

Santiniketan

- Description

Santiniketan, popularly known today as a university town, a hundred miles to the north of Kolkata, was originally an ashram built by Debendranath Tagore, where anyone, irrespective of caste and creed, could come and spend time meditating on the one Supreme God. Debendranath, who was father of the Poet, Rabindranath, was also known as Maharshi (which means one who is both saint and sage) was a leading figure of the Indian Renaissance. In a trust deed prepared in 1888, he declared: 'Apart from worshipping the Formless, no community may worship any idol depicting god, man, or animals; neither may anyone arrange sacrificial fires or rituals in Santiniketan.... No insult to any religion or religious deity will be allowed here. The sermons given here will be such that will be appropriate to the worship of the Creator and Father and will help in ethics, benevolence and brotherhood...' It was in this area that the Maharshi had a spiritual realization while meditating under a glade of Chhatim trees (*Alstonia scholaris*), which were the only vegetation in this arid land of Birbhum. These trees still stand with a plaque that says, He is the repose of my life, the joy of my heart, the peace of my soul. Chhatimtala as it is called is the spot that symbolizes the starting point of Santiniketan, which was to become his son Rabindranath's home and base for activity. It is considered to be a hallowed spot and prayer services are held here on very special days. Rabindranath, too, like his father before him would sit in meditation here, under the chhatim trees during sunset.

ASHRAMA COMPLEX: Among the structures built by the Maharshi was the Santiniketan Griha or house and the beautiful stained glass Mandir, or temple where worship is non-denominational. Both structures built in the second half of the 19th century are important in their association with the founding of Santiniketan and the universal spirit associated with the revival and reinterpretation of religious ideals in Bengal and India. A beautiful garden was laid out on all sides of the Santiniketan Bari. The top-layer of gritty dry soil was removed and filled up with rich soil brought over from outside. Rows of various fruit trees and trees with extended foliage for shade were planted. The avenue of Sal trees, so familiar to earlier asramites as being Rabindranath's favourite walk, was planted at this time.

The other important structures built at a later date, after Rabindranath moved to the site of Santiniketan are, the Patha-Bhavana, with beautiful frescoes by Nandalal Bose and his students, Natun-Bari, built in 1902 by the Poet for his family, this simple thatched cottage was offered to Mahatma Gandhi's Phoenix school boys in 1915. Mrinalinidevi, the Poet's wife died before the house was completed but her name lives on in the nursery school named after her - Mrinalini Ananda Pathsala which is housed here. Dehali was built in 1904 and Rabindranath lived here for a while. Santoshalaya, a single-storey house with a tiled roof is named after Santoshchandra Majumdar, one of the first students of the Santiniketan Vidyalaya. Santoshalaya is a hostel for young students of the school. The walls of this house have frescoes prepared by artists of the twenties. Built out of a donation by Satyendraprasanna Sinha of Raipur, Singha-Sadan has a clock tower and bell that regulates the timings of daily routine for the ashrama inmates. It was in this building that Oxford University conferred its honorary doctorate on the Poet. Purvatoran and Paschimtoran are the two buildings on either side of Singha-Sadana. Classes are held here. Dwijaviram is a house where the Poet's eldest brother, Dwijendranath lived. Gandhiji visited him in this house. Dinantika built in 1939, is an octagonal two-storeyed structure originally used as a tea-house with the staircase on the outside; staff members of Visva-Bharati would meet in the evening for a cup of tea and relaxation. The Cha Chakra, as it was called, was instituted in the name of Dinendranath Tagore by his wife, Kamaladevi. The walls of this house have colourful frescoes by Nandalal Bose. Taladhvaj, a round mud hut with a thatched roof built around a taal tree (toddy palm) with part of its trunk and its huge palm leaves stretching out over the top, was built for Tejeschandra Sen, a tree-lover who would even share his lodging with one! Old Santiniketan Press: In 1917, the citizens of Lincoln, Nebraska had presented to the boys of Santiniketan, a letter-press treadle machine which saw the beginning of the Santiniketan Press, from where the Santiniketan Patrika, a newsletter was printed. Chaitya is a small structure made of mud and coal-tar in 1934 resembling a typical thatched hut of Bengal, yet it carries a Buddhist name. Planned by Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar, this structure has a glass-paned showcase where newly-created works of art were on display every few days. Ghantatala, resembling a gateway to a Buddhist stupa stands at the crossroads of Salvithika and the road leading to Cheena Bhavana from the Santiniketan house. A bronze bell hanging from the structure would, at one time, regulate the classes and other events held during the day. Gourprangan: The open ground in front of the school building is named after Gour Gopal Ghosh, who was a student and teacher of Santiniketan. Certain ceremonies like the flag-hoisting on Independence Day and Republic Day are held here. On 23 January, the birth anniversary of Netaji is commemorated with rows of lighted lamps on the ground. Kalo Bari is a unique structure made of mud and coal-tar. Built as a hostel for Kala-Bhavana students, its walls and pillars have been decorated with relief work and is the handiwork of art-students over many years. Begun by Nandalal Bose in 1934, there are examples of Ramkinkar's works on the northern walls. Panthasala: In 1925 Hirabai, widow of Liladhar Thakkar of Bombay donated Rs 15,200 to construct a restroom for travellers and a well and water trough to provide drinking water to travellers and beasts. The rooms now house a book-store and Railway Reservation Counter. Ratan Kuthi was erected in 1924 out of a donation by Trustees of Sir Ratan Tata to be used as a residence for scholars who stayed and worked at Santiniketan. This building symbolizes the reverence to the personality of Rabindranath by the Tatas. Malancha: Built in 1926 by Rabindranath for his youngest daughter, Mira, the genesis of the Malancha house lies in the deep sense of sorrow and guilt that Rabindranath felt at the failed marriage of his daughter. He wanted this house, along with its gardens to be a solace for the lonely woman and together, father and daughter, they planned the garden.

