

N. F. S. Grundtvig: Educationist extraordinary

Homage of an Indian adult educator

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Challenging the notion that Grundtvig's ideas are unique and without significance outside the boundaries of the Danish state, this article seeks to emphasise the universal nature of Grundtvig's thoughts and their relevance for the development of the countries of the third world. India, for example – despite its glorious past and present democratic constitution – is far from an ideal nation where 440 million people are still illiterate and 320 million people are living in poverty. Grundtvig's concept of democracy, in which an overwhelming majority of the electorate should be enlightened, can also become a reality in the third world if his philosophy and practice are creatively assimilated with the thoughts of renowned thinkers of the third world (like Tagore, Gandhi and Freire).

As I settle down for a one-year stay in Denmark, I gradually become aware of the nature of the Danes' appreciation of Grundtvig. I begin to discover that for some of his compatriots, Danishness and Grundtvigianism are synonymous. I begin to understand why most of Grundtvig's works are not available in English translation as those of some of his famous contemporaries are. For instance, I have on my table a book on the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen's life and work, which was published in Denmark in 1955, for the 150th anniversary of the author's birth. There is an article in this volume entitled 'Hans Christian Andersen in eighty languages'. People might argue that fairy tales are less restricted by national and linguistic boundaries than some other forms of writing. But what would they say regarding the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard? All his books and journals are translated into English. I have often heard the excuse offered that Grundtvig is too Danish to be translated. Yet surely the person who contributed so much to the shaping of modern Denmark, who worked for the enlightenment of the Danish peasantry, who conceived the folk high-school, deserves to be known to the world at large, and through his own works.

The total absorption of Grundtvig into the Danish national consciousness, for better and for worse, has given rise at worst to an extreme nationalistic and chauvinistic form of Grundtvigianism which, if allowed to continue unchallenged, may in the end divest the

Grundtvig-inheritance of the cherished universal ideals of Grundtvig himself.

Grundtvig, therefore, deserves to be saved from those of his adherents who would, by default or intention, deny him his rightful place in the international arena.

Moreover, since the Danish experiment in which Grundtvig and his supporters played their key role was uniquely successful as an alternative path to social progress, not only do Grundtvig's ideas merit being placed before the international community, both as part of the historical record and as a still-usable pattern for the future, but Denmark, as part of Europe and part of the world, could be said to have a duty to achieve this goal. The world has a right to learn from the theory and practice of Grundtvig.

As an Indian and as an adult educator, therefore, I want to read in Grundtvig what is universal in his thinking. Grundtvig was born two and a quarter centuries ago, at a time when the concept of democracy was just taking shape in Denmark. He gave meaning and content to the concept which in fact comprise the very soul of democracy. He enshrined within it, and tirelessly campaigned for, the ideal of educational enlightenment for all, through a network of folk high-schools.

During the last two hundred years, the world has seen the decline of monarchy, the rise and fall of dictatorships and the decolonisation of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the world of today, terrorised by Islamic Jihadis and arrogant crusaders, Grundtvig's ideas of freedom and responsibility remain appropriate tools for ensuring peace and prosperity. His ideas can be compared with those of the most outstanding thinkers of the last two centuries, during which time the world has changed from a pre-modern to a post-modern one. Access to the ideas of Grundtvig could immensely serve the cause of liberation of the people of the developing world. In India, for example, the world's largest democracy, we need the thoughts of Grundtvig in order to be rejuvenated and remotivated with a renewed understanding.

From a glorious past to a problem-ridden present: India through the ages

India, the cradle of an ancient civilization where thousands of years of history walk with ease alongside the contemporaneous present, is both a boon and a burden to the international community. It is a nation which has contributed to the world of knowledge in such diverse spheres as philosophy, religion, literature, politics and science. Ancient Indian philosophy begot an extraordinary array of schools such as

Lokayata, Boudha, Jaina, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa and Vedanta all of which represented sophisticated strands of thought, and are comparable to many contemporary areas of world philosophy. In the sphere of spirituality, India is credited with the origin of a number of important religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. One can imagine the quality of intellect that India possessed if one considers that the *Rig-Veda*, the world's oldest religious text, originated in India during 1500-1200 B. C. In literature, India offered the world two great epics – The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the field of politics, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (300 B.C.) is a masterpiece on statecraft. Susruta and Charaka (1000 B.C.) compiled the two outstanding treatises on medicine and health care. The theory and practice of Yoga is an Indian innovation of 3000 B.C.

