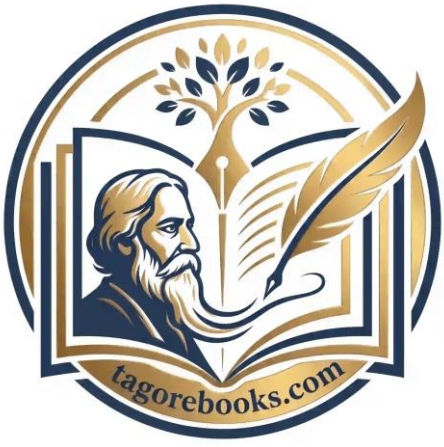
ESSAY

# VISVA BHARATI

## Rabindranath Tagore



# Contents

VISVA-BHARATI — 1 ..... 2
VISVA-BHARATI — 2 ..... 4
VISVA-BHARATI — 3 ..... 10
VISVA-BHARATI — 4 ..... 13
VISVA-BHARATI — 5 ..... 19
VISVA-BHARATI — 6 ..... 24
VISVA-BHARATI — 7 ..... 33
VISVA-BHARATI — 8 ..... 38
VISVA-BHARATI — 9 ..... 41
VISVA-BHARATI — 10 ..... 44
VISVA-BHARATI — 11 ..... 49
VISVA-BHARATI — 12 ..... 53
VISVA-BHARATI — 13 ..... 62
VISVA-BHARATI — 14 ..... 66
VISVA-BHARATI — 15 ..... 69
VISVA-BHARATI — 16 ..... 77
VISVA-BHARATI — 17 ..... 82
VISVA-BHARATI — 18 ..... 86
VISVA-BHARATI — 19 ..... 90
APPENDIX ..... 93

# VISVA-BHARATI — 1

"Yatra vishvam bhavatyekanidam" — Where the world finds its one nest.

In the household of mankind, the festival of lamps of knowledge goes forward without pause. Only when every people kindles its own light to its fullest brightness will this festival together be accomplished. If any nation's particular lamp is shattered, or if its very existence is caused to be forgotten, then loss is done to the whole world.

It has been proven that India, through the power of her own mind, has thought deeply upon the problems of the universe, and has striven with her own intellect toward their solution. That teaching alone is true teaching for our country which enables our country's own mind to gather truth for itself and to express truth through its own strength. The teaching of mere repetition is no teaching of the mind at all; that can be accomplished as well by a machine.

When India meditated with her own strength, her mind possessed unity. Now that mind has become fragmented. Now the great branches of her mind have forgotten to feel their vast connection within a single trunk. Even as, within the limbs and members of a body, the severance of the one thread of consciousness is fatal to the whole frame, so too that mind of India which today lies divided and scattered among Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Muslim, and Christian, cannot, by itself,

receive anything as its own, nor can it give anything as its own. Ten fingers must be joined together to form the hollow of the palm—for receiving as much as for giving. Therefore, in India's scheme of education, all the currents of thought—Vedic, Puranic, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, and the rest—must be gathered together and their treasures of thought assembled; we must come to know how India's mind has flowed through these many channels. Only by such means will India be able to comprehend her own wholeness through her own manifold divisions. Unless she knows herself thus as vast and interconnected, whatever learning she receives, she will receive as alms. By such mendicancy no nation can ever become prosperous.

The second point is this: the true field of education lies precisely where the creation of knowledge is in progress. The chief task of a university is the production of knowledge; its secondary task is to give that knowledge away. In the field of knowledge, we must summon those sages who are engaged, through their own strength and discipline, in the work of research, discovery, and creation. Wherever they gather together in their own work, there the spring of knowledge will naturally well up, and in the flowing stream of that spring will the true university of this country find its founding. It must not be built as an imitation of foreign universities.

The third point is this: in every country, education is bound up with the whole of the nation's life. In our country, our modern education has direct connection only with a few professions current among the educated classes—clerkship, legal practice, medicine, deputy-collectorship, police service, the office of the munsif, and such like. Where there is ploughing, where the oil-press of the oilman turns, where the potter's wheel revolves, this education has not reached with even the lightest touch. In no other educated country does such a misfortune come to pass—

for the reason that our new universities do not stand upon the soil of this land, but hang, like a parasite, from the branch of some foreign tree. If a true seat of learning is to be established in India, then from its very beginning that institution must apply its economics, its agricultural science, its hygiene, all its practical sciences, to the village surrounding its own site, and thus claim for itself the central place in the nation's living. This institution shall cultivate the land according to the finest methods, shall rear cattle, shall weave cloth, and, adopting the cooperative method for its own economic sustenance, shall bind student and teacher closely together with the livelihood of the surrounding inhabitants.

To such an ideal institution I have proposed to give the name "Visva-Bharati."

# VISVA-BHARATI — 2

In the present age, whatever power, whatever governance, whatever will operates upon our country comes wholly from without. It is so overwhelming that, utterly surpassing it, we can scarcely entertain a thought of our own. Because of this, the wisdom of our minds grows feebler day by day. We bear the will of others, we receive the teaching of others, we recite the words of others—and in this, our natural growth is hindered. The agitation of mind that from time to time arises in this condition turns us away from the path of our good. In such a state, one party comes to believe that to satisfy their resentment by ignoble means is itself duty; another party, through flattery or through spying, by whatever means, wanders about the precincts of the dust-heaps of the state in search of the bread of humiliation. In such a condition, it becomes impossible to see greatly or to create greatly; men become, within and without, exceedingly small, and lose faith in themselves.

The sapling whose fruit is in danger of being devoured, stripped bare, by goats from outside must be kept within a fence. Grown large within that sheltered refuge, the tree in time rises beyond the goat's reach. When first the resolve to found a school at the Ashram came to my mind, I thought I would take refuge here, in this one fenced place within India. Here, protected from being overwhelmed by outer force, an attempt would be made to grant our minds a measure of freedom. Here, keeping the mind free from distraction,

from the assault of the passions, we would think greatly upon the good, and truly pursue the practice of that good.

In recent times, we have taken political austerity itself to be the austerity of liberation. I had come to think of weeping together in a great multitude as the very discipline of that austerity. In the arrangement of that vast lamentation, all other work had come to a standstill. By this I felt great anguish.

Our country has always known that the liberation of the soul is such a liberation as, once attained, renders all bondage trivial. That very liberation—liberation from the

bondage of self-interest, from the bondage of the passions—is our goal; we must retain some corner of our being where we can hear that truth with our ears and know it as true. This liberation is not a transformation into inertness or powerlessness. The detachment it brings is not born of sloth; it renders the mind fearless, purifies action, and drives away greed and delusion.

Yet I do not say by this that there is the slightest good in outer bondage; I do not say that it must be worn as an ornament around the neck. That too is an evil. But that liberation which lies within cannot be defeated or dishonoured by this bondage. If we wear the mark of that liberation upon our brow, then we may lift our heads even above the royal throne, and we have the right to regard the merchant's accumulated wealth as a trifling thing.

However that may be, this thought remained in my mind: that in Western countries human life has a goal; the teaching and discipline there direct men by various strengths and paths toward that goal.

Along with it, incidentally, ten other sorts of needs are fulfilled through this same education and discipline. But in our country at present, the great goal of life has not awakened within us—only the goal of livelihood has grown large.

The goal of livelihood concerns only want, only need; but the goal of life concerns fulfilment—it stands above all need. Regarding the ideal of this fulfilment, we may differ from Europe; but if we do not believe that some ideal exists which is not merely for filling the belly or amassing money, then we have indeed become utterly small.

It was with the thought of accepting this truth, and of teaching others to accept it, that I first founded the school here. Its first step was to withdraw the mind from the many distractions without, and to establish it in peace. It was in this field of peace that we took our seat.

Many of those present here today did not witness the condition of this place at its beginning. At that time, whatever else it was, it could scarcely be said to smell of a school at all. The call that resounded loudest here was the call of universal Nature,

not the call of the schoolmaster. There was then no connection of wages with the students; even their bedding, their brass vessels, and the like, I had to supply myself.

But in the modern age it is not possible to go on walking so far against the current. If an arrangement exists in one place with no correspondence whatsoever to anything in the rest of society, then harm is done by it, and it cannot endure. For this reason, the form and character of this institution have changed a great deal from what they once were. Yet, even so, that original essence remains. Here, boys still

taste as much freedom as is possible. The playground of our outer liberty is universal Nature; that field here is spacious indeed.

After that, it was my wish to dissolve, through education itself, the servility in the minds of our boys. But it is difficult to escape altogether from the net in which the system of education has bound our country from head to foot. If the path of our school did not lead toward those great gateways of learning that exist both at home and abroad, then who could say what might result—this fear lingered in my mind. I could not summon the full courage to rise against it, for my own strength was negligible, and my experience likewise. For this reason, the school here had to be built to suit the needs of the Matriculation examination. Within that narrow enclosure, I tried to preserve as much freedom as I could. For this very reason, I was unable to bring our school under the governance of the University.

I have said before that in every great country, the lower aim of education is the gaining of practical opportunity, and the higher aim is the fulfilment of human life. From this aim springs the natural origin of a school. Our modern schools in this country have no such natural origin. Foreign merchants and rulers established these schools here from without, for the sake of their own narrow purposes; indeed, it is found in certain old records of that time that, when the extent of teaching exceeded the measure of need, the authorities reprimanded the teacher for having taught too much.

Though much has since changed, the brand of slavery to niggardly necessity is still imprinted upon the forehead of our government-sponsored education. It is because it is entangled with our want, with our anxiety for daily bread, that we somehow go on bearing this education

in whatever manner we can. It is because of this terrible compulsion that we cannot express freedom within our system of education.

The most fatal flaw of all in this system of education is that it is assumed, from the very outset, that we are destitute. Everything, all of it, must be taken from outside—as though in our own house there were not a farthing's worth of ancestral capital for learning. By this, not only does education remain incomplete, but a sense of destitution is born in our minds. If, now and then, goaded by wounded pride, we try to cast off that feeling, even so it expresses itself in some graceless, discordant bravado. In these present days, this bravado has not dispelled our inward poverty—it has only made that poverty appear ridiculous and irritating.

However that may be, if we wish to dissolve the servility of the mind, we must dissolve this servile character of our education. If within our Ashram we cannot grant education this very liberation, then the purpose of this place will have failed.

Some time ago, a resolve arose in the mind of the revered scholar Vidhushekhar Shastri Mahashaya. In our country's tols and chatuspathis, only Sanskrit learning is given, and all other learning is utterly disdained. As a result, the education of students there remains incomplete. Only when the learning of our own country is taken as the primary refuge, and upon it is built the structure of all other forms of learning, does education become true and complete. The vessel of knowledge must be made one's own, and its materials gathered and stored from every quarter of the earth. Shastri Mahashaya set about translating this resolve into action. But owing to various obstacles, he could not then accomplish it. Out of this frustration

he left the Ashram for a time.

Afterward, he was invited back once more to the Ashram. This time I relieved him of the duty of teaching classes. He devoted himself to the study of philology. It

seemed to me that work of this very kind is the true yoke-fellow in the sacrificial field of education. If true seekers of knowledge should gather around such devotees of learning, so much the better; and even if, by our country's ill fortune, they do not gather, still this sacrifice will not have been in vain. It is far better than turning children into parrots by making them memorize the meanings of words and the ready-made formulas of foreign lands.

In this manner the work began. This was the first sowing of the seed of our Visva-Bharati.

We have not the means to found a university by gathering twenty or fifty lakhs of rupees. But for that reason we do not wish to despair. If the seed has life within it, it will, little by little, sprout and grow of itself. If there is truth within our striving, want of material means will not bring about ruin.

Our seats have filled. For the teaching of Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit languages, and the scriptures, Vidhushekhar Shastri Mahashaya has taken his place in one; in another sits the Mahasthavira of Ceylon; Kshitimohan-babu has joined us; and there is also Bhimashastri Mahashaya. On the other side, around Mr. Andrews gather those thirsting for English literature. Bhimashastri and Dinendranath have taken charge of the teaching of music, and Nakuleshwar Goswami of Bishnupur has come to join them with his surbahar. Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar stand ready

to teach the art of painting. Students come flocking to them even from distant lands. Besides this, we have set about doing whatever lay within our power. Our friend from Bihar, Sattur, is about to arrive; he will teach Persian and Urdu, and, with the help of Kshitimohan-babu, will cultivate the study of ancient Hindi literature. We also hope that, from time to time, professors will come from other places to instruct us and then depart.

The infant comes into the world feeble indeed. When truth arrives thus, in the guise of an infant, it is then that faith is placed in it. Were any creature to be born full-grown, with beard already sprouted, we would know it at once for a monstrosity. Visva-Bharati is a mighty idea, yet it has come to our Ashram wearing a very small body. But the arrival of greatness disguised as smallness happens every day in this

world; therefore let us rejoice, let the conch-shell of blessing be sounded. Let us hope with a single mind that this child has carried hither a draught of ambrosia from the Creator's own store of immortality; may that very nectar preserve and nourish it from within, and may it preserve and nourish us as well.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 3

Today is the first session of the Visva-Bharati Parishad. For some time now the work of this school of Visva-Bharati has been going forward. Today I shall place it into the hands of the public at large. Those well-wishers of Visva-Bharati who are scattered throughout India and beyond, whose hearts are in sympathy with its spirit, who

will not hesitate to accept it—into their hands I now consign it.

It is our supreme good fortune that today, quite unexpectedly, several well-wishing friends have gathered among us, men who have won renown both at home and abroad. All here know that Dr. Brajendranath Seal, Dr. Nilratan Sarkar, and Dr. Shishirkumar Mitra are present today. It is our still greater good fortune that a sage has come here from across the sea, whose fame is known everywhere. Our most beloved friend, Acharya C. F. Andrews, has come to join our endeavour. It is our good fortune that, at this our very first session, at the moment when we set about linking Visva-Bharati with the world, we have found him here as a representative of the Western world. The bond between his heart and the heart of India has long since been established. Let him receive India's hospitality among us at the Ashram. May all the friends assembled here today take the charge of this from our hands. We have nurtured this Visva-Bharati for a time; now has come the moment to consign it into the hands of the world. May they receive it with glad hearts, and establish the bond of their own hearts with it. With this desire I have, by the common consent of all, chosen to honour first Acharya Seal Mahashaya; let him take the chair and accomplish this rite—let him, as the representative of the world, receive this from our hands and set it before the world. No one else could understand this matter as he understands it. He has viewed the realm of knowledge with a generous eye. Mere extraordinary erudition alone cannot achieve this, for erudition often breeds the spirit of division. But he has grasped, with a spiritual vision, the inner unity of the realm of knowledge. On this day, there is no one more worthy than he to receive Visva-Bharati. With joy

I offer it into his hands. Let him, on our behalf, present it before all assembled, and if there be no obstacle in his heart, let him himself take his place within it, and join it, as his own, to the world.

Let me first speak the inmost meaning of Visva-Bharati, for perhaps many do not fully know it. Some years ago, a resolve arose in the mind of our most beloved friend Vidhushekhar Shastri Mahashaya: that in our country, the institutions and methods of what is called Sanskrit education needed reform. It was his earnest wish that the scope of those ancient seats of learning existing in our country as tols and chatuspathis should be enlarged. It seemed to him that in the age to which these institutions owed their founding, there had been no want of their fitness. But the age has changed. The schools now established by Government are not the creation of this country's own making. But these ancient institutions of ours are in harmony with the nature of our country; they are of our own creation. Now it is needed only that, through them, the pulse of the new age, its call, should find expression; if it does not, then we must understand that they are not responding—that they have died. With this resolve in mind, he went to his own village; when, owing to this, our connection with him was for a time severed, I felt sorrow, although I knew that in its inner dimension that bond could never be broken. Afterward, owing to various obstacles, he was unable to establish a chatuspathi in his village. Then I assured him that his wish would be fulfilled here—that this place was the proper field for it. In this manner did Visva-Bharati begin.

The seed of a tree, little by little, expands by the law of its own life. That expansion occurs in such a way that it can no longer be contained within the limits of the seed itself. In the same way,

what I first conceived as the scope of education, destined to remain confined within the needs of this country, began gradually to strive toward liberation in the wider sky. That endeavour which is true makes its claim upon the whole world; if one tries to curtail it for some particular purpose, one curtails its very truth. This time, going to the West, I have seen that everyone wishes to know what treasure the Eastern continent can give. Today mankind has had to suffer pain. The refuge it built in ancient times has had its foundation shattered. Because of this, it has seemed to man that this refuge is no longer fit to satisfy his want. The sages of the West too

have understood this, and they have desired to perceive by what path man's striving might go so that this want could be fulfilled.

If any nation, out of the arrogance born of national pride, comes to think its own religion and its own heritage utterly and exclusively its own, then it cannot, behind that wall of pride, keep guard over its true treasure. If, through its pride, it seeks to make truth wholly its private possession, then that very truth of its will be destroyed. Today, everywhere upon earth, this consciousness of universal belonging is awakening. Shall India find no place in the endeavour of this age? Shall we say that, setting aside the great purpose of mankind, we wish to remain content with a petty purpose? Shall we then not be deprived of that glory which belongs to man? Is it, then, the greatest glory to perceive oneself narrowly within the fixed boundary of one's own race?

This Visva-Bharati, though it is India's own creation, must be made into a field of discipline for the whole of mankind. But what have we to give? Shiva, the embodiment of benediction, has gone forth with his begging-bowl in hand. Into that bowl, who shall give what? Shiva has come

with that bowl to the door of every man. Have we nothing to give him? Yes, we have something to give—it is with this very thought that we must set to work. It is for this very reason that I wish to establish Visva-Bharati in the field of India.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 4

How any undertaking has its beginning cannot truly be told. That beginning remains veiled in mystery. For forty years I lived upon the waters of the Padma; my neighbours were the flocks of the sheldrake on the sandbanks. Sitting among them I wrote my books. Perhaps I would have gone on so forever. But why did the mind suddenly turn rebellious, why did I step forth from the world of thought into the world of action?

In my own boyhood I suffered great anguish from the system of education I underwent. That system wounded me with such grief that, even grown to manhood, I could not forget its injustice. For the child is taken away from the breast of Nature, from contact with the living world of man, and cast into the machine of the school. Under the crushing weight of its unnatural confinement, the mind of the child is wounded day after day. We studied at the Normal School. That was once the house of the Mallicks. There were no trees there; the marble courtyard and the high brick wall seemed to glare at me with a fixed and sullen stare. We, in whose child-natures the ardour of life lay vivid and keen, suffered greatly from this. Cut off from the companionship of Nature, and deprived of all living connection with our teachers, our very souls seemed to wither. All our teachers created in our minds nothing but terror.

Whatever learning is gained in this manner, severed from the bond of life, can never become intimate with life itself.

Upon this subject I had, from time to time, given lectures. But when I saw that my words were received by all merely as pleasing eloquence, and that even those who assented to them made no effort to translate them into practice, then I resolved, of my own will, to give my thought a shape in action. My longing was this: that I should bring happiness to children, that the trees and plants of Nature should become one of their teachers, a companion of their life—and thus to build, in this fashion, a living nest for the nurture of learning.

