In the foregoing chapters we have tried to trace the fundamental characteristics of Tagore's ideas on education culled from his addresses and writings at different times in different places in India and abroad. Now let us see how he himself endeavoured to put his ideas into practice through various experiments undertaken in different institutions founded by him at different times.

It has been said that Tagore devoted the latter part of his life to conducting various experiments in education. We like to discuss here the important features of his experiments in a chronological order. His experiments may broadly be divided into three phases, namely, Santiniketan Phase, Visva-Bharati Phase, and Sriniketan Phase.

Let us now take up the phases one by one. But now all the phases, though they grew up at different times and deal with different aspects of education, are known to the world as Visva-Bharati Scheme comprising all the phases under one central administration. However, for the clear understanding
and better treatment of Tagore's experiments in education we like to discuss the experiments under certain important heads, such as, background, time and place, aims and objects, management and administration, activities and importance.

(1) Santiniketan Phase

BACKGROUND: Santiniketan is an Ashramic institution for experiment in education. In one of his famous articles entitled 'My School' which contains the poetic account of the genesis and growth of his school, Tagore wrote that he started his school when he was nearing forty. Tagore was born in 1861 according to his own account given in another article known as 'My Life' (originally a lecture delivered in China in 1924). It then follows that Tagore started his school in 1901. As Tagore was a poet and he had spent the greater portion of his life in literary activities, his sudden turning to the educational field was quite unexpected of him. But Tagore himself clarified that the foundation of school owes to the memory of his school days. This was not an outburst of any sudden emotion. The idea of educational experiment had been hatching for a long time and gradually maturing in the poet's mind and waiting for the suitable scope for expression. It was in December, 1901 or at the beginning of the new century that the long
awaited scope was explored. Notwithstanding this, there are also certain important factors that inspired or impelled Tagore to found an institution for experiment.

While Tagore was residing at Santiniketan, the idea of reviving the Ashrama, the forest school of ancient India, occurred to his mind. It was an experiment in this direction. In the year 1901, "he began to keep a little school with two or three boys only."\(^1\)

The year 1900/1901 was, according to Marjorie Sykes, an important time in Tagore's life. This period of time was coming for him to make a new start in life with some new work or adventure. Tagore first expressed his idea of new adventure to his father and sought for his permission to establish "a school where he would teach his boys the lessons of freedom and joy in work and life which he had learned from his own father. The Maharsi listened and blessed him and the school began."\(^2\)

It is now clear that the longing for freedom and joy in work and life led Tagore to introduce a new feature in the joyless and stereotyped Indian system of education. This was his main aim.

His memory of school days was the memory of longing for freedom and joy and it was that longing which impelled
Tagore to take up experiments in his characteristic way or in the way of a poet and an artist and not that of a pedagogical expert. He himself once remarked that his institution assumed "the aspect of a work of art and not that of a pedagogical laboratory." He also clearly said that the founding of his school had its origin in the memory of that longing for freedom. To quote his own words - "The founding of my school had its origin in the memory of that longing for freedom which seems to go back beyond the sky-line of my birth."4

It is then the inner urge that led Tagore to found a school at Santiniketan. A few lines cited below very beautifully express the nature of the urge. "Thus my experience had impressed on me the suffering, owing to the repression of personality, the dissociation of life from the subjects of their study, which boys endure from the school system in vogue in our country. Therefore, when the call came, I went from my home on the Ganges to Santiniketan, in order to found there a school in the midst of the Ashrama itself."5

Not only Tagore's aversion to the school system in vogue in the country, but also his great devotion to the Ashrama ideal of Tapavana impelled him to come to the field
of educational experiments. But as "the spirit of the Tanavanya in the purity of its original shape would be a fantastic anachronism in the present age", Tagore tried in every possible way to adjust it to the modern conditions of life. It is clear that the school that Tagore founded with the blessing and kind permission of his saintly father was modelled after the ancient forest school or Tanavanya and with modern outlook suiting it to the life, needs and aspiration of the people of the modern time. "When Rabindranath started his school, he had in his mind the Tanavanya, the forest dwelling of ancient India ....... Rabindranath wanted Santiniketan on the first new forest school, but he did not want it to be just a copy of the old ones. He hoped that it would have the same spirit as they did, but with a different outward form suitable to the present times."  

TIME & PLACE : The school at Santiniketan was formally and ceremonially started on the 22nd December, 1901. But it had a long history which may be stated here in brief. The Maharsi, Tagore's father, purchased about seven acres of land from the Sinhas of Raipur in the district of Birbhum on 1st March, 1863 (B.S.1269, 18th Phalgun) two years after Tagore was born (1861). This plot of land was lying in between Siuri and Bolepur Station and under the Zamindari of the Sinhas of Raipur. It was again beside the village
known as Bhubandanga which was infested with notorious dacoits or robbers. "It was at the invitation of the Sinhas that the Maharshi first set foot on the uplands of Birbhum, very probably in the year Rabindranath was born, 1861. The land had apparently never been cultivated and the population was sparse. .... waste land of this kind is called Brahmadanga by the local people. A single Chhatim tree made a patch of shade in the otherwise treeless and grassless plain. The Maharshi's palanquin stopped there to rest. The coolness refreshed his mind and body. .... A profound peace slowly settled over the bosom of the earth. The heart of the Maharshi overflowed with thoughts of God. His whole being sang:

"He is the joy of my heart
The comfort of my spirit
The peace of my soul."