UTTARAYANA COMPLEX: North of the ashram area described above, is the enclave of Rabindranath's own houses, built over the last three decades of his life (1919-1941). Konark, originally a mud house was the earliest dwelling that Rabindranath built for his own seclusion from activity to provide a place for his own work. It contained an east facing verandah with rows of pillars used as a stage for plays and dance-dramas composed by the Poet. Natir Puja was first staged here. Since there were no walls in the central large room, nature was an effective backdrop. The Konark verandah was used for poetry readings by the poet. The Mrinmoyee Patio is a beautiful cemented floor with sitting arrangements. This was built on the foundation of the other mud house when it was pulled down. Rabindranath would sit in this open patio and write. Shyamali: the construction of a mud house was an experiment. Rabindranath wanted to see if instead of a thatched roof, which was always vulnerable to fire hazards, a permanent mud roof could be built. It was to be a low-cost structure and would serve as a model house for villagers. The walls were heavily built so that the weight of the mud roofs could be borne. One of the rooms was constructed by using earthen water-pots arranged inside plaster-casings to form its roof and walls. According to Rabindranath, this would keep the rooms cool as the hot air having to pass through these earthen pots would lose some of its heat. Keeping Rabindranath's ideas in mind, Surendranath Kar prepared the architectural plan and Nandalal Bose prepared the visual perspective based on the Borobudur style. The entire outside wall was decorated with beautiful relief work by Kala-Bhavana students under the guidance of Nandalal Bose. The Santals on either side of the main door and on the eastern corner were by Ramkinkar Baiz. Gandhiji and Kasturba stayed as guests in this house. Punascha, meaning postscript suggests the Poet's change of mind. Another house was built on the eastern side of Shyamali. He lived in this house for a short while but it was here that he created most of his paintings. Udichi is the last house built for Rabindranath. He felt claustrophobic, he said, and wanted a room to be constructed on four pillars. However, changes were gradually made according to the owner's needs. He took poetry classes on the ground floor. The most imposing house in Uttarayana, is Udayan. Uttarayana is the area where these five houses are located in. The gardens of Uttarayana were planned and laid out by the Poet's son, Rathindranath, a horticulturist by training. He planted in Uttarayan and in the surrounding area exotic plants and trees from other lands. The African Tulip (*Spathodea campanulata*) from Equatorial Africa, the Sausage tree (*Kigelia africana*) and Rhodesian Wistaria (*Balusanthus speciosus*) from Tropical Africa, the Baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean Trumpet tree (*Tabebuia aura*) from Latin America are some of the trees that have survived in Santiniketan as have the ideas and research studies done by foreign scholars who came to Santiniketan. Udayan, unlike the other houses was conceived by Rathindranath, not the poet. When Rabindranath came to live in Konark, Rathindranath and his wife lived in an outhouse by its side. Starting from these modest and functional rooms the elaborate structure of Udayan was gradually evolved. Udayan has many suites of rooms— each on a different level which gives this house its individuality. Distinguished visitors who have stayed here are Stella Kramrisch, Margaret Milward, Sir Maurice Gwyer, S. Radhakrishnan (later, President of India) and Jawaharlal Nehru. Guha-ghar/Chitrabhanu stands near the lake in the Japanese-styled gardens of Uttarayana. The studio or Chitrabhanu was built for Pratima Devi at a higher level of the ground and later the space below was converted into a room to be used as a workshop for Rathindranath. The workshop is a low-ceiling room and the entrance wall has rough stones on it and creepers growing over it giving it a resemblance to a cave-dwelling or guha-ghar.

INSTITUTES OF VISVA BHARATI: In 1922, Visva Bharati was inaugurated as a Centre for Culture with exploration into the arts, language, humanities, music and these are reflected in diverse institutes that continue in their educational programmes, which are based on the founding principles of excellence in culture and culture studies. As originally intended, these serve as institutes for Hindi studies, Hindi Bhavan, Sino Asian studies, Cheena Bhavan, centre for humanities, Vidya Bhavan, institute of fine arts Kala Bhavan, and music, Sangit Bhavan. The structures in these institutes constitute a myriad of architectural expressions which are as diverse as the Kalo Bari, a mud structure with coal tar finish and sculpture panels, Mastermohai studio, a single storied structure built for the first principal of Kala Bhavan, Nandalal Bose, murals and paintings on Cheena and Hindi Bhavan, created by the illustrious artists like Benodebehari Mukhopadhyay, Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Somnath Hore with active involvement of students.