At that time a great debt hung about my neck—a debt not wholly of my own making, but whose burden was mine alone to bear. The sum of that debt was more than a lakh of rupees. I possessed not a farthing of my own; my monthly allowance was exceedingly small. Selling what little I could of the saleable rights to my books—their copyrights and the like—I set about this impossible endeavour. My call reached no corner of the country. Only Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, who had not yet entered the field of politics, responded; this resolve of mine pleased him greatly, and he came here. But before he arrived, I had already begun the work. With five or six boys, I taught them under the shade of a jackfruit tree. I myself possessed no great learning. But I did what I could. With those few boys, I read the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to them with feeling and with relish—I made them weep, I made them laugh, and, bound to them in close intimacy, I made men of them.

At one time, out of the vexation of my own inexperience, it suddenly occurred to me that a headmaster was sorely needed. Someone mentioned the name of a certain man,

saying, "That man is a most expert teacher; whomsoever he touches with the golden wand of his coaching passes his examination." He came indeed, but within a few days, having observed everything, he said, "The boys climb trees, they shout, they run about—this is not good." I said, "Look here, at your age they would never climb a tree at all. Let them climb a little now. When a tree has spread its branches, it calls to man. Let them climb it and dangle their legs, if that is all." He grew vexed at my way of thinking. I remember he tried to teach by the kindergarten method. "Ball is round, bell is round, man's head is round"—such lessons he taught. He had been a champion scholar in his examinations, the helmsman of the Matriculation. But he did not take root here; he took his leave. From that day forward, I never again kept a headmaster.

This was no small matter. In few schools in the world have boys enjoyed so much liberty. I fought with the teachers over this. I told the boys, "You form your own Ashram assembly; take your own affairs into your own hands." I never for a moment abandoned this resolve—I never allowed the boys to be oppressed. They

sing, they climb trees, they paint pictures, and remain bound to one another in intimate and unconstrained fellowship.

There is yet another side to the education of children here. It is this: to let small children understand the deep and lofty meaning of life. The mantra of our country's striving is this: that joy lies only in what is great, that there is no joy in what is small. But at present, politics alone has seized for itself the whole place of that greatness. My conviction is this: the loftiest ideal that man possesses must be made known to children. Thus, here, morning and evening, we utter some great saying of our ancient hermitage,

and sit still for a while. In this, if nothing else, there is at least an avowal. Through this practice, small children receive an intimation of something great. Perhaps they sit at worship waving their hands and feet, growing restless—but the profound significance of sitting in this posture reaches, day by day, into the depths of their minds.

My intention was that children here should fill the beginning of their lives with manifold delight. Through perpetual communion with Nature, through the constant practice of tasting the joy of life in song, drama, and the play of colour, the memory of a sweet and conscious joy would gather and accumulate in the children's minds—it was with this aim that the work began.

But this school did not accept this alone as its ultimate goal. My first purpose in founding this school was that the children of Bengal should grow here into true men—that their hearts should blossom, like the hundred-petalled lotus, in joy through form, through taste, through fragrance, through colour, through picture, through music. But as my own mind matured, this purpose too grew deeper. These children of Bengal, through the laughter and chatter of their play, created in my mind a restless agitation. I sat still in wonder, listening to their joyous voices. Gazing at them from afar, it seemed to me that this joy was itself a stream flowing forth from the fountain of immortal nectar within the heart of all mankind. In these children I found that very touch. Where the children of the earth, the children of the whole universal heart, are made glad together, into that vast field I let my heart expand. Wherever the great, life-giving pilgrim-place of mankind exists, wherever,

day by day, the history of man is being wrought, there my mind made its journey. Until I was fifty years old, I had not written in English; I had no notion of how well or ill I knew the English tongue. My mother-tongue alone was my resource. When I wrote English letters, I had Ajit or someone else write them for me. I studied in school

until I was thirteen years old; after that I was a truant student. When, at the age of fifty, I undertook to translate my own writings, it was because the songs of Gitanjali had stirred an awakening of feeling within me that I chose to translate those very songs. That book of translations became the true provision for my journey to the Western world. By a stroke of destiny, I found a place for myself in the world beyond my own country—not by any wish of my own. With this honour, my responsibility too increased.

As long as a seed remains a seed, it remains confined within itself. Afterward, when it sprouts and, in the form of a tree, attains expansion in the open sky, it becomes the possession of the whole world. This school, in one corner of Bengal, with a few Bengali boys, lay confined within a narrow corner of its small capacity. But, as with all living things, a moment of fulfilment came to it from within. Then it no longer remained a thing wholly bound to the earth; then it lifted its head to the sky above, its inner being joined itself to the wide world; and the world claimed it as its own.

We must accept this truth: that the geographical boundaries of the modern world have broken down, that mankind has drawn nearer to one another. The foundation of this union of man must be love, not hatred. I do not deny that, in matters of material dealing, men today oppress one another and defraud one another. But in the pursuit of truth there is no East and no West. The teaching of the Buddha arose upon the soil of India and, travelling to China, struck the heart of mankind, and gradually claimed the whole of Asia for its own. In eternal truth there is no division of East and West. In this Visva-Bharati, I must build up a field for that very pursuit of truth. It is needful that a relation of giving and taking be established between us and the world. Until now we have been mere "schoolboys" of the English universities, having only

received learning at the hands of the West. But a relation of mutual exchange with the West has not yet been established. With courage I have invited Europe to our seat of learning. Here, in this manner, shall a true meeting take place, and a holy place of pilgrimage for knowledge shall be built up. In the field of politics we make a great deal of verbal boasting, but within ourselves we have no faith in ourselves; there is abundant poverty of spirit. Where there exists true abundance of the wealth of the mind, there miserliness becomes impossible. That nation which has true hope and faith in its own treasure has no hesitation in distributing it to others; it wishes to call the stranger to itself and bestow its gifts upon him. It was in our country that this very call was once proclaimed, in resonant tones—Ayantu sarvatah svaha: "Let them come from every side."

We wish to remain confined, cut off far from all others, within the solitary prison-house of learning. We are content to go on living upon whatever the gaoler mercifully allows us to eat. It is no easy matter to deliver India from this isolation. We must build within ourselves the relation of giving service and receiving service, of giving gifts and receiving gifts. From the world's realm of knowledge, India stands apart, alone, her light of education reduced to mere scraps and fragments, left to decay in the eternal ruin of her village schoolhouse. We wish to join ourselves to the stream of the world's knowledge and thereby gain release from this spiritual and intellectual dishonour.

Let India know her own mind, and let her win deliverance from all modern humiliations. We must come to know how great sages such as Ramanuja, Shankaracharya, and the Buddha strove, in India, to solve the problem of the universe. We must become acquainted with the great disciplines of learning of Asia—Zoroastrianism, Islam, and the rest. It will not do

to acknowledge only the Hindu mind of India. In India's literature, art, and architecture, a wondrous creation has arisen through the mingling of Hindu and Muslim. In the acquaintance of that creation lies the complete acquaintance of the people of India. It is precisely because no fit seat of learning has been established for gaining that acquaintance that our education remains incomplete and feeble.

The vast being of India has striven to gather diversity together into unity within herself. We need some field of discipline in which to apprehend that very austerity of hers. In Visva-Bharati this very work may be accomplished. If our learning is not tested in the marketplace of the world, then our knowledge shall not be complete. The pride that grows dense, sitting in a corner of one's house amid one's own kinsfolk, is no true substance. Only when we are joined to the vast field of mankind's pursuit of knowledge shall our learning attain its fulfilment. May this very aim of Visva-Bharati be fulfilled.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 5

You who are gathered here today—our connection with all of you will grow ever closer, a direct and living bond will be established. The inward ideal of Visva-Bharati will, day by day, become manifest to you. As all the institutions of Visva-Bharati awaken one by one into being, so, through them, its inward form will gradually dawn upon you. I feel some hesitation in speaking of this from without, for when one tries to give outward shape to a great inward idea, a discrepancy inevitably remains between the two. When the gap between the incompleteness of the outer form and the inward greatness of some ideal becomes visible, then, after all the grandiloquence of its beginnings, it becomes for many a cause of disappointment and of shame. No one person alone has the power to bring an ideal into full expression, for it is not the work of one or two persons for some particular season. The first impulse with which an undertaking begins is not its true likeness. It is through heart, through action, through life, with the help of many fellow-workers, that it gradually comes into bloom. Its earliest appearance cannot truly express that inward truth. It is for this very reason that I feel hesitant in speaking of this institution.

The spirit and the ideal that Visva-Bharati cherishes, the complete truth that it holds within its heart—many among the guests who have come here from outside, and even among those charged with its work, have accepted and revered, though they perceived it through much incompleteness. By this, our enthusiasm has been quickened. A truly inward bond has not yet been established with everyone in our own country. Indeed, even among those who are connected with this institution, many, without beholding the true form within, look only upon its outward aspect—its methods, its rituals, the gathering of its materials—and, regarding it so, lament the claim it makes upon them. The reason for this is that the spirit I wish to express does not, in the present age, occupy the minds of all. Those who are engaged in certain sudden and modern endeavours have no heart to entertain so great a purpose. Or perhaps my own incapacity, my own misfortune, may be the cause of it. Perhaps I lack the power to win, from others, acknowledgment of what is the true aim of my own life. He upon whom the call falls, to whom the command comes from within himself, bears within that very call both urgency and responsibility. If

he cannot make the purpose of his life so plain to all that it becomes acceptable to others, then his own incapacity stands revealed. Perhaps there is in my own character some completeness of a kind that prevents my own work from becoming the work of the whole country. But I have hope that nothing has been entirely in vain. For I cannot call this institution merely a thing of my own making. The work of creation goes forward unceasingly, wrought by those who have gathered there. The atmosphere that is being built up there, day by day, down to the very mirth and sport of each child, lends its aid to that creation. Every child, every student, every teacher, has, unknowingly, lent cooperation to this pursuit of truth. In whatever measure of work has been brought forth through them, I place my faith; I hope that one day the seed of this endeavour will, beyond all doubt, lift its head, a tree in full growth, into the open sky above.

It has occurred to me that the students of our own province, who possess enthusiasm and curiosity, ought not

to be deprived of the fruit of this tree. The thought we pursue in Visva-Bharati, the truth we seek there, where scholars both of our own country and from abroad are engaged in discussion—whatever they give, if it is left to be exhausted in some small corner, will be wasted. Bound within so narrow a compass, it affords no opportunity for all to partake. Although Santiniketan remains my centre, yet those who gather there, who must labour with their own hands, are not necessarily the only ones truly worthy to receive the ideal. Thus it has seemed to me—and many students and their friends have told me likewise—that whatever is created in Visva-Bharati, whatever truth is discovered there, ought to be made known also to the student community of Calcutta, so that they too may understand that a discipline of life is being pursued there, not merely the study of texts from books; and for that purpose, provision ought to be made for its acquaintance through various performances of music, art, and literature. I consented to this proposal, but with great hesitation, for I have no such intimate acquaintance with the students of this country. I feared that those who have for so long misunderstood so much might perhaps mock it. There is nothing so easy as to mock a great ideal. Even the smallest person may throw dust upon some great thing, may distort it.

It was because I felt this ideal had no connection with the present age that I remained in secluded solitude for twenty years. I carried on my work in such secrecy that even my own closest kin neither knew of it nor understood it. With what aim, for what reason, abandoning all other occupations, forsaking leisure, in answer to what call, with what joy, I became absorbed in this work—even my own fellow-workers do not fully know. Yet, notwithstanding this, I have seen with certainty, in the image of joy among the boys of my school, in the proof of free growth I have witnessed in them,

that they have gained something from this place. For all these reasons, I have not, until now, come forth into the open.

Visva-Bharati may be viewed in two ways: first, to take up the responsibility for whatever work is being done at Santiniketan itself; second, to enjoy from afar the fruits of Santiniketan's labour, to join oneself to it from without. He who feels sympathy with the ideal of Visva-Bharati may become a member of that institution and take upon himself the charge of nurturing its ideal. He may think for it, strive to build it up, and guard it from harm. This is the aspect of responsibility, and the work of those of the household of kinship. For this purpose the door of Visva-Bharati stands open. But people may indeed say, "We do not care for all this; why bring professors from abroad? India was perfectly well off within her own confines." To those who say this we offer no opposition or dispute. Despite this opposition, they may become members of this "Visva-Bharati Sammilani" of Calcutta—no one objects to that. If we gather and bring some songs, there is no reason they should not listen; or if we have something to say, they too may come to hear it—just as Kshitimohan-babu spoke the other day on the poet Kabir, or as today a reception was held in honour of Acharya Lévi before his departure. This scholar, though a foreigner, can hardly be called a man of any one particular country—he has become our own, he has received our country deeply into his heart. No one has suffered any injury from this acquaintance that has been formed with him.

In the present age, history seems suddenly to be striving to turn in a new direction. Why is it that, among those who are forever striving for the sheer advancement of their own race, a contest of fists should suddenly

break out? I have said before that the truth of man lies in this: he attains himself only by finding himself amid the multitude of others. For a long while this truth was at work within narrow bounds. As long as geographical confinement remained a reality, within that confinement each individual grew great by feeling himself to be true in union with all the rest of his own race. But in the present age, that fence has broken down; the obstacles which once, by land and sea, in country after country, kept men divided from without, are gradually being swept away. Today man travels even through the pathways of the sky. As the skill of air travel increases, man will leap over all the gross barriers of the earth, and national boundaries will have no meaning left at all.

The boundaries of geography have weakened, and mankind has come to stand close to one another. But this truth, so immense, has remained today a truth only of the outer world—it has found no place within the mind. The habit of the old age still clings to it today; whosoever seeks to walk the path with the provisions of that old discipline carries with him a thing of a bygone age, and so it continues to work against the forward path of the present age.

Whoever does not approach, in the spirit of truth, the truth that has dawned upon the present age must suffer blows. Thus today there is strife—even in the meeting-ground of the nations, there is neither joy nor peace. In the quarrels, the strife, the suspicion, and the hatred that have accumulated, I understand that the pursuit of truth is not being accomplished. That very truth which today stands as a guest at the door of human society—Visva-Bharati has undertaken the discipline of welcoming that guest.

However great her poverty, however grievous her misfortune from without, India has the right to accept this responsibility. Let none say today, "You are poor, you are subject to others; what right have you to speak such words?" This very reproach is addressed to us. Pride in wealth

refuses, indeed, to acknowledge this truth. Wealth and possessions create division; it is the wealth of truth alone that holds the power to transcend division. He who does not believe wealth to be the ultimate refuge, he who, like Maitreyi, has been

able to say, "What should I do with that by which I should not become immortal?"—he alone is truly Dhananjaya, the winner of wealth; he alone can break through the barrier of riches and reveal everywhere the true right of the human soul. Let Visva-Bharati acknowledge that right. Let the ascetics of every land and country take their seat within this Visva-Bharati. "Let them come from every side"—this is what we shall say, sitting here in our Ashram. Only if we can establish, within this modern age, that very austerity which India performed in pursuit of spiritual unity, shall all our dishonour be removed—not through trade, not through war, but through the acknowledgment of truth alone. May Visva-Bharati, from this day forth, be dedicated to the fulfilment of that full glory of humanity—this is our resolve.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 6

One thing must be remembered concerning Visva-Bharati: the idea and the resolve that it embodies did not arise in my mind through deliberate thought at any particular moment. The seed of this resolve lay hidden within the depths of my consciousness, and gradually, imperceptibly, it put forth its shoot and awakened. The reason for this lies within my own life. From the very life I have lived since childhood, the ideal of this institution has slowly come awake.

You know that I did not keep pace with the conventional system of education. The manner in which I was raised within my family had drawn me away from ordinary society; I lived a solitary existence. From childhood I had no close bond with human society—I grew up at its margins. You will find an account of this in Jivansmriti. Because I lived apart from society, I gazed upon it, as it were, only through the window of a casement. And so my attraction toward the rare and distant things of the world grew very deep. My home was in the city of Calcutta, and so my movements were confined within the narrow bounds of brick and stone. On every side of us rose tall houses, and in the small space between them stood a few scattered trees and a single pond. Yet beyond our neighbourhood, at a little distance, there were no great houses—the place had something of the character of a village.

In those days, the world of outer nature called to me. I remember how, at midday, I would steal away to claim for myself a corner of the roof-terrace. The open blue sky, the cry of the kite, and the varied small murmurs of the crowd in the lane—through these, the fragmentary glimpses of life I caught from the rooftop stirred my heart. Within all this there was also a call from human nature. From far away, sometimes the lullaby-sound drifting over the settlements at night, sometimes the waking-song of dawn, and the various sounds of festival and clamour, set my heart restless. The ever-changing play of light and shadow in the monsoon sky, and in autumn the glistening of grass and coconut groves in the small garden under the dew, seemed to me things of rare beauty. I remember rising early to await the sunrise, so as to keep pace with its coming. The golden light falling upon that morning dew brought to my heart a deep and intense wave of joy. It was as though

the whole world called to me again and again, saying, "You are mine. The truth that is within me awaits union with all, yet even in this separation between you and me there is sweetness." Even then, this perception of the outer world was stirring vaguely within my mind. The call of the outside world deeply enchanted the small boy confined within his small room.

I remember, too, that when dengue fever first appeared in our city, this epidemic came to me as a great opportunity to escape. We went to live in the garden-house at Penety, by the banks of the Ganges. For the first time I received the touch of nature in a somewhat intimate way. I cannot express how enchanting it was. Many of you come from villages, many have the closest ties to rural life. You have seen its green fields of grain and its groves, but you will not be able to grasp exactly what I felt. Having gained freedom into the open sky from the prison of brick and mortar, I understood, as few are fortunate enough to understand, how precious was that first acquaintance with nature. In the morning the boats of the household would go south, and in the evening turn north again. This stream of life along the two banks of the river, this bond between man and water in the pursuit of livelihood, these ritual acts of bathing, drinking, and offering water performed by the villagers—all these sights touched something deep within me. The villages seemed to cling to the two banks of the Ganges as though drawing in the water of their thirst like the milk of a mother's breast. This was my first visit to the banks of the Ganges. And how strange and wondrous the sunrise and sunset appeared to me there, I cannot say. This world reveals an inexpressible majesty at every moment, and though we remain joined to it, through excessive familiarity it grows dim to us. You have seen this noted in the poetry of Wordsworth. To the worldly man, the wonder of universal nature becomes altogether a "no"—one might almost say it ceases to exist. Its mystery and sweetness no longer stir any response in his mind. Day after day the sky, as though unfolding page after page of some wondrous book of poetry, reveals again and again the inmost message of the world's poet. But we, through excessive familiarity, remain deprived of its essence. Therefore it needs to be said that my mind, which was so eager then for the touch of nature's flowing essence, has not even today lost its intensity. This much I have said by way of preface. Among all the events that steered my life, through various relationships, in a particular direction, the manner of living at this time was foremost of all.

A similar fortunate event occurred when I went to live on the banks of the river Padma. Those mango, jackfruit, tamarisk, cane groves, and mustard fields on the Padma's banks, the breeze heavy with the gentle fragrance of spring, the settlement of wild geese vocal with their calls amid the deserted sandbanks, the clear, shimmering depth of the river sparkling under the evening star—all these established an intimate kinship with me. There, amid village life, in acquaintance with the world united in the beauty of human life and nature, I found occasion for deep joy.