This glorious and illuminating past continued with intermittent ups and downs until the seventeenth century, when Indian industry, particularly textile, came to be in great demand in the international market. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (or Tavarnier; 1605-1689), the renowned French traveller and pioneer of trade with India, writes in *Travels in India* (first published in French 1676; English translation with notes, appendices, by V. Ball, 1889):

As to the commodities of great value and which draw the commerce of strangers thither (to Bengale), I know not whether there be a country in the world that affords more and greater variety: for besides sugar (...) there is store of cottons and silks, that it may be said that Bengale is, as it were, the general magazine thereof not only for Indostan (...) but also for all circumjacent kingdoms and for Europe itself (Ghosh 1996, 207)

The same view was expressed by François Bernier, French physician, co-traveller of Tavernier and author of the most remarkable travelogue of that century, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668* (translated Archibald Constable, London 1891; quoted in Ghosh 1996, 204-205). A modern historian's assessment of this situation is to be found in Feldbæk (1969).

As India came under British domination in 1757, Indian industry, particularly textile, which had supplied the world market for centuries, was completely destroyed. Education for the broad masses was relegated to the background and institutions developed to cater to the requirements of an elite. The percentage rate of literacy in India was 7.16 in 1821, 9.50 in 1831, and still as low as 16.10 in 1941.

However, India saw the emergence of a host of great thinkers like Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1823), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1821-

1891), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1903), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). All of them, with the exception of Mahatma Gandhi, were the creators of Bengal Renaissance, the series of social, religious and cultural movements that awakened the Indian people. This has striking similarities with the Danish Golden Age. But this social awakening touched only a small section of the Indian people – those belonging to the upper and middle classes. A large section of Indian society, especially those belonging to lower classes and castes and engaged in agriculture, remained outside the purview of this movement. Even after independence, little was done to touch this section of the population. Only Mahatma Gandhi did his best to address the social problems of this section of the population – such as the problem of untouchability. In independent India, precious little was done to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of these people. 320 million are still living in poverty today in India and 440 million are illiterate. The child mortality rate is 79 per 1000 live births; ratio of male and female population is 1000:927 due to female foeticide and infanticide.

The root causes of the ills of Indian society lie in wrongly placed priorities. The policy makers placed more emphasis on industrialisation than on agriculture and land reform. They put more emphasis on higher education than on basic education. Instead of solving bilateral problems with neighbouring countries, they sought to resolve them militarily – thereby draining huge resources into unproductive sectors.

Grundtvig: The role of the individual in history

Grundtvig witnessed the unfolding of Danish history during his childhood and youth when the great agricultural commissions were changing the face of rural Denmark. It was a veritable social transformation whereby the peasants of Denmark – mostly middle peasants (owning 20 to 120 acres of land) became a driving force of Danish history. Around the same time he witnessed some of the most eventful years which had far reaching effect on the future of Denmark as a nation. The British attack on Copenhagen and seizure of Danish fleet (1807), cession of Norway from the Danish realm (1814), economic bankruptcy (1813) – all these had greatly influenced his thinking. When he was a child, he heard from his elders, especially from his teacher, of the momentous events taking place in France (1789). In short, history was out of joint in his childhood and youth. As a reaction to these unsettling national and international events,

Grundtvig deeply meditated over the possible course of salvation of the Danish nation. These thoughts were so unusual and radically different, so down to earth but philosophically pregnant, that they charted an alternative path to social development.

Let us first look at the process of development of his educational thinking. His earliest statements on education date back to 1802. Still a student of the University of Copenhagen, he was influenced by his time and therefore in these unpublished jottings we find him opining in favour of humanistic scholarship. However, even at this stage, we find a refreshing insight. He was opposed to physical chastisement and rote-learning (See Bugge 1985, 218). Both were considered essential by most of his contemporaries and predecessors. He was also influenced by the philosophy of enlightenment. He therefore laid stress upon the social responsibility of education.

After his emotional experience in Egeløkke, Grundtvig found himself open to the influence of romantic philosophy. He spoke in favour of an idealist concept of education.

This was further developed as he was appointed history and geography teacher at Det Schoubouske Institut when he wrote his unpublished textbook *Lærebog i Verdenhistorie for De tvende øverste Klasser i Schouboes Institut* (Text book on world history for two upper classes of Schouboe's Institute) (*GSkv* I, 169) He also wrote a few poems in this period. In these writings we find Grundtvig offering his fellow countrymen a truer understanding of life (Bugge 1965, 364).

