

Missive- October, 2023

In the history of human civilization, Karl Marx's statement that *History Repeats Itself* continues to remain axiomatic. This is more than a statement as it reveals a historical truth justifying that human ideas are context-driven. Implicit here is also belief that human history moves dialectically which means that the nature of transformation is hardly the same because the circumstances do not remain static.

The recognition of Santiniketan as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO on 17 September, 2023 is the fulfillment of a dream that many of us dreamt for many years. The initiative was undertaken in 1921 when Visva-Bharati was founded in one of the remote districts of the then Bengal, Birbhum, in 1921 by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. With support from his equally committed compatriots, it was relatively easier for Gurudev to navigate in tumultuous circumstances involving the struggle for India's political emancipation. The collective efforts led to the rise and establishment of Visva-Bharati as one of the most prominent centres of alternative method of education. It was an unfolding of an alternative pedagogy as well in contrast with Macaulay-introduced English education in India. In the context of the increasing importance of English education as it was a passport for lucrative public employment, Tagore's alternative education was not, at all, attractive. Nonetheless, Tagore's relentless endeavour generated a legitimate space among the Bengali middle classes who did not appear to have been swayed by the easy availability of public jobs. Till 1951, Visva-Bharati was a private initiative; with the acceptance of 1951 Visva-Bharati Act by India's parliament, the University became a public institution which drew on the ideational vision of Tagore linking education with collective well-being.

Visva-Bharati took off well and many those who were associated with the institution under Tagore's stewardship endeavoured hard to adhere to the bard's ideational vision. There were, of course, occasional deviations which were exceptions rather than rules. One however notices radical metamorphosis in its nature when West Bengal was passing through severe political chaos. Birbhum became notoriously famous by default; Visva-Bharati shared the blame as it hardly remained an abode of peace. Instead, it became a nursery of the growth of forces which were anything but not conducive to the pursuit of serious academics. Visva-Bharati gradually lost the reputation which it had at the outset. It was evident because not only did number of students from other states in India and abroad decline, the academicians from elsewhere appeared to have lost interest in being associated with Visva-Bharati presumably because it was not the same as it was in the immediate past.

What was just a symptom became a chronic deformity of Visva-Bharati in course of time. Many, of course, tried to meaningfully address the difficulties; they appear to have lacked the courage and elan to successfully halt the decline. Visva-Bharati was, to many, a sinking ship which disillusioned many, especially those who were baptized in Tagore's ideational priorities. In other

words, the efforts of those determined to wreck the University outweigh those who, despite having committed to protect Visva-Bharati's rich legacy, appeared to have taken a back seat as it was, to them deemed appropriate then. It was the beginning of a trend that was considered to be ephemeral although those who thought so, were soon disillusioned as what appeared to be a mere indifference soon became a trend.

For the heritage tag to be bestowed on Santiniketan- Visva-Bharati, many worked relentlessly since the place became a centre of alternative learning. Since 2019, Visva-Bharati Parivar received a boost once the Hon'ble Chancellor of this University, Shri Narendra Modiji, expressed his desire to be associated with this endeavour. It was a god send opportunity for all of us who also nurtured the same goal. Equally zealous were the Hon'ble Union Education Minister, Shri Dharmendra Pradhanji and his competent colleagues in the Ministry, the Hon'ble Union Minister of Culture, Shri G Kishan Reddy and his enthusiastic team in the Ministry and last, not the least, the able and committed members of Archeological Survey of India. Without their steadfast commitment to the cause, it would not have possible for Santiniketan-Visva-Bharati to attain this rare distinction. We owe a great deal to them.

This rare tag would have remained elusive had the members of Visva-Bharati Parivar devoted their energy to the realization of their dream. A mere gratitude could never be adequate since what they rendered by being tuned to the objective can never be gauged. Their involvement came out of a commitment to the institution which allowed them to enjoy worldly comfort as well. It is true and I have reasons to believe that mere pecuniary gains acted decisively in persuading my colleagues to support the work does not seem to be plausible; what stood out was their selfless commitment to the institution barring, of course, a few deviants who, by nature, always enjoy by defaming Visva-Bharati which is the source of their worldly existence. They are basically shameless creatures who gradually phase out as history is replete with innumerable instances.