SRINIKETAN: Also in the core area, is Sriniketan, an Institute for Rural Reconstruction founded in 1922 with Leonard Elmhirst as its first Director. Surul Kuthibari: Rabindranath purchased this building in 1912. The house was often used by the Poet as a retreat and here, in solitude, he would write. It housed the Sriniketan office and is associated with Leonard Elmhirst and Kalimohan Ghosh. In front of this building on a wall, Nandalal created a mural depicting Halarshana a ploughing festival introduced by Rabindranath to honour the tiller of the soil. Sriniketan also houses the very significant institutes and farms that are in continued use: the Silpa Sadan, a centre for village crafts; Palli Samgathan Vibhaga, the centre for rural reconstruction; Palli Siksha Bhavan, a centre for education for village children and adults; Rural Extension Centre, that conducts research in organic and innovative farming techniques and animal husbandry.

The Santiniketan Aesthetic

For Rabindranath, who was essentially a poet and artist, the realization and the expression of beauty was the supreme objective in human life. His concept of beauty, according to true Indian tradition, was inseparably connected with truth and goodness. Whatever is true and noble in life, nature and art is also beautiful. Thus, aesthetic sensitiveness, in the true sense, is a fundamental aspect of spiritual education. A proper aesthetic culture should also include the perception and expression of the beautiful in human life and social conduct, as well as in art and literature. Rabindranath stated in no uncertain terms that man's sensory encounter with the environment was as important as his mind's enquiry into its inner mystery, and any worthwhile society should provide for both. Nandalal Bose (1882-1966) took it up as a challenge. For him, with the right effort, all members of a community, whether housewives, working men or schoolchildren can be creative of sorts within their

talent and potential. So he gave attention to all, inducing them to learn alpona, batik, leather-craft, picture making with simple units; besides he tried to bring cleanliness and order into the campus, considered elegance to its building and interiors, visual variety and liveliness to its festivals and dramas, a distinctive graphic image to its publications, even set standards of refinement in personal and group conduct, so that, at one time he managed to bring to the place a special aesthetic aura, the hall-mark of which was a dynamic simplicity, an artless art. The frescoes on many of the asrama buildings were created at his initiative; he would involve his students in this work. The murals on the lives of medieval saints which Benode Bihari Mukherjee (1904-80) created in Hindi Bhavana in 1946-47 was the artist's magnum opus. In 1972, even after he lost his eyesight, he made a large ceramic mural in the Kala-Bhavana campus.

Most of the houses built after 1919 in Santiniketan and all the five houses in Uttarayana were designed by Surendranath Kar (1892-1970). Santiniketan was acutely short of funds and the asrama had to observe utmost economy in all matters. Surendranath took up the challenge and improvised a kind of architecture that was functional, inexpensive and conformed to the quiet aesthetics of the place. Its hallmark was a sense of austerity, simplicity, elegance of proportion and sparing use of detail. His attention to function, avoidance of flamboyance, a low-keyed elegance and appropriateness to the environment appealed to all.

The landscape of Santiniketan is dotted with sculptures by Ramkinkar Baij (1906-1980), larger-than-life figures of Santals who were in reality part of the landscape. A Santal family, complete with dog, a group of workers running along at the call of the mill, their clothes flying in the air, a thresher, all situated along the main road. When Ramkinkar created Sujata, an elongated figure of one of the disciples of Buddha, he placed it just a little distance from the seated Buddha. Nandalal planted Eucalyptus saplings in the area, knowing that one day these tall trees would be a perfect setting to Ramkinkar's Sujata. It was Nandalal Bose, who created an environment where art would be a part of life and the children of Santiniketan have grown absorbing these beautiful monuments as they have the oxygen in the air.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

Founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1901 and located about a hundred and fifty eight kilometers northwest of Kolkata in Bengal's rural hinterland, Santiniketan represents the distillation of Rabindranath Tagore's life, philosophy and greatest works through his lifetime and the continuing legacy of his unique model of education and internationalism through a living institution and architectural ensemble. And while many of Tagore's greatest art and literary works bear a unique association with Santiniketan, it can be argued that his model of an Indian education through the revival of the tapoban tradition and humanist ideology finds its greatest reflection in Santiniketan, thus making it Tagore's greatest work. In his last letter to Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore wrote 'Visva Bharati is like a vessel carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation'.

The school at Santiniketan was a sapling which grew into the widely branching tree that was Visva Bharati. Today, Santiniketan and Visva Bharati exemplify the continuation of Tagore's works, both as a living educational and cultural centre as well as through the generations of outstanding alumni who excelled in the worlds of painting, literature, music, sculpture, cinema, economics and politics. The architectural and landscape setting of Santiniketan embody Tagore's vision of an eclectic architectural expression that was a blending of diverse cultural traditions in a landscape setting that formed the backdrop for a literal translation of 'Santiniketan' as an abode of peace.

Humanism & Cultural interchange (Criterion ii)

Author Nirad C. Chaudhuri described Tagore as, "Historically, the greatest product of the interaction in India in the nineteenth century between European and Hindu life and civilization.... In one sense he may be regarded as the victim of the interchange, and in another as its prophet. His own life was caught in the conflict which the interchange brought about, and his writings stand for its achievement."

At the threshold of the 20th century in Bengal reeling under British rule and sectarian divisions, Tagore envisioned a place of learning unfettered by religious and regional barriers. From its very inception, Tagore modelled Santiniketan on principles of humanism, internationalism and a sustainable environment and the curriculum was developed to promote the free interchange of human values and cultures. Thus, over a hundred years ago, Santiniketan began in a majority Hindu region with 3 out of 5 teachers being Christian, encouraged women to join as both students and teachers, and promoted a unique blend of art and cultural interchange in its classrooms that were held in the open air, free from the confines of spatial or ideological boundaries.