He decided then and there that this was the place for his Santiniketan. He purchased about seven acres of land from the Sinhas and built a two-storeyed house. The name of the house was Santiniketan, the Abode of Peace. The same account of the history of Santiniketan has also been given by the two alumni, Sudhir Chandra Kar and Pramathanath Bisi in their books on Santiniketan. Mr. Bisi and Mr. Kar, however, refer to a pair of Chhatim trees in their
account, respectively in their books named Rabindranath 0 Santiniketan and Santiniketaner Siksa 0 Sadhana. Thus we find that the place of Santiniketan was originally selected by Tagore's father, Maharshi Debendranath. "Shantiniketan was originally founded by his father who had there a house, garden, mandir (small temple) library and all conveniences for retirement and study."

An Ashrama was also established there by the Maharshi in the year 1890, 7th December (B.S.1297, 22nd Agrahayan) and a temple was built for the worship of the creator of the universe and cultivation of universal brotherhood in the following year (1891) (B.S. 1298, 7th Pous). Rabindranath opened his experimental school under the name Brahmacharya Ashrama after ten years in 1901 (B.S., 7th Pous). It was later named Brahmavidyalaya. The 7th Pous is a very important date in the life of Santiniketan and still holds a great estimate and the most pompous festival with remarkable firework is being held every year on this date.

Many a great change came over the barren uplands within a period of four decades since the time of the purchase of the lands. The Maharshi not only laid down the foundation stone of the Ashrama and built up a temple (Mandir) on that plot of land, he also exhausted his energy and money of his family that was dilapidated due to a heavy burden of
debt to make it fit for a place of meditation by planting orchard and Sal trees and excavating ponds and creating a healthy and happy natural environment. Needless to say that the very influence of the natural atmosphere of Santiniketan made Tagore realize many great truths of life and select the place for his educational experiments.

That Tagore was greatly indebted to his father for the establishment of his experimental school was candidly admitted by him. He thought himself to be fortunate enough as his father kept the place prepared for his adventure. He started the school with a very limited resource and with about ten boys only.

The description of the site of the school given by Tagore is worth quoting here. He wrote, "All round our ashram is a vast country, bare up to the line of the horizon except for sparsely-growing stunted date-palms and prickly shrubs struggling with out-hills. Below the level of the field there extend numberless mounds and tiny hillocks of red gravel and pebbles of all shapes and colours, intersected by narrow channels of rain-water. Not far away towards the south near the village can be seen through the intervals of a row of palm trees the gleaming surface of still-blue water, collected in a hollow of the ground. A road used by the village people for their marketing in the
town goes meandering through the lonely fields, with its red dust staring in the sun. Travellers coming up this road can see from a distance, on the summit of the undulating ground the spine of a temple and the top of a building, indicating the Shantiniketan ashram, among its amalaki groves and its avenue of stately Sal trees."

Regarding the resources of the school it is learnt from his own writings that his resources were extremely small, with the burden of a heavy debt upon them. But this poverty itself gave him the full strength of freedom, making him rely upon truth rather than upon materials. It is then clear from the foregoing lines that Tagore did not submit to any sort of resistance, material or human, that stood in the way of his experiment. He went on with the blessing of his saintly father and his own iron will and vigorous strength of mind without waiting for outside sympathy, help and advice. Not that he found the distrust of his countrymen "having the evil reputation of a poet" in the matter of his experiment in education and rural reconstruction, he also had to encounter with the suspicion of the bureaucracy. The British Government was not in favour of such experiments in a secluded place. They were afraid that it might contain the germ of National Movement.

AIMS & OBJECTS : The aim of an institution like the
aim of life is very difficult to predict. Tagore himself admitted it. So the poet made the following reply when he was asked about the idea upon which his school had been based. He replied, "I must confess it is difficult for me to say what is the idea which underlines my institution. For the idea is not like a fixed foundation upon which a building is erected. It is more like a seed which cannot be separated and pointed out directly it begins to grow into a plant." The founder of Santiniketan school could not think that the school would turn into an International University. He remarked that the growth of this school was the growth of his life and not that of a mere carrying out of his doctrines. Because the ideals with which Tagore started the school had undergone many changes in course of its future development. He wrote: "Its ideals changed with its maturity like a ripening fruit that not only grows in its bulk and deepens in its colour; but undergoes change in the very quality of its inner pulp." No doubt, he started with a benevolent object and worked hard and sacrificed all the money, energy and time that he had for the success of it. But the result achieved was very small. He went on building system after system and then pulling them down. Though a good many obstacles stood in the way Tagore never despaired of success. He went on with various experiments.
Then a question may naturally arise whether he had attained his ideal in his institution. Let us hear what he himself said, "My answer is that the attainment of all our deepest ideals is difficult to measure by outward standards. Its working is not immediately perceptible by result. We have fully admitted the inequalities and varieties of human life in our ashram. ....... yet I am perfectly certain and proofs of it are numerous, that the ideal of the ashram is sinking deeper and deeper into our nature every day ....... whatever might be our original motive in coming here; the call sounds without ceasing through all our clamour of discords, the call of Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam - the All Peace, the All Good and the One." As regards the object of his school Tagore pointed out, "The chief object of this school is to make education an integral part of life. Intimate ties of kinship must be set up and maintained between the children of the ashram and the world of nature.