From 1815 to 1830 Grundtvig's thoughts underwent a series of transformations until finally he reached a point of clarification. At this time the concept of 'Danishness' an expression of national identity becomes established in his thinking. He also discovered at this point the living, spoken word not only as a mode of communication to the divine but also as instrumental to enlightenment of the people.

Between 1829 and 1831, Grundtvig visited England thrice in connection with his study of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts kept in various British archives. While in England, he greatly appreciated the English educational system particularly in the colleges of the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. He was impressed with what he perceived as the free and open relationship between the teacher and the student, in residential circumstances permitting the informal exchange of experience and knowledge outside as well as within the lecture-hall. These impressions positively influenced him to seek to evolve a similar open interaction in educational institutions in Denmark too. Thus he combined his idea of popular enlightenment with free and frank interaction between the teacher and the taught. This new outlook

he placed before his readers in the introduction to his book *Nordens Mythologi* (1832) (*GSkv* I, 221). Some other great principles, such as civic and religious freedom, and respect for humanity, which he observed in England, entered his concepts.

The first sessions of the newly created Provincial Advisory Councils during 1835-36 – an attempt by the *enevælde* (absolute monarchy) to appease demands for democratic government – imbued him with admiration for the use of spoken word which he termed the ‘Secular Resurrection of the Word’. In the spring of 1836, he wrote his important educational work: *Det Danske Fiir-Kløver* (The Danish four-leaved clover) (*GSkv* II, 7).

In the following years Grundtvig published a series of books on education: *Til Nordmænd om en Norsk Høiskole* (To Norwegians concerning a Norwegian High School) (1837) (*GSkv* II, 63), *Skolen for Livet og Akademiet i Soer* (The School for Life and The Academy at Soer) (1838) (*GSkv* II, 79), *Om Nordens videnskabelige Forening* (On the academic union of Scandinavia) (1839) (*GSkv* II, 126), and *Lykønskning til Danmark* (Congratulations to Denmark) (1847) (*GSkv* II, 210). In *Om Nordens videnskabelige Forening* he envisaged a new people’s university to be established by the Scandinavian countries.

Grundtvig, as we know, was learned on a scale almost unknown in the present times. However, his emphasis on popular education emanated from his view that scientific education was a matter for the few, but popular education was a matter for the whole people. Science and learning are abstract but popular education is concrete. Most importantly, Grundtvig felt that learning of an upperclass minority goes astray if there is no education for the people to face it. Members of the developing world face this phenomenon rather regularly where learning acquired by one section creates a gulf with the unschooled majority. Grundtvig wanted a uniform enlightenment of all classes. The most important means for this sort of enlightenment, he observed, are not books but the living word. The then existing educational institutions in Denmark were not appropriate for generating such enlightenment. The new objective necessitated a novel form of institution: and he prescribed the folk high school.

Not only in the sphere of education but elsewhere too, Grundtvig espoused radically different views – very different from those held by the state church leaders. His conception of the church and his view of the human being were congregational and corporate. For him, life cannot be fully and fruitfully lived in individual isolation. It was in this fundamental conviction that he differed so radically from the individualism of that existentialism promoted by his contemporary Søren

Kierkegaard. The body of a people – the congregation, the folk – is the community through which and within which the individual's highest potential, including spiritual potential may be realized. It enfolds and carries the person, gives life and strength, guides and guards the individual. The life of the people is determinative for the life of the individual.

This corporate identity is characteristic of the individual of the third world. Unlike the person who is atomised, insular and 'self'-ish, the individual of the third world belongs to the community. Technology has not yet been able to cut the umbilical cord that binds a person to the community into which he/she is born.

Grundtvig had unswerving belief in the wisdom of the ordinary people. This ensured that he was grounded in the people's consciousness. If we extrapolate this from a national to an international perspective, it will mean that Grundtvig would have faith in the wisdom of the common folk in the third world in the changing scenario of the today's world. Their perception, unadulterated by narrow individualism would help to make the world a more satisfying place to live in.