As soon as UNESCO included Santiniketan in the World Heritage list on 17 September, 2023, a rat race began among the shameless souls all over the state to claim that because of their hard work, the very site in the district of Birbhum would never have had the distinction. The claims was made by many, including those who, while being several thousand miles away from Visva-Bharati lost no time to firmly establish his/her/their claims of being formidable contributors to the achieve this feat. This is neither paradoxical nor ironical because the West Bengal also provides nourishment to those who tend to mislead the prospective voters by adumbrating what is a white lie. The explanation is located in the carefully designed mindset in this Indian province where one's expertise is judged not by truthful but by being deceitful. This is unfortunately ubiquitous perhaps due to the fact that by being deceptive there is nothing to lose, then why does one inculcate the habit of being truth-driven. Isn't a behavioural imbalance that we inadvertently imbibe as it is gainful rather temporarily as history demonstrates.

Visva-Bharati is a beacon of light. Hence, these miscreants who are clearly losers tend to catch the straw with the fear of being drowned away. By being innocent of how human civilization progresses, these strikingly stupid creatures seem ignorant that history is cruel to them for they misused their birth as human beings. As their aim is to safeguard partisan interests, they soon are identified and thrown out of civilized world in no time. Because they are stupid, they do not seem to gauge what they are doing and how history will judge them once they are gone as ordinary mortals. They may be widely reputed although their deeds as human beings are despicable which they tend to not understand because they are incapable of judging the intricate movement of history. Hence, they grab what does not belong to them because they are confident that they are too strong to be shown the door. But, as history has shown, the trend is temporal and those who worked consistently for their narrow gain are soon to be marginalized to the extent of being extinct.

II

The aim of this missive is twofold. On the hand, contrary to the established practices, I want to put on record my own assessment of the ground realities at Visva-Bharati when I am at the saddles of power. This will help to articulate my views on the basis of my memory which generally fades away with the passage of time; on the other hand, my missive will enable the readers to get the views from horse's mouth; or, in other words, as missive contains the voice of a member of Visva-Bharati Parivar, it will clear out many misgivings prevalent in the public domain.

Visva-Bharati is the source of survival for both the detractors and those who are working for the well-being of an institution located in the World Heritage Site of Santiniketan. By putting on records their inputs, including those which are also concocted, those who claimed to be journalists earn their livelihood; the self-proclaimed devotees of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore are also engaged in safeguarding what they have so far been obtaining by employing the time-tested device for fulfilling their exclusive objectives; being students of this Heritage centre of learning, students prepare themselves for the battle they need to fight in the wider world for sustenance; teachers and non-teaching staff draw salaries which are higher than many of those who work in universities other than central universities; the Toto owners and drivers earn by ferrying the tourists; the local shopkeepers gain monetarily, do are the hoteliers by providing accommodation to the tourists who visit Santiniketan throughout the year. The moot point is to highlight that Santiniketan-Visva-Bharati cannot be compared with any other worth-visiting tourist spots in Bharat and abroad because of the above distinctive reasons. Hence, it bestows responsibilities on us since our quality survival is dependent on its continuity as a unique academic institution with equally distinctive features.

This is not the place to write a critique of those who nearly failed to discharge their assigned duties except to suggest that the well-entrenched mindset favourably disposed towards personal gains needs to be discarded. As history demonstrates, bad habits grow fast and the process is just reversed presumably because we, as human beings, are instinctively better trained to happily sustain

deplorable habits. For instance, illegal extraction of money from Visva-Bharati was hardly an offence until the deviants were told so; the discontinuity of five chances to the failed students were withdrawn because that was contrary to the rule book; avoidance of the assigned work and keen to earn a few quids by doing the same work beyond office hours because this enables the employees to claim extra money on top of their salary. This was an overtime culture of the past. Now, our non-teaching complete the same work within the office hours; if that is possible now, why was overtime work was required to be done to finish the same work: a million-dollar question!

Visva-Bharati stands out by default and as it is a source of income everybody squeezes his/her pound of flesh by hook or crook. And, in case they are resisted, all the miscreants form an unholy alliance to endeavour to obstruct those in opposition. This is the common storyline one finds if one carefully dissects the long history of Visva-Bharati. Its founder, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was not spared by these opportunistic souls, as many of his autobiographical texts reveal and so was his eldest son, Rathindranath Tagore who was the first Vice Chancellor after Visva-Bharati became a central university with the tag of an institution of national importance in 1951. I don't want burden the readers by repeating the trend Visva-Bharati witnessed since the name of Vice Chancellor changed but his plight was the same as soon as he fell apart from the so-called sons of the soil as they felt that Visva-Bharati was their fiefdom which needed to be safeguarded even if that required hitting the Vice Chancellor and his like-minded colleagues below the belt.