The relationship between students and teachers is not one of imparting knowledge only, it must be one of genuine kinship."

ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT: From a letter addressed to the teachers of Shantiniketan and despatched through some
Kunjalal Ghose on 10th Nov., 1902 it is understood that all the work of administration and management of his experimental school at Santiniketan would have been conducted by a *Samity of Adhyaniketas* (Council of Professors). It was based on the principle of collective leadership and responsibility. A person elected by the council was entrusted to execute all the activities according to the direction of the council. The keynote of administrative system was self-government. It is now under the central administration of Visva Bharati which has its own Vice-Chancellor and Registrar like other universities of India.

ACTIVITIES: The following time-table was maintained at Santiniketan every day:

To get up from bed at 4.30/5.30 a.m. - "The day began very early, at five-thirty in winter and four-thirty in other seasons. The boys made their own beds and as they did so recited the verses of scripture: 

\[ \text{... finishing their ablutions while it was still dark they took turns sweeping the dormitory. Then they bathed in water drawn freshly from the well, cold and invigorating. ... Then they went to their morning prayers. Each chose a secluded spot to his liking, spread a small woollen carpet and sat in silence} \]
To take breakfast within 7.00 a.m.
To attend classes from 7/8 a.m. to 11.00/11.30 a.m.
To take dinner at 11.30/12.00 a.m.
To attend afternoon classes at 2.00/2.30 p.m. & playground.

Morning prayer was followed by breakfast. The general menu consisted of wetted gram and molasses, or some sort of sweetmeat like Buda or Gaia and a cup of milk-16.

"A very brief service comes after breakfast before school. Morning school is from 8 till 11.30. All classes are held in the open air .... the various classes meet under different trees in the grounds."17

"Morning classes were over at 11.30 or 12. It was time for lunch. In those days the food was vegetarian..... They washed their\' own dishes. After lunch they took turns looking after guests."18

"At two or two-thirty classes started again on days when it rained heavily the students were given a holiday."19 "In the afternoon the work is light, they have their lessons to prepare, then comes tiffin and games, drinking, gardening

For seven or eight minutes ....... After this individual meditation Rabindranath would join them for congregational prayer."
follow."20 "On ordinary days everyone appeared on the playing field when classes were over, after tea. Some occupied themselves with carpentry and other with gardening."21

To attend recreational classes

"After games come the evening bath, meditation and the chanting of a Sanskrit hymn before the last meal and when the meal is over the scholars have an hour of storytelling, acting dramatic scenes, singing and so on."22

To go to bed at 9.30 p.m.

After the day's work they retire to bed at half-past nine and a choir of boys again goes round the school singing evening songs. They begin their days with songs and they end them with songs."23

DISCIPLINE: Tagore was always in favour of extending freedom and joy to the boys of his school and as such he introduced the principle of self-government in his experimental school. Ernest Rhys observes in this connection, "It was, I believe, through his knowledge of successfully applied principle of self-government in the George Junior Republic of America,
that it came to be the rule at Bolepur that the boys should be left as much as possible to themselves, and manage their own affairs without any interference from outside. Indeed it naturally then follows that punishment in any form would have no place in his school.

IMPORTANCE: The selection of site, management and administration and activities of Tagore's school at Santiniketan reveal at once that his school is clearly distinct from all other schools. It was a school where through peace, freedom and joy teaching and learning operated. The very site of the school was conducive to the implementation of Tagore's ideas and the growth of the physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the children. The children were being taught there in the natural environment and under the affectionate care of the teachers and spiritual set up. Specially Tagore's towering personality permeated the whole atmosphere of the school. It equally touched both the teachers and the taught. Ernest Rhys rightly observed, ".... not many fathers speak of their sons with as great a longing and affection as the poet did of his boys..... His affectionate care of them is a powerful spirit in the school; it was its birth spirit and it sustains the place and all who live and work there."
It is then found that not only the influence of nature, but also the influence of man, specially of teacher did much to mould the character of students and to unfold their personality. Students were allowed to live a life quite in harmony with nature realizing the unity of mankind. On having communication with all and living in the atmosphere of freedom, care and affection they learnt the lesson of true freedom and joy, peace and mutual trust, friendliness and fraternity. There was no distinction between the manner of living between the teachers and the taught. They all thought themselves as gathering there, as learners and seekers, truth and beauty, peace and goodness. The principle of 'plain living and high thinking' followed by the teachers of Santiniketan infused the spirit of simplicity of living and renunciation and developed the idea of inquisitiveness and wisdom amongst the students. It was in the sense the Boys' Republic extending full scope for the boys to live in freedom and to think in freedom and to work in freedom. In other words, they enjoyed liberty, equality and fraternity in their school at Santiniketan.