From the early 1830s, Grundtvig began to recognise the possibility that Denmark would eventually have a democratic form of government. He was apprehensive that this newly gained freedom could be manipulated by the upper classes at the cost of the poorer sections of the society. He envisaged a situation in which the leaders would gain too much power – unless the people were given access to such a degree of democratic participation that a people's voice might speak freely and strongly. It would be proper also to add that he was just as anxious about the possibility of people having a right to vote who did not have a commensurate understanding of the common good – chiefly because they had not been educated in *folkelig* awareness (such as learning from Danish history and legend, for example, could inculcate) Accordingly, Grundtvig suggested the idea of a people's high school in which everyone could be admitted. We have discussed the salient features of these folk high schools elsewhere (Mitra 2003, 136-154). What Grundtvig thought 175 years ago is the need of the hour of many countries of the developing world. Even where there exists a representative form of government, democracy does not function in practice because the elites rule and the vast majority only obey – exactly what Grundtvig feared in Denmark. He wanted a fairly enlightened electorate who would exercise their right judiciously and would not reduce democracy into the other extreme – a mob rule.

Grundtvig's views of society are suited to the reality of the post-communist era. This world is being increasingly dominated by an individualism, as harsh in many respects as the collectivism it replaced. Unless we can find a 'third way', collaborative and interdependent, a 'relationship' society in which we can learn how to live for each other and especially for the poorest and the weakest, we shall never begin to discover a more satisfying way of life.

Tagore, Gandhi and Freire

When we seek to find relevance of Grundtvig's thoughts for the people of the third world, we do not think of him in isolation from other thinkers of the third world who contemplated the liberation of their people not only materially but spiritually too. The most outstanding among them are Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997).

Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore, considered as a phenomenon by his countrymen, was born in Calcutta in a landlord's family. Essentially a poet, he was more than a poet. Apart from being a poet, he was a composer of songs, a great writer of short stories, a great novelist, a playwright, a literary critic, a writer for children and many other things. Besides, he was a pioneer in education. A rebel against formal education in his youth, he tried to give shape to some of his own ideas of education in the school he founded in Santiniketan in 1901. The school was upgraded to a university called Visvabharati in 1918.

Though himself a school dropout, he understood the malaise of the prevalent Indian education system. He came to espouse the view that the mother tongue should be the vehicle of imparting knowledge. In a colonial set-up, education through the medium of English would produce an English-speaking elite isolated from the rest of society.

Tagore wrote a number of articles on education in his late twenties. In an article on education written in November 1892, he expressed his opposition to learning by rote. In another article, he emphasised the need to organise country fairs which would bring together entrepreneurs and consumers to bridge the gap between people's needs and innovative solutions. This would also give rise to national awakening and self reliance. Tagore believed in sustainable development. He felt that in a country like India, with an overwhelmingly large rural population, self-reliance of the rural people was the most important weapon for achieving self-sufficiency. In 1905, he founded a cooperative rural

bank with the participation of local peasants. He also started a night school for adults in a village of the untouchables.

In 1913, Tagore received the Nobel Prize for Literature. He put the money into the cooperative bank he had created in order to boost the local economy and to help the developmental works undertaken there.

On 22 December 1901 Tagore started his school at Santiniketan. He called it an Ashram or hermitage. The students had to attend to all their needs themselves. Food was simple and vegetarian. All academic instructions were given in the mother tongue. The idea of teaching through some form of activity and craft was implemented here. Classes were held in the open, under the trees in close proximity with nature. Music and fine arts were parts of the curriculum.

Seventeen years later, in 1918, the foundation of Visvabharati, the university, was laid. Formal inauguration was made in 1922. Tagore believed that on each race was laid the duty to keep alight its own lamp of mind as its part of the illumination of the world. Visvabharati was such a lamp of the Indian nation. It was an Indian, Eastern and Global cultural centre. Shortly thereafter, another wing was added to the university called the Institute of Rural Reconstruction. Four general areas, namely agriculture, craft and cottage industry, village welfare and non-formal education were emphasised here. This covered more or less the whole gamut of activities for rural development.

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was a great genius of enlightenment. His message reached almost every household of the Indian nation. All of Gandhi's movements had deep social connotations. Gandhi's educational ideas were unique. Since the establishment of the British Raj, educationists and thinkers condemned colonial education as rootless, unreal, inadequate, shallow, alien, demoralising and denationalising. Gandhi condemned it in moral terms.

Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 at Porbandar, a small town in the province of Gujarat, on the western coast of India. He came of a middle-class family of trading caste. Right from his student days, honesty was his watchword in life. He was an average student. Passing his matriculation examination in 1887, he got admitted to a college at Bhavnagar. He found instruction in English difficult to follow. Frustrated, he took the advice of a family friend and went to England to study Law. He procured the necessary finance through borrowing and the sale of his wife's jewelry. He set sail on 4 September 1888.