The story since the fag end of 2018, the situation appears to have transformed for variety of complex reasons. The miscreants took out their fangs a little earlier than what was the trend so far which shortened my honeymoon period from three years to just six months! Never mind. It allowed me to see the ugly, ferocious and immoral faces well ahead of time. I was thus fortunate enough to confront them earlier than my predecessors. So, the battle between good and bad began long before I had anticipated, which adequately prepared me for the rainy days. As I had unquestionable faith in the dictum - God help those who help themselves - I never had an iota of doubt to believe that the days of the miscreants were numbered. Because it was a battle between two uneven forces - one for fulfilling evil designs and another for truth - I was confident that those who stood for the latter would invariably rise decimating the forces to the contrary. As a cursory look at the recent past reveals, truth always prevails regardless of the coercive strength of those who survive on untruth.

In the face of wild misinformation and the blatant misattribution of credit, I am here to set the record straight regarding the honours that Visva Bharati has recently been showered with. Under these circumstances, it does not seem improper to blow one's own horn.

Visva-Bharati was a den of corruption; the number of classes that should have been taken teachers in an academic session was strikingly less; administrative staff remained their own bosses and hence they designed their schedule according to their priorities; they were interested in getting

extra money on account of duties beyond office hours, or what is identified as overtime allowances, in administrative parlance; office functioned in accordance with the directions of those who drew their authority by being blessed by the local chieftain; rules were thus conveniently ignored. Nobody in the office dared to raise their voice apprehending the backlashes by the political goons. The Vice Chancellor appeared helpless presumably because of unknown fear. Visva-Bharati suffered terribly due to gross financial irregularities. Prominent among them was drawing of money for legally endorsed benefits, like, for instance, Leave Travel Concession (LTC). An officer who was the disbursing authority as regards LTCs took this facility three times in succession which runs counter to fundamental rule of Government Financial Rules. This was a university where corruption was not only rampant but was also considered appropriate by almost all. Some of them endorsed because they were corrupt, and some prefer to remain quiet to buy peace and embarrassment.

Visva-Bharati was thus under the control of those who did not bother to comply with established rules, regulations and norms governing a public institution run out of taxpayers' hard-earned money. It was a heaven for them as they had access to muscle power and also government assistance since they purportedly belonged to or associated with the ruling party.

What was also bothersome was the prevalence of landsharks: many of them belong to who's who of Bengali elites. They were holy cows: they can be seen but not touched because they have the authorization to do things which are strictly forbidden for ordinary mortals. Recently a voice against the land grabbers created furore internationally simply because the person concerned made statements to please the provincial political boss which is unbecoming of him in view of his global reputation as an academic. So, those who grabbed Visva-Bharati's leasehold land remain outside the purview of legal constraints which are applicable for others. Besides, there is another way of grabbing land by the establishment of a deity: be it Lord Shiva or Lord Hanuman or Bajrangbali. By being respectful to the act, Visva-Bharati reclaimed 15 acres out of 72 acres of captured land since late 2018. With the application of stringent step against the financial defaulter, Visva-Bharati never restrained itself from combatting these land grabbers. While one is very protective of retaining illegal land, there is also an example of a good Samaritan who unconditionally donated land and house to his alma mater. Now, the department of Statistics is housed there. In so far as reclaiming of money which was illegally taken by those associated with Visva-Bharati is concerned, the amount is nearly SIX CRORES.

With the unholy alliance between the evil forces and the government, the officials, including the Vice Chancellor of Visva-Bharati have been subject to humiliation as the government agencies tend to misuse the institutional authority to muzzle their voice. These designs do not seem to be as effective as they are assumed. As history demonstrates, the battle against injustice and unfairness makes the participants strong and determined to fulfill their mission regardless of consequences.

Since the late 2018, Visva-Bharati put a halt to those activities defaming this heritage institution. Many temporary constructions adjacent to students' hostels were demolished because all kinds of illegal activities were carried on there. By doing so, Visva-Bharati built an open-air theatre, known as BHARAT TIRTHA, and settled many shop-owners without paying a single penny to the local goons who forcibly raised levy from them before this arrangement was made. The new Mela ground is demarcated from the dwelling private houses by constructing boundary walls aesthetically compatible with the heritage architecture of Visva-Bharati.

A claim is deliberately made that Visva-Bharati stopped the Heritage *Poush Mela*. This is a white lie. The Hon'ble Division Bench headed by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of Kolkata High Court have a verdict saying the Visva-Bharati lacks the infrastructure of holding of grand Poush Mela by being complaint with the stringent direction of the National Green Tribunal. We had to take the decision to honour the court judgement. Similar is the case of *Vasanta Utsab* held on the day of Holi. We have not stopped it. Instead of making this Utsab as a space hooliganism and perversion, we have been organizing *Vasanta Bandana* as religiously as it was held as per Gurudev's directions. So, the detractors are spreading lies to curry favour from those who believe in creating sensationalism and distortion in public mind.