To speak more directly, Santiniketan was an ideal school of the boys, and for the boys. It was boys' Republic in real sense.
A few lines from Brahmacharyasram are pertinent to quote here - "I have not much faith in running the school mainly with a body of rules. The Santiniketan school is not merely a machine for forcing instruction down the children's throat. Its purpose will never be achieved except with the help of voluntarily offered good will. I do not consider the Advanakas of this school subordinate to me ....... the work of the institution is as much their as mine, and if this be not true, the establishment of this institution has gone in vain." 27

It is said that Santiniketan justified Gurudeva's expectations in a large measure. It proved that the identification of truth and beauty was possible not only in a poet's imagination but also in real life. It showed that the ideal and the real need not be at war with each other, that utility may be wedded to purity of thought. And what was this ideal? It was an ideal of love. Santiniketan owed its origin to love - a Poet's love of humanity. 28

Prof. S.C. Sarkar through his long discussion on the Santiniketan experiment pointed out that at Santiniketan Tagore experimented three functional principles of self-education, such as, freedom, fullness or inclusiveness and vastness or universalisation through the creation of specially organised natural and social environments and specially selected corpus of culture and atmosphere.
can then say that herein lies the importance of Tagore's experiment. It has been evident from the above that his two most important principles, namely, freedom and joy in education and the self-realization through self-purification and self-expression had been effectively implemented at Santiniketan.

(2) Visva Bharati Phase

INTRODUCTION: Visva Bharati is an institution for world culture. It is Rabindranath Tagore's International University at Santiniketan. Its name means "university" in its true sense - a place of universal knowledge or "world culture" as it is often translated. It also contains the idea of the union of the world (Visva) and India (Bharat) to seek this knowledge. Its motto is: Yatra Visvam Bhāratī Ekanidam" where the whole world meets in one place.

BACKGROUND: After the school at Santiniketan had become established and worked for a number of years, Tagore was seized by a "new restlessness of spirit" and a desire to find "freedom in a larger world of men and things. As the years passed he began to discover little by little what
Tagore expressed that he "had all along experienced the want of an institution in India which should be a true centre for all the different eastern cultures, concentrating in one spot the varied ideals of art and civilization which have been contributed to the world by the various countries of Asia." Gradually this idea was widened on account of his visit to Japan and America in 1918 and his second visit to Europe and America in 1920-21. The period between 1918-19 and 1920-21 was very important to Tagore and to Santiniketan as well. Because the experimental school which he started in 1901 developed in 1921 as Visva Bharati - an institution for world culture. It was no more limited to the study of Indian or Asian culture alone, on the other hand, it was extended to the study of the world culture. So it is rightly observed, - "The fuller idea of Visva Bharati now included the thought of a complete meeting of East and West, in a common fellowship of learning and a common spiritual striving for the unity of the human race." 

TIME & PLACE : Visva Bharati was formally opened on the 22nd December, 1921, twenty years after the establishment of Santiniketan School in 1901 and presided over by an eminent scholar Sri Brajendranath Seal. But it owed its origin to
the year 1918 because the foundation stone of Visva Bharati was laid in December, 1918 with great solemnity as Tagore was passing then through some bereavements due to the death of his eldest daughter and the political arrest of his dearest friend William Pearson. "The foundation stone of the university was laid in December, 1918. Drums were not beaten. There was no elaborate fuss. Like many other great things, Visva-Bharati began in unadorned solemnity. The following year, 1919, students began to arrive by ones and twos. The work of Visva Bharati started after the Summer holidays, side by side with the work of the school."  

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: As soon as the small school developed into a university with such broad ideas a well-formulated constitution was greatly needed. "Surendranath Tagore and Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobes drafted a constitution which was adopted and registered in May 1922. Rathindranath Tagore and Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis were appointed Karma-Sachivas (Joint Secretaries) of the Visva Bharati, and it now took over all the activities of the institutions at Santiniketan and Sriniketan. In the new system of nomenclature the school became the Purva Vibhaga which was later on changed into Patha-Bhavana; the institute for higher studies - the Uttara Vibhaga - was later on split up into two departments viz: Vidya-Bhavan"
which concentrated mainly on research work and studies of different eastern cultures and Siksha Bhavana, imparting collegiate education up to the graduation level. The music and art sections were separated in 1934 and the music section became the Sangit Bhavana, while the Art Section its old name: Kala-Bhavana. In late thirties, two more departments, China-Bhavana and Hindi Bhavana were established with endowments for Chinese and Hindi studies ...

After the death of Rabindranath, Rabindra-Bhavana was established in July 1942, as a Research Academy and Memorial Museum. In 1948, another department Vinaya Bhavana was established under the basic education training scheme. After the latest development of Visva Bharati was made in May, 1951 when it was declared to be an institution of national importance and was incorporated as a unitary, teaching and residential university by Act XXIX of 1951 of the Indian Parliament. The then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed the first Acharya (Chancellor) and Rathindranath Tagore, the first Upacharya (Vice-Chancellor) of the University. This system of administration is still going on with a Registrar (Karma-Sachiva). The Vice-Chancellor and Registrar like those of other universities are directly responsible for the administration and management of this central university.
Besides these departments and institutions or Bhavanas at Santiniketan, Visva Bharati has some other important departments and institutions under the department of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan, one mile to the west of Santiniketan, connected by road and telephone. These will be discussed under the heading - Sriniketan phase.

