

VISVA BHARATI

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A study of the evolution of Visva-Bharati during the lifetime of its founder, Rabindranath Tagore, offers an insight into what this institution was intended to achieve. Rabindranath founded a school for children at Santiniketan and it was around this nucleus that the structure of an unconventional university developed through careful planning.

In 1863, on a seven-acre plot at the site of the present institution, Debendranath Tagore, the poet's father, had built a small retreat for meditation, and in 1888 he dedicated, the land and buildings, towards establishment of a Brahmavidyalaya and a library. Rabindranath's school Brahmacharyasrama which started functioning formally from December 22, 1901 with no more than five students on the roll, was, in part, a fulfilment of the wishes of his father who was a considerable figure of his time in the field of educational reforms. From 1925 this school came to be known as Patha-Bhavana.

The school was a conscious repudiation of the system introduced in India by the British rulers and Rabindranath initially sought to realize the intrinsic values of the ancient education in India. The school and its curriculum, therefore, signified a departure from the way the rest of the country viewed education and teaching. Simplicity was a cardinal principle. Classes were held in open air in the shade of trees where man and nature entered into an immediate harmonious relationship. Teachers and students shared the single integral socio-cultural life.

The curriculum had music, painting, dramatic performances and other performative practices. Beyond the accepted limits of intellectual and academic pursuits, opportunities were created for invigorating and sustaining the manifold faculties of the human personality.