The first few days in England were miserable. An additional inconvenience was the vow he took before his mother that he would

not touch women, nor meat and wine. Then one day he discovered a vegetarian restaurant where he had his first satisfactory meal in London. There he bought a copy of Henry Salt's *A plea for vegetarianism*. From now on he became a vegetarian by conviction.

Then began the course of self-study. He was introduced to *The Ethics of Diet* by Howard Williams. He read in this book that Jesus was a vegetarian. He also came across the theosophical thoughts of Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. He read the Bhagabat Gita in Arnold's English rendering. In Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* he read the teachings of Mohammed. He studied the Buddha's teachings and read the Bible. His mind began to unify the essential teachings of major religions.

On returning to India after three years in England, he could not cope with the situation there. On being offered a job of a legal assistant in an Indian firm in South Africa, he set sail for Durban in 1893. Embarking at Durban, also called Port Natal, Gandhi was received by his employer Abdullah Sett. At the port itself, he noticed that the way the whites were treating the Indians was anything but courteous. He encountered his first humiliation in a Durban court when he was asked by the magistrate to take off his turban. Gandhi refused and left the court room. On his journey to Pretoria a few days later, he was thrown out of the first class compartment although he had a valid ticket. He was even beaten up by the conductor of the stage coach while journeying from Charlestown to Johannesburg.

Having come face to face with the appalling conditions in which his countrymen were forced to live in that country, he engaged himself in raising the consciousness of the people and motivating them to protest. He launched mass movements against the Government's policy and thereby discovered his unique method of non-violent struggle. During the course of his struggles, he established the first Phoenix settlement and then the Tolstoy Farm. In addition to practising self-reliance, he took upon himself the task of teaching the children of the settlers.

Since everything in these settlements had to be done by the settlers themselves, children could not attend formal school. Students used to come to the class in the afternoon, after a day's labour. Gandhi and his German colleague Kallenbach, who were also tired, did the teaching. There were many difficulties. Students were Tamil, Telegu and Gujrati speaking. There were Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The age group varied between seven and twenty. Girls and boys studied together. With great patience Gandhi taught the heterogenous group. He discovered that story-telling was the best method of getting the students'

attention. As far as practicable, he taught the students in their mother tongue. History, Geography and Mathematics were taught in a lively and unconventional way. The children also sang prayers together.

Gandhi came back to India in 1915. He travelled extensively to arouse the people from ignorance and sought to give them a new consciousness. These exercises refined his own ideas about education of the Indian masses.

Gandhi believed that education should be imparted in the mother tongue. Primary education should establish a relationship between the child's environment at home and at school. This, he thought, could be done by teaching the child the craft he/she would find most relevant. Alphabetisation was not, for Gandhi, the be-all and end-all of all education. Gandhi felt that physical education and craft would develop the child's intellectual capacity. Gandhi was opposed to too many textbooks. He preferred that students should be taught, at the initial stage, orally and through dialogue and story-telling. History, geography, mathematics, and so on should be taught in such a way that the child could find connection between life and education. Gandhi wanted a mass movement for education of the adults. Gandhi believed that education and life-requirements should be so harmonised that the process of deliteracisation would not take place. He wanted that women should be educated as much as men. Gandhi was against any sort of punishment to the child.

Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire has been called the Rousseau of the twentieth century. His work on the educational methods and practices of the oppressed brought about a qualitative change in the philosophy of adult education in particular and education in general. He is the first philosopher who connected literacy with liberation. Not only in the sphere of theory but also in the domain of practice, he brought about revolutionary innovations.

Born on 19 September 1921, this great educationist and philosopher started his journey in this world with a leaky umbrella. He was the youngest of four children. His father, though an army officer, was a kind person. Paulo learnt his alphabets from his parents in the garden under the mango tree while playing with them. This lively, natural and free way to literacy influenced him greatly in his later years when he discovered his unique method of reading the word and the world.

The world economic crisis of 1929 affected the economic condition of the Freire family adversely. His father could not cope with the rising cost of living in Recife and therefore moved to the nearby town

of Jaboatao. Paulo lost his father, the sole earning member of the family, when he was only thirteen. As a consequence of this tragedy, Paulo stopped going to school at all. He resumed his studies at the age of sixteen. Most of his classmates came of affluent families. Paulo was tall, thin and underfed.