Distinguishing Features:

Tagore's experiments through all these departments and institutions contain some such elements which distinguish them from other similar institutions of the past and the present. These may be summarized as follows: close personal contact between the teachers and the students (institutions being residential), the influence of nature and environment (classes being held under the sky and trees), the atmosphere of freedom and joy, the practical training given in co-operation and self-government, facilities for self-expression through social, literary and artistic activities, due emphasis on physical culture and organization of excursions and educational tours for the school students and seminars, close personal attention and tutorial help, emphasis on social, cultural and other
co-curricular activities and other various facilities for college and university students of India and abroad. It is said regarding the facilities of students of Visva-Bharati: "Students coming from far and near live together, dining in the same hall, playing on the same grounds, organising common socials, picnics, excursions, literary meetings and musical and dramatic entertainments, it being one of the main principles of the educational practice of the Visva-Bharati to see that none of the pupils neglects any of the major faculties, nor develops the one at the expense of the other. One of the many valuable privileges and opportunities available to students of Visva Bharati is that a student by joining any one of the educational departments is allowed without having to pay extra fees to have the benefit of attending classes or courses in any other department, provided he shows a marked aptitude for such learning." 

Everything that was being organized and conducted, formulated and fostered was in consonance with the aims and objects of Visva Bharati which demand to be purely original and distinctive. The importance of Visva-Bharati then lies in the implementation of Tagore's cardinal principle of international understanding and universal humanism. It stands for creating scope of a better understanding.
between man and man, and between 'the conflicting interests that divide humanity to-day.' It represents neither an abstract idea nor a collection of separate departments or institutions in brick and mortar. It is much above all these things. It is the culmination of Tagore's philosophy of life and education and the consummation of all the ideas and movements of his time. It is the monument of Tagore's glory as a poet and an educator. No other institution can claim the greatness of Visva-Bharati as it is a unique creation of the creative genius. It stands for the exchange of the world culture.

(3) Sriniketan Phase

INTRODUCTION: Sriniketan is an institution for rural reconstruction. The name of this institution is self-explanatory. It echoes its own importance. "The word "Sri" contains the idea of prosperity or welfare resulting from activity and growing into healthy beauty." As the compound Bengali word "Santiniketan" means the Abode (Niketan) of Peace (Santi) similarly 'Sriniketan' being derived from another compound Bengali word implies the Abode of Beauty and Prosperity. The Bengali term 'Sri' means Beauty derived from Prosperity and 'Niketan' means Abode or House. Thus all the compound words used by Tagore such as Santiniketan,
Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan are highly expressive and significant.

BACKGROUND: Even by founding Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati Tagore was not satisfied, for he could not visualize what he wanted. He wanted to see India a prosperous country. He realized that peace and prosperity of a country can never be achieved if it cannot improve the conditions of the poverty-stricken and superstitious people of the villages. Hence he felt the great need of village reconstruction as economic factor plays the most important part in the village life. He, in short, wanted to see the ponds full of fish, the sheds filled with cows and the bins bristling with grain. "Rabindranath was seeking a way to link the school at Santiniketan with the villages in a way beneficial to both. Perhaps the possibility of doing this was in his mind when, while he was in England in 1912-13, he purchased the lands and the building at Surul from Col. Narendra Prasad Singha of Raipur."

TIME & PLACE: After two decades since the establishment of his experimental school at Santiniketan Tagore with a view to linking education with village reconstruction formally opened a centre at Surul on the 6th February 1922 with the name of Sriniketan. We, therefore, find that Sriniketan or the Institute for rural reconstruction was
Founded within a few weeks after the inauguration of Visva-Bharati (22 December 1921). It is located at a distance of one mile from Santiniketan but connected by road and telephone. Leonard K. Elmhirst was the first director of the Institute without whose active and sincere assistance the Institute might nip in the bud.

AIMS & OBJECTS: "The ideal of the Institute, in the words of the Poet, is "to bring back life in its completeness into the villages, making the rural folk self-reliant and self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural traditions of their own century and competent to make an efficient use of modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic condition."3

1) Winning the affection and confidence of the villagers by taking a genuine interest in rural welfare work and by sincerely trying to help them in the solution of their urgent problems.

ii) Studying rural problems and conducting researches and experiments for their solution.

iii) Passing on to the villages the knowledge thus gained so that attempts can be made jointly and on a co-operative basis, for an all-round regeneration of rural life.
In the words of Elmhirst it had two fold aim. He wrote, "From the onset we had two main objectives, to survey the economic, social and scientific needs of the cultivator in his home, village and fields, and secondly to try out our own laboratory experiments in health, education, craft, cultivation and animal husbandry." 5

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT: The institute was initially started with three neighbouring villages but its activities were extended later on to seventy-six villages through various departments. The Department of Agriculture includes agriculture, animal husbandry and pisciculture. Needless to say, these activities form the integral part of the rural economic development. We shall only state here the salient points of activities and achievements of this institute.