At an early age I gained yet another thing. Though I lived apart from people, and though I spent my time separated from the open embrace of nature, I grew up at home within an atmosphere steeped in the practice of music, literature, and art among kinsmen and friends. This is a very significant fact of my life. From childhood I have been a truant pupil. I have always fled in fear of the schoolmaster. But from those unseen teachers of the universe who teach their lessons unobserved, I have somehow learned to read. In our house, discussions of English and Bengali literature and of music took place constantly, and I grew up amid all this. Though I did not receive formal instruction in these subjects, from this I was able, inwardly, through various means, to gather for myself a store of delight. My eldest brother was then engaged in writing Swapnaprayan. Just as a tree in freedom blooms with abundant flowers and bears fruit, scattering and shedding much here and there without any regret, so too he preserved in his notebook far fewer writings than were scattered loose on torn paper in the wind. Our passageways became strewn with these scattered loose sheets. That heap of discarded literary creation, strewn in fragments, left a deposit of fertile silt along the current of my mind.

After that, as you know, I devoted myself to literature from a very young age, and whatever blame or fame I received, I carried on wielding my pen through it all. There was then one great advantage—that the field of literature was not so public, there was no great market for literature; the exchange of goods took place in small bazaars only. And so my childhood writings felt no shame in their own little corner. Whatever small praise and encouragement I received from relatives and friends, I considered sufficient. Later, gradually, Bengali literature expanded, its practice gained breadth. The field of literature became crowded with multitudes. Before long, like the appearance of stars in the night sky, the literary firmament came to

be studded with countless writers. But despite all this, in my own literary practice that same solitude persisted. This seclusion was my own most intimate possession. I was never cured of excessive publicity by its blows. For thirty-five to forty years I wrote in the secluded dwelling of the Padma's banks, according to my own whim. Whatever is good or bad in my poetic creation was written in that time.

While I was thus absorbed in literature, passing my days, a call, an inspiration, arose within me, for the sake of which my mind grew restless to come out into the world. The work for which I felt longing was the work of teaching. This is a very surprising matter, for I have already said that I had no connection with the educational system. But the reason I had to take up this burden was this—there was a firm belief in my mind that our system of education suffers from a grave deficiency, and that unless this is remedied, education will remain separate from our life, remaining altogether an external thing. I do not say that this grave deficiency exists only in our country—in no country can education become fully comprehensive—everywhere the teaching of knowledge is made into an abstract affair, cut off from life.

Then a picture of a distant age awakened in my mind. I do not know how much of what is written of the hermitage in ancient legend history would regard as literally true, but setting aside that question, it has occurred to me that there is a very great truth in the system of education of the hermitage. If man is deprived and cut off from the teaching of the vast universal nature within whose lap he is born, he cannot receive a complete education. Just as in the wilderness there is this companionship of nature, so too, on the other hand, when the highest treasure of knowledge possessed by the ascetic man is gained while sitting in the midst of that nature, then knowledge is received from the teacher within a truly intimate bond. Education then does not become, deprived of human life, a wholly isolated affair. The mode of life that existed in ancient times—milking the sacrificial cow of the hermitage from within the forest, kindling fire, and remaining in constant union with nature in various ways—had within it a closeness. There is a very great teaching in the growing up together, through such a mode of living, with those who are received as teachers. By this, a true bond is established between education and life, the relation between teacher and disciple becomes true and complete, and the union with universal nature and human nature becomes sweet and wholesome.

Therefore it seemed to me that though the flowering of human life within the hermitage was, in those days, a natural matter, its time has not yet passed away; the truth and beauty that lie within it belong to all ages. Even in the present age, the life of the hermitage ought not to be beyond our reach.

When this thought had arisen in my mind, I took up the post of teacher at Santiniketan. Fortunately, Santiniketan was then, for my purpose, full of the spirit of the hermitage. In my childhood I spent time here with my father. I know directly that he realised truth in his life, in utter intimacy, through the union of his heart with the universe and with the Supreme Soul. I have seen that this realisation was not, for him, an external thing. He would sit at two in the morning upon the open roof-terrace, absorbed amid the star-studded night, drinking in the nectar of ambrosia within, and every day, sitting beneath the altar, would fill the vessel of his life and drink the stream of nectar. To realise Him who fills the whole universe, within the world-poem—this became, in the Maharshi's life, a direct truth. It occurred to me that if I could bring here to Santiniketan the companionship of boys to that place of the Maharshi's sadhana, then, having given from myself what little I had to give while remaining with them, I need not worry for the rest—nature itself would fill their hearts and remove every want. For this union with nature, there is in every heart, more or less, a portion of hunger whose satisfaction must be attempted; that touch of which man has been deprived must be restored to him.

At that time my companions and helpers were very few indeed. The revered Brahmabandhav Upadhyay loved me and held my resolve in respect. He came and joined in my work. He said, "You do not know how to teach—I shall take that burden upon myself." The responsibility of being with the boys fell to me. In the evenings I read to them from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, evoking laughter and pathos, making them laugh and weep. Besides this, I used to invent all manner of stories, drawing out a small tale day after day, stretching it along a single thread for five or seven days at a time. In those days I had the power to create stories on the spot. Many of these improvised tales have found a place in my Galpaguchchha. In this way I tried to make the minds of the children turn, through acting and through stories, songs, and readings from the Ramayana and Mahabharata made vivid and delightful.

I know that to shape the current of a child's mind in this way, to create an attitude, is a very great thing. It is necessary to make true the orientation of his mind toward the fact that he has been born into so vast a universe, into so vast a human society, that he has received so vast an inheritance. In this unfortunate age of our country, for many of us, the final goal of education has become mere employment; we are deprived of that bond of joy with the world through which the wealth of the universe can be made one's own. But man must recognise his own rightful claim. As he should bring harmony between his heart and nature, so too must he become united with the vast human universe.

The people of our country have forgotten the sage's word, "bhumaiva sukham"—"only in the vast is there joy." For the sake of this, the man of knowledge and austerity, having accepted unbearable suffering, sets forth on expeditions toward the North Pole, journeys along impassable paths into the interior regions of Africa, rushes in search of truth with his life in his hands. For this reason the travellers on the path of austerity—of knowledge, work, and feeling—have become fearless in passing through the path of sorrow; they have known that bhumaiva sukham—that man's joy lies on the path of sorrow itself. Today we have forgotten this, and so, having contented ourselves within extremely petty aims and a paltry mode of living, almost all the people of our country pass their days.

Therefore, when establishing this school, the first thought that came to my mind was that our students' lives must be rescued from mental feebleness, from timidity. The stream of the Ganges, rising from the mountain peak and flowing on to country after country, can be used by man for all tasks of the world, small and great alike. Likewise the stream of learning that flows forth from the height of some lofty human heart and goes flowing toward the infinite, flowing east and west, constantly self-overflowing in every direction—this we should not bind and confine within the narrow bounds of petty self-interest; but where it has made the whole of human life fulfilled, where that vast universal form of it has become manifest, there we should bathe and become pure and unsullied.

"Sa tapo'tapyata sa tapastaptvā idaṃ sarvamasṛjata yadidaṃ kiñca." The Creator performed austerity; through austerity He created all this. In every atom that austerity of His is embedded. For that reason there is within them constant conflict,

the surge of fire, the whirling of circular motion. Along with this austere striving of the Creator, man's stream of austerity flows too; he does not sit idle either. For man too is a creator; his true work is the work of creation. That he gathers and accumulates is not his great distinction; that he reveals himself through renunciation—this is his true distinction. Therefore, in this universal field of austerity of the Maker, there is his austere striving too. This fact must be realised—that man is an ascetic. To realise it, one must come to know, as great, the striving of austerity in every land and every age as the true religion of man.

In the present age, at the field of austerity where the austere striving of men of all nations and all countries of the world has found its seat, we too, forgetting all distinctions, must arrive. When I established Visva-Bharati, this very resolve was working in my mind. Being a Bengali, should our practice of literary delight be completed only within Bengali literature? Was I not born into the universal world? Is there not glory, no less, in the true realisation that all the philosophers, poets, and scientists of the world have performed their austerities for my sake as well?

These words from my mouth may sound like arrogance. Yet, on today's occasion, I must still say that the honour I have received in Europe, kings and emperors have never received in any age. By this one truth is proven—that in the inner realm, in the sanctuary of man's pain, there is no distinction of race. I have gone to men who are teachers of mankind, yet they have, freely and without any hesitation, exchanged reverence with this dweller of the East. I myself am astonished to think where I have managed to touch the golden wand within men's minds, why, across the division of continents in Europe, they have received me as one of their own. In just such a way, Sir Jagadish Bose too, wherever he has found within himself the source of the stream of truth and has been able to give it to men, has been welcomed there by the learned of every land as one of their own.

In the Western lands there is continuous mutual respect for learning. Though a fierce political war raged outwardly between the French and the Germans, between them there has never occurred an obstacle to cooperation in learning. Why should we alone, forever remaining "schoolboys," memorising lessons mechanically bit by bit, descend into the examination hall, and then, having passed the examination, sink into the abyss of forgetfulness and sit there? Why should

there not be an exchange of austerity between our austerity and that of the ascetics of every land? Keeping this thought in mind, I invited, for our field of endeavour at Visva-Bharati, many thoughtful persons of Europe. Not one of them scorned that invitation. With one of them, at least, we have had personal acquaintance. He is the French Orientalist scholar Sylvain Lévi. Had you had close contact with him, you would have seen that his scholarship was as profound as his heart was vast. I went first, with hesitation, to Professor Lévi and made known my proposal. I told him that my desire was to establish in India such a field of learning where all scholars might gather, where an effort would be made to bring together in one place the treasures of India. At that time he had received an invitation to deliver a lecture at Harvard University. Harvard is among the great universities of the world. But no one knows the name of our Visva-Bharati; and yet Monsieur Lévi accepted, with the greatest reverence, the hospitality of this obscure hermitage.

Do not suppose that he lost any respect by coming here. He has said again and again, "This is, for me, like dwelling in heaven." Great scholar though he was, it cannot be said that he received pupils worthy of him in due measure, yet he did not disdain us; he felt the glory of the work in the glory of the spirit itself; and so he was able to find satisfaction here. In this connection you should know that France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Bohemia, and other European countries have given Santiniketan a vast quantity of books as gifts.

To receive the world as a companion, we at Santiniketan have been setting our seats as best we can, but just as clapping cannot be done with one hand, so this gathering of hearts cannot be accomplished by one side alone. Where India has cornered herself in one place, will she not open her closed door there? Will she consider as her own glory the arrogance of isolating the world through narrow-mindedness?

My wish is that at Visva-Bharati that field be created where India's relation with the world becomes natural, beneficial, and befitting of kinship. India must feel that there exists such a place where there is no cause for shame or sorrow in receiving men as kin, where the mutual relations of men are not a source of pain. My Western friends have sometimes asked me, "Will the people of your country accept us?" I have answered firmly, "Yes, certainly, Indians will never reject you." I know

that in the Bengali mind there is a sense of pride in learning; the Bengali will not deny Western learning. Despite all manner of division and difference of opinion in the political sphere, reverence for universal learning has, in Bengal more than anywhere else in India, become ingrained in the Bengali's blood. Even those who are extremely poor, whose hardship knows no bounds, aspire, in Bengal especially, to the gentler status that learning confers. If the Bengali cannot be educated, he cannot rise into gentle society. That is why the widowed mother of a Bengali is eager, husking rice and spinning thread with the sweat of her toil, to educate her son. Therefore I believed that the Bengali would not scorn learning and the learned; and so I said to the sages of the West: "You may come to our country without hesitation, fearlessly; there shall be no lapse in our welcome of you."

The truth of this promise of mine will be tested here at Visva-Bharati itself. I hope that here we shall be able to prove that in the great human society, where the sacrifice of knowledge proceeds, we too have the right to offer our oblation at the altar of truth; that we can claim as our own the treasure of knowledge of every land and every age—this is our glory. The natural right of every man to receive gift and offering at the hands of other men—we are not deprived of even the smallest part of it by any delusion of inferiority. We possess none of that barbarism which fails to acknowledge as its own the light of knowledge regardless of country, time, or person, which feels no shame in scorning it, which cannot feel its own wretchedness in rejecting it.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 7

At every moment there is within us an impulse to unfold ourselves. Unfolding is the fundamental truth of the universe. In the play of creation, on the one side there is concealment, on the other, revelation. The joy of revelation, passing through time and space, realises itself by removing its own veil. The Upanishad says—"Hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitaṃ mukham"—the face of truth lies covered by a golden vessel. But if it remained forever covered, we would know only the vessel, we would not know the truth. Then there would be no force even in saying that truth lies concealed. But because the process of creation is itself the process of the revelation of truth, for this reason the sage of the Upanishad has been able to give voice to man's longing in this way: "O Sun, remove the covering of your light, let me see the truth."

That man has been able to speak such words has its cause in this—that man sees within himself that the state in which he is presently immersed is not his ultimate condition. He has greed, and a powerful desire to fulfil that greed; but his inner soul says, I wish to free my humanity from the covering of greed. That is, whatever element has become excessively powerful within him, he does not acknowledge as the revelation of his humanity, but acknowledges it as an obstruction. Man has not said that whatever exists is true, that whatever appears is worthy of belief. However powerful the outward force may be in brutish, barbarous man, that his truth is feeble—that is, that his revelation is obstructed—this, man has somehow realised from the very beginning; and that is precisely why the thing we call civilisation has not been in vain for him.

The real meaning of the word "sabhyatā" (civilisation) is to find oneself within the assembly, to realise oneself amid all. The root meaning of the word sabhā (assembly) is this—that where there is ābhā, where there is light. That is, man's light of revelation is not alone within himself, but joined with all. Wherever the deficiency of this principle of union exists, there, in that same measure, man's truth remains wanting. For this very reason man keeps saying to himself: "apāvṛṇu"—open, remove the covering of your solitary self, let the truth of your universal self be revealed; there lies your radiance, there lies your liberation.

When the seed manifests as a sprout, it does so through renunciation. That renunciation is the renunciation of the self. It must rend itself apart to release its own truth. Likewise, for the sake of gaining that self which belongs to all, man too must renounce that self which belongs to him alone. For this reason, the Isha Upanishad says, the man who finds himself within all and finds all within himself—"na tato vijugupsate"—he no longer remains hidden. Untruth hides, truth reveals. That is why our prayer is: "asato mā sad gamaya"—lead me from untruth to truth; "āvirāvīrma edhi"—O embodiment of revelation, may You manifest within me.

Thus we see that revelation means giving of oneself. Only in giving myself do I reveal myself, do I come to know myself. The giving of oneself and the knowing of oneself occur together. The extinguished lamp does not give itself, and so does not find itself. The man who, hoarding himself, becomes greater than all others, remains hidden, remains confined; the man who, giving of himself, wishes to become one with all, is revealed, is free.

Consider merchandise covered over with a cloth painted in various colours. As long as the cloth remains, the gift has not been given; as long as that, the whole thing is drawn toward myself alone. As long as that, it seems that the cloth itself is of supreme value. As long as that, the meaning of the real thing is not grasped, its worth is not understood. When the time comes to give, when the cloth is removed, only then does the real thing become acquainted with the world, only then does everything attain fulfilment.

Only when our self-offering is complete do we find ourselves completely. Otherwise, whatever strange covering we possess called "my own self" seems supreme, and the frantic effort to preserve it somehow remains lodged in the mind. From attachment to that alone come all envy, all quarrel, all sorrow. Those who are foolish lose themselves gazing at the colour of that covering alone. One's own true form is precisely the form of union with the universe.

Today, on New Year's Day, is the day to perceive directly the truth within our hermitage. We must know what is the creative power of the austerity that has found its place here. There is an outer arrangement to this place; its buildings are

being constructed, its rules and regulations are running—we are shaping all this together. But within it there exists a certain principle that is gradually unveiling itself to itself, and that very process of constant unveiling is its creation. If we can see that clearly, then our enthusiasm for self-offering can become complete. When truth remains obscure to us, our will toward renunciation lacks strength.

Truth calls us to renounce. For it is through renunciation alone that our self-revelation occurs. Within our hermitage too, that call has become manifest. We have given that call the name "Visva-Bharati."

An appeal that man should perform self-sacrifice in the name of his own nation grew very powerful across the earth for some centuries. That is, one's own nation appeared, until now, to man as the greatest truth of humanity. The result of this was that, in order for one nation to grow great by exploiting another, a universal banditry has been going on throughout the world. Even those who, in the name of their own nation, have not hesitated to commit fraud, deceit, oppression, and cruelty—man has shamelessly kept their names shining in his history. That is, that moral law which is universal has been dishonoured at the altar of one's own nation, and man has considered this to be part of religion itself. Within the bounded limits of one's own nation, this practice of self-sacrifice flourishes; its immediate fruit has appeared in history to be very tempting indeed. The reason is that sacrifice itself is creative power; that sacrifice becomes true, and spreads its fruitfulness, exactly in proportion to the breadth of its scope. For this reason, in the history of nations, instances of sacrifice have been proven to be great instances indeed.

But man can never, by narrowing truth, achieve lasting prosperity forever. At some point he must strike against it; if only the topsoil is fertile, the great tree grows quickly, but eventually its roots reach a barren subsoil, and then one day suddenly its branches begin to wither. Man's sense of duty does not find its full nourishment within the bounds of his own nation, and so suddenly, one day, poverty arrives in the very midst of his own abundant wealth. That is why Europe, which was the chief field of the creation of nations, has today become stricken with the terror of war.

The terrible suffering that has stirred Europe, through war and through peace, means this—that within the form of the nation, man has covered over his own

truth; man's soul cries, "apāvṛṇu"—unveil, reveal. Because the revelation of humanity has become obstructed, man has been able, until now, to commit such open insolence regarding sin committed in the name of one's own nation, and has been able to believe that by this he suffered no loss, but only gain. At last, today, when the nation has begun to give birth of its own accord to its own destructive weapon, Europe, beholding the form of the nation, has become terrified of itself.

The message of the new age is this: remove the covering, O man, reveal your own generous form. Today, on the first day of the New Year, within our hermitage, we shall take this message of the new age into our hearts. If today we see our hermitage freed from the covering of every kind of discriminatory thought, then we shall be able to see its true form.