In developing his holistic educational paradigm, Rabindranath sought through various means to break down existing barriers and to foster interconnectivity between provincial and regional groups: between English-medium educated elites and the common people; between urban and rural economic groups...and to reduce the gender gap.

Tagore's vision finds architectural expression in Santiniketan where the buildings of China Bhavan and Hindi Bhavan were specifically built to house institutes that explored linguistic linkages between eastern countries, as well as the eclectic architectural expression of structures such as Sinha Sadan, Udayan and Patho Bhavan that merged various cultural vocabularies to create a unique architectural synthesis.

In only the second year of its existence, Santiniketan had its first foreign student in Hori San from Japan. To cultivate this interchange in the students of Santiniketan, Tagore actively solicited the presence of visitors from all over the world, in addition to devising syllabi that promoted the understanding of different cultures: Vedic, Puranic, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, and Sikh traditions; the 'precious and permanent contribution' of Islamic culture to Indian art and architecture; writings of 'our medieval saints'; special studies of China, Japan, and Tibet; as well as Western culture, for 'only then shall we be able to assimilate this last contribution to our common stock'.

Noting its 'celebration of variety', Nobel laureate and long time resident of Santiniketan, Amartya Sen speaks of 'the ease with which discussions in the school could move from Indian traditional literature to contemporary as well as classical western thought and to China, Japan and elsewhere'. Tagore's poem encapsulates this vision of internationalism through his words,

"He mor chitta, punya tirthe jagore dhire

ei bharater maha-manaber sagoro-tire."

'On the sacred shores of the ocean of humanity of this India,

Awaken, my heart!'

The architectural and landscape setting of Santiniketan embody Tagore's vision of an eclectic architectural expression that was a blending of diverse cultural traditions in a landscape setting that formed the backdrop for a literal translation of 'Santiniketan' as an abode of peace.

The Tapoban & Gurukul traditions: Education & Rural Reconstruction (Criterion iii)

On 22nd December 1901, Rabindranath Tagore established his school at Santiniketan with five students (including his eldest son) and an equal number of teachers. He originally named it Brahmacharya Ashram in the tradition of ancient forest hermitages.

Santiniketan is in many ways a pioneering step in the field of education and rural reconstruction. Located in the heart of nature amongst Hindu, Muslim, and Santali villages which were in 'serious decline' despite a rich cultural heritage, the school, from almost its beginning aimed to combine education with a sense of obligation towards the larger civic community. The 'voice of the vedic tongue', Tagore said, outlined the nature of Santiniketan, envisioned as the ideal form of the traditional Indian hermitages which had at one time flourished in the forests of ancient India, great seats of learning from which the Upanishads had evolved, exploring a universal and humanistic life of the mind. Although Tagore was highly critical of Macaulay's system due to which, unlike the West, education, particularly higher education, was cut off and insulated from the living social corpus of India.

Santiniketan revives and gives form to Tagore's interpretation of the ancient Indian concept of tapoban. Tagore revived the ancient Indian model of Tapoban, or penance in a forest, interpreting it though an educational model aimed at 'cultivation of feeling' (bodher tapasya/sadhana) as opposed to education of the senses and intellect. This aspect of education involves the realization of the individual self in relation to the universe and the essential kinship of all existence. Santiniketan combines the traditions of the gurukul mode of residential schooling with its tangible manifestation in open air classrooms arranged under the canopies of trees.

In keeping with the gurukul tradition of students learning from their guru (teacher) in a residential ashram in the bosom of nature, Sriniketan is a distinct step in the field of rural reconstruction. In 1907, Tagore sought to expand the school's relationship with its neighbouring villages of the Santhal tribal community. The school, from its conception, aimed to combine education with a sense of obligation towards the larger community.

Sriniketan is the earliest experiment in rural reconstruction in India that Tagore began and was later followed by Mahatma Gandhi in his ashrams at Wardha and Sewagram. Leonard Elmhirst came from England to be part of Sriniketan and his experiences in Santiniketan inspired him to establish at Darlington Hall in Devonshire. If Tagore had done nothing else, what he did at Santiniketan and Sriniketan would be sufficient to rank him as one of India's greatest nation - builders.

Instead of celebrating religious festivals, the students of Santiniketan celebrate nature through its seasons. Thus Poush Mela (winter), Vasantotsav (spring), Varsha Mangal (rains) and Maghotsav, continuing the close connect between man and nature established in the founding principles of Santiniketan. With the outbreak of unprecedented communal violence in the wake of Bengal's partition, Tagore revived the folk festival of Raksha Bandhan, reinterpreting it in 1909 as a tie between Hindus and Muslims.

Santiniketan, or the 'abode of peace' cannot be confined to the strict definition of an academic university. Vishwabharti is an educational institution, but one with a difference, where classes are taught in the open air, where nature and its seasons are celebrated instead of religious festivals, where the graduation ceremony is marked by the gifting of a chhatim leaf and where humanism and the larger concepts of internationalism are rooted in Tagore's philosophy that 'the whole world can find a nest'. (Criterion iii)

Ideas of Outstanding Universal Value: Internationalism: (Criterion vi)

Santiniketan is among the pioneering institutions in modern history that offered a living example of internationalism, before even the United Nations established its guiding principle enshrined in Article 1, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. Long before the League of Nations and the United Nations, Tagore was an internationalist who critiqued the narrowly defined concepts of nationalism and patriotism. He wanted all human beings to be treated equally regardless of the country or nation to which they belonged. He also did not want barriers between people even within the same nation—the barriers of caste, race, and religion.