Recently, Visva-Bharati offered jobs to more than 400 individuals from all over the country. This stands in contradiction with the practice prevalent in West Bengal. No job is available without offering money. Two prominent persons, the earlier Education Minister and an incumbent Vice Chancellor (along with others) are now behind bars. This is a miracle to those who got appointments because they were persuaded to believe that they had to offer money in this regard. But, they were equally surprised when it was not there. They were selected on the basis of merit; the test was conducted at two levels by the Government of India-led National Testing Agency. Most transparent system of selection in which candidates participated from various parts of the country. As a result, the demographic complexion of non-teaching staff of Visva-Bharati will invariably change. The same formula is working in so far as the selection for teaching posts is concerned.

This missive is a checklist of what Visva-Bharati achieved since 2018 by dint of hard work of those who are uncritical admirers and governed by the objective of securing the well-being of this Heritage University amidst stern opposition. The opponents have the courage because they are endowed by the support of the state authority willing to deploy coercive power to threaten those courageous enough to articulate a voice of opposition irrespective of adverse consequences. There were many who were waiting near the fence who plunged into action once the proper leadership was put in place. Now, Visva-Bharati is strong enough to meaningfully challenge attempts at thwarting any of the designs harming this great institution built by the most dedicated son of *Bharat Mata*, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

There is a widely-circulated misconstrued notion that for Visva-Bharati to function normally, the Vice Chancellor needs to carry everybody associated with the Institution and also those who are self-proclaimed Rabindriks. This is an oxymoron claim because those who start their day with the plans to exploit Visva-Bharati can be transformed into Balmiki! I wonder. There are many who are miscreants, deviants and also thugs in and around the campus and also elsewhere. Is there any mechanism to put them back to rail. Differences of opinion and attitude is inherent in human beings. If that was not the case, Subhas Chandra Bose was not ousted from the Indian National Congress in 1939 due to unbridgeable politico-ideological gulf with the Mahatma. Even now, in contemporary politics, we have leaders of paramount importance who cannot tolerate others largely due to differences of opinion and attitude. Gurudev Tagore did not comply with Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation strategy; he differed radically from the Mahatma when the latter described the 1934 Bihar earthquake as God's caprice since it was clearly an outcome of geological metamorphosis below the surface of the earth. Even today in West Bengal, will the optimism that the leader take everybody on board work? It is simply impossible because we as human beings often hold diametrically opposite views based on partisan aims. Those who make this statement in the public domain are either stupid to the core or instinctively deviants or pretentious to believe that people are not intelligent enough to understand them as crafty but *bekuf* (utterly imprudent) of the highest order.

Visva-Bharati was a nursery of corruption because of complex reasons which are identified in a nutshell. Now, the situation has improved. The thugs and goons have shown their places; those who survive on salaries from the institution have also realized that there is nothing called FREE LUNCH. One has to earn one's lunch by hard work and the Visva-Bharati administration is alert to its responsibilities. It is true that in so doing, those involved in governing this Heritage institution took many unpleasant decisions which led to consternation. Many of the stern administrative decisions ruffled feathers of many in consequence.

What is the way out of the difficulties confronting Visva-Bharati and other centres for higher learning in many parts of the country? There is no easy answer. But it is also not desirable to avoid attempting to find possible way outs. One should not escape when the problem appears to be insurmountable; instead, one should have the courage complemented by intelligence to hold the bull by its horns although it is easier said than done under the present circumstances in the province where Visva-Bharati is located. What is of utmost importance is to build an indomitable will to conclusively weed out the sources seeking to cripple this great institution. It is also remembered that it is a team work to successfully address the difficulties striving to halt the rise of Visva-Bharati as one of the best academic centres in the world. Gurudev Tagore played his role at the dawn of Visva-Bharati's journey as an alternative institution of learning; after his unparalleled contribution many who were politico-ideologically baptized by him also helped sustain the glory. Once Visva-Bharati became an institution of national importance in 1951, it functioned under the tutelage of Gurudev Tagore's eldest son, Rathindranath Tagore as its first Vice Chancellor. After