Here, guests of various races have come from various lands. If they encounter no obstacle within, then, through their very coming, this place will of itself become transformed into a pilgrimage of union for the new age. In Bengal, various rivers have come and fallen into the sea; from the confluence of those many rivers with the sea, Bengal has itself acquired, and been shaped into, a particular character. If our hermitage likewise expands its own heart, and if visitors here easily find their place, then this hermitage, through that very confluence of all, will itself attain its true form. Pilgrims bring the devotion, bring the vision of truth, by which they themselves make the place of pilgrimage true. We who have come to this hermitage, with reverence and with expectation, hope that we shall realise here—through that very reverence, through that very expectation—that truth shall shine forth here in its fullness. What mantra's form shall we see here, we shall constantly expect. That mantra is this: "yatra viśvaṃ bhavatyekanīḍam"—where the whole world becomes a single nest. In country after country we have seen man fragmented within his particular national environment; there we cannot realise man as our own. Let this hermitage of ours, within the world, become such a place where, despite religion, language, and all manner of racial difference, we can see man as man, free from all external division. That very seeing is the seeing of the new age. The hermit lies awake, knowing that he will see the first dawn in the eastern sky. The moment he sees the reddened line of light at the edge of darkness, he knows that the victory-banner of dawn has unfurled its own flag upon the rampart of the night of darkness. In just such a way, may we, here on this eastern

edge of India, at this end of the continent, today in the dawn of the New Year, see brightly, among all the guests and friends gathered here, the form of man freed from the darkness of discriminatory thought. From that very seeing, may we be able to believe in our hearts that the dawn of the new age has begun in the history of man.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 8

A short while ago I went to Kalighat. Going there, I saw our old Adi Ganga. It has fallen into grave decay. The path of its commerce with the sea has been closed forever, as though by paralysis. When the current of this river was alive, how many merchants extended the bonds of their trade from our India to Ceylon, Gujarat, and other lands! It had removed, like the current of friendship, the barrier to union between man and man. That is why this river came to be regarded as holy. Likewise, whatever great rivers India possesses—the Indus, the Brahmaputra, and others—all of these were regarded in ancient times as sacred. Why! Because these rivers served as the means of establishing bonds between man and man. There are, to be sure, many small rivers—their currents may be swift; but they possess neither depth nor permanence. They have not been able to bring forth, in their flowing waters, this form of universal friendship. They have not helped in the union of man with man. For this reason their water did not become, for man, a place of pilgrimage. Wherever great rivers have flowed, great cities have arisen there—those lands have become the central lands of civilisation. By the flowing of these rivers, man's treasure of knowledge and endeavour has travelled to various places. In our country's seminaries, when the teachers distribute knowledge, the teacher's wife manages their food and drink; this Ganges too, in just such a way, while gradually extending India's field of endeavour on one side, was also, on another side, removing hunger and thirst. That is why man holds such reverence for the Ganges.

So we see, then—where does this sacredness lie? Why, in this—that man, through beneficent call and opportunity, has come to a great arena and united with man—has not remained shut up, alone, within the fortress of his own self-interest. Apart from this, there is no such quality within the water of a river that could make it holy.

But the moment its current lost its purpose, the moment its unobstructed connection with the sea was broken, that very moment its depth too diminished. I saw the Ganges, but my heart was not pleased. Although people still revere it even now, that is merely their habit. In its water there no longer remains that sacred

form. In the life of our India too, precisely this same condition has come to pass. At one time India had called the whole world to its path of sacred endeavour; people came from every country and united in India for the sake of attaining the great truth. India too, in that age, distributed to the whole world whatever was best in itself. Because it had established its own bond with the entire world, India became a sacred land. Why did Gaya become a sacred place for us? Why—because the Buddha performed his austerities there, and India has distributed the fruit of that austerity of his throughout the whole world. If a transformation has occurred, if today it no longer takes up the burden of dispensing that immortal food, then there remains in Gaya not the slightest trace of sacredness. If we think something still remains, we must understand that it is only our old habit—can the priests of Gaya make Gaya great, or can its temple do so?

We must remember this: sacred religion does not exist in soil or in air. It must be sustained through thought, through endeavour. Within our hermitage that obstruction has been removed to a great degree. Of their own accord, guests from abroad have come here to establish their seat. They say that, having come here, they have found satisfaction. In just this way the Ganges of India has flowed through our hermitage. Guests from various lands and countries began their comings and goings. They have mingled their lives with our life. Resting upon this hermitage, their hearts have expanded. There is no greater success than this. It is because man achieves crossing-over at a place of pilgrimage that such a place bears that name. There are many places where people come but do not achieve crossing-over; where every traveller comes merely to go away again, not to remain. Like Calcutta's great bazaar—there, coming, one finds no affection, no rest; there, coming, one's journey does not end; there is no talk except of profit and loss. I was born in Calcutta—there I cannot find shelter. I have a house there, and yet I cannot think of anything there as truly my own. If man cannot find that shelter of his own, what use is it to look at monuments, to look at great buildings? What call is there in that place? Only merchants can remain there. That is not a place of pilgrimage. Apart from this, whatever places of pilgrimage we have—what happens there? Those who go there thirsting for merit give money into the hands of the priests. There, people of every land do not receive the inner call to unite.

Yesterday I received a letter. The superintendent of our rural reconstruction work at Surul wrote to me from aboard a ship. He wrote that the people on the ship pass their days with card-games and other such petty amusements, so much so that he was astonished and wrote to me, asking how they could remain within such a life. A life in which there is no great revelation, a life filled with trivial matters, a life that has no current flowing toward the world—how can they remain within it, how can they find contentment of mind in it?

The reason Mr. L. K. Elmhirst has felt this sorrow is this: because of the responsibility he has taken up here in the hermitage, he has had to come and stand in a greater field. Resting upon his work, he has come to stand in the field of welfare of all the villagers. This work is not for his own self-interest. Because he found, in holding all the villagers in reverence as human beings, the opportunity to unite with all, this place has become, for him, a place of pilgrimage. Among these poor and ignorant folk round about, he found his way to walk. For that reason, those great and wealthy men who were his companions—some of them judges, some magistrates—he came to understand, within himself, as utterly unfulfilled. Though they attained great power here, they could not find the path of continuous union with the entire people of the country. They did not arrive at any place of pilgrimage in India. Some of them found their resting place upon a throne, some found their resting place in an iron safe—they did not find their resting place in any holy pilgrimage. Our friend, coming to Surul, was able to realise the pilgrim-nature of this place. If even we, living here, cannot realise this, then there are none more unfulfilled than we. Therefore I say: may we, within our work here, within this practice of knowledge, be able to realise welfare. This place is not merely a school; this place is a pilgrimage. May people come here from every country and every land and be able to say—ah, we are saved; we have come out beyond the petty household and attained vision of the universe and of the universal deity.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 9

Our deficiencies are many, and we have many grievances too. For those who, with genuine zeal and wisdom, strive to awaken awareness of that deficiency and to remove it, to make understood the account of our grievances and bring about their settlement—they are benefactors of the country; let our reverence for them remain unshaken.

But through insult and poverty alone, a country does not come to self-knowledge; by that alone we are diminished. For a star whose light has gone out, darkness is not its only curse; its non-manifestation amid the whole constellation of stars is its greatest dishonour. Darkness confines it only within itself; light keeps it joined with all.

Wherever there is deficiency in India, wherever there is dishonour, there she is cut off from the world. If this deficiency alone were her entire condition, if India, like the heart of darkest Africa, were truly dominated by poverty, then she would have no recourse but to remain inarticulate within her own unbroken darkness.

But the dark fortnight is not India's only phase; the Creator has not deprived her of the light of the bright fortnight. Through the companionship of that light, she has the right to unveil the glory of her own full moon to the whole universe.

Visva-Bharati has taken upon itself the task of bearing and proclaiming the message of that luminous wealth of India. Where India's new-moon darkness lies, there is her poverty. But shall she, by acknowledging only that poverty, remain ashamed before the world? Where her full moon lies, there her generosity must also exist, surely. In that very generosity lies her identity; there the whole universe will certainly accept her invitation.

He in whose house no invitation is extended is indeed isolated, forever shunned in society. We wish to say, on behalf of Visva-Bharati, that there is no reason for that

invitation of the world to India to cease. Those who are faithless, who have fixed their entire gaze only upon her deficiency, say: until we attain political independence and prosperity in trade, the great nations will scorn us and will never accept our invitation. But to speak thus is not merely an insult to one's own country; it is an insult to all mankind. When the Buddha took up the burden of spreading truth by accepting destitution, he thereby proved this very truth—that truth is glorified by its own intrinsic majesty. The sun is self-revealed by its own light; it needs no gold-plating in a goldsmith's shop to gain its worth; such words do not become fitting even in the mouth of the crudest merchant.

The self-regard we have borrowed from the West carries within it the impurity of an exclusive faith in political and commercial wealth. That is why, in this present age, even an Indian feels no shame in saying that national glory comes first, and the glory of truth only after. I have seen, in certain Western great nations, that pride of wealth has eclipsed, like Rahu, their entire education and discipline and endeavour. There, under the weight of vast wealth, man's head has bent toward the earth. In the act of pointing an accusing finger at the West to proclaim our national pride, the very mouth that always condemns this materialistic greed of the West—when that same mouth proposes to place the treasure of truth behind the treasure of power—surely then our malevolent star smiles its crooked smile. It is exactly like some purity-proud Brahmin who eats with the very mouth in the house of one considered unworthy, and then, coming outside, condemns it with that same mouth.

Through the voice of Visva-Bharati, we wish to say this: that the treasure of truth has not perished in India. If it has not perished, then the responsibility of that truth must be acknowledged. The wealth of the wealthy man can belong to him alone, but the truth of the truthful man belongs to the world. With the attainment of truth comes, inevitably, the duty of inviting others to share it. The moment the sage understood, "vedāham etam"—I have known this—that very moment he had to say, "śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ"—hear, O children of immortality, all of you.

Hear, all of you—if this invitational voice of our forefathers remains silent today in India, then empire, independence, prosperity in trade, can give us no glory whatsoever. If the wealth of truth has been lost in India, then her right to invite the

world has also been lost. Those who, today, do not believe in India's invitation do not believe in India's truth either. We believe. Let Visva-Bharati reveal that faith to our own countrymen, and proclaim it to the people of all countries. Let India's invitational voice be declared to the world at Visva-Bharati. Let India, here at Visva-Bharati, realise that wealth of hers which can be gained only through the act of giving it to all.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 10

When I established a school here at Santiniketan and brought the boys here, I had nothing particular of my own to give or to say. But it was my earnest wish that this morning light here, these green meadows, these trees and plants, might touch the hearts of the children. For in the companionship of nature there is need for the gathering of joy within the young heart; through tasting the essence of the world in every direction, and through enjoying the beauty of the morning light and the evening sunset, the unfolding of children's lives occurs of its own accord. I wanted them to feel that the earth was raising them in her lap as a nurse raises her charge. They must be freed from that imprisoning crowd of the brick and stone of the city in which they are reared. For this purpose I established this centre of education on this open plain, under the open sky and light. My longing was that the trees, plants, and birds of Santiniketan themselves should take up the charge of their education. And alongside this, they would also receive some education from certain human beings. For the system that gives education by separating it from universal nature has done severe harm to the heart of the child. The isolation created by this separation of connection has brought misfortune upon mankind. This misfortune has prevailed in the world for a long time. So it seemed to me that a favourable field must be created for establishing a bond with universal nature. In this way, this school was founded.

At that time I had no particular resources or means of my own, for I myself had always avoided the role of schoolmaster. I had no such audacity as to teach children book-learning. But from childhood the voice of universal nature had enchanted me; I have felt with it a bond of utter kinship. How much more valuable this was than reading books, how much strength and inspiration it conferred, I know for myself. For how long, alone, month after month, did I live my life amid the sandbanks of the wild geese! Whatever nature gave during that life lived among these sandy shores, the more I received it with cupped hands, the more I found that my heart grew full to overflowing. So, when I saw the children here running about in joy, climbing trees, filling the sky with their cheerful laughter—it seemed to me that they had gained something rare indeed. That their learning received a particular

mark or grade is not the most important thing; but that the cup of their heart has become filled to overflowing with the nectar of the universe, has brimmed over with joy—this matter is of immense worth. Through this laughter, song, and joyful storytelling, their minds have been nourished deep within. Their guardians may perhaps not understand this; the examiners of universities may perhaps not be willing to award marks for it; but I know this to be most precious indeed. To receive Saraswati as a mother from the very lap of nature—this is a matter of supreme good fortune. Thus began my school.

After that, with the opening of one door, the inner doors too began to unfold themselves. In truth, the thing to be opened is one, but the things to be received are many. Yet if the first door remains closed, there is no way to enter within. The artificial education that results from being deprived of nature's shelter is precisely that primary knot which, if not untied, makes entry into the treasure-house of delight exceedingly difficult. Therefore the way of man's liberation is to acknowledge nature as nurse, and to gain one's education under her very shelter. It was with this ideal of liberation that this centre of education was founded.

In this free air of this place, the freedom that we have gained is something we may speak of today with pride. How many bonds this has loosened for us, how many narrow prejudices it has removed—one cannot finish speaking of it. Here we have learned to acknowledge all men as our own; here the mutual relations of men have gradually become easy and natural.

That this is a matter of supreme good fortune, we must know. For I have already said that there is a great affliction within man—his utter confinement within his own community. Separation from universal nature diminishes his power of thought. But beyond this there is yet another unnaturalness in man, and it is this: that man himself is man's greatest enemy. This is a very terrible thing. How much narrowing of heart lies within it, we cannot know by mere habit. In the arrogance of our own kind, we have become cornered into our own little corner, depriving ourselves of the vast domain of the universe. This terrible obstruction must be removed; we must know that wherever man's treasure of heart exists, there is no division of country or land, no geographical partition. Mountain, forest, desert—these cannot imprison the soul of man.

The land of Bengal on whose soil rice ripens, on whose soil trees grow tall—that topsoil belongs to Bengal; but we must know that the deeper earth beneath it is spread throughout the whole world, and so, at this very spot, there is the deepest root-connection with the entire universe. If this nurturing earth of hers were not universal, then Bengal's greenness would not appear as it does. One can, of course, take up soil and plant a tree even in the small space of a pot, but that does not yield sufficient fruit. It is the soil of a vast place that produces a truly abundant harvest. Exactly so, wherever within the inner realm we deny the universe, saying that one can become great even while remaining separated from it—there we commit a grave error indeed.

Wherever in the world the various currents of civilisation have come together and merged, there alone has a sacred land of knowledge come into being. There, the gathering of various races from various directions has brought about a great union. Within the great civilisations of Greece, Rome, and others, there was a confluence of various streams of knowledge; that is why they did not remain isolated, did not become extinguished in history. Within the civilisation of India too, there occurred, in just the same way, the union of Aryan, Dravidian, Persian, and other diverse races. We must accept this synthesis of ours. In the history of the world, it is those who are barbarous who are most exclusive; they have never allowed new peoples to enter their own land, and whenever they have seen any difference of race, language, or the like, they have gone, under the pretext of this being a fault, to kill with the arrow of poison.

Today is the time to acknowledge universal man as our own. We must know, through the boundless love and knowledge of our hearts, that man does not belong merely to some particular nation; man's greatest identity is that he is man. Today is the time to say that man belongs to all countries and all ages. Within him there is no nationality, no racial distinction. It is precisely because this recognition has not been achieved that man today wishes to grow great by plundering the wealth of others. He kills himself, and his hand does not tremble in killing another—he dares to commit so great a wrong.

Shall India, in defending her own race, bring forward the precedent of Western countries? Have we forgotten that Europe and America, laying the foundation of their own nationalism, have built a vast rampart such as was never built in our country? India has said this—that he who has been able to realise the universe as his own has attained true truth. He does not remain unrevealed; "na tato vijugupsate"—he becomes manifest to all, in all times. But those who remain unrevealed, who did not acknowledge others, never became great; they could not leave behind, in history, any great truth. That is why Carthage has vanished from history. Carthage wished to plunder all the jewels of the world. Consequently, it left behind no treasure that could furnish provisions for the men of future ages. That is why Venice too could leave behind no message. It merely sold like a merchant, amassed, and could give away nothing. But the moment man has been able to extend his domain of knowledge and love over the whole world, that very moment he has attained his own truth, has become great.

At first, when I established the school at Santiniketan, I brought the boys here with this purpose—that in the open field of universal nature I would give them liberation. But gradually it occurred to me that the terrible gulf that exists between man and man must be removed, and man must be given liberation into the vast world of all humanity. That very heartfelt longing found expression in the history of the unfolding of my school. For the institution named Visva-Bharati was established with this call—that man must be given liberation not merely in the field of nature, but among men. The liberation within one's own household, within one's own country, is a small matter; through it truth becomes fragmented, and for that very reason disharmony is created in the world. Because, again and again, step by step in history, there has occurred this deviation from truth, man has suffered, has kindled the fire of rebellion. The truth that exists between man and man—"ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati"—the universal truth contained within this saying—man has not accepted; he has confined himself within the boundary of his own country. To the degree that man has acknowledged this unity, to that same degree has he attained true truth, has gained the complete revelation of himself.

If today we fail to realise this truth, is there no penalty for it? Must we not know the terrible loss that follows from the denial of this great truth of man? We must prevent this grave wrong—that man inflicts pain upon man; at Visva-Bharati we

have come forward to acknowledge that truth. Let others take up whatever work they will—let the merchant extend his trade, let the wealthy man accumulate wealth—but here, a bridge of union for all mankind shall be built. The door of the guest-house shall be opened; standing at its threshold, we shall not hesitate to invite all. In this field of union, we must not forget our Indian treasure; we must establish unwavering faith in that wealth, and receive it with reverence. Vikramaditya built, at Ujjayini, a splendid palace of which today there remains no trace at all; historians have, to this day, been unable to settle the question of his lineage and clan. But the poetry that Kalidasa composed and left behind bears no question of locality at all; it belongs not only to India, but remains the eternal treasure of all lands and all ages. Only when everyone says, "This is mine, I have received it," is it truly given. To attain this right to give—for this, enthusiasm is needed, the effort of endeavour is needed. We must not be miserly. To receive and propagate any great treasure, one must, with abundant joy, bear every blow and insult, and renounce everything without hesitation. At the world's festival of lamps, may the lamp that India lights never meet with denial; may we never, through mockery, overshadow its flame. Let the path of self-revelation lie open; be joyful through renunciation.

On this day of today's festival, our prayer is this: lead us from all darkness and untruth into light—not the light of gold, diamond, and ruby, but the light of the realm of the spirit. India today makes this prayer—lead her from death into the realm of immortality. Though we are destitute, still, let this prayer resound from our throats for the sake of all mankind. O embodiment of bliss, let your revelation be complete. O fierce one, within your fierceness there is much sorrow and poverty—may we be able to say that even through the covering of that dense cloud, we have seen your southern face. "Vedāham"—I have known. "Ādityavarṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt"—from beyond darkness itself I have seen the form of light. Therefore I no longer fear darkness. That darkness which confines us within our own small boundary, within our own petty identity—that we do not accept. That light which reveals us to all, and reveals all to us—that alone do we salute.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 11

Today the hour has come once more for me to depart from this hermitage; perhaps this time I must spend a considerable while abroad. Before going, I wish once more to speak clearly of what lies in our hearts concerning this ashram, concerning this work.

Today, as this present picture of our ashram passes before my eyes — this students' residence, this hall of arts, this library, this guest-house — it all seems like a dream. I find myself wondering how it began, and where its fulfilment lies. The most astonishing thing of all is this: that a man wholly unfit for the task — I say this not as any studied modesty — should have been the instrument through whom such a work was accomplished. On the day I first called the students here, what I held in my hand was not merely insufficient means but a heavy burden of debt, under which I was utterly imperilled, with no way of discharging it. And as for imparting learning, everyone knows how incapable I was for that task. I had not read well; I had no acquaintance with the system of education then prevailing in our country. I entered upon this work burdened with every kind of unfitness and penury. Its beginning was exceedingly feeble and frail — there were but some five students. I took no fees from the students; I had myself to provide, by whatever means, the children's food and clothing and necessary supplies, and to relieve the teachers' domestic wants. Year followed year; the want of money remained constant; as the school grew, it became evident that without fees the institution could not be sustained. Fees were then introduced, but the want was not thereby removed. I had to sell, piece by piece, the copyright of my books. Whatever little property I had here and there was gone; I sold my wife's ornaments — I had to empty my own household to keep the work running. I do not know with what reckless daring I had then set out. As one who has wandered through perilous paths in the trance of a dream trembles upon waking, so, looking back now, my own heart trembles in just that way.