Santiniketan is a pioneering experiment in internationalism. At a time when India was grappling with the problems of colonialism and seeking its freedom from British authority, Tagore's vision surpassed national and cultural boundaries to establish a larger international vision, that of universal humanism. Through bringing diverse individuals together in a hospitable setting, he sought to promote understanding between different linguistic groups, different races and global cultures and diverse religions.

The motto that Tagore chose for Visva Bharati, *Yatra Visvam Bhavatyekanidam*, 'where the whole world can find a nest', reflected his aspiration for the institution.

Tagore himself alluded to the global character of Santiniketan with an invitation to the world, while concluding his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in Stockholm, in the 'name of the unity of men', in the 'name of love', and 'in the name of God', to 'join hands with us and not to leave this institution to us', to 'make it living and representative of the undivided humanity of the world'. Mainly due to his efforts, Santiniketan was visited by international scholars and artists such as Sylvain Levi, Moritz Winternitz, Sten Konow, Fernand Benoit, Arthur Geddes, Andree Karpeles, Mary Eeghen, Stella Kramisch, James Cousins, T'an Yun-Shan, Yonejiro Noguchi, Guisepppe Tucci, Carlo Formichi, Arnold Bake, Igor Bogdanov, Mark Collins, and Vincenc Lesny.

Ideas of Outstanding Universal Value: Influence on the Modern Indian Nation - Inclusiveness & Non Alignment (Criterion vi)

The vision of Tagore's Santiniketan was that of inclusiveness and it influenced the vision of Gandhi and Nehru (and later Indira Gandhi who was a student at Santiniketan) in the formulation of an inclusive Indian nation. His inclusive nationalism and non-parochial interpretation of India's history became a powerful agent of ideas for the freedom movement that Gandhi and Nehru led between the two world wars.⁸ Nehru's famous foreign policy of 'non-alignment' sought to avoid taking sides in the Cold War. This was very much in line with Tagore's philosophy and understanding of history.

Ideas of Outstanding Universal Value: Environmentalism, Women's Emancipation (Criterion vi)

Tagore had always championed the cause of women emancipation, most of his literary works etched unforgettable female characters. At the beginning of the 20th century, Santiniketan pioneered a coeducational model in India which was a major break from accepted social norms.

Associated Personalities (Criterion vi)

Highly gifted men and women from the different parts of India came to Santiniketan for an innovative education or to teach there. Noteworthy among them were Mrinalini Sarabhai, Gopala Reddy, Nandalal Bose, Leonard Elmherst, Arthur Geddes, Bal Gangadhar Menon and KV Muthuswamy. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, Oscar Award winning director Satyajit Ray, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and iconic artists such as, Ram Kinker Baij and Jogen Chaudhuri, Kanika Bandhopadhyay, Udai Sankar, have been alumni of Santiniketan. Visva Bharati became therefore an important facilitator of inter relationship of cultures within the sub continent as well. Not only was it enriched by being the site of the artistic creations of some of the best known artists of modern India, its art school was arguably the best in the country. Mahatma Gandhi called Santiniketan his second home and established on the principles of its rural reconstruction model, his ashrams at Wardha and Sewagram.

Association with Rabindranath Tagore's work and ideas (Criterion vi)

The sheer volume and diversity of Rabindranath Tagore's work is outstanding. In Bengali, there are twenty-eight large volumes consisting of poetry, dramas, operas, short stories, novels, essays and diaries; and a similar number of volumes of letters, still being edited and published. His songs separately published, number nearly two and a half thousand, his paintings and drawings over two thousand. A large fraction of all this is still read performed and studied in Bengal.

The Nobel Prize awarded to Rabindranath Tagore in 1913 for his work *Gitanjali* published in Bengali 1910, was an acknowledgement of his literary genius and also of his thoughts, making him the first Indian to be acknowledged by the West at this scale.

'Jana Gana Mana' composed by Tagore, was selected as free India's national anthem after it gained independence in 1947, but was composed by Tagore in late 1911. This stirring song is today India's national anthem, a beacon of light guiding a billion Indians.

Mahatma Gandhi referred to Tagore as Gurudev (teacher) and wrote, "I regard the Poet as a sentinel warning us against the approach of enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, Inertia and other members of that brood."

Among individuals who made these forces creative in shaping the destiny of India, two stand out as pre-eminent, Gandhi and Tagore. The contribution of Gandhi is unmatched; he made Indian history as no one else did. That of Tagore was less obvious, but subtler and deeper, for it released and fed the hidden fountains of creative activity in fields which the politician is power. Among modern writers he has the uncommon distinction that while the sophisticated Bengali intellectuals delight in his verse and prose and learned professors write volumes on them, the simple unlettered folk in the congested lanes of Calcutta or in the remote villages of Bengal sing his songs with rapture.

Santiniketan is, most of all, distinguished by Tagore's life long association with it. It was the crystallization of his vision and the place where Tagore himself wrote many of his great works of literature, poured his creative genius into paintings and sketches and was informed of his being awarded the Nobel prize. Even the different houses in which Tagore lived in Santiniketan, which were constructed from local material and which are mainly specimens of rural architecture, were in most cases designed by him.