he made an ignominious exit from Visva-Bharati, many globally reputed academicians were at saddles of authority as Vice Chancellors; they also worked to the best of their abilities to take Visva-Bharati forward in accordance with their exclusive mode of understanding Gurudev Tagore's ideational priorities. My purpose is not to undermine the great work done by my predecessors; but what needs to be probed is why Visva-Bharati nosedived in the course of time. It was a steady decline over the years. Many of my predecessors attempted to understand this phenomenon once they demitted office which did not allow them to execute their design to remove the hurdles halting the decline. Or, they might have restrained themselves to be candid in their assessment to avoid being disturbed or to avoid raising unpleasant issues to please the trouble makers/miscreants. There is no persuasive answer to this question. There are however examples to substantiate that some of my predecessors bought peace in the campus by allowing the miscreants to enjoy the fruits of their support to the authority. This is a matter of common knowledge that revenue from Visva-Bharati's guest house in Kolkata was never deposited to the university till 2019. It was justified by the claim that the right was given to them by one Vice Chancellor although papers formalizing this arrangement was not available. I wonder whether it was just a mere statement of the miscreants which persuaded those who follow him as Vice Chancellor since it was an easy way to buy peace in the campus. I have no evidence to support any of the contention except the fact that revenue generated from the guest house went to private pockets. The only good thing that happened once Visva-Bharati took over the governance of the Kolkata Guest House was that the University received Rs. 9.54 lakh from one of the employees of Visva-Bharati who claimed to have authorized to keep the revenue in his custody. What is most appalling is that the money earned by the University was allowed to be in possession of a private person, and none of my predecessors dared to address this anomaly for reasons best known to them. The erstwhile Vice Chancellors and their team might have had compulsion which perhaps deterred them to undertake stern steps to address many of the issues conclusively. I admire their capabilities and with the foundation they built, it was easier for me to identify the lacunae. What was a little disturbing at the outset was the disproportionate strength of those who were not institutionalized to exercise authority. Unfortunately, they were the ones who remained critical for most of the decisions although their demand concentrated on the fulfillment of their rights and whenever their attention was drawn to their duties, they happily scuttled. For their benefit, they did not mind being illogical in stressing their demands; but for taking care of Visva-Bharati's well-entrenched traditions, they did not seem to be so sincere. Hence, for them attendance in the Wednesdays prayers is not an important consideration; many teachers also join them although, at the drop of the hat, they defend their irregularities as well in the name of the bard. What an irony?

What to do to set things right in this heritage site? Many detractors have already started barking because Santiniketan was not recognised as a global Heritage Site despite, as they claimed, their hard work. The leading dailies in West Bengal highlighted this aspect seemingly to give credit to the failed individuals. It is as if to celebrate the passing out of a candidate despite having failed to pass in the past. We happily recognize the role of the entire citizenry of the province, the country

and the globe because Gurudev Tagore was always for universal humanism. Along with this statement, we are also aware that the principal architect of this recognition is Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore who conceptualized humanity differently and also creatively which allowed those serving Visva-Bharati since 2018 to realize the mission pursued by many of the Tagore devotees.

Now, the responsibility of maintaining the Heritage status is enormous. We need support from all. Whatever was made possible with the personal care of our Hon'ble Chancellor, our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modiji, the Hon'ble Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhanji, the Hon'ble Minister of Culture, Shri G Kishan Reddy the Hon'ble Director General of Archeological Survey of India needs to be taken care of so that it is not lost. The help received from the state government led by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shrimoti Mamata Banerjee deserves appreciation. We earnestly request the Hon'ble Chief Minister to return the road to Visva-Bharati that passes through the Ashram. The plying of mechanical vehicles will affect the buildings located next the road which will be possible with regular monitoring. This is not the time to fight over the deliberately created differences; now, it is an occasion to come together to work for the Heritage Site so that we avoid being branded as incapable in sustaining the glory. We must rescind the habit of putting blame on the Vice Chancellor and his team if something goes wrong somewhere while, for taking credits, there is a rat race among the detractors who begin their days with a prayer to the almighty to harm those working for Visva-Bharati's well-being and go to bed with the same prayer. Visva-Bharati belongs to humanity and it is required to be protected by all. There is no place in this Heritage Site for anybody to engage in activities contrary to Gurudev Tagore's ideational vision.

As mentioned above, there is no shortcut to accomplish the predetermined goals. A well-defined plan is necessary which needs to be backed by hard work of those who also have an identical mission. We must also undertake activities to generate interests among those who appear indifferent to Visva-Bharati for reasons which are not always fathomable. In view of the Heritage tag by UNESCO, it is incumbent also on the stakeholders to participate in those activities which are tuned to the protection of Visva-Bharati as a global Heritage Site. Core here is an earnest request to all for safeguarding the Tagore-founded Visva-Bharati.

At the end, let me reiterate that the aim of my missives is to not to dig and churn out issues which are likely to create ill-will among those associated with this globally-reputed institution. Instead, my objective is to raise those issues which are complementary to the rise of Visva-Bharati as an exalted academic institution comparable with any of the universities elsewhere in the world. This is a mission which cannot be fulfilled by a handful of people however dedicated they may; what is thus required is to create a milieu in which everybody here in Santiniketan and outside is drawn to the goal.