And yet this was, after all, but a modest school. Yet for the sake of this modest undertaking I had to forsake, in great measure, the literary labour that had been

mine since boyhood. What was the reason for this, whence came such attraction? Let me tell you the answer that comes to my mind upon this question. From childhood I had loved this universal Nature most deeply, most intimately. I felt with great intensity that the life of the city, raising round us on every side a wall of machinery, had severed us from our communion with the world. Here in this ashram, in the open courtyard of Nature's own abode of life, amid the flower-festivals of spring and autumn, I gave the children a place; and it was the joy of that very gift which held me fast within an otherwise insupportable renunciation. The nectar that Mother Nature dispenses, I distributed among them all, blending it with song and various festivities of joy. Its success gave me encouragement every day. And one more thought had awakened in my mind long before this: that the bond between student and teacher must be made exceedingly real. Among men, every kind of relation is a relation of giving and receiving. Sometimes through wages, sometimes in exchange for renunciation, sometimes even through compulsion, men keep this flow of giving and taking running day and night. But the bridge between the one who gives learning and the one who receives it is, properly, the bond of devotion and affection. Where that bond of kinship is absent, and only a dry duty or a commercial relation remains, then both the receiver and the giver are unfortunate.

To relieve his worldly wants, a teacher must, from the outside, accept wages; but his inward relation must be a true one. This ideal we were able, in those days, to carry very far in our school. Then the teachers moved about with the students, played with them; their bond with the children was intimate. Whether in language, history, or geography we taught by any excellent new method, I do not know; but that thing which no school anywhere considers indispensable, and yet which is the greatest thing of all — its place being established in our school — in the joy of that, we forgot all other want.

Gradually our tiny school grew large. Many of you have come here from other provinces of India; the students too have come from various regions. Gradually its bounds extended further still; friends came from abroad to join this work. What was hidden could never, I thought, become manifest so widely as this.

We did not strive for it; we did not expect it. Always, with meagre means and meagre strength, we laboured in solitude. Yet this institution of ours, following its own inmost nature, has expressed itself upon the field of the world. The sages of the West who came here — Lévi, Winternitz, Lesny — found something here that was not confined within the corner of Bengal; from this I can understand that some one truth has found expression here. The joy, the reverence, the ardour they felt and carried away is perhaps not something that comes alive among all of us here; and yet there is some fulfilment in the very air of this place, at whose touch distant guests have become intimate friends, and those who came for but a short while have formed a bond that will last forever.

Today the spirit of division and the spirit of hatred have set the whole earth aflame; such a world-wide clash of mortal enmity among men has no precedent in ancient history. From land to land this fire has spread. We in the Eastern continent slept through many centuries; our awakening came as the shock of this very blow. Japan awoke under a mother's blow. Once the embassy of love from India awakened her; today greed has come and struck her, waking her through fear. He who wakes to the blow of greed's arrogance makes others afraid in turn. Japan struck Korea; she went to strike China.

What unbearable anguish is man's today! Bound to servitude, through how much suffering is he being crushed — man's wholeness everywhere lies afflicted. This dwarfing of humanity, this worship everywhere of the machine-god, this self-destruction — shall there be, nowhere upon earth, an effort to put an end to it? Are we, because we are poor, because we are subject to another nation, therefore to be denied man's true wealth? If our striving be true, if within us our word abides, then all must receive it, bowing their heads.

Once the Buddha said, "I shall remove the sorrow of all mankind." Whether he truly succeeded in removing sorrow is not the great matter; the great matter is that he willed it so, that he offered up his own life for all creatures. That India should be rich, that she should be powerful — this was not his austerity; he strove for all mankind. Let that striving awaken once more today upon the soil of India — can that will be banished from India?

If I could inspire Visva-Bharati with this spirit, it is my own poverty that I cannot — had I been a true seeker, had I possessed that power of single-minded concentration, then everything would have followed of itself. Today, in all humility, I confess to you: I am unequal to the task, and so this work is not mine alone; this striving belongs to all of you. This you must take up as your own.

Whenever I go abroad, I forget the feebleness that exists in our country's consciousness regarding all mankind, and I invite everyone to India's sacrificial field. Returning, I see — where is that vast role here, where is that vision of ourselves as dwelling in the midst of a vast world? I have no strength, but I had faith in my heart that the call which has come from the inmost shrine of the universe would be heard by many, that many would come together in it. May we, within our ashram, banish above all else whatever obstructs that realization; may we escape the sorrow born of the sway of the passions. Perhaps our striving will succeed; perhaps it will not. I hold fast in my heart to the Gita's teaching — that to covet the fruit is to deceive oneself and to deceive others. Our work, viewed from outside, is very slight — how few are our students, how few our departments — but from within, there is no limit to its claim. May the gathered heart of us all make firm that claim, and, resting upon it, create manifold good — may the joy of that creation, and its austerity and its sorrow, be ours. May the discord of petty opinions, the clash of self-interest, be forgotten, and may we keep our striving pure — may that ardour come to us. If the fire of my own spirit were pure and bright, I would make this demand from the seat of a guru. But I am merely a fellow traveller with you upon one and the same path; I cannot lead, nor do I wish to. You know that I have given what I had to give, that I have not been miserly. It is for this reason that I have today the right to beg of you.

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# VISVA-BHARATI — 12

The undertaking that once began here is now a matter of long ago. A former student of ours brought before me, through a few letters and printed accounts, a fragment of that early history. This student had been connected with the institution from its very founding. Last night, when I read the torn fragments of that old record, I remembered how feeble was the beginning, how slight the preparations. The form that appeared then in the shade of the sal-avenue of this ashram was so utterly hidden within what has today become Visva-Bharati that it could not have entered anyone's imagination. At the first dawning of this undertaking, we recited the invocation-mantra of our ancient teachers — the mantra in which they called to all and said, "Āyantu sarvataḥ svāhā" — "Let them come from every side"; they said, "As the streams of water come and mingle in the sea, so may all here be united." Their very call resounded in our voice, but in a feeble voice. That day, within that recitation of the Vedic mantra, we had hope, we had desire. But the unfolding of life that we feel today was not then clearly within our sight. That from the hidden heart of this school the seed of truth would sprout within my own lifetime and attain expansion in the form of Visva-Bharati — I dared not, in that day, give shelter in my mind even to this hope. That some day the whole of India, vast India — this India where many nations, many sciences, many communities have their confluence — would take her seat within this ashram; that for all the people of that India room would here be made spacious; that all would here receive the right of hospitality; that here no obstruction, no injury, would come between the fellowship of one another — such was the resolve in my mind. I had then wholeheartedly wished that everywhere else in India we might see the form of bondage, but that here we might see clearly, as if alone, the form of liberation. The bondage that has worn India to shreds is not, after all, something outward — it is within ourselves. Whatever divides is bondage. He who is imprisoned is a prisoner simply because he is cut off. The countless links of the enormous chain of discord and division have kept the whole of India torn and tormented by fragmentation; at every step they obstruct that liberation which man finds in kinship; and this mutual difference is, step by step, drawing us toward mutual hostility. We wish to cover over, with the word-magic of political oratory, the discord between one province

and another; but when, in the field of actual life, mutual jealousy, contempt, and the sense of one's own versus another's become simply a tangle of thorns, we do not feel even a trace of shame about it. Thus, while the hope of mutual cooperation remains far off, even the path of acquaintance between us is blocked by a profound indifference.

That very darkness in which, in India, we fail to see one another clearly is the chief cause of all our weakness. At night our instinct of fear grows strong, yet in the morning light it vanishes. The chief reason is that in the morning we can see everyone, while at night we see ourselves as isolated. In India that night has become eternal. What it means to be a Muslim, understood fully and as one's own — as, for instance, Rammohan Roy once understood it — very few Hindus know. What it means to be a Hindu, understood fully and as one's own — as, for instance, Dara Shikoh once understood it — very few Muslims know. And yet it is precisely within such deep knowing that the difference between one and another dissolves.

For some time now we have been reading in the newspapers that among the Akali Sikh community in the Punjab a powerful religious movement has arisen, whose followers, band after band, fearlessly accept beating and binding. But wherein lies their difference from other Sikhs, at what point they received so terrible a blow, and by devotion to what truth they have struggled against that blow unto the extremity of life and emerged victorious — leaving aside our sympathy on this matter, even our curiosity has not been stirred. And yet nowhere do we hesitate to imagine that, by the mere force of words, we shall create a political unity out of these people. When, in the Deccan, the Moplah outrages showed themselves in their cruelty, we in Bengal were not moved, regarding that matter, even to the extent that curiosity about the religious, social, and economic facts underlying it might naturally provoke. And yet, regarding the establishment of a great national unity between the Hindus and the Moplahs of Malabar, we are forever proclaiming, at least in words, our firm resolve.

Our scriptures say that bondage is avidya — ignorance — and that ignorance alone is bondage. This holds true in every respect. It is precisely toward him whom we do not know that we are truly estranged. On some special day we may embrace him round the neck, for that is mere outward show; we may address him as friend and

shed tears, for that too is outward show; but "in festivity, in adversity, in famine, in political upheaval, at the king's gate, and in the cremation ground" — in these we cannot, by the inevitable attraction of natural affection, maintain fellowship with them. For those whom we know intimately alone are our kindred. Only when the people of India become, to one another, a great kindred, can they become a great nation.

We have undertaken the task of building the steps of that knowing in order to reach the summit of union. Once, when my dear friend Vidhushekhar Shastri set himself to the task of gathering together, within India's field of learning, the branches of knowledge belonging to all of India's communities, I felt the greatest joy and ardour. The reason was this: Shastri Mahashay had received his own learning along the very path of the ancient Brahmin pandits' tradition of instruction. That our education can become fruitful in a generous and liberal way only if we can, with reverence, acknowledge also those branches of learning that lie outside the Hindus' eternal scriptural knowledge — the truth of this was given particular strength by being spoken from his own lips, and was thereby made manifest to me. I realized that this very generosity, this honouring hospitality extended, in the field of learning, toward every people, is what is truly Indian. For this very reason, when India in ancient times adopted from the Greeks and Romans their particular methods of astronomy, she did not hesitate to acknowledge those foreign teachers as sages in their own right. If today, in this regard, the smallest meanness should overtake us, we must know that the pure Indian spirit has, among us, suffered corruption.

Upon the identity of the many peoples of this land, India's own self-identity depends; somewhere, then, there must exist a striving toward that end. May the establishment of that striving stand firm forever at Santiniketan — this thought has dwelt, visibly and invisibly, within our aim in founding this institution. But what is my capacity? Even if I had the capacity, if this were to be my creation alone, what fulfilment would there be in it? That I should light the lamp and leave it burning in the window, in expectation of the traveller, and then take my leave — this alone was my hope.

Since then, through countless want, poverty, opposition, and obstruction, I have borne this burden along an arduous path. Its inherent truth has, by gradually shedding its covering, today taken on before us a form considerably clearer. Our day of joy has come. That you have gathered here today is so great a good fortune for us. That the members of this institution, each engaged in his own work, should have formed, bit by bit, so close a bond with it — this too is so great a good fortune for us.

Having borne this work alone for so long, on the day when I surrendered it into the hands of all, the doubt arose in my mind whether everyone would receive it with reverence or not. The obstacles were many then, and remain many still. Yet, despite hesitation and misgiving, I have offered it up, wholly and completely, into the hands of all. Let no one think that this is the achievement of a single man, and that he has bound it inseparably to himself alone. If what I have nurtured so long and with such care comes to be held sacred by the world at large, that will be my greatest good fortune. I say that the day has come today, but has even the dawning of that day truly arrived? Just as, on that first day, I dared not imagine the possibility of this present day, and yet that first day secretly bore this future within it, why then should I not trust that, in the distant history of India, this Visva-Bharati will come to its full expression? It is through that very trust that its manifestation gains strength and becomes unshakeable — this we must bear in mind. Proof of this has begun to appear, now that I see you have taken up its burden. From the standpoint of this institution, this is no small matter; and from my own standpoint too, it is no small matter. For any single man, this burden would be insupportable. Though the joy of my inward trust and hope has given me strength to bear this burden, I have never had leisure to forget my own poverty of power. For how long, oppressed daily by so much want and incapacity, have I come onward; how greatly has needless outward adversity diminished it from every side.

Yet, despite all its flaws and incompleteness, despite all its poverty, you have taken up the charge of nurturing it with reverence — how much grace you have thereby shown me, I alone know. For this, I offer you today, in my own person, my gratitude.

You have taken upon yourselves the task of binding the outward structure of this institution together through well-considered rules and regulations. I cannot say

that I fully understand this work of ordering its governance; owing to bodily weakness I have not always been able to give it due attention. But I know for certain that such a framework is needed. Who would deny the usefulness of a reservoir to water? Along with this, we must also remember that though the spirit dwells in the body, it transcends the body. The body is confined within a particular limit, but the field in which the spirit roams is the whole universe. We must bear in mind that the excessive complexity of bodily arrangement should not obstruct the expansion of the spirit. The outward, embodied form of this institution is, at present, clear and complete to me; but it is the expansion of its spiritual form that I have witnessed in particular. The reason is that I travel, again and again, far and wide beyond the ashram. How often I have thought: if those who are the sacrificers of this Visva-Bharati could come with me into the outer world and witness its recognition there, they would know upon what vast ground its shelter rests. Then they would see its form of liberty, transcending particular time, place, and rule. I have seen, among people abroad, so profound a reverence toward that manifestation, that recognition, of India, as cannot remain confined within India's territorial bounds — a reverence that outshines the lamp as light does. From this I have understood that India possesses some treasure to which the whole world has a claim. It is our duty to fulfil that claim humbly, restraining from our minds the fierce excess of national pride. That India which belongs to all times and all peoples — the duty of inviting all times and all peoples to that India belongs to Visva-Bharati.

Some time ago, when I went to South America and lay confined to a sickroom, almost every day groups of visitors came to me with questions. The substance of all their questions was this: what wealth does India possess that is worth giving to the world? By India's wealth, I understand this: that which is not meant to be exhausted in the particular use of her own people alone. That by which India gains the right to give, the right to offer hospitality; by whose strength she can take her seat amid the whole world — that is to say, that which reveals not her want but her fullness — that is her true wealth. Every great nation has its own particular worldly concern, through which its own special need is served. In its military and economic might, no other can share; there, giving causes it loss. In history we hear of certain wealthy nations, such as the Phoenicians, who were ceaselessly occupied solely in the acquisition of wealth. They gave nothing, left nothing behind; however great their wealth, they possessed no true treasure. They exist within the withered pages

of history, but not within the mind of man. Egypt, Greece, Rome, Palestine, China, and other lands have produced, for the sustenance of the whole world and not merely their own, things to be enjoyed by all. In the satisfaction of the world, they stand glorified. For this reason, the question of the whole world is this: what has India given, not merely to herself, but to the world? I tried, as best I could, to say something, and I observed that this only increased their eagerness. Thus the conviction has grown firm in my mind that today India's only resource is not the beggar's bowl; in her courtyard there stands the site of a universal sacrifice, to which she can summon all for the imperishable gift of the self.

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That message of India meant for all — this we call Visva-Bharati. The manifestation of that message does not lie within our mere school alone. Shiva comes in the form of a poor mendicant, but one day all his splendour stands revealed within him. Visva-Bharati came to this ashram in humble disguise, in the form of a small school. That was the beginning of her play, but it is not there that her ultimate truth lies. There she was a beggar, gathering alms by the handful. Today she is ready to throw open the treasury of giving. That treasury is India's own. The whole world stands today at the threshold and says, "I have come." To say to her, "We are occupied with our own want, we cannot think of giving to you" — no shame could be greater than this. For only by failing to give do we come to lose.

There is no denying that, in the present age, Europe has spread her dominion over the earth. The reason for this is neither accidental nor merely external. The reason is that whereas barbarism gives its whole mind, exhausts its entire strength, upon its own immediate need alone, Europe has left that far behind. She has grasped hold of some truth that is universal for all time, that fulfils all her needs and yet remains, inexhaustibly, in abundance beyond them. This is her science. It is through the manifestation of this science that she has gained her right upon the earth. Even should some cause bring about the bodily extinction of Europe, the value of this truth can never be lost from its place in the history of mankind. She has enriched mankind forever — this is her greatest glory, this is her immortality. And yet, precisely where this same Europe has made her own greed greater than the welfare of all mankind, there her poverty is revealed, there is her dwarfishness, her

barbarism. The sole reason for this is that man's truth does not lie in isolation, confined merely within his own self — that isolation is the very nature of the beast; the beast has no life beyond its perishable, bodily existence.

Those who are great souls kindle, in their own lives, that undying light by which man may realize himself within all.

The Western continent, through her politics, has estranged the vast world; through her science, she has invited the vast world. If we can see the generous form of history within the vast sweep of time, we shall see that in the direction of self-aggrandizing politics lies Europe's self-degradation, her darkness; in the direction of science alone has her light shone forth, there alone her true self-expression lies; for science is truth, and truth alone bestows immortality. In the present age, it is science that has given Europe her fulfilment, for science reveals the universe; while her all-devouring, insatiable politics has created only her own destruction, for in the blood-heated frenzy of politics she sees everything but herself as indistinct and small; and thus, by fragmenting truth, she sets turning the whirlwind of unrest into an endless cycle of self-destruction.

We would be gravely mistaken to think that Europe became great through boundless egotism, through a divisive consciousness steeped in national pride. No statement could be further from the truth. In fact, it is by the strength of truth that her triumphant march has gone forward; it is by the allurement of the passions that her decline has come — under the sway of those passions, we wish to give everything to ourselves, depriving the world outside.

Now the greatest question we must put to ourselves is this: have we nothing left to give? Have we come to that final barbarism of utter destitution, in which there is only want and no wealth at all? Can it be any good to us if the whole world comes to our door and turns away unfed? I do not say that we need not produce the bread for famine; but if there be nectar in our store, can we survive by neglecting entirely our duty regarding it?

Whatever the answer each of us may give to this question, our striving is this: that the answer which has come to our minds should find its full expression within the

work of Visva-Bharati. Visva-Bharati wishes to proclaim her own identity through this very Vedic mantra: "Yatra viśvaṃ bhavatyekanīḍam" — "Where the whole world becomes a single nest." Here we shall establish the seat of that kinship which is fit to be spread throughout the universe. In that seat there is no decay, no staleness, no narrowness.

We wish to seat everyone in this place; has that work even yet begun? The sages who have come here from other lands have, we are certain, felt within their hearts a summons. Our well-wishers, who are closely bound to this ashram, all know that our guests from distant lands have received here the hospitality of India herself, and, having received it, have found deep contentment. Whatever we offer from this place finds its proof in these very guests. They have honoured us. From our country's side they have received kinship, and from their side too the bond of kinship has become real.