Agriculture comes first. From its very start the Institute had been trying to develop agriculture in the villages along scientific lines. Agricultural problems peculiar to the neighbourhood of Sriniketan were systematically studied and attempts made for their solution at the Sriniketan Farm. The Farm serves the two-fold purpose of experiment and demonstration. Experiments were made firstly to improve the quality and yield of existing crops, secondly
to introduce new crops and plants and to teach the villagers improved methods of farming.

Next to agriculture comes animal husbandry as corollary to agriculture. Because without improvement in this respect agriculture cannot flourish up to the desired end. Besides, scheme like dairy, poultry, goatery and apiary which were introduced and experimented at Sriniketan in a scientific way helped much to increase the income of the rural people. Pisciculture on co-operative basis was an added impetus to the people of this surrounding villages of Sriniketan.

The next important department was the Rural Industries Department popularly known as Silpa Bhavan. This department was originally started on a very modest scale at Santiniketan but later on shifted to Sriniketan. It mainly aimed at solving the problem of unemployment of rural people during their spare-time. Training was given in a variety of crafts - weaving, artistic leather work, carpentry, pottery, paper-making, book-binding etc. The importance of this department, therefore, lies in the fact that it provided the people of single crop area with some subsidiary occupation during the months when there is hardly any agricultural work. It is again important in the sense that it helped some of
them to take up cottage industries as a profession and other to use their leisure hours profitably by manufacturing things at home. It is thus rightly said - "It demonstrates how a large number of unskilled workers can be helped to earn a decent living in a province where little land is available per capita and where industries are few."6

That it goes without saying the awful problem of unemployment of India today may be very smoothly tackled if the leaders of the country think deeply on this line and plannings be directed effectively to assess the guidelines given by Tagore before half a century.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SRINIKETAN: The substantial help for its development came from one of Tagore's English friends, Leonard K. Elmhirst. In 1920 Elmhirst met the Poet in the United States of America and at the very first meeting the poet unfolded to him his own plan for bringing back "life in its completeness" to rural India. "Their meeting had far reaching consequences in the history of the growth and development of Sriniketan. Elmhirst came to India next year and joined the Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan in February 1922 as its first Director."7
Tagore candidly admitted the contribution of L.K. Elmhirst to the progress of Sriniketan. He owed much to Elmhirst. Because while his another foreign friend advised him to sell the plot of Surul purchased by Tagore, Elmhirst left no stone unturned to make the attempt successful and to materialize the idea of Tagore. Tagore said, "In all this my friend Elmhirst helped me greatly. It was he who developed this place into a separate field of work. It would not have been proper to have it linked up with Sriniketan. In Elmhirst's hands the work made great progress."  

There are also other departments, such as cooperative departments, department of Economic Research, department of Health and Sanitation etc. Of these departments the department of education deserves special attention. It is known as Siksha-Satra. We shall refer to certain important points only.

SIKSHA-SATRA:

It is an important department of Rural Education.

INTRODUCTION AND ORIGIN: It is said that Siksha-Satra was the second school that Tagore started twenty-two years after the establishment of the Sriniketan School.
Sontosh Kumar Majumdar, the son of one of the Poet's dearest friends whom he had sent to the USA along with his own son Rathindranath Tagore for education in Agriculture was put in charge of this School. After premature death of Mr. Majumder only after one and half year of the starting of this school Siksha-Satra was removed to Sriniketan and placed under the charge of Sri E.W. Aryanayakam. Tracing the origin of Siksha-Satra Prof. S.C. Sarkar writes, "Inspite of the fame that came to the Santiniketan School, the Poet's quest of truth was not quenched into self complacency. On the contrary, he felt an experimenter's impatience with the imperfections and discrepancies that experience had revealed and would not rest till he could get them right. He wanted the Santiniketan school to continue along its path of adventure, but unfortunately it had already paid the penalty of success. It had tied itself down to commitments and compromises." Tagore was confronted with numerous obstacles on the way of the implementation of his ideas. In order to have the freedom to give effect to his idea, he founded another school in 1924 with a few boys who either were orphans or whose parents were too destitute to be able to send them to any school whatever. In other words, "If Santiniketan must tie itself down to commitments and compromises that hampered the fulfilment of his ideal, all that he could do
was to create a new institution where the experiment could be carried on under more favourable conditions." And Siksha Satra was that new institution for rural education founded on 1st July 1924, at Surul house known as Sriniketan. The first school was founded in 1901 at Santiniketan. It is known as Patha Bhavan.

AIMS & OBJECTS: It is known that Rabindranath had three things specially in view when he started Siksha Satra. First, he wanted to give the pupils full opportunity to enter into intimate relationship with the natural and social environment.

Secondly, he wanted them to undertake a greater measure of responsibility in meeting the daily requirements of their individual and community life.

Thirdly, he attached great emphasis to learning through creative occupations including craft work, gardening etc.