The objective of missives is to document my experiences while being a member of Visva-Bharati Parivar. For me, to serve Visva-Bharati as its Vice Chancellor is a god send opportunity for at least two reasons:(a) by being at Visva-Bharati, I have an opportunity to fulfil my dream since my college days. I wanted to write a political biography of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore since he was not just a littérateur; he was an innovative thinker who creatively conceptualized many socio-cultural and politico-ideological issues. Unfortunately, this aspect of Gurudev Tagore's ideas has not received adequate scholarly attention so far. He was studied primarily for his literary prowess. Again, with the blessings of the Almighty and support of my colleagues here, it was possible for me accomplish this feat; and (b) as an integral part of Visva-Bharati, it was also possible for me to baptized and later internalized the distinctive cultural ethos which Gurudev Tagore evolved innovatively during his worldly existence. For me, Visva-Bharati is a different world together which, despite being surrounded by semi-urban milieu, has succeeded, so far, in retaining it's old charm. Amidst adversaries and politically empowered forces, this institution of national importance continues nurture the legacies which emerged when it came into being in 1921. The holding of Wednesdays prayers without interruption since it was introduced in the Ashram is a testimony of collective respect for Gurudev Tagore's ideational preferences. Other cultural programmes, held to commemorate the arrival of new seasons are manifestation of how the founder sought to connect the Visva-Bharati Parivar with nature and the surrounding world.

An institution becomes a source of inspiration not because of the infrastructure but also because of those who, by their devotion, make it lively and vibrant. I am privileged in this respect because my detractors, colleagues and the outsiders, allowed me to be acquainted with the bad and ugly side of humanity and those who were like-minded strengthened my belief that humanism would always prevail. I have no grudge to anybody. The fierce critics helped me understand many of the petty tricks to rattle another individual which also made me far more tolerant than what I was when I came from Germany. I was a teacher then; now, I am a human being with precious experiences which I would not have had without being Visva-Bharati's Vice Chancellor. So, big *Salam* to all for making my wirehouse of experiences rich and enviable.

The allegory

Shailapur is now happy because those who were determined to disturb peace in the past have received a big slap from an unknown corner. Dhurto Hen, Kuhipriyo Bekar, Atripta Kattakarya, Bakshkak Kattakarya are now quiet because the reward which Shailapur received was inconceivable since they endeavoured hard to stop the awarding agency to confer this distinction on Shailapur. Their chamchas are equally disappointed because of the failure of their bosses' incapability. They became empty vessels which just sounded much. They are thus not visible except throwing futile tantrums now and then among those who prefer to be misled as it gave them false hopes. Dhurto Hen is away in his safe house, located several thousand miles away from Shailapur. His admirers seem to have been hallucinated since he bows down before Maharani to attain his partisan gains while those who remained with him in the rainy days were left behind

although they nurture hopes that one day Dhurto Hen would throw Haddis or something to their benefit. Alas, there are soulless people in this world who continue to be deceived by those who are relatively smarter than them. The outcome is obvious as history demonstrates: they survive as parasites and hope rather endlessly that these crafty individuals will have mercy on them surviving on false optimism!

The Sardar is the happiest person under the Sun along with those who have never lost hope in his capacity to do what appears to be unthinkable and hence inconceivable. Being aware that this global recognition was made possible despite the planned opposition by Dhurto Hen and heartless and mindless blind supporters, the Sardar expressed his gratitude to all who have been working for villagers' well-being and also contributing to the sustenance of village's glory. Maharani was disappointed, for obvious reasons because her tricks boomeranged. Hence what she did caused laughter although it was integrally linked with her whimsical behaviour: as soon as the announcement for this glory for Shailapur was made, she, despite being far away from the village, immediately plunged into action by claiming that it was possible for her efforts and also those parasites who moved around her to get at least left-over food and other items which Maharani might not have liked as she was not in a mood to have them. Unfortunately, these dependent souls survive like this although the Maharani is very skeptical about those who surround her as bees moved around the queen bee. Hence, she is ruthless in kicking out many of those who did not live upto the standard of servility she expects. Their devotion to Maharani landed them in jail also. But that is the price one should be prepared to pay to enjoy life even for few days.