Thus I say, the work has begun. The truth of Visva-Bharati has grown ever more luminous. What subjects we teach our students here, whether the teaching pleases everyone's mind or not, whether a department of higher education has been opened on the model of an ordinary college, or whether some work is being done in the department of research — let us not think of all these as the essence of our permanent identity. All this exists today; tomorrow it may not. I fear lest the small thing become so magnified that one day the weeds choke the standing grain. On the branch of a great tree some particular bird may build its nest, but that particular bird's nest is not the sole defining mark of the tree. The true sign of the tree's greatness lies in the truth it reveals of the whole forest's nature within itself.

I have said before that our striving is to welcome the world through that very manifestation of India which the world holds in reverence. I am reluctant to speak of what experience I have gained in the Western continent in this work of Visva-Bharati. Many of our countrymen may perhaps not receive it with reverence; indeed, the mockers may even deride it. But that too is no hard matter. What truly deserves thought is this: that the reverence our country gains abroad should not be turned into mere material for vanity. That is a matter for joy, not a matter for pride. When we feel pride, we push those outside us further away still; when we feel joy, we know them as our very own. I have seen this again and again: those

noble souls abroad who have loved us — many among us have regarded them as though they were mere property to be claimed, accepting wholly the honour they have been able to show our nation, yet acknowledging none of the responsibility that falls to us in turn. By failing to acknowledge the glory of their own nation that is revealed in their conduct, we have given proof of our own deep poverty of spirit. Hearing their praise, we grow arrogant, calling ourselves great; we forget entirely this one lesson — that there is greatness in acknowledging and proclaiming, with unhesitating joy, whatever excellence exists in another. What has humbled me more than anything else is this: that wherever I have carried the image of India to other lands, it has nowhere been dishonoured. Those who have honoured me have, through me, honoured India herself. Whatever I may become in this world hereafter, may that honour never diminish, for it is not bound to me personally. By accepting Visva-Bharati, you have taken upon yourselves the charge of making manifest the immortal form of India. May our effort be fruitful; may the guest-house be filled, day upon day, to overflowing; may those who come receive honour, receive joy; may hearts give, may hearts receive; may the exchange of truth and affection make deep and far-reaching the bond between India and the world — this is my desire.

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# VISVA-BHARATI — 13

When I lived in a village of Bengal, there was a woman renunciate there who held me in reverence. She had asked of me a gift of land for building her hut. From whatever crop that land yielded, her own food was provided, and she maintained two or three orphan children as well. Her mother was living, in comfortable circumstances; her mother had made many attempts to bring her daughter home again, but the daughter would not consent. She told me once: in the food of one's own house is born the pride of self — the mind cannot be rid of this illusion, that I am the owner of this food, that it is I who feed myself. But the food I receive by begging from door to door is God's own food — He gives it to me through the hands of all men; upon it I have no claim of my own, only trust in His mercy.

I have served Bengal, throughout my life, within the medium of the Bengali language. Of my sixty-five years, for at least fifty-five I have devoted myself to the pursuit of literature, and whatever boon I have gained from Sarasvati I have laid, in its entirety, into Bengal's treasury. For this reason, upon whatever affection and honour I have received from Bengal, I have a claim of my own — and were Bengal to be miserly, were she to withhold from me my due, I might say, in some reproach, that Bengal remains in my debt. But upon the esteem, the affection, that I have received beyond Bengal, or abroad, I have no claim of self-regard. For this reason I accept this latter gift as God's own gift. He shows me mercy — or others show me mercy — for no particular reason at all.

In this gift of God the mind grows humble; from it pride is not born. We may take pride even in the few coins in our own pocket; but of that golden light which God has poured to fill the sky, whose worth we can never repay, we may possess the right only to feel joy, never pride. The honour bestowed by others is, in the same way, beyond price — that gift I accept in a spirit of humility, never of arrogance. In this honour I have not had the occasion to feel myself merely as Bengal's child. In Bengal's modest house I had room for pride; but in India's greater house, I have room for joy.

My Lord did not give me, in His temple, merely the charge of playing the flute — He did not grant me leave simply upon the weaving of garlands of verse. When my youth had passed, when my hair had turned grey, then came my summons into His presence. There He sits as the mother of children. He said to me, smiling: "My son, all this while you have been of no use at all —

merely stringing together words, wandering about. Your years are spent; now, in whatever days remain, serve these children."

I began the work — that was the work of my school at Santiniketan. I began teaching with a few Bengali boys. Pride arose in my mind: this is my work, my creation. I thought, I am doing good for Bengal; this is my own power.

But that this was the command of a Lord who belongs not to Bengal alone — this truth He whose work it was made me remember. From across the sea came friend Andrews, came friend Pearson. Upon the friendship of one's own kin there is a claim; that friendship serves one's own people in turn. But when those with whom there was no bond of blood, whose language was foreign, whose ways were foreign, came unbidden and stood at my side, then my pride melted away, and my joy was born. When God makes a stranger His own, it is in that very kinship that we may know Him as our true kin.

Pride had arisen in my mind that I was doing much for my own country — that I was offering my wealth, my capacity, to my native land. That pride of mine was shattered when a foreigner came to join this work. Then I understood: this too is not my work, it is His — His who is the God of all mankind. These foreign friends who sent themselves unasked, who, far from their own kin, poured out their entire lives in the midst of a nameless corner at the edge of the world, at the edge of India — they did not think, even for a single day, that those for whom they offered themselves were foreigners, were of another country, were children, that these children had no wealth with which to repay their debt, no power, no honour to bestow. They themselves were men of the highest learning; many posts of honour awaited them; many higher salaries called to them — all these they refused, uncomplainingly, deprived of the honour and affection of their own countrymen, pursued by the suspicion of those in authority, scorched by heat and disease, they

gave themselves to this work. For this work they took no wage; they took only suffering. They did not make themselves great; they made their Lord's command great, they made love great, they made the work itself great.

This, indeed, was God's mercy upon me — that in diminishing my pride, He enlarged my striving. Can this striving now be contained within the narrow bounds of Bengal alone? Boys began to come from beyond Bengal. I did not call them; even had I called, my call could not have reached so far. He who, from across the sea, called His servants in His own voice — He it was who, with His own hand, erased the boundaries of His field of service.

Today nearly thirty boys from Gujarat have come and settled in our ashram. The guardians of those boys are the ashram's truest well-wishers. They have shown us every kind of favour; such favour I have found nowhere else in India. For long years I raised Bengali boys to manhood in this ashram — yet in Bengal I find no support. That too is my Providence's mercy. Where the claim is greater, what one receives there is but a due — a kind of rent. He who receives rent, even should he be a king, is unfortunate, for he receives it as alms from those beneath him; but he who receives a gift receives it from above — that is love's own gift, not an exaction wrung by force. The favour my ashram has received from beyond Bengal is itself a blessing — it is pure. Through that favour, this ashram has become the possession of the whole world.

Therefore today, setting aside all pride of self, forsaking all pride in Bengal, I have gone forth to beg, beyond its borders, for the mother of this ashram. "Śraddhayā deyam" — it must be given in faith. By the gift of that faith may all receive this ashram as their own, make it the possession of all, and raise it up into the realm of the universal. This universal realm is itself the realm of the immortal. Whatever remains confined within the narrow bounds of our pride, within the narrow bounds of our self-interest, lies subject to death. Whatever belongs to all mankind belongs to all time. Through the alms of all, may the nectar of Providence be showered upon our ashram; in that anointing of nectar may we, His servants, be made pure; may our pride be washed away, may our strength grow steadfast and unsullied — with this desire in my heart I have come before you all; through you all, may Providence

be pleased with us, and may He take into His own right hand our words, our minds, and our endeavour, into the fabric of His own creation of good.

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# VISVA-BHARATI — 14

Long ago, from the practice of literature on the riverbank, I came, I know not at what summons, to this open country. Since then thirty years have passed. I do not think I have much further claim upon my years remaining. Perhaps in the time to come I shall have no more occasion to speak. It is for this reason that I wish to speak today what is in my heart.

Why an undertaking begins, none can say. Why a tree should come forth from a seed, who knows? Between the two there is no resemblance at all. When the summons comes from within the depths of life, none knows its ultimate meaning. I came here in a time of sorrow; through grief, through poverty, bearing the weight of mortal bereavement, I went onward for long years — why, I cannot fathom even in thought. I cannot say clearly by what attraction I came to this barren plain.

Man discovers himself in its purity only through that labour which has no reckoning of worldly gain and loss. Only by offering ourselves beyond ourselves do we come to possess ourselves. It was, I believe, that very will which made me, on that day, take so great a leave from the habitual labour of composition that was my nature's own.

My resolve, in those days, was that I would give the boys an education that was not merely of the book; I would, as far as I could, make them into men by uniting their learning with that joy of liberty found amid the open sky and the unbounded plain. It was not that I had gathered the means of instruction. I myself had received no ordinary schooling, and in that matter I was without experience. My joy lay in the inner world of Nature, in the harmony of trees and sky and light. This had been my true acquaintance since childhood. That I had found this joy, I wished also to give. In school, I was banishing my boys from this very fountain of joy. That teacher within universal Nature, who through the flow of manifold powers — form, flavour, fragrance, sound, colour — makes the life of man rich and fruitful, is set aside, and the schoolmaster seeks instead to force-feed to children, upon the tip of a cane, a joyless learning. I resolved that into children's education the sap of life must be

made to flow — that not from our affection alone, but from Nature's own treasury of beauty, they should gain the wealth of life. With this wish alone, in the smallest possible compass, the ashram school began; in making this small thing true, I sought to make myself true.

By serving the boys, through the sacrifice of personal pleasure, through the bond of affection, perhaps I was able to give them something — but I myself received far more than that. Even then, adversities were without end. Having begun the work in this way, gradually my mind advanced further into this task. That feeble beginning has today gone forward a very long way. My resolve has today taken a certain form. I shall not reckon the sorrowful adversities through which I have had to pass every day. Again and again I have thought: why, in the striving for my true resolve, should I not find everyone beside me — why must I go on alone? Today I have become somewhat free from that resentment, and so I can say: this was the complaint of a weak mind. Of that which has no outward pomp, no excitement, which cannot hope for recognition among men, whose sole worth lies in an inward unfolding, in the Inner Witness's own approval — of such a thing it cannot rightly be said that other people are somehow at fault for their indifference toward it. The realization belongs to him alone; the burden is his alone. If others do not share in it, no complaint can be made. He upon whom the burden falls must settle the account and go his way; if a sharer be found, well and good — if none be found, that fact cannot compel one. If the demand to give up everything comes from within, then it cannot be said: what did I get in exchange for this? Once the command has reached the ear, it must be obeyed.

Our task is to give truth its form. Even if truth be acknowledged within, it must also be made manifest without. That I have made my resolve wholly successful can never be said at any time — I have given it a body only through harsh obstruction. Let me not think of this: when I am gone, who will watch over it, what the future holds for it or does not hold. I wish to carry only this consolation: that I have done what I was able to do; whatever I received in my heart, however hard to bear, has been accepted into action. What shape this institution will take, through the play of society, amid its varying circumstances, I cannot even imagine. It may be feared that it will continue to develop exactly along the lines upon which I set it in motion. But that very arrogant covetousness must itself be renounced. Through what

transformation of form, in union with society and with time, this institution's journey, by its own vital impulse, will proceed along the path of the future — who today can determine that with certainty? That whatever in it is personal to me will be acknowledged by history forever — this can never be so. May whatever truth exists within it have its unimpeded triumphant march; if that life-giving mantra of truth abides within it, then we may take it for granted that the form it will assume, in its outward expression, will not resemble the picture of today. But — "Mā gṛdhaḥ" — covet not the shape fashioned by your own hand. Whatever is small, whatever is the creation of our own egotism, existing today and gone tomorrow — let us not make the mistake of consolidating that, upon some sectarian foundation, as though it were our ultimate refuge. It is only through true striving and true action, moment by moment, that our institution will give its own living testimony — and there alone lies its eternal life. Let not the mind of the trader seek to display some gross, popularly impressive prosperity; let its true glory be revealed in inward grandeur. May the depth of the ideal, through unceasing fulfilment, guide it along the path of self-creation. The measure of this fulfilment does not depend upon time, for the infinite nature of truth is revealed in its own moment of pure manifestation.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 15

In my middle years, when I resolved to found a school here at Santiniketan among boys, there was then apprehension and disquiet in my mind, for I had no experience in this labour. Despite the want of worldly habit and of education suited to it, despite my lack of skill in the craft of teaching, my resolve grew firm. For, upon reflection, I saw that a certain system of education had once prevailed in our country, and that its revival was especially needed. I did not hold the blind partiality of believing that system to be the best in all the world; but this conviction took possession of my mind: that man is born into these two realms alike — universal Nature and human society — and that only by bringing the two together into a single confluence, within a school for boys, can education attain its fullness and human life its completeness. If, severed from the call of universal Nature, one forces upon children an education built solely of book-learning, one merely accumulates the substance of knowledge; the mind that is to receive it is reduced to the condition of a beast of burden. The very purpose of education is thereby defeated.

I have not forgotten the experience of my own childhood. In my boyish mind there was a natural fondness for Nature; when, banished from that fondness, my mind was ground, as though by machinery, in the lifeless discipline of school instruction, I suffered harsh anguish. To crush the mind in this way, to habituate the boyish mind to such harshness, cannot be conducive to mental health. We have forgotten the very ideal of education. Education is surely not the mere distribution of information; man is not born to carry tidings — it is the aim at the root of life itself that we must seek to grasp. The purpose of education is to realize, in knowledge and in action alike, the entire ideal of human life.

It seemed to me that I might find, within education itself, the resolution of this question: what is the aim of life? Some intimation of it may be found in our country's ancient system of education. In the deep austerity and instruction of the forest hermitage lay an educational discipline through which teacher and student alike attained the fullness of life. Not merely sacred learning, but also the pursuit

of secular sciences — grammar, etymology, prosody, astronomy, and the like — brought teacher and disciple together, in ancient times, upon the same field of striving; if such a discipline of cooperation can be achieved here too, then education will attain its fullness.

How far, at present, we are able to adopt that discipline is hard to say. Today we do not lack dispersal of mind. But this ancient confluence of learning was not the opinion of any particular time or community. At the root of man's mental faculties lies this one truth: that man is not an isolated creature, that he is bound in communion with all mankind, and that herein lies the fullness of his life — this is man's very nature. Therefore, in whatever country, in whatever age, man may produce whatever learning or labour, all mankind has a right to it. In learning there is no distinction of race or caste. Man has the right to the wealth created and evolved by all mankind — this truth lies at the very root of his life. The education into which man comes by the fact of his birth is not the gift of any one race. Age after age, the stream of all mankind's labour and learning has flowed and mingled into a single ocean of thought. Upon the shore of that ocean of thought is man born, and it is that very ocean's summoning mantra that is proclaimed in every direction.

Man of the earliest ages one day discovered the mystery of fire, and put it to use. The truth of fire did not remain bound to any particular age; all mankind became possessor of this wondrous mystery. In the same way, clothing, the tilling of land, and the like, beginning from the discoveries of the earliest ages, through man's labour and striving in every quarter — the treasure of knowledge we have thereby received belongs to no particular race or age. This truth we do not properly realize. We desire such a gift as all mankind can receive.

We are born into the field of sacrifice of all mankind. Brahma, who offers up Himself even within His own creation — that is His joy, and within that field of His renunciation all living beings subsist, and enter into Him, and are dissolved — this is, as it were, a truth of the spiritual realm; but in the realm of mind too, man must be made to realize that he is born, and moves about, within the domain of the great souls' renunciation; only then can we endow incidental education with completeness and universality.

My resolve, therefore, was this: that I would arrange education so as not to confine the mind within any particular race or individual; that, despite the harsh obstacles and blind prejudices of the country, I would, through the cooperation of the human mind of every land, establish here, through universal collaboration, a field of all-learning; that I would achieve this truth not through the mere reading of history, geography, and literature, but through the union of all branches of learning. This is an exceedingly difficult undertaking, for on every side the country offers resistance to it. One must struggle against the countrymen's self-pride and the narrowness of national vanity.

That we have attained complete success here I cannot say; but we must remember that the resolve inherent in this institution still remains. If one is occupied solely with incidental procedures, spreading their intricate net wide, the achievement of outward order and discipline may become possible, but the ideal itself will be stunted.

When, at first, I opened this school here with a handful of boys, there was as yet no temptation toward fruitful results. We had then, as helpers, a few devoted workers — Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, the poet Satishchandra, Jagadananda. These were then united in a single harmony of spirit. The atmosphere then was of a different kind. We were not merely entangled in the net of rules and prohibitions; with few students, our daily life became real through intimate union with them all. In serving them we realized a deep joy, an ultimate fulfilment. I witnessed then infinite patience among the teachers. I remember that we never dismissed those boys who gave us pain through their misdeeds, nor punished them in any other way. As long as the charge of this was in my own hands, I forgave them again and again; I forgave the teachers too. Many of those very students later attained distinction.

In those days there was no anxiety for outward fruits, no busyness in giving marks after examinations; we tried to make every student our own. In those days the school had no connection with the university, and was wholly detached from it. I noted a very deep devotion toward this institution in the minds of the students of that time.

The school went on in this way for a long time; much later its compass came to be enlarged. Fortunately, I did not then receive the help of my countrymen; their groundless opposition and causeless hostility struck me — but I paid it no heed, and made no attempt to publicize the work I was beginning. I remember my dear friend Mohit Sen, who became attracted upon receiving an account of this school, and whose mind was stirred profoundly by our ideal. He said, "I was able to do nothing — the university's employment is my livelihood; had I been able to come here and work, I should have thought myself blessed. That could not be. I have earned something in this examination season; I wish to give something from it." So saying, he gave me a note of one thousand rupees. This was, I believe, the first and last sympathy I received from my own province. In this connection I must also mention the favour of the affectionate Maharaja of Tripura toward me. Even today that favour continues, flowing through his lineage.

Mohit Babu remained, for long, sincerely connected with this undertaking, and would inquire after my needs. He asked permission to write something in the papers about this school. I objected to this. I said, "I have sat down among the trees with a handful of boys; there is no grand establishment here, the outward scene is humble; the general public will quite misunderstand it."

With this handful of teachers and students, I ran this school through great hardship, standing at the very extremity of financial distress and difficulty — the history of that is not preserved. Through hard striving, borrowing to supply the daily necessities, I spent my days utterly bereft of means, but there was no regret. For there lay a deep truth concealed within that very destitution. Well — this discussion is in vain. The fruit of labour cannot be shown in outward display; the circulation of vital sap is a hidden, secret thing, not something to be called forth and displayed. That deep work went on here even amid every kind of adversity.

This harsh opposition has its usefulness — just as the barrenness of land must be removed through hard effort before a crop can be made to grow, and only then does it gain its productive power, its sap of fertility. It is a matter of sorrow that Bengal's field of the mind is barren, unfavourable to the establishment of any lasting institution. That ill will which wounds for no reason, breaking what has been

built, striking at resolve, accepting nothing with reverence — had this school's endeavour been spared that, perhaps it would have been difficult to preserve its own truth; many things, once drawn by premature fame, are not meant to last. It is through this very obscurity, then, that this school has survived and grown.

A time came when its compass began to expand. Vidhushekhar Shastri Mahashay said: the toles and chatuspathis of the country are narrow, unsuited to this age; they must be expanded and joined with Western learning, to make the country's educational system suited to the times. This thought too had taken hold in my mind. My school then was merely a place of instruction for boys; I had not imagined so vast an undertaking as this, nor did I think I should succeed in it. Shastri Mahashay was then in Benares, editing a Sanskrit monthly journal and pursuing literary studies. He came here and joined us. He was not then proficient in the Pali language and scriptures; it was at my request, first, that he undertook to gain knowledge in this scripture.

