

Vishwa Bharati Shantiniketan and Tagore's Ideas on Education

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In news

Recently, the Prime Minister addressed the centenary celebrations of the Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, West Bengal

About Shantiniketan(abode of peace)

- It was built by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, and later expanded by his son Rabindranath Tagore whose vision became what is now a university town with the creation of Visva-Bharati.
- Santiniketan, popularly known today as a university town, a hundred miles to the north of Kolkata, was originally an ashram built by Debendranath Tagore, where anyone, irrespective of caste and creed, could come and spend time meditating on the one Supreme God.
- The area is flanked on two sides by the rivers, the Ajay and the Kopai.
- Rabindranath Tagore first visited Shantiniketan in 1873 when he was 12 years old.
- In 1888, Debendranath dedicated the entire property for the establishment of a Brahmavidyalaya through a trust deed.
- In 1901, Rabindranath started a Brahmacharyaashrama and it came to be known as Patha Bhavana from 1925
- Rathindranath Tagore was one of the first five students at the *Brahmacharya ashrama* at Santiniketan
- Santiniketan embodies Rabindranath Tagore's vision of a place of learning that is unfettered by religious and

regional barriers.

- Rabindranath founded a school for children at Santiniketan and it was around this nucleus that the structure of an unconventional university developed
- Tagore was one of the first to support and bring together different forms of arts at Santiniketan.
- Tagore encouraged artists such as Nandalal Bose to take up residence at Santiniketan and devote themselves full-time to promoting a national form of art
- Shantiniketan was established with the aim of helping education go beyond the confines of the classroom, Santiniketan grew into the Visva Bharati University in 1921

About Vishwa Bharati University

- The Visva-Bharati University, founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921, is the country's oldest central university.
- Visva Bharati was established as a centre for culture with the objective of exploring the arts, language, humanities, music etc.
- It was also declared an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament in 1951.
- In May 1951, Visva-Bharati was declared to be a Central University and "An Institution of National Importance" by an Act of Parliament.
- It was granted the status of a unitary, teaching and residential university.

Rabindranath Tagore's Ideas on Education

There are **four fundamental principles in Tagore's educational philosophy; naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism. Shantiniketan and Visva Bharathi are both based on these very principles.**

He insisted that education should be imparted in a natural

surroundings.

Tagore said, "Children have their active subconscious mind which like a tree has the power to gather its food from the surrounding atmosphere".

According to him an educational institution should not be " a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food that's artificially prepared. Hand work and arts are the spontaneous over flow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance".

According to him, "**Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of dust and gives us wealth not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love.** It is a process of enlightenment. It is divine wealth. It helps in realization of truth".

The main objective of his school Shantiniketan was to cultivate a love for nature, to impart knowledge and wisdom in one's native language, provide freedom of mind, heart and will, a natural ambience, and to eventually enrich Indian culture.

Religion was ideal for Rabindranath Tagore. His 'Visva Bharathi World University' stood for his nobility of soul. In the pamphlet named 'The Centre of Indian Culture', the poet expresses the ideals of Visva Bharathi.

In The Centre of Indian Culture pamphlet he writes, '**In education, the most inspiring atmosphere of creative activity is important. The primary function of the institution must be constructive; scope must be for all kinds of intellectual exploration.** Teaching must be one with culture, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, economic and social. True education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings".

He says, "We should know that the great task of our institution is to provide for the education of the mind and

all the senses through various activities”.

Tagore also lays emphasis on the learner's contact with nature. Apart from physical activity, nature teaches a man more than any institution. Educational institutions should realize the importance of this fact and inculcate co-curricular activities to good effect.

He **believed that one of the main aims of education is to prepare the individual for the service of the nation and education stands for human regeneration, cultural representation, harmony and intellectualism.** Educational institutions should build on the power of thinking and imagination in an individual and help turn herself/himself into a self-sustained building block of human society and a creative canvas of a nation on the whole.