
STATEMENT BY ASHOKA UNIVERSITY FACULTY

To,
Professor Malabika Sarkar, Vice Chancellor
Mr. Ashish Dhawan, Chairman of Board of Trustees
Ashoka University.

The resignation of Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta from Ashoka University on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 is a matter of great anguish for the university faculty. It is not just an occasion for sorrow over the departure of a deeply respected and admired colleague. It also raises urgent questions about the university's commitment to academic freedom as well as its internal processes.

In light of media reports that circulated before the official announcement of Professor Mehta's departure from the university, it seems quite plausible that his resignation was a direct consequence of his role as a public intellectual and critic of the government. We are greatly troubled by this scenario. Even more troubling is the possibility that our university may have acceded to pressure to remove Professor Mehta or to request, and accept, his resignation. This would fly against the principles of academic freedom on which Ashoka University has been set up - and which Professor Mehta, in his time as Vice-Chancellor and University Professor, has so scrupulously fought to defend. It would also set a chilling precedent for future removals of faculty, curtailing our sense of who we are as researchers and teachers.

We request the university to ask Professor Mehta to rescind his resignation. We also request that the university clarify its internal protocols of faculty appointment and dismissal, and reinforce its institutional commitment to the principles of academic freedom.

We stand fully in support of Professor Mehta and all academics who risk their personal and professional well-being by speaking truth to power.

Sincerely,
Ashoka Faculty.
March 18, 2021.