Gradually the work here began. It seemed to me that I must undertake the broadening of the country's educational system. There was then no university anywhere that gave a place of honour to the learning of every land. In all universities the curriculum had become designed merely for passing examinations; that educational arrangement, afflicted by the meanness of self-interest, made no attempt to receive learning with reverence. So it seemed to me that I should build here, freely, outside the governance of the university, an institution that would be a meeting-ground of all learning. Those who undertook that labour gradually came and joined here.

My child-school's expansion was accomplished — not through committees convened and deliberative assemblies summoned, but gradually, growing from its small beginnings. How, in the course of time, its field of activity became so vast, everyone knows.

Whatever success our work has achieved does not present itself as a clear image before the eyes of our workers; they grow doubtful, express dissatisfaction at the outward results. And so, now and then, one wishes to see wherein our labour's fulfilment lies — otherwise contentment does not come. This time, after returning

from Calcutta, the people of a nearby village took me with them — going among them gave me great joy; I felt, here indeed is fruit; here strength has spread, it has expanded from heart to heart. The results of examinations are a small matter — here indeed is the fruit we have gained: we have been able to awaken the minds of men. Man has understood that we are his own. Among the simple hearts of the villagers our influence has circulated; their own inner strength has been awakened.

Before my death I was glad to witness this thing. That these people called out to us in love, that they received from us reverence and strength — this was not a crowd gathered to hold some "great meeting," not something done merely to catch the newspaper's notice. But this call of the villagers touched my heart. It seemed to me that a lamp had been lit, that its flame had kindled heart after heart, that the light of man's strength had been illumined heart by heart.

This that has come to pass is not any one man's achievement. Through the effort, thought, and sacrifice of all the workers, the combined labour of all has nourished this whole. It is, therefore, a matter for confidence that this was not brought about by artificial means. This work was not done sheltering behind any particular individual. Have no fear — the circulation of vital force has occurred; in our absence this institution will not decay or lose its way.

We have been able to make the general populace a part of our own resolve — this institution moves in that direction. In small measure, in this one place, we shall solve India's problem. Not through the arrogance of politics, but by simply receiving our countrymen as our own kin and working here together with them — this is what we shall do. We cannot conquer the world by claiming the right of voting over them; rather, there will be an exchange of hearts with them, we shall engage ourselves in their service. They too will give, and will receive from us — this work of all-India shall be done here.

At one time a question was put to me: why do I not join the Swadeshi movement then current. I answer: the excitement that exists among the general populace will not advance my work. I do not believe that truth can be achieved through only one particular method alone. So I say this: when the answer to this question becomes

complete here, one day it will become visible to all. The supply of the answer I hold to be true may perhaps come from here itself.

I have been waiting in that expectation. There is no narrowness in truth — the striving toward humanity extends into every department. In the narrow effort to enlarge one's own faction, that very truth is dwarfed.

The notion of modern man is that resolve must be announced through advertisement. I see that nowadays the newspaper columnists sometimes write of Visva-Bharati's work. I fear this; if one's attention is turned this way, fame is made greater than truth. Truth does not scorn smallness, but fears the unreal; it therefore hesitates to take shelter in the clamour of renown. But the modern creed is to judge work by its extent, not by its depth. Its result is like the spreading of a tree's branches and boughs — the fruit thereby is diminished.

I have, at times, received much sorrow in solitude, but there was peace within it. I did not seek fame, and did not attain it; rather, it was obscurity that was mine. Manu has said: know honour to be like poison. For long I have not demanded honour as a reward for my labour. I have worked alone, in solitude, having given up all hope of cooperation. Had I hoped, there was no prospect of its coming. In such a place, to receive no outward recognition is itself wholesome.

What good is it to deceive myself with the claim that this institution of Visva-Bharati will remain fruitful age after age? Working with a mind freed from illusion, resigned, doing what one can to the extent of one's power — this much I know how to do. Providence demands of us our labour. But if we demand of Him its fruit, He keeps its reckoning hidden; He does not dishonour our endeavour by settling it with ready cash. Besides, that the resolve we make today will be repeated exactly in the time to come is not time's nature. We may prepare the road ahead, but we can by no means fix, once and for all, the destination according to today's taste and understanding. If, in blindness, we were to do so, that would become the tomb of our dead resolve. What we strive for today, when its time is fulfilled, will undergo its funeral rites; through that will come the body's release of truth — but remember that, after this, its summons to take on a new body in a new birth will come again:

"Nātinandeta maraṇaṃ nātinandeta jīvitam. Kālameva pratīkṣeta nirdeśaṃ bhṛtako yathā"

— "Let one not overmuch rejoice in death, nor overmuch in life. Let one simply await the appointed time, as a servant awaits his master's command."

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# VISVA-BHARATI — 16

When once, in my mature years, I founded this institution, the future floated before me; the path then lay toward its goal, the summons of what-was-not-yet resounded then — its image was still indistinct, and yet, in one respect, it was more vividly clear than it is now. For the ideal that was then in my mind advanced, undivided and with joy of its own, toward realization in the actual. Today my span of years is nearly spent; having reached the far end of the road, I have had occasion to look back upon its beginning; I have gone to that side — just as, when the setting sun stands upon the western horizon's edge, before it lies the eastern horizon, where its journey first began.

When we speak of a past age, our hearts exaggerate out of an earlier fondness — such is the belief many people hold. There is some truth in this, but not the whole truth. Of a distant time that we recall, whatever was discordant has, by then, of its own accord, fallen away from the mind. Whatever was accidental, whatever was incongruous and attached to the present moment, has by then crumbled and dissolved into dust; whatever, in earlier days, for various reasons, took on a hindered shape — the harshness of that hindrance no longer pains us today. For this reason the picture of yesterday that appears within the mind is fully complete; all the enthusiasm of the journey's beginning is then condensed upon the canvas of memory. Within it there remains no part that, by way of protest, continues to fragment another part. It is for this reason that we feel past memory so intensely and vividly in the mind. In the distance of time, the incompleteness of truth's outward form is effaced, and the general image of imagination appears undiminished.

When this school first began, how slight its requirements were — those who were students here in that era know this. In comparison with today, the scarcity of its resources, its poverty in every department, was exceedingly great. We began our work with a handful of boys and one or two teachers, beneath a great jackfruit tree. Their manner of life then was utterly simple — far more so than it is now. It is certainly not correct to say that in the very feebleness of this manifestation lay the

fuller revelation of truth. The form we see in a child stirs joy in our minds through its beauty, but it does not possess within it the multiplicity of life's forms, nor their manifold powers. Its full worth lies in the expectation of the time to come; just as this first phase of the ashram's manner of living was, in the present, small, it was, in the future, destined to be great. What I desired then held within it no doubt at all. There was then hope, directed toward nectar; the accumulation of worldly resources upon which society is founded — leaving that behind, all had come here. Those who were my fellow-workers here were exceedingly poor. I remember now — what hardship they endured here, what poverty of bodily and worldly comfort they bore. There was as yet nothing of temptation here, not even the conveniences of living, nor even any fame — not even in the mirage-form of future prospects of improvement had an illusion spread upon the distant horizon then. No one then knew of us, nor did we wish to make ourselves known. The great drums of publicity that exist now in various newspapers, lending sound and fashioning a story out of trivial events — there was no such widespread arrangement then. Many friends even wished to announce this school's existence. But we did not desire it. Unseen by the public eye, through much sorrow, that was our true austerity. There was such want of money that it cannot even be imagined today, even in a time of world-wide depression. And this fact no one will ever know, in no history will it be written. The ashram had no property, no assistance either — nor did we seek any. For this very reason, those who worked here in those days gave inwardly, and received nothing outwardly. Not everyone who was drawn here, attracted by that ideal, had a sense of it that was clear or strong, but within that small compass it was able to become intensely concentrated. The students were then exceedingly close to us, and the teachers too were exceedingly close to one another — they were each other's dear friends. I had taken the ideal of our country's forest hermitage. With the change of time, the form of that ideal has undergone change, but its essential truth remains intact — namely this: to acknowledge the ideal of livelihood, and to subordinate it to the general ideal. At one time this was fairly manageable, when the compass of daily life was not overly vast. But it is not wholly true that, within that narrow scope, a simple life was therefore the best ideal. In higher music there may be many flaws; on a single-stringed instrument the chance of error is small, but that does not make the single string the best. Rather, when labour, having become widely extended, proceeds along a rugged path, if, despite all its errors and failings, there remains life within it, then it must be honoured. There can be no

greater self-deception than the wish and effort to bind, forever, the simplicity of childhood.

This same truth applies to our work. When I was alone, within a small field of labour, the inspiration of a single intention worked easily upon the minds of all the workers. Gradually, as this ashram grew large, it could no longer be possible for one person's intention to be fully expressed within it. Many have come here, diverse their education and training — I work with them all, I do not select some and reject others; various errors and faults occur, various revolts and conflicts occur — and amid all this, the manifestation of life within this intricate world, which is forever stirred by blow and counter-blow, I honour. I myself do not revere so very simple an arrangement as that all should, together, play upon a single string tuned to the ideal I have sent forth. I know what I call great, what I have chosen to honour as the best; I know that among many there is a want of devotion to it, but I do not wish to complain of that — today, even while I remain present, whatever work is being done here is, through various conflicts and inconsistencies, forming itself quite naturally according to the law of life; and when I am no longer here, whatever is stirred up through the combined endeavour of many minds will be the simple truth. It would become artificial if some one individual were to bind everyone to his own command and direction — within the very law of life, self-contradiction too must be acknowledged and accepted.

Today, after many days, I am able to see this ashram as a whole; I have seen that it has grown up of its own accord, by its own law. When the Ganges is at the mouth of Gangotri, it has but a single stream. Afterward, gradually, the more it has united with many rivers and streams, the nearer it has drawn to the sea, the more its form has been transformed. That original clarity is no longer there; much turbidity has entered into it, and yet no one says the Ganges ought to turn back, simply because much impurity has crept into it, because that simple flow is no longer there. The wholeness that comprehends all of this is itself the greater thing — the ashram too has moved, self-propelled, along that same path; through the confluence of many human minds it has grown to its present wholeness. Of course, within this, a certain original impulse brings a certain unity; that too is necessary, and yet its momentum has grown powerful through the union of all. Nothing can be imagined as eternal, as lasting forever — yet I hope that a certain deep truth at its root will remain

constant: namely, that this will not become a mere cage for the imparting of learning, but that here all together shall create a realm of living spirit. No one can fashion such a heaven in which there is no impurity, nothing sorrowful; but friends will know that whatever in this is blameworthy is not, for that reason, the greater part of it. The eyelid rises, the eyelid falls — but the falling of the lid is not the greater thing; to call that the greater thing is to call blindness great. Those who are hostile — it is not that they will not find matter for censure; no one can be wholly protected from the hand of censure. But to defeat it and survive beyond it is itself proof of vitality. Within our own bodies there are various enemies, the germs of various diseases — if we were to isolate and look at those alone, we would see every man as a repository of corruption. But in truth, the health that is seen having conquered disease is itself the truth. Just as a battle rages within the body, so too, within every institution, there exists a certain conflict between good and ill — but that lies, as it were, behind; the stronger evidence here is that of health.

I have never said, nor do I say even today, that what I shall say is scripture — I am not that kind of actor. I have invented no extraordinary doctrine; the truth of the undivided, fulfilled life of which the seekers speak is a truth that all must acknowledge. Let this one truth remain constant. After that, the work of ongoing creation will be accomplished by all together. Just as there is a skeleton within the human body, so too there exists, within this institution, a certain mechanical aspect. Let this institution be full of life, but let the machinery not become the principal thing; let there remain a path for the free movement of heart, spirit, and imagination. I imagine that those who once, at some time, tasted the savour of this school, who united their life with the life here, may perhaps have encountered many obstacles here, suffered much sorrow — but, once at a distance, seeing it in its proper perspective, they will see what here is great, what is true. I believe that many such discerning students and workers certainly exist, for otherwise it would be unnatural. At one time they received various joys here, were bound in bonds of friendship — that they should have no tenderness toward it cannot be. I hope that, not through passive tenderness alone, but by becoming, in their inmost selves, a part of this institution, if they wish it well, then it will be able to remain sustained by its own life, and the harshness of mechanism will not be able to grow dominant. Those who were once students here, who have received something here, given something here — if they receive it with their whole heart, then it will be full of life.

For this reason I express today this wish: that we should adopt such a method as will make it easy for those who wish to give here the offering of their lives, who wish to receive this with tenderness, to become part of it. I ask that those who were once here unite together and keep this school fulfilled. I did not come here resolving that this ashram should become, like other schools, a mere mechanical product — the mechanical part has indeed entered in, but may life, above all else, remain true within it. For that very reason I summon those who were once here, in whose minds that memory still remains bright. If, in the future, the strength of the ideal grows feeble, may those former ones revive it with the stream of their own life, may they, through devotion and reverence, make its labour fruitful — if I can receive this assurance, I may go forth at peace.

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# VISVA-BHARATI — 17

From where this ashram-school began, with what resolve, toward what goal it has proceeded — this is something worth considering once each year, especially now for me, since I feel that I shall have little more time to speak. Its history is not remarkable; the burden of work I undertook was not natural to my own temperament. I grew to manhood far removed, in some corner apart, from earlier society; the family in which I was raised had but slight connection with the world at large; and when I turned to literature, that too was spent in solitude upon the riverbank. At such a time came the summons of this school; I felt this thought: that confined within the city's cage, the human child suffers a kind of perpetual exile, his education too bound within the narrow compass of a school. Under the master's rule children suffer much pain; of this I too have my own experience. I never imagined that I would find any remedy for it. Yet one day, leaving the riverbank, I came here and called out to boys. The first enthusiasm that arose in the work here was the joy of creation; to view education merely as an organ of public service from the standpoint of the people's welfare — that is not the standpoint from which I began my work here. I imagined that, growing to manhood amid Nature's beauty, the minds of the boys here would unfold, their coverings would fall away. When I learned there was no one else to undertake the charge of this work, I took up this burden despite my lack of experience. I thought that my boys would become full of life, that curiosity would be awakened within them. It was not greed that they should obtain high marks and pass their examinations well; rather, my wish was this: that they should be joyful, that they should be fully unfolded through Nature's nurture and through intimate kinship with their teachers. With a handful of boys beneath the trees, I began my work with this very aim. The open field for Nature's unrestrained fellowship was here; I tried always, so that they might take joy, feel enthusiasm, in learning; I read the Ramayana and the Mahabharata aloud to the boys. Akshaychandra Sarkar Mahashay used to come here then; he expressed regret that, being unable to remain a student, he could not hear it. I invented various games for the boys in my own mind; I joined with them in acting plays; I composed dramas for them. So that they might not suffer sorrow in the darkness of evening, I created ever-new means of their diversion — I tried to keep their every

hour filled. My dramas and songs were composed for their sake alone. I joined even in their sport and play. None of these arrangements fall under the ordinary rules of education elsewhere. In other schools, perhaps, verb and noun forms are being purely drilled — the guardians' gaze too is turned in that very direction. We may perhaps have fallen short in that respect, but this much must be said: that here I gave the students the joy of easy liberation. I was always their companion — not merely in a class of ten or five, not confined merely to their set lessons — I tried to awaken them within their own inmost selves. My intention was that they should not be moulded rigid by any rule. In this endeavour I had as my companion the youthful poet Satishchandra — he was able to make learning sweet through joy; even so difficult a subject as Shakespeare he was able, through the virtue of his teaching, to impress delightfully upon the children's minds. After that, gradually, various seasonal festivals came into practice; my aim was that, unknown to themselves, our joyous union with Nature should develop through the cooperation of these festivals.

The number of students then was small — this too was an opportunity, for otherwise it would have been impossible for me alone to take up this burden. All the students and teachers had then become one; it was therefore easy to guide everyone with a single intention.

Gradually the school has grown great. While I was responsible for it, many a crisis came, and I bore it all; many a time I had to send away a large number of students, and whatever financial loss this caused I bore as best I could. I kept only this one aim in view: that student and teacher should be inspired by a single ideal, moving together. Gradually it seems that, along the easier path, the school has moved in that very direction — the methods of education generally current, the demands of the university, these have grown strong; its own course has changed, and the influence of the prevailing mould of the high school has grown dominant, for it is easy to incline that way; the ideal of success leans toward the ideal already current. In the midst of this came the Constitution; it was decided that the school would not remain under one individual's control, but that the taste of the general public would guide it. Perhaps because of my poet's nature, I cannot fully understand how a constitution, a framework of rules — in which greater weight falls upon artificial method than upon the law of life — can serve; I feel that this obstructs the work of

creation. Be that as it may, relying upon the Constitution, I have taken some respite from the midst of this; but I cannot forget that if no distinctive character remains to this school, we are depriving ourselves. I have had to give far more than my means allowed for this — no one knows how much; what unbearable suffering I have had to acknowledge. In great sorrow I had to shape it; if, after all that, it turns out to be something that already exists in plenty elsewhere — that is, if the standard of its success is made to conform to the ordinary — then what need was there to accept such enormous loss? If this school comes merely to be reduced to a high school, then I must say I have been cheated. Those who began teaching here along with me, who gradually grew up within the ideal of this place, many of them are now departed. The later ones who have come now have an ideal of teaching, of directing the students from a distance, that was not my way in my own time. By keeping such distance, it is not possible to awaken the inward self. This may perhaps allow for very efficient administration, but a greater want than that begins to grow. Now there are many students, many departments, and all proceed in a disconnected state. The workers are unable to view the whole institution as one, in the field of thought and in the field of service alike — a division is being born.

What I wish to say is this: if every department does not fall under a single vital process, then it is difficult to bear this burden. As long as I am here, I can perhaps resist this division, but in my absence, whose ideal will prevail? I have accepted much sorrow for the sake of this school — I hope I have the right to express this anxiety. There exists no institution within which there is nothing blameworthy, but the compassionate heart presses it to its bosom nonetheless; there exists no undertaking without its sorrow, but a friend bears that sorrow along with its joy. May we, united together with firm devotion, preserve the purity of our ideal, and not forget the school's fundamental purpose.

Gradually another idea entered into the school — the union of India with the world in the field of culture. From this there has been much gain and loss alike, but I have gained a few friends who have brought here the offering of their own self-sacrifice, who have loved my work, and loved me. They have heard much censure. Outwardly we are exceedingly poor, what can we show — yet they have helped as friends. He who has preserved Sriniketan is a foreigner — what has he not given! Andrews is poor, yet he has given whatever he could — how many blows we have dealt him,

yet never once, wounded by this, has he done us any harm. Pearson Sahib is our dearest friend, our truest well-wisher. Some of them are now departed. This unfeigned fellowship is a consolation amid all sorrow and loss. I acknowledge, with a full heart, my gratitude to these foreign friends.

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# VISVA-BHARATI — 18

In Europe there exist everywhere institutions dedicated to the pursuit of science — vast their preparation, manifold their endeavour. The power-centre of modern Europe lies in science, and for this reason the undertaking to cultivate it has easily received the support of all. But European culture is not concerned with science alone — there is literature too, music, various arts, and endeavours for the public good. The centres of these have taken shape, in various places, through the nation's own natural development.

