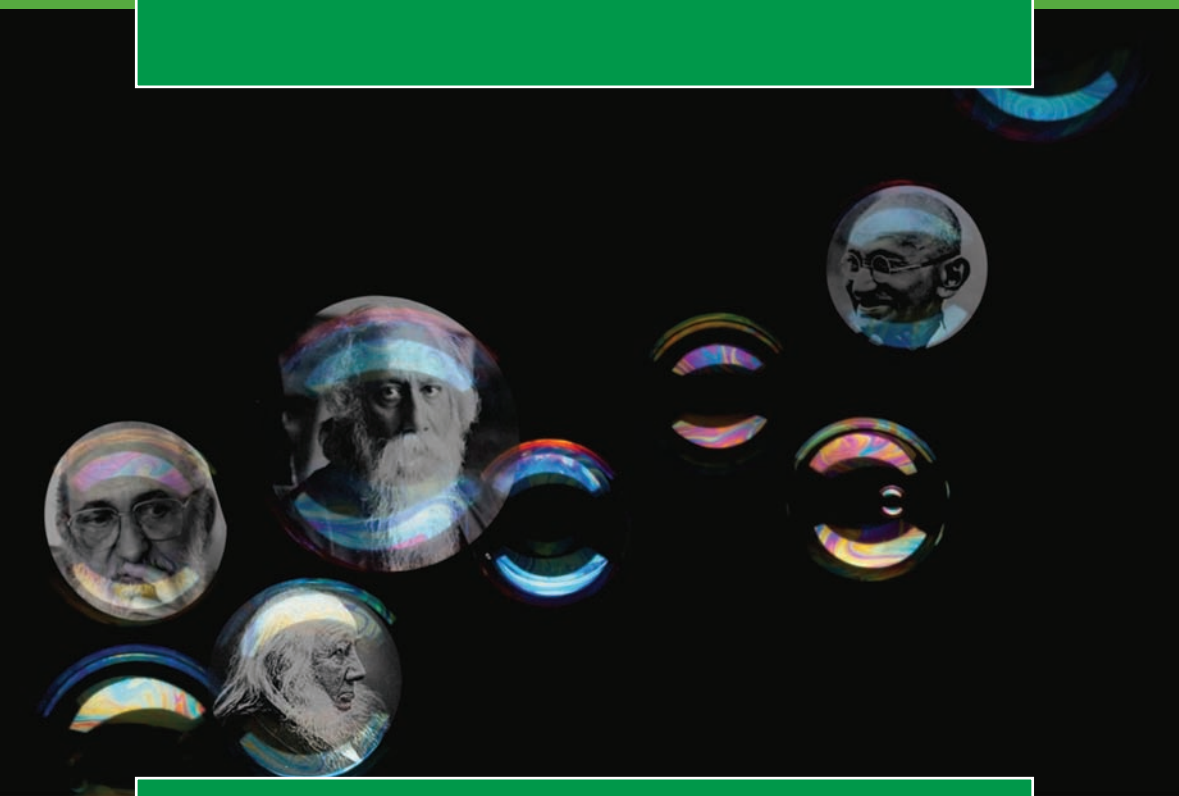
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Education for the People

Concepts of Grundtvig, Tagore, Gandhi and Freire

Asoke Bhattacharya



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Education for the People

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Volume 4

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Education for the People

Concepts of Grundtvig, Tagore, Gandhi and Freire

Asoke Bhattacharya
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India

SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6091-264-1 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-94-6091-265-8 (hardback)
ISBN: 978-94-6091-266-5 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
http://www.sensepublishers.com

Printed on acid-free paper

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Paulo Freire Institute website of UCLA, California, USA for "Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Paulo Freire: their concepts of education", (2004).
2. Grundtvig Studier, Aarhus, Denmark for "NFS Grundtvig: Educationist Extraordinary: Homage of an Indian Adult Educator", (2005).
3. Raktakarabi, Kolkata, India for "Folk High School and Cooperative Movement in Denmark", (1993).
4. Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, Denmark, for "Adult Education in India: Relevance of Grundtvig", (2000).