He gained admission to the University of Recife at the age of twenty. On successful completion of his course in Law, he joined the legal profession but quit it almost immediately for ethical reasons. In 1946 he joined the Social Service of Industries (SESI) and worked there for ten years. SESI was an employers' organisation. Its objective was to assist the workers in various ways. Here Paulo came face to face with the stark reality of the conditions of living of the Brazilian working class. Working in the department of education and culture of SESI, Paulo Freire endeavoured to reform the teaching-learning process in the schools for the children of the workers organized under its auspices. He gradually became a teacher who would like to innovate. Paulo discovered that dialogue was the best way to teach.

Thereafter, he joined the cultural extension wing of the University of Recife. While working here, he discovered a new method to literacy which would lead to conscientisation, a term he coined to denote the acquisition of a new level of consciousness. In 1959, he wrote his dissertation "Present Day Education in Brazil". He received his Ph. D. He was given the Chair of History and Philosophy of Education in the School of Fine Arts of the University of Recife.

The evolution of Freire's epistemology can be traced to the conditions of living of the majority of the people of North East Brazil in the 1960s. They were victims of the culture of silence. Oppressed for ages, these poor people lost the courage and even the willingness to speak about their miserable conditions, let alone protest against it. They passively submitted themselves to their fate. Paulo wanted to break this vicious culture so that these people could take an active part in creating a new Brazil. His method of literacy was connected to that development of critical awareness he termed conscientisation.

His first attempt at teaching literacy took place in Recife, with a group of five illiterates of which two dropped out on the second or third day. But the method that evolved was utilised in the large scale experiment in Angicos in Rio Grande do Norte. Three hundred agricultural workers learnt to read and write within a period of forty-five days. The President of the nation, Joao Goulart, and the Minister of Education, Paulo de Tarso Santos, invited Freire to take charge of the national literacy programme. Freire planned to organise twenty thousand cultural circles so that two million people could be made

literate. This and other pro-people actions of the government infuriated the ruling class. A military coup in 1964 removed the elected government from office. Paulo Freire was arrested. On being released, he left, first for Bolivia and then for Chile. He continued the work he started in Brazil. He published *Education as the Practice of Freedom* in 1967. In 1970 he published his most celebrated work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Here he connected education with conscientisation. There was no other educational philosopher before him who gave such a strong voice for liberation to the oppressed.

Concluding Remarks

Thoughts of Grundtvig, Tagore, Gandhi and Freire can be assimilated to make a composite whole. Each of these four thinkers contributed uniquely to the field of people's education and freedom. Therefore the synthesis of their thoughts can be of immense significance if applied in practice for uplifting the masses of the developing world.

Grundtvig's concept of enlightenment is closely connected with the awakening of the people through the literature, history and culture of the nation. Myths, folklore, legends and the anecdotes of history root them to their tradition. All these awaken the people and make them conscious participants in the democratic institutions. For Freire, education is the practice of freedom – the freedom to choose. Are not these concepts complimentary?

Grundtvig's concept of *folkelighed* relates to fruition of people's intrinsic national culture. It is closely connected to language, tradition and heritage of a particular society. For Tagore, culture is an integral part of the student's upbringing. Fine arts and craft, dance and music, literature and science – all these constitute culture and are rooted to the nation. Freire started his literacy process from the premise of culture and extended it in the realm of freedom. Culture, according to Freire, is what is practised by the people as they transform nature. In a unique way, he obliterates the differentiation between the artisan and the artist, showing that both of them transform nature in their unique way.

Grundtvig, Gandhi and Freire contributed some of the most significant key words and concepts to humanity. Grundtvig's concept of *folkelighed* and enlightenment awaken a whole nation. Gandhi's Satyagraha urges people to hold on to truth at all costs. Freire's conscientisation accentuates the faculty of critical thinking. Together, they constitute a philosophical whole.

Abbreviations

- Gskv I-II*: K. E. Bugge (1968), *Grundtvigs Skoleverden i tekster og udkast*, vol. 1-2, Institut for Dansk Kirkehistorie, Copenhagen
- Nordens Mythologi*: N. F. S. Grundtvig (1832), *Nordens Mythologi eller Sindbilled-Sprog – Historisk-Poetisk udviklet og oplyst af N. F. S. Grundtvig*, Copenhagen.

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