In his last letter to Mahatma Gandhi Tagore said that 'Visva Bharati is like a vessel carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation'.

Human history needs to be continuously reminded of the existence of institutions such as these which continue to live in practice and form. For this, along with many other reasons, Santiniketan needs to be preserved as a World Heritage Site.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity

Santiniketan is one of the avant garde visions of an international educational and cultural institution conceptualized in the beginning of the 20th century. The location of the facility remains unchanged even today incorporating the aspects of authenticity that is tangibly associated with spirit and feeling. In order to understand its outstanding universal value and consequently authenticity one has to first recognize the various layers of history for Santiniketan's establishment and growth which form the periods of significance.

Periods of Significance: Historical Layers

Maharishi Period (Land purchased and ashram built by Maharishi Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath Tagore)
Late 19th century: 1895 onwards

Santiniketan then constituted 18.7 bighas of land area that was purchased by Maharishi Debendranath Tagore from the Sinha landowners of the area.

The structures belonging to this earliest phase of development include the Ashram, Santiniketan Griha, Upasana Mandir (Prayer hall). Chhatimtala, the site of the chhatim trees under which Maharshi meditated is also critical to the historical significance and integrity of this period. This area is nearly all intact and forms the core of the Santiniketan precinct. The structures are intact and retain their integrity and authenticity. They have been recently restored by Archaeological Survey of India.

Gurudev Period (Rabindranath Tagore) 1901-1941

Rabindranath's Santiniketan, established in 1901, was a multifaceted vision that would aim unity of humanity in different cultures around the world. Visva Bharti was a place where 'the world would form a single nest' using a combination of various elements including education of children, nature loving environment, use of music and arts for emotional development, social work to help neighbouring villages, promotion of rural development through Sriniketan and research on philosophy, cultures etc. It would be a centre established to eradicate not only poverty of mind but also poverty of material life in India.

Being of an artistic nature Rabindranath believed learning to be an activity of freeing one's mind which could not be possibly achieved locked up in a classroom. Hence emerged the idea of open air classrooms which continue in the same spirit with which it was initiated at the time of the conception of the school.

Santiniketan was to be a quite rural environment surrounded by nature far away from the busy city life. He wanted to establish not only an intimate community of teachers and students as embodied in the age old Indian tradition of Gurukul but he wanted something much more in order to create an environment which would open up students mind to a relationship with the world within and around. This tradition is still faithfully adhered to as a principle practice at the university. Rabindranath believed in convergence of two distinctly different chains of thought which were the traditional beliefs of east and progressive ideologies of west. As a result of which there were many international visiting faculties which have contributed in fulfilling his vision.

Rabindranath Period (Rabindranath's son) 1941-1952

After the death of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, his son Rathindranath took over the mantle of his father at Santiniketan. Most of the complex was preserved in tact, with the addition of Rabindra Bhavan to house the museum.

This period ends with the formulation of Visva Bharati as a national level university under an Act of Parliament.

In the Rathindranath layer, we see Santiniketan well on its path to continue the four fold vision of Gurudev.

Rabindranath Tagore had envisaged a fourfold plan for the development of Santiniketan.

1. Santiniketan School (1901)
2. Integration of fine art and music to academics(Kala Bhavan and Sangeet Bhavan 1919-1920)
3. Rural reconstruction experiment (1922 Sriniketan)
4. Establish cultural relation between Hindvi cultures with other eastern cultures and relations between eastern and western cultures.

This fourfold plan has been adopted and implemented to date even after Santiniketan acquired the status of a University in 1951.

Pockets of core areas exist within the Visva Bharti campus which strive to retain the authenticity in terms of form and design. These core areas include structures from the 3 significant stages mentioned earlier. The infill in between are a direct result of the growing needs of the university. Even though the integrity is weakened due to the pressures of development and later interventions, these interventions are mostly reversible and can be controlled in the near future with proper development guidelines.

Living traditions begun by Gurudev such as the Utsavs, festivals, open air class rooms and the curriculum that encourages the infusion of performing and fine arts in academics are an intrinsic character of Santiniketan.

Living traditions such as the Utsavs, festivals, open air class rooms and the curriculum that encourages the infusion of performing and fine arts in academics still continues with a high level of integrity.

Santiniketan and Sriniketan both form a part of the Visva Bharti campus under the jurisdiction of the University which alone forms its governing body which still keeps intact its originally intended use and function. This authoritative body is responsible for maintenance and management of the site as well as heritage conservation and its related issues.

It is concerned with site management of different areas which include maintenance, repair, presentation, promotion, visitor infrastructure etc. Being aware of the threats to the heritage elements and its protection needs the university has recognized the need of a conservation and management plan which will address all the key issues and need for heritage conservation and the framework of these guidelines will be incorporated within the management authority.

Comparison with other similar properties

Santiniketan cannot be compared to any Occidental university and even in the Eastern world, it has few comparisons as it was based on a purely secular ideology. This was not merely an educational institution - it was a cultural confluence, an experiment in rural reconstruction and environmentalism and at the same time a confluence and coming together of myriad cultures, languages and the culmination of Tagore's principles of internationalism and universalism.