This is how Rabindranath thought that he would be able to introduce in the school 'an active vigour of work, the joyous exercise of inventive and constructive energies that help to build up character. This is how he sought to unite with the Tapovana ideal of education the
western genius who knows how to clear the path towards a definite end of practical good.11

Regarding the aim of Tagore in founding the Siksha-Satra it is stated in Bulletin No. 21 that the aim of Rabindranath Tagore was to have a school that could equip boys for a full civil life. The boys must have their intellect developed as well as their aesthetic imagination; they must imbibe an esprit-de-corps or team spirit, on which to build a harmonious social life in their home villages. The Siksha-Satra was founded as a model school run on model methods for the building up of the ideal villager. Tagore’s own words best explain his aims. "The primary object of an institution of this kind, should be to educate one’s limbs and mind not merely to be in readiness for all emergencies, but also to be in perfect tune in the sympathy of response between life and the world."12

It is also said in the same Bulletin that Tagore was enthusiastically assisted by his distinguished associate Mr. L.K. Elmhirst in working out the Schemes for such an socio-educational institution. His special contribution was his desire to have village boys trained through modern science in the different rural handicrafts and in agriculture. He thought that the boys of this institution should
be trained in such a way that with their knowledge and practical experience they would naturally play a leading part in the reconstruction of their home villages and thus make fora a renaissance of rural life.

Prof. S. C. Sarkar's observation regarding the aim of Siksha-Satra is worth quoting here. He writes, "The Siksha-Satra was meant to be a reform, a transplan­tation of the Santiniketan experiment to a more favourable soil. At the same time, it was intended to be a departure in respect of certain new features that it was to incorpo­rate."13

It is now clear that Tagore set up Siksha-Satra in addition to the similar institution which is now known as Patha-Bhawan at Santiniketan. The foundation of Siksha Satra at the Sriniketan phase is due to the need that Tagore felt to extend the scope of experiment in a most liberal and independent way. He wanted such a place for experiment where the tradition of the community, the parents' expectations, the up-bringing of the teachers themselves and the claim and constitution of the official university, would not stand arrayed against the idea he had cherished. Herein lies the importance of the experi­ment through Siksha-Satra at Sriniketan. Not only the aims,
but also the occupations, activities and methods adapted there clearly indicates the special characteristics of this institution which by virtue of its originality demands a special position in the field of Tagore’s experiments.

**OCCUPATIONS**: Gardening and weaving were the principal occupations. House-building, clay modelling, dyeing, etc. were also added with them. "Of all the Cottage crafts weaving seems to be the most popular, though clay moulding with artistic designs is also much enjoyed." Poultry and fishery were also very enthusiastically adapted by the students of the Satra. "The junior group is very interested in the poultry, it gathers the eggs, dates them and writes on them the name of the keeper." Dairy was also an important occupation for the boys of the Satra. It is said, "The boys display immense interest in the dairy, poultry, and fish farms. On the occasion of the purchase of a fine new cow the boys, garlanded it, washed its hoofs, and rubbed its horns with oil, in fact, everybody took pride intending the cow, and the birth of its calf was a tremendous event."  

"First-aid, nursing also form the part of the Siksha-Satra training under the Medical Officer. The boys must do nursing and observe the patients who come for first
aid to the Dispensary. If a student falls ill, he is nursed by his fellow-students and if anybody in the colony is reported ill the boys volunteer to serve the capacity of health visitors and assist in every way they can.

"The idea of social service is fostered and developed by cooperation with the Village Welfare Department that helps the poor village people. The boys work hard and are invaluable at Utsavas and melas (festivals and fairs). It is through the application of the principles on which the Siksha-Satra was founded, that the school hopes to give balance and poise to the character of its students." 17

ACTIVITIES: Siksha Satra was started on a very small scale like the Santiniketan school only with six village boys having age group between 7 and 10½ years. It was from the very beginning a residential school for orphans. All boys lived and worked together and no distinction was allowed to exist in respect of caste and creed. There was common kitchen for all and it was left entirely in their charge. They had to manage it themselves.

It is then found that attempts were made at the Satra to create an atmosphere of self-reliance, decency,
independent self-expression, and self-discipline.

IMPORTANCE: Importance of this programme of the training at Sriniketan and its relevance to the current educational experiment may be summarized in the following manner: "In view of the efforts that are being made to-day to re-orient the educational system to meet the needs of the people of free India, it is indeed curious to think that Rabindranath, nearly a quarter of a century back anticipated the most progressive educational thoughts and principles yet discovered and gave them a concrete shape in this small modest-looking institution, Siksha-Satra." 

Referring to Tagore's idea of experiment in rural reconstruction and education Marjorie Sykes remarked, that Rabindranath tried to bring to the villages round Sriniketan not only more money, but also more interest in life, more happiness and more enjoyment. In his view, Tagore wanted to bring real joy and happy cooperation into one small village. And that would be true swaraj. Sykes came to the conclusion that the poet longed to make every village in India a Sriniketan, a home of welfare and beauty.

Tagore's own observation relating to his idea behind the experiment in rural reconstruction and rural
education at Sriniketan is as follows: "We must so endea-
vour that a power from within the villages themselves may be
working along side of us, albeit undiscernable by us ......
If I can free only one or two villages from the bonds of
ignorance and weakness, there will be built, on a tiny scale,
an ideal for the whole of India ...... our aim must be to
give these villages complete freedom—education for all the
winds of joy blowing across the village, music and recita-
tions going on as in the old days. Fulfil this ideal in a
far villages only, and I will say that these few villages
are my India. And only if that is done, will India be truly
ours."  