The essays contained in this edition are thoroughly checked and edited. The article entitled "Tagore on Right Education for India" which was presented at a colloquium at the School of Education, University of Aarhus in January 2008 is a new addition. It is hoped that the book will be found to be thought-provoking and enjoyable.

I am grateful to Professor Peter Mayo for selecting this book for publication in the Sense Publication series 'International Issues in Adult Education.' Mr. Peter de Leifde has been extremely courteous and accommodating as a publisher. I thank him for his cooperation. In spite of all our efforts, if any inaccuracies or errors persist, none but the author is responsible.

Asoke Bhattacharya

Kolkata
March 31 2010

PREFACE

It is my pleasure to take up Professor Asoke Bhattacharya's invitation to write the preface to this latest addition to the series I edit for Sense Publishers. In focusing on Grundtvig, Tagore, Gandhi and Freire, this book really captures the spirit of the series: an inclusive approach to international issues in adult education. While primarily having a 'majority world' focus, shedding light on figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, who deserve greater recognition in the adult education literature, alongside the iconic (as far as adult education is concerned), Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig and Paulo Freire, this book provides a strong North –South, cross-cultural dimension. It also provides ample material for a post-colonial, or more appropriately, an anti-colonial dimension to the international discussion on adult education.

In fact, I would dare say that this work should be of interest to not only those engaged in adult education but also those with an interest in postcolonial studies and comparative education. The ideas of all the four figures are contextualized. The author himself represents this trans-continental contextual dimension, being a native of India, living in Kolkata (Calcutta), but having spent a period of study in Denmark. These contexts provided him with direct contact with the ideas of Tagore and Gandhi, on which he must have been brought up, as well as the ideas of the Danish Grundtvig who inspired the Folk High School (FHS) movement that owes much of its original impetus to Kristen Kold. Grundtvig's ideas, which converge with those of many other educators, including those featuring in this book, and the concept of the Folk High School appealed to many other figures from different continents. These figures then reinvented the concept in their own country. The American, Myles Horton is one such figure who reinvented the concept in the context of Tennessee, founding the Highlander Folk School (now Highlander Research and Education Center). Closer to the theme developed by Asoke Bhattacharya in this book, we know that the Tanzanian government, headed by its revered President, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, also reinvented the idea of the FHS in the east African country where Folk Development Colleges (FDCs) were developed. Scandinavian influence was very strong in Tanzania at the time (Unsicker, 1986, p. 234). The FDCs were also set up as residential colleges for those who were successful in the Tanzanian literacy programme and who were chosen by their village communities to follow residential courses meant to benefit the community at large (Bhola, 1984, p. 154; M. Mayo, 1997, p. 64). Launched in 1975, the FDCs programme provided "courses for village leaders (chairpersons, secretaries, bookkeepers, and village shop managers); leaders of women's organizations, household activities, and small scale industries; various groups engaged in implementing various self-reliance projects; and assistant field officers." (Sumra and Bwatwa, 1988, p. 264). These Folk Development Colleges played an important role in the development of adult education as part of 'education for self-reliance' and the greater all embracing concept of *Ujamaa Vijijni* (village familyhood).

Bhattacharya provides an entire chapter on Grundtvig and the 'Third World.' The author rightly problematises the notion of 'Third World'. It is the sort of problematisation one also finds in the work of Paulo Freire, given equal prominence in this book.

It is perhaps the work on Tagore which would probably capture most attention in this book. Save for a few other articles and publications, including an essay by Ratna Ghosh and Ayaz Naseem (2003), this literary figure and Noble Prize winner does not get the recognition he deserves in the mainstream international education and adult education discourse. This discourse is however predominantly ethnocentric, and Eurocentric at that. In my view, it is precisely this ethnocentrism that the book challenges.