Rabindranath Tagore was categorical about Santiniketan not being anything like the idea of a western university. He said, "The mischief that as soon as the idea of a university enters our mind, the idea of a Cambridge university, Oxford university, and a host of other European universities, rushes in at the same time and fills the whole space. We then imagine that our salvation lies in a selection of the best points of each, patched together in an eclectic perfection. We forget that the European universities are living, organic parts of the life of Europe, where each found its natural birth. Patching up noses and other small missing fractions of our features with skin from foreign limbs is allowed in modern surgery; but to build up a whole man by piecing together foreign fragments is beyond the resources of science, not only for the present time, but let us fervently hope for all time to come."

BAUHAUS

The Bauhaus School was founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany in the year 1919. Weimar is one of the great cultural sites in Europe and was also awarded a UNESCO World Heritage site status in 1998. Bauhaus was first of its kind that combined craft and fine arts, creating a 'total' work of art in which all arts, including architecture would eventually be brought together. The Bauhaus style became one of the most influential currents in Modern architecture and modern design. The origins of Bauhaus were far from the earlier methods of education in industrial art, fine art and architecture. Its program was based on the latest knowledge in pedagogy. Bauhaus was based on a socialist ideology that an artist must be conscious of

his social responsibility to the community; on the other hand, the community has to accept the artist and support him. The Bauhaus had a profound influence upon subsequent developments in art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography. The Bauhaus movement which was mainly influenced by modernism had created major influences around the world especially on arts and craft in western Europe and in countries like USA, Canada and Israel.

Now known as the Bauhaus University of Weimar it has faculties in Architecture, Art and Design, Civil Engineering and Media. Today the University well known for its civil engineering and architecture oriented disciplines offers variety of courses in free art, design, web design, visual communication, media design, media culture, architecture, civil engineering, materials science, processing technology, environment and management.

The term "Bauhaus" stands for an eagerness to experiment, openness, creativity, a close link to industrial practice and internationality. Building on the tradition of the Bauhaus movement, all the faculties of the University are involved in the creation of public spaces. The goal is to get science, art and technology working together systematically, artistically and innovatively on the planning, construction and design of current and future spaces of habitation. Practical experience plays an important role in all academic fields, as well as in artistic development.

AUROVILLE

Auroville (the city in the making) is located on the Coromandel Coast on the outskirts of Pondicherry in south India. It draws its inspiration from the vision and work of the renowned Indian philosopher and spiritual visionary Sri Aurobindo in collaboration with Mirra Alfassa (The Mother) in the year 1968. Auroville is based on the ideology of manifestation of human unity in diversity. The township was founded on barren land and now has transformed into a green belt with a large variety of flora and fauna.

Auroville rose out of a necessity to build an ideal city in the form of an experiment to create a passage for a new realization which needed implementation on a grass root level. It was intended for up to 50,000 inhabitants from all around the world. It currently houses 20,000 people of various nationalities. They live in various settlements sharing the land with 35,000 local populations in the surrounding villages.

The settlement is based on the collaboration of eastern and western ideologies. It is a 'universal' city where people from all creeds, castes and nationalities can live and thrive in harmony.

Auroville has its fundamentals based on partnership of Aurovilians with nature and the local population. These fundamentals are practiced in various forms of activities such as tree planting schemes, organic agriculture, educational research, village development, cultural activities, community services, land re-generation, rain water harvesting, conservation approach and many more. To manifest its principles these diverse activities are housed in the various scientific and social research, educational, agro-institutions, community centers and volunteering, internships & studies programs. All these activities and institutions are housed under one umbrella body constantly working towards experimenting on new methods of education, fine arts, village extension work, physical education and research in Indian culture and its evolution.

Town and Country Planning Organization and Auroville Foundation have drawn up the Auroville Master Plan of international significance. This master plan is divided into three stages: perspective plan, development plan and implementation plan. This plan hopes to demonstrate how 'urban' & 'rural' areas can complementarily develop in an integral and holistic way for their mutual benefit and well-being. Auroville wants to break new ground in settlement-planning in such a way as to help other cities, both in India and abroad, which are experiencing high urbanization trends.

Auroville can be compared to Santiniketan on two accounts, one that its establishment was linked with an Indian visionary (Sri Aurobindo) and that it is a community that changed a barren landscape into a human settlement based on the principles of internationalism and human unity.

However, Santiniketan as an idea not only was envisioned over half a century before Auroville, it also has a greater educational aspect to it, while Auroville is more on the lines of a commune. Santiniketan's Visva Bharati University has a much larger role to play in the sphere of Indian education.

Banaras Hindu University (BHU)

Banaras Hindu University is situated in the holy city of Varanasi in north India. This centre of learning was founded by a great nationalist leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, in 1916 with the cooperation of nationalist leaders and Gandhians such as Dr Annie Besant.

BHU aimed to promote the study of the Hindu Shastras and of Sanskrit literature as a means of preserving and popularizing the best thought and culture of the Hindus and all that was good and great, learning and research in arts and science in all branches, to advance and diffuse such scientific, technical and professional knowledge as is best calculated, to help in promoting indigenous industries and in developing the material resources of the country and to promote the building up of character in youth, by making religion and ethics an integral part of education.

Banaras Hindu University ranks among the first few in the country in the field of academic and research output. This university has two campuses with a number of institutes, faculties, departments, advanced centres and interdisciplinary schools all working towards excellence in areas of Science, Social Science, Technology, Medicine and Agriculture. It is also associated with a number of outreach programmes in community development, social work, environmental protection, rainwater harvesting etc. its social welfare agricultural extension programme promotes services in rural development and self-employment.