Tagore's optimistic expectation did not prove
futile. From the account given in Bulletin No. 11 it is
found that in the year 1945 the village welfare department
extended its activities to 76 villages under 16 welfare
centres. It is proved beyond any suspicion that Tagore
achieved what he wished and his endeavour in the field of
rural reconstruction and education was a pioneering work.
It is in this sense Tagore was a herald of village recons-
truction work and national movement in education. The
Bulletin referred to above contains the following observa-
tion regarding the importance of this attempt in the matter
of village reconstruction which was started touching all
spheres of rural life, such as, education, agriculture, industry public health and sanitation, etc.

It is concluded that the importance of the kind of work carried out by the Rural Reconstruction Institution cannot be over emphasized; in a country with a predominantly rural population the improvement of villages and the teaching of the manifold problems of rural life simultaneously on all fronts, are of the first importance.

More important than its actual achievements — which are not inconsiderable — are the possibilities offered by Sriniketan. The Institute is admitted by a pioneer organization to carry out practical research into the problems of rural life in Bengal. At a time when everyone in the country is thinking in terms of planning and reconstruction, the possibilities offered by Sriniketan should be investigated and exploited to their fullest extent. The Institute will be found ideally suited to become a pilot research station to study the problems of agriculture, education, economics, health, cooperation industries, etc. It can devise scientific methods for tackling all these problems in the practical field.

In conclusion we would like to give here a brief extract from the impression of Sir John Russel, Director,
Both am she ad Institute - who visited the Institute in 1937. "Altogether this village work appeals to me," said Sir John, "as being among the best I have been in India, being inspired by the spirit of human interest and are intense desire to do all that is possible for improving the life of the village in all its aspects."

Tagore thought that the heart of the country beats in the village and so he after his experiment at Santiniketan and Visva Bharati exerted his last but greatest treasure of mind and money for the village reconstruction at Sriniketan. Its ideal should be followed with the zeal of Tagore if we really intend to reconstruct the rural life to meet the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of the people still residing in the remote villages of India in a very wretched condition being deprived of all sorts of amenities of modern life. Education should be related very closely to the social and economic life of the people; otherwise it is destined to sound like an empty vessel being confined within the very narrow limit of theoretical education and having been disconnected with the life around us resulting in sheer disappointment and frustration among the people of future generation which will find no alternative except disorder and destruction. Tagore being a prophet and a
poet foresaw the coming danger germinating in the day as dust education and therefore as a remedy for it he upheld in his own way the new path to follow and to save the country. Not only he suggested the way of escape, but at the same time he showed the country the practicability of solving the problem through his success in the field of experiment in rural reconstruction and education. Herein lies the importance of his experiment which aimed at reorientation and re-organisation of education to suit the modern needs and to fulfil the aspiration of the modern time.

I.K. Elmherst, the pivot of Sriniketan, refers to the importance of the activities of Sriniketan in the following way. "First and foremost was the poet's emphasis upon the need for fundamental respect for and readiness to appreciate the individual, whether aboriginal Santhal, outcast Muchi, man, woman, boy or girls..... This principle of respect for the individual and of refusal to impose upon him same system we may think good for him seems to me basic in the whole approach of Santiniketan and Sriniketan to education, to extension work, and to life." 22

He wrote about what Tagore wanted to do at
Sriniketan in addition to his experiment at Santiniketan School. "Into our wholly compartmentalised world docketed, labelled and pigeon holed" says Elmherst, "the poet cast his synthetic ideas of Visva Bharati and Sriniketan and claimed them as natural and logical additions to his existing School." 23

We can conclude in the words of Dr. P.C. Bagchi who writes: "..... without Sriniketan, Santiniketan is incomplete. If Sriniketan is kept aloof from Santiniketan, then whatever else we might be, we could not live upto the ideals of Gurudeva". 24

It is now quite conspicuous from the foregoing discussion that Tagore's idea of humanistic and socialistic education had been fully implemented through his experiments at Sriniketan and Siksha-Satra. These are the pillars of his practical attitude in life and education. The poet at this stage comes to the stern reality in life. His experiments in education at Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan clearly express his naturalistic, idealistic, pragmatic and realistic views and their miraculous and harmonious blending. In other words, the individualistic, socialistic, humanistic and internationalistic principles that occupy a great place in the modern theory of education can be distinctly discerned from Tagore's theory and practice in education. That Tagore was not only a theorist also a great experimenter
has been undoubtedly proved by his series of experiments at the three places referred to above. These experiments have given him the worldwide reputation of an educator par excellence in addition to his appellation of a great poet. His superiority as an educator lies in it. No other educator of the world had such poetic genius as Tagore possessed. The range of their experiment was not so extensive and intensive as Tagore had done. The starting of an institution like Sikhsa-Sattra is surely an original contribution of Tagore, because it is an enterprise in a new direction. It is a concrete suggestion for the solution of the problems of unemployment and illiteracy and the removal of poverty through education.