Like Count Lev (Leo) Nikolayevich Tolstoy, Tagore came from a distinguished family, a joint landlord's family in Tagore's case. Like Tolstoy, he too exerted much energy into providing space for peasant learning and organization, including the organization of cooperatives. He also stands out as a figure worth referring to in discussions concerning community education, action and development, given his initiation of a village development programme in his North Bengal estate. His initiatives in founding other institutes such as a university and an Institute of Rural Development are also worth studying, at a time when we are witnessing the emergence of such projects as the 'rural university' in certain parts of the world. Like Gandhi, Freire and other writers, notably those coming from contexts where traditional education was markedly colonial, he focused on the language issue in education. Tagore recognized how the colonial foreign language serves as an important source of social differentiation besides being a cultural imposition. These themes run through the work of the three 'majority world' figures in this study, with Gandhi tackling this issue in his educational endeavors, not least those connected with the settlement aptly named 'The Tolstoy Farm.' Gandhi's ideas were enunciated in his proposals submitted to the Wardha Conference and adopted by the Congress Party which, we are told, did not implement them after independence.

What is interesting about this monograph is that the focus is not exclusively on the four male figures. Ample space is devoted to the larger east-west, cross-cultural contexts of Denmark and India. We come across lengthy, chapter-long discussions of the Folk High Schools, and the contemporary challenges they face, and adult education in India – in short the two contexts which the author seems to have been straddling in his work as educator, researcher and cultural animator. The book provides new insights into the study of adult education from an international, comparative and transcontinental perspective.

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Peter Mayo
University of Malta
Msida, Malta, 31 March 2010

FOREWORD

A very long distance lies between the State of Bengal, India and Denmark. Similarly, Brazil and India are separated by two oceans and the African continent. Accordingly, it seems a daring enterprise to embark upon a project which aims to establish a dialogue between educationists from India, Denmark and Brazil, not least in light of the fact that any effectual educational theory is developed and has to be framed within a specific context. This contextuality is valid for all four educational thinkers who are discussed in this collection of essays, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi from India, Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig from Denmark and Paulo Freire from Brazil.

Moreover, the four educationists belong to different historical periods. Grundtvig lived in the milieu of early nineteenth century Denmark, whereas Tagore and Gandhi for the greater part of their adult years lived in the first part of the twentieth century and Paulo Freire in the second part of the same century. Accordingly, it seems risky if not even far-fetched to analyze all of them from a consistent perspective. At first sight it might appear as more appropriate to present the argument that differences between them account for more than similarities.

Professor Asoke Bhattacharya has taken the heavy burden upon his shoulders to venture into the task of moderating a dialogue between the four thinkers mentioned, and to do so with the ambition of presenting a proposal which bears significance not only for his own nation of India, but for the southern hemisphere as a whole.

From a Danish point of view, one feels proud on behalf of one's own small nation to see one of the icons of the national heritage brought into interaction with significant thinkers from great nations in other continents. From my individual perspective, as somebody who has attempted to view Grundtvig as a catalyst for modern challenges seen from an international perspective, it is in a way the fulfilment of a long cherished hope that this project is carried out by a colleague and friend who has international outlook and intellectual skill. But my appreciation reaches beyond such personal feelings. In a global context, where the relations between world religions and ethnic communities are seen by many people under the headlines of a clash between civilizations, where early steps towards dialogue across the boundaries of religions and races are all too often dismissed as naive romanticism, and where the gulf of living standards between the northern and the southern hemisphere is widening, nothing could be more constructive than to discuss theories of education for the people as a common challenge, regardless of differences concerning race, religion and nation. There is no reason to deny the serious difficulties in terms of method and content that arise at the very outset, when all differences pertaining to the four thinkers in question are taken into due account, and Professor Bhattacharya does not yield to the temptation to underestimate the difficulties. Yet he meritoriously continues his investigation, arriving finally at a goal which deserves to be taken up as a point of departure for all those who are struggling with so huge a challenge: namely that of developing educational

theories which combine pedagogical efficiency with an understanding of the depths in the nature of man.

Four voices from diverse settings in the global historical heritage merge into one melody. A concerted effort may enable us to address present challenges and show a path leading to future prospects, if appropriate measures are taken. According to Bhattacharya, "Grundtvig's views of society are suited to the reality of the post-'communist' era. This world is being increasingly dominated by 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's message from his experiences in Bengal under colonial rule was a call for a new type of national university, which "would utilize its knowledge in such areas as economics, agriculture and health, for the development of the village and the people residing there". It "would bind together the students, the teachers and the local community". The students would be encouraged "to study and love nature as it unfolded over the seasons", and teachers would make use of music and fine arts ''to refine the child's emotions and sensibilities".