The chief fulfilment of all these centres does not lie in their fruits of labour alone. Greater than that is the fulfilment achieved in the unfolding of the seekers' own souls. If the manifold provocation and support of that unfolding exist within a country, then that country's inner soul can awaken. In man's nature there exists, in its higher region, the command of disinterested labour; there stands established that altar where, without placing hope in anything else, one may surrender oneself purely to truth — for no reason at all, save that in this lies the fulfilment of one's own soul.

In our country, here and there, scattered far apart, there exist a handful of universities, where, bound by rigid rule, a mechanical system has set up its factory for manufacturing degrees. Taking advantage of this education, the number of businessmen too — doctors, engineers, lawyers, and the like — has steadily increased. But no field of disinterested dedication, for the sake of truth, for the sake of labour, has been established in society. In ancient times there was the tapovana — the forest hermitage — where seekers gathered together for the cultivation of truth and the unfolding of the soul's fullness; it was the kings' duty to maintain these hermitages with a sixth part of the state revenue. In every civilized land, a field of forest-dwelling has been fashioned for those devoted to the austerity of knowledge and labour.

In our country, the common man takes "sadhana" to mean the pursuit of spiritual liberation, the pursuit of renunciation alone. The resolve with which I undertook to

establish an ashram at Santiniketan did not have as its aim anything far removed from the ordinary man's cultivation of mind. What is called culture is manifold; it refines the mind, bringing forth its full worth from the dull obscurity of its primeval, mineral state. This culture has many branches and sub-branches; wherever the mind is healthy and simple, there the mind itself desires these manifold inspirations of culture.

My intention, in the ashram at Santiniketan, was to establish broadly a field for the cultivation of this culture. Not only is there, in our country's schools, a narrow limit fixed within the compass of textbooks for the cultivation of knowledge, but I shall acknowledge as belonging to this culture all the learning and practice needed for every kind of craft, art, dance, song, instrumental music, drama, and rural welfare work. I know that all of these are needed for the full unfolding of the mind. Just as the nutriment of various creatures, combined within our food, gives our body health and strength, so too all the subjects worth learning, which contain within them the ancient nutriment of the mind, must be combined together in the endeavour of our ashram — this is what I have long pondered.

On the banks of the Padma was my secluded dwelling. Coming from there to the ashram, I took my seat amid some five or six boys. Let no one think that my aim was to do them good. I had no resource of benefit to offer them through the work of teaching classes. In truth, the eagerness to pursue sadhana had seized hold of me — for my own sake. The greed to gain myself, through the act of giving myself away, had taken possession of me. My days passed, one after another, in the work of teaching these small boys; in it there was no prospect of expecting or tasting fame. The most humble of schoolmasters. That these few small boys took all my time, my means, my capacity — in this alone lay my fulfilment. This ordinary opportunity that came to me — through it I began to find myself. This self-unfolding comes only as the fruit of sadhana, in the meeting-field of vast human life. Only by setting aside oneself can one gain the fellowship of vast humanity — even within this trivial work of teaching small boys. In this there was no fame, no self-interest — and it is for that very reason that in it lies the touch of vast humanity.

Everyone knows that I have discovered no faculty of man's mind. From childhood, the powerful desire for self-expression that was awakened within my poetic

endeavour had its direction turned toward every faculty of man's mind. I have never branded the cultivation of any mental power of man as frivolity or want of gravity.

For many years I pursued literary work in a houseboat on the riverbank; in that there was for me the utmost peace and joy. But man is not merely a poet. To the manifold stirrings of mind that exist in the universe, one must respond from every side; one must say: Om — I am awake.

When I came here, the outward manifestation of my labour was exceedingly slight. Of this I can say only this much: those resources were scarce. Within an exceedingly small field, the joy that comes through giving oneself and receiving oneself — it was through that very joy that this ashram's work began.

Day by day the field of this work has expanded. Today it stands revealed before the gaze of the public at large. I have learned, from our experience, that our country's gaze is often unfavourable. But this has caused no loss; rather, it has only increased the worth of our labour.

Those who have worked in this school, even within a narrow compass of duty, deserve my grateful and reverent acknowledgment of their cooperation.

I do not know whether those who have come here have received it completely. But it is to them that I have dedicated this institution.

For long we remained hidden in this ashram. The seed's unknown sojourn within the earth is needed for the unfolding of life. The period of this unknown sojourn went on for a long time. If today this institution stands exposed to the public eye, then we must accept all the impact of that public gaze, the good and the ill alike — sometimes with a pained mind, sometimes with enthusiasm.

To those who come here as advisers, counsellors, or guests, let it be known: we have no businessman's shrewdness in this school. We have not preserved the goodwill of the crowd by following, moment by moment, the excited opinion of the public, and if, for that reason, we have been deprived of favour, that is our good

fortune. We endeavour to choose what is best in our labour. I know the cultivation of work to be one with the cultivation of humanity. A seat of sadhana has been established here. I do not boast that, in every school, that seat has been claimed by true seekers. But within the atmosphere here there exists one summons — "Āyantu sarvataḥ svāhā" — "Let them come from every side."

We have come to believe that our effort has not been in vain, though we cannot yet see the fully ripened form of the fruit. Those who have found, in our long and arduous endeavour, something of eternal worth — from their favourable regard we have received a boon. Their power of discernment has awakened our labour. Sages and guests have come from afar, and returned as friends; their assurance and their joy have been stored in the ashram's treasury of wealth.

Through long years of sacrifice, through striving, I have brought, as it were, to its final completion, together with the span of my own life, this work of offering dedicated to establishing this ashram at the very altar-root of the country. Through the approval of distant guests and visitors, this has become clear to us: that here there exists the circulation of vital force. These guests have seen some outward manifestation of its fruit in bloom and blossom, but beyond that they have seen also its inward workings. Those distant guests, those sages, are our truest friends, for we have received their assurance. That I have, in the labour of this ashram, dedicated myself — this will be fulfilled if, before I go, I can deliver this creation of mine into my country's hands. "Śraddhayā deyam" — as one must give in faith, so too, "śraddhayā ādeyam" — one must receive in faith. As I wish to give in faith, so too this must be received in faith. On the day when this giving and receiving is complete, on that day this field of my life's entire labour of sadhana will attain the form of fulfilment.

# VISVA-BHARATI — 19

After long days, I stand before you today in this temple. I have come today with the utmost diffidence. I know that, in the interval of my long absence, the knot of many of my long-held resolves has grown loose; whatever the reason, your minds are no longer prepared to grasp the inward purpose of every undertaking, every duty, of this ashram — there is no profit in denying this. For this not you alone, but all of us, are responsible.

Today I recall a day of forty years ago. I was then in a secluded corner of Bengal, upon the lonely bank of the Padma river. When the mind turns that way, it seems to see the glimmer of a distant age's dawn. Then suddenly came an awakening summons into my soul. I had till then merely written poetry and spent my days; I was immersed in study and literary discussion, and along with that bore a vast burden of worldly affairs.

Why, from that peaceful river-shore's tender embrace, I was drawn away to this sun-scorched desert plain, I cannot say.

Here, then, on every side outside, was sparseness and solitude, but always, within the mind, there was the assurance of a certain fulfilment. With single-minded devotion I desired always that the triviality, meanness, and presumption of the present age must all be swept away. That I should be able to bring those whose charge of education I undertook to the nectar-shore of India's age-spanning sadhana — this alone was the hope deep within me.

For how many days did I gather in the courtyard before this temple, with but one or two worshippers — ceaseless was the effort to awaken the dormant life-force. Along with that there was further effort to awaken, in the minds of the boys, their independent power of labour and power of thought. Never, in any fragmentary way, did I wish to give education. I never disrupted the wholeness of their education through the disjointed arrangement of classes.

The provision of that day was not dimmed by blind ritual, was not degraded by the fatigue of mere routine. There was no task here that was not intimately connected with one central source of reverence at the ashram's heart. Bath, food, and drink — every day's whole life was consecrated by this source. The sky and air of Santiniketan were filled with this very consciousness. In those days no one could remain inattentive here, out of disdain.

Today, drawn by the ebb-tide of old age, I have fallen far from your lives. I do not see anywhere the joyous eagerness to rescue, with my own hands, from the inadequacy of my failing strength, the ideal that I first bore when I came here, and to carry it forward with firm resolve. It seems to me that this is, as it were, the very characteristic of the present age. To doubt everything, to dishonour everything — in this, it seems, lies its arrogance. It is indeed that very hideous trait that has spread, like a plague, blooming forth today in nations and societies the world over, deriding as it does what is the eternal treasure of human civilization's endeavour.

Forty years ago, when I first came here, the sky of the ashram was clear. Not only that — poison-vapour had not yet spread across the distant horizons of human society.

Today again I come before you as though from a great distance. Once more I remember the long and difficult path by which I first entered this ashram. Piercing through the cruelty of adverse fortune, that journey proceeded forward; its history of unbearable sorrow no one will ever know. Today I have come through that memory of sorrow. With an anxious heart I have come seeking, among you, its fulfilment. Do not, through the faithless arrogance of the modern age, reject austerity from your minds — acknowledge this.

Much ruin has occurred throughout history, many monuments of civilization's achievement have been shattered age after age, yet man's strength has still not been utterly destroyed. Relying upon that very hope, the sinking vessel must be rescued; with new winds in its sail, it shall begin its voyage again. The current of time is carrying forward, within itself, even the new helmsmen of the present age, though it does not always reach their own perception. One day, when their own count of years has grown through presumptuous argument and derisive laughter,

the pride of a sterile intellect steeped in doubt will give no peace to the spirit. Then the search for the nectar-spring will begin in their lives too.

We are travellers upon that road of hope, preparing to offer, with reverence, the awakening mantra of a new dawn — a reverence in which there is invincible strength, whose vision will not be overcome by the darkness of nihilism, which will proclaim:

"Vedāham etaṃ puruṣaṃ mahāntam / Ādityavarṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt."

— "I have known this great Being, radiant as the sun, beyond all darkness."

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# APPENDIX

By the authority of this ashram's Guru and by your own permission, I accept with bowed head the charge of chairmanship that has been given me. I am wholly unworthy of this charge. But this present institution is vast and spans many ages. Setting aside, therefore, personal modesty, I have undertaken this duty. For many years a centre of learning has grown up at this ashram. An educational experiment of this kind is very rare in our country. This country is, after all, the country of ashrams and monastic communities and viharas. Here and there one or two such schools, like the "Gurukul," exist, but this is inspired in an entirely new way. Its place can be filled by nothing else. Here, beneath the open sky, in the lap of Nature, amid the clouds, the thunder, the rain, and the wind, boys and girls are being nurtured. Here it is not only outward Nature that has been invoked, but through artistic creation, the inner nature too has been awakened into its surrounding state. The boys and girls here have become one family, united among the teachers. One universal soul, as a personality, has remained always awake within it. In this way this school has grown. Today the spreading and fulfilment of that foundation has begun. Today is the day of Visva-Bharati's rise. By the formal meaning of the name "Visva-Bharati," we understand that the "Bharati" who worked unseen for so long is today made manifest. But within it there lies also another resonant meaning — that the "Visva" (universe) shall come to reach "Bharat" (India), making that universe Indian, colouring it with our own blood, inspiring it with India's great soul, and then again presenting that very soul before the universe. In that sense alone does the name Visva-Bharati find its fulfilment.

One thing we must remember: what is India's great soul? That great soul, nearly lost, which we seek to grasp — if, in seeking it, we do not establish commerce and exchange with the world as a whole, then we shall not attain self-realization. "Each can realize himself only by helping others as a whole to realize themselves" — as this is true, so too its converse, namely "others can realize themselves by helping each individual to realize himself," is equally true. Just as another stands between me and my goal, on the path I must travel, so too I stand between him and his. For where Brahma encompasses us both, there we are one, abiding within a single great unity. Seen in this way, we must gain, in Visva-Bharati, an understanding of

what India's soul is, and in that we shall see the self reflected in the form that the world's self-understanding will take.

I wish today to say something concerning India. Today there exists, throughout the world, a single problem. Everywhere a spirit of revolt is visible — a revolt against ancient civilization, against social order, against learning and intellect, against institutions, against everything. All that our ashrams, our temples, and the like, had become, seems to be turning to dust. The fire of revolt burns, and it acknowledges no order, no progress, wants no reform, wants nothing at all. The great war that occurred, through this very revolt a greater war than that is now approaching; the late Great War was but one manifestation of it. How shall this problem find its resolution, where shall peace be found? Every nation has the right to answer this. In this problem, what has India to say, what has she to give?

From the long meditation and reflection of all these ages, have we gained an experience that holds something toward the resolution of this problem? The effort being made in Europe in this regard has been made from the direction of political administration. There, upon a political foundation, through treaty, convention, pact, the attempt is being made to establish peace. This will happen, and there is need for it to happen. I see that there, the Multiple Alliance too did not succeed, but led to conflict instead. Nor did the Arbitration Court and the Hague Conference succeed; in the end it has come to rest upon the League of Nations. Its reliance is upon the limitation of armaments. But I believe that, beyond this, effort must be made in other directions too; not merely in the political field, but effort is needed in the social direction as well. For the universal, simultaneous disarmament of all nations, a new Humanism's religious movement ought to arise. The machinery that would result from it would not remain subordinate to the diplomacy of parliaments or cabinets. The joint sitting of parliaments will, of course, occur, but alongside this, only through a conference of various Peoples can peace truly be established. But one thing will be necessary — the life of the mass, the religion of the mass. In the present age, individual salvation alone will not suffice; now, salvation lies only in salvation for all, or there is no salvation at all. This aspect of mass life within religion must be established in society.

What message should India give regarding this? India too has intuited peace, and China too has done so. In China, the effort has been made from the social direction. If there be social fellowship of man with man, then international peace will come; otherwise it will not. The very foundation of Confucius's teaching is this: that society is a family, that peace is founded upon social fellowship; only if there is peace within society can there be peace outside it. India has given this another foundation — the peace of non-violence and friendliness. To perceive, in every individual, the form of the universe, and within it to realize the unity of Brahma — within this conception lies the peace that India alone has sought. The peace-compact that would establish the self upon the foundation of Brahma — that alone would bring peace. In the effort to resolve this problem, we need both China's social fellowship and India's peace of the soul; otherwise the League of Nations will achieve nothing. For the conflict greater even than the Great War that is proceeding to engulf the world, Visva-Bharati must, on India's behalf, give its message.

India has seen that the State, in the political field, is nothing in itself. She has said that beyond the nation there exists a greater truth, and that the eternal faith possesses its own distinct nature. Wherever the unfolding of the soul and the manifestation of Brahma occur, there alone is her country. With the spread of her faith, India has believed in this extra-territorial nationality. Following this example of India, the League of Nations' conception of nationality must be revised. Similarly, from the standpoint of the soul, the idea of extra-territorial sovereignty must be given a place. In this way a Federation of the World might be established; adapted to the needs of the present time, this notion of extra-territorial nationality might be raised before the League of Nations. From the political standpoint of India, this is the message to be given. We see that the Buddhist missionaries propagated the idea that every king's code ought to be such as would serve not only his own people's welfare, but equally that of every other people. In India's history this principle has always been observed; her kings, through victory and defeat, even as emperors, have thus acknowledged international obligation.

What is India's message regarding social life? Here, among us, the group and the community occupy a very great place. These are an intermediary body between state and individual. In Rome and similar countries, conflict arose, through the

state's structure, between the State and the Individual; in the end, the result of individualism was anarchy, and the result of the State was militarist socialism. In the history of our own country, we see, within varna-ashrama and religious communities, the life of the community itself. Just as, under varna-ashrama, every individual had certain dues, so too he had certain obligations, certain fixed duties to perform. Just as "community in the individual" exists, so too "the individual in the community" exists. In every man's individual life, both group-personality and individual personality are awake; both of these are equally necessary. Within group-personality, a place must be given to the individual's own right. A flaw has remained in our country, that our individual personality has not developed, nor has there been co-ordination of power in the state. We have suffered loss on account of our individual personality. We have been humiliated at the hands of organized enemies.

Today in Europe there is a need for the group principle. There, political organization, economic organization, all are moving in the direction of forming groups. We too have a problem to solve along this path. Just as we have something to receive from Europe regarding the centralization and organization of the state, so too Europe has something to receive from us regarding the group principle. We must take economic organization from that land and build up our own village community. Agriculture is the chief support of our way of life; our effort, therefore, must be directed toward ruralization. I do not, of course, mean to say that town life should not be developed — that too is necessary. But we must achieve a union of spirit with the soil. If there is a proper relation of ownership with the land, then freedom can exist. Factory life, too, is necessary, but large-scale production must be brought in without abandoning the individual's relation of ownership to land and homestead. Energy must be brought in on a large scale, but we must see to it that the energy of machinery does not oppress and overwhelm man's soul, does not make it inert. Through the cooperative system, a place in the country must be given to manual labour as well. In this way India must give her own identity to economic organization. Our standard of life stands at so low a level that we are sitting down to die of decay. Without abandoning the method whereby I indicated efficient organization, we must put science to use in fulfilling our needs. In our Visva-Bharati, therefore, every institution of politics, social duty, and economics that exists in the world must be studied, and understanding where and in what

respect our deficiency lies, we must fulfil our want from it. But in doing so we must take care not to destroy, under outward pressure, our own vitality and creative power. Whatever we accept, we must melt into India's own mould. Through our own creative power, these must become coined into our flesh and blood.

Different peoples have different schemes of life, but within their histories and in the diversity of their geographical circumstance there exists also a great unity; within this diversity there exists, in one place, the unity of the human race. The life-values that have been created, through their respective histories and geographies, by various environments, need to be extended through mutual communication. Through the exchange of these life-schemes a great playing-field will be created for them in the world.

What are the deficiencies of our national character, and what must we gather from outside? Our chief defect is that we are overly one-sided — emotional. Within us there has occurred a perpetual division between will and intellect, between subjectivity and objectivity. We are either excessively subjective, or excessively universal. Often we proceed to the very extreme of universalism or of equality, but do not proceed into differentiation. Our objectivity needs its full development. Through observation and experimentation of Nature, the mind's fidelity to truth and its discipline must be established. There is a deficiency of character in our intellect; we must therefore keep watch over our intellectual honesty. Only then shall we see that a sense of duty has been awakened. On the other hand, we must awaken our sense of moral and personal responsibility, and must bring back what has been lost of Law, Justice, and Equality — in all these matters we must gather instruction. Unless we find the universe within ourselves, we cannot find ourselves. Thus, by establishing the universal form within us, we shall attain self-realization, and we shall give our message to the universe.

In this country there are many universities, many institutions, but from them is being produced only cast iron and a rigid, standardized product. At Santiniketan a place has been made for naturalness; I hope that in Visva-Bharati too, attention will remain fixed upon the unfolding of that same spontaneity. The university may be called a national institution. The genius of Asia tends toward universal humanism; therefore, in the interest of India and of Asia, there is need for just such a university.

Through the sangha and the vihara of old, India once achieved her fulfilment; adapting them to the needs of this age, that ancient forest-hermitage has here been reborn in the form of Visva-Bharati.

Baishakh, 1326 [Bengali Era]