Sardar is also contented because now there is team of workers with steadfast commitment to the glory of Shailapur. He has another reason to be joyous because the founder of Shailapur always believed that hard work would result in achievements which were elusive so long as people have commitments and urge to fulfill them. So, the global recognition to Shailapur is a tribute to that great soul who sacrificed a great deal to make the village a centre realizing those aims which became peripheral among human beings. His world was one of humanism and not a space for dehumanizing humanity. With the involvement of Sardar since he arrived on the scene, the task that the founder of Shailapur always privileged appeared to have become critical again for humanity. Nonetheless, Sardar warns that Dhurto Hen and his blind followers have not been completely routed; hence those with commitment to safeguard humanism everywhere need to be alert and ready to fight again for the goal, the Shailapur founder never undermined.

The battle in Shailapur against strong detractors is a lesson of history. It confirms that Dhurto Hen is not one; he represent an evil force which means that there are always the possibilities when humanism will be attacked and sacrificed since it is a deterrent to the goals for which noble souls, like the founder of Shailapur, selflessly worked day and night for humanity. There is always the hope that this isaberration of history since humanism always triumphs. We are fortunate that the Almighty sends human beings whenever their future is at stake. So Dhuto Hen is a member of a

minority who, however venomous he may be, is as ephemeral as a bubble in the well. The morale of this allegory is thus a repetition of a historical truth, viz., humanism ultimately triumphs despite apprehension to the contrary.

Prof. Bidyut Chakrabarty
Vice Chancellor, Visva-Bharati
Santiniketan
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একটি রূপক

যারা অতীতে শৈলপুরের শান্তি বিঘ্নিত করার জন্য বন্ধপরিষ্কার ছিল তারা অজানা প্রাপ্ত থেকে বৃহৎ চপেটাঘাতে বিপর্যস্ত বলে এখন সেখানে সুখ-শান্তি বিরাজ করছে। ধূর্ত হেন, কুপ্রিয় বেকার, অতৃপ্ত কতাকার্য, ভক্ষক কতাকার্য আপাতত শান্ত — শৈলপুর যাতে পুরস্কারের স্বীকৃতি না পায় সেজন্য পুরস্কার প্রদানকারীদের নানা ভাবে খামানোর চেষ্টা করেও যে তারা ব্যর্থ হবে সে কথা ভাবতে পারেনি। তাদের ‘চামচবৃন্দ’ ও একই রকম হতাশ — তাদের প্রভুদের প্রয়াস বৃথা যাবে ভাবেনি। তারা সুপ্রচুর শব্দ করা শূন্য কলস মাত্র। তাদের আর দেখা যাচ্ছে না, যারা দিশাহীন অলীক আশা দিয়েছিল তাদের প্রতি কেবল মাঝে মাঝে নিষ্ফল আক্রোশ প্রদর্শন করছে। ধূর্ত হেন শৈলপুর থেকে বহুক্রোশ দূরে এখন নিরাপদ আশ্রয়ে। মহারানির কাছে ব্যক্তিগত লাভের জন্য মাথা নত করায় ধূর্ত হেনের গুণগ্রাহীরা যারা দুঃখের বর্ষায় তার সঙ্গী ছিল তারা পেছনে পড়ে রইল, প্রতারিত হয়েও তারা মনে মনে এই আশা পোষণ করে হয়তো কোনোদিন ধূর্ত হেন তাদের দিকে লাভের ‘হাড্ডি’ কিস্বা সে-জাতীয় কিছু ছুড়ে দেবে। হায় রে! এই পৃথিবীতে আত্মবোধহীন মানুষেরা চিরকালই তাদের থেকে চতুর-চকচকে মানুষের দ্বারা প্রতারিত হয়। এর ফলাফল ইতিহাসে লেখা আছে: কৌশলী মানুষদের দাক্ষিণ্যে বেঁচে থাকবে এই ব্যর্থ আশা নিয়ে পরজীবীরা অস্তিত্ব বজায় রাখে।

সর্দার আর তাঁর সেই অনুগামীরা যারা স্বীকৃতি প্রাপ্তি অচিস্তনীয় ও অসম্ভব জেনেও সর্দারের সামর্থ্যে বিশ্বাস রেখেছিল এই মুহূর্তে সূর্যের নিম্নবর্তী বিশ্বে তারাই সবচেয়ে খুশি। ধূর্ত হেন ও তার হৃদয়হীন-মস্তিষ্কশূন্য অন্ধ সমর্থকদের পরিকল্পিত বিরোধিতা সত্ত্বেও এই আন্তর্জাতিক স্বীকৃতি পাওয়া গেছে সর্দার একথা জানেন এবং যাঁরা পল্লীর উন্নয়নের ও গরিমাবৃদ্ধির জন্য কাজ করেছেন তাঁদের প্রতি তিনি ধন্যবাদ জ্ঞাপন করেছেন। মহারানি স্বভাবতই অখুশি, তার কৌশল ‘বুমেরাং’ হয়ে গেছে। তার কাজ হাস্যকর তবে এসবই তার খামখেয়ালি হুজুগেপনার সঙ্গে সংগতিপূর্ণ: শৈলপুরের গরিমাময় স্বীকৃতি ঘোষিত হওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সেখান থেকে বহুদূরে থাকলেও মহারানি ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়ে দাবি করে তার ও তার চারপাশের পরজীবী সাজোপাজরা যারা তার ভুক্তাবশেষের অপেক্ষায় ঘুরঘুর করে তাদের কাজের সুবাদেই এই স্বীকৃতি জুটেছে। দুর্ভাগ্যবশত, এই পরজীবীরা এভাবেই তাদের অস্তিত্ব বজায় রাখতে চায় — মহারানি অবশ্য রানি মৌমাছির