In 1911, Tagore wrote an essay, "Hindu Visvavidyalay", which was composed around the time of the establishment of Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University. In it, he discusses the problem of communal education within the larger context of communalism. Tagore argued (in line with his belief that "Unity does not mean Uniformity") that real unity among different units will be possible only when each unit, however small, fully realizes its own individuality and stature. He felt it fitting that Hindus and Muslims should attain full growth and maturity through their own systems and the "free breath of modern learning would serve as an emancipating force."

While Tagore supported the idea of religious communities fostering educational research and revival of their cultures, his educational system at Santiniketan was based on plurality of cultures and religion, with even the nascent stages of Santiniketan having 2 Hindu and 3 Christian teachers. Santiniketan was established a decade before BHU and in its ideology, did not limit itself to Hinduism, but to a much larger universal and international outlook.

SEVAGRAM & SABARMATI ASHRAM

Tagore's experiments at Santiniketan and Sriniketan were to deeply influence Mahatma Gandhi's work at Sevagram at Wardha. Gandhi adopted the method of teaching through crafts many years after Tagore had successfully established this at Santiniketan. Infact, the first teachers in Gandhi's basic school were from Santiniketan.

Mahatma Gandhi established Sevagram in a village near Wardha in Maharashtra, 75 kilometers away from Nagpur at the invitation of Jannalal Bajaj. From 1936 to 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was based here, spreading the message of Non Violence in his work towards Indian Independence.

In April 1936, Gandhiji established his residence in the village Shegaon which he renamed as Sevagram, which means 'village of service'. Many decisions on important national matters and movements were taken at Sevagram. Though initially Gandhiji had decided to live here with only his wife Kasturba, pressure of work necessitated more colleagues join him at Sevagram until it became known as Sevagram Ashram and became a full-fledged institution.

The Satyagraha Ashram, later renamed as Harijan Ashram, was established as part of the Freedom Movement. The Satyagraha Ashram was founded on May 25, 1915 in Ahmedabad at Kochrab, when Gandhi returned from South Africa, with 25 inmates. The Ashram was shifted on the bank of river Sabarmati in July 1917. Devoted ashramites led a community life in search of Truth and Non-violence under his guidance.

Sabarmati Ashram, at the banks of Sabarmati river was located in Ahmedabad and came to be known as 'Sabarmati Ashram'. Gandhi stayed at the Ashram from 1915 to 1933 after which the Ashram was disbanded.

KALAKSHETRA

Kalakshetra was established in 1936 by Rukmini Devi Arundale near Madras, (Chennai) in South India. It was built as an arts academy forming an extension to the Theosophical Society. Kalakshetra became the first dance institute to establish a meaningful theoretical syllabus for dancers. The academy provides not only education in fine arts but also runs a craft education research centre and a school where students have the opportunity of combining fine arts studies with the regular primary and secondary education syllabus. The academy advocates a holistic approach towards education. Open air classes are conducted in order to provide exposure to arts and help students appreciate nature.

NRITYAGRAM

Nrityagram is an institution specialising in Classical Indian Dance forms. It is situated near the outskirts of the city of Bengaluru in south India. Established in 1990 by Protima Gauri, Nrityagram is a community of dancers following a lifestyle of the Gurukul tradition, influenced to some degree by Kalakshetra and Santiniketan. The institution encourages an awareness of the interdisciplinary approach and an understanding of the inter-relatedness of all arts and physical traditions, not only of India, but also of other countries. Along with the intensive dance training in their residential dance education programmes, the students learn Indian Literature, mythology, poetry, Sanskrit, music, aesthetics, history of dance, philosophy, spiritual thought and dance theory. Regular workshops are conducted in martial arts, yoga, mime, meditation, sculpture, etc. The institution believes in self-sufficient existence where they use their resources to the fullest and share a relationship with the earth they reside on and as a member they believe not only being a complete dancer but also a complete human being.

The institution also runs various villages and school outreach programmes encouraging local children from various financial and social backgrounds to participate in various workshops and pursue a career in dance.

DARTINGTON HALL TRUST

Dartington Hall trust was established in 1925 on a thousand acre estate bought by Leonard Elmhirst and his wife Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst as a rural experiment based on the ideals of Rabindranath Tagore and Sriniketan. This experiment combined the introduction of new methods in farming and forestry, and the creation of related industries, with the promotion of the arts and crafts, the founding of a co-educational boarding school and other educational experiments, and the care and conservation of buildings and landscape.

The trust's aspiration is to continue work in the form of encouragement of human creativity, artistic, intellectual and practical; the promotion of learning by doing; and the attainment of the highest standards of performance and execution in all the activities undertaken. Independent but complementary activities in the arts, crafts, education and social justice, notably the Dartington College of Arts, also take place on the estate, many of them offshoots of the Trust.

The trust promotes five aspects of its programmes of work namely Arts which is necessary for nourishing the human spirit, Sustainability which believes that environmental protection and economic development should be complimentary goals and works towards progress, Social justice which recognizes gap between policy, practice and research and helps to improve outcomes, Enterprise which promotes commercial profit necessary for charitable activities and The Place which maintains and renews estate for supporting the programmes.

Dartington Hall trust creates a distinct culture which derives inspiration from its founders. This culture embodies different values based on giving opportunity to one and all to help improve the world, initiate new ideas, broaden perspective using a holistic approach towards teaching, deep understanding of craft and individual and collective creativity, all of which is required for deeper understanding of the whole.



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