মতো তার চারপাশে থাকা মৌমাছিদের সম্বন্ধে গভীরভাবে সন্দেহান। যতটা আনুগত্য তাদের কাছ থেকে আশা করে তা না-পেলেই নির্দয় পদাঘাতে মহারানি তাদের বহিষ্কার করে। মহারানির প্রতি আনুগত্যের ফলে তাদের হাজতবাসও করতে হয়। কিছুদিনের জন্য জীবন উপভোগের সুবাদে এই মূল্য প্রদানের জন্য তাদের প্রস্তুত থাকতে হবে।

সর্দার তৃপ্ত, কারণ শৈলপুরের গৌরবের জন্য দৃঢ়চিত্ত ত্যাগনিষ্ঠ কর্মীর দল গড়ে উঠেছে। তিনি আরেকটি কারণেও খুশি — শৈলপুরের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা মনে করতেন কঠোর শ্রমই সাফল্যের উপায়, সে বিশ্বাসের প্রতি যাদের আস্থা ছিল না ত্যাগনিষ্ঠ কর্মীদের দেখে এবার তারা তা স্বীকার করবে। সেই মহান আত্মা, যিনি একটি গ্রামকে কেন্দ্র করে মানবতার সর্বাঙ্গিক লক্ষ্য পূর্ণ করার জন্য আত্মত্যাগ স্বীকার করেছিলেন, শৈলপুরের আন্তর্জাতিক স্বীকৃতি তাঁরই প্রতি নিবেদিত। তাঁর জগৎ মানবতার জগৎ, মানুষকে অবমানবায়িত করার জন্য সেটি গড়ে ওঠেনি। সর্দার যখন শৈলপুরে উপনীত হলেন তখন থেকেই তাঁর গভীর মনোযোগ শৈলপুরের প্রতিষ্ঠাতার আদর্শের প্রতি নিবেদিত কারণ মানবতার জন্য তা পুনরায় গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠেছিল। সর্দার এই মর্মে সাবধান করতে চান যে, ধূর্ত হেন ও তার অনুগামীরাই কেবল সম্পূর্ণ পরাভূত হয়েছে তাই নয় শৈলপুরের স্থপতির আদর্শের পক্ষে সচেতন ভাবে লড়াইয়ের জন্য আবারও প্রস্তুত থাকতে হবে।

ক্ষমতাশালীর বিরুদ্ধে আপত্তিজনক লড়াই করলে কী হয় ইতিহাসের থেকে এই শিক্ষা শৈলপুর পেল। যে অশুভ প্রতিশক্তি মানবতাবাদের বিরোধী, ধূর্ত হেন তাদেরই প্রতিনিধি হয়ে শৈলপুরের স্থপতি ও তাঁর অনুগামীদের দিবারাত্রি আত্মত্যাগে গড়ে ওঠা এই প্রতিষ্ঠানের বিরুদ্ধে কাজ করেছে, এ কথা সুনিশ্চিত ভাবেই বলা চলে। যখন থেকে মানবতার জয় ঘোষিত হয়েছে তখন থেকেই ইতিহাসের মধ্যে এই বিকৃতবাদীদের বিরুদ্ধে জয়ের আশা জেগে উঠেছে। আমরা ভাগ্যবান যখনই মানজাতির ভবিষ্যতে সংকট নেমে আসে তখনই সর্বশক্তিমান প্রকৃত মানবদের প্রেরণ করেন। সুতরাং ধূর্ত হেন সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়ের প্রতিনিধি, তার খুৎকারে যতই বিষ থাকুক না কেন কুয়োর মধ্যের বুদ্ধদের মতো তা মিলিয়ে যায়। এই রূপকের সারকথা হল, ইতিহাসের পুনরাবৃত্ত সত্য: মানবতাই শেষ অবধি সমস্ত প্রতিকূল শক্তির বিরুদ্ধে বার বার জয়ী হয়।

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