Regarding Gandhi, Bhattacharya draws the conclusion: "he preferred that students should be taught, at the initial stages, orally and through dialogue and story-telling. Text books might be introduced later, but not those usually written for rote-learning". Later: ''Gandhi wanted a mass movement for education of adults. He was aware of the deliteracisation process of the adults and felt that if education and life-requirements could be harmonized and integrated, the adults would be able to utilize their new-found knowledge".

Last, but not the least, Asoke Bhattacharya devotes a detailed analysis to the modern Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire. The bridge to Grundtvig is depicted in the following way: "Like Grundtvig two hundred years before him, Freire seamlessly connects development and democracy with education and enlightenment. The special contribution of the educator to the birth of the new society would have to be critical education, says Freire".

Asoke Bhattacharya's individual monograph is part of a long-term strategy, which should be mentioned here because it involves a successful cooperation between research and teaching institutions in India and Denmark. On the Indian side Professor Bhattacharya has been the dynamic leader of a working group, which has set up three international conferences on education, development and cross-cultural experiments, using Tagore, Gandhi and Grundtvig as catalysts. The three occasions have taken place in 1999, 2003 and 2007 respectively. It has been the goal to establish a dialogue and to set up an exchange programme, which, despite the formidable problems of funding, has proved possible to activate at both research student and senior academic level, to the considerable mutual benefit of both host and sponsor. Moreover, it has been a remarkable aspect of the endeavours in Kolkata that scholars from other parts of India, indeed from other nations in Asia, have been included in the enterprise, to the effect that the group of organizers around Bhattacharya can claim to function as a centre with contacts to the whole southern hemisphere.

On the Danish side we have been trying to build up a comprehensive programme for studies under the headline "Grundtvig and the English-speaking world". We have published two collections of essays: A. M. Allchin, D. Jasper, J. H. Schjorring and K.Stevenson (eds.) *"Heritage and Prophecy. Grundtvig and the English-speaking World* (1994), and A.M. Allchin, S.A.J. Bradley, N.A. Hjelm, J.H. Schjorring (eds.) *"Grundtvig in International Perspective. Studies in the Creativity of Interaction"* (2000). No less importantly, we have commissioned a non-Danish scholar, Arthur Macdonald Allchin, who reads Danish, but who lives in the United Kingdom and therefore is able to look at our heritage from an international perspective, to write a full-scale English-language introduction to Grundtvig. It has the title: *N F. S. Grundtvig. An Introduction to his Life and Work* (1997 and later). This year a significant prolongation of the project leads to the publication of a volume, bringing translations of selected Grundtvig-texts into English: *"N F. S. Grundtvig A Life recalled An anthology of biographical source-texts translated from the Danish and edited, with a copious index, by S.A.J. Bradley"* (2007).

Against this background it can be expected that the present stimulating and enlightening book by Asoke Bhattacharya will occupy an essential place, bringing the study of Grundtvig as educationalist into living interaction with other key thinkers from the global community.

Jens Holger Schjorring
Centre for Grundtvig Studies
University of Aarhus, Denmark
Aarhus, July 2007

CHAPTER 1

RABINDRANATH TAGORE, MAHATMA GANDHI AND PAULO FREIRE THEIR CONCEPTS OF EDUCATION

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) and Paulo Freire (1921–1997) are three of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century. They are pioneers of people's enlightenment in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The movements they initiated in India, South Africa and Brazil, respectively, soon found universal acceptance. A perusal of their thoughts will leave no one in doubt that they are extremely relevant in the present context.

Tagore's concept of education, vocational skill development and rural reconstruction found adherents not only in the Indian subcontinent but beyond. Every year visitors and students from all over the world throng Visva-Bharati, Tagore's University, to learn at first hand how his ideas found fruition in his own land.

Gandhi started his political, social and educational movement in South Africa. Historically, his was the first movement of enlightenment in that continent. He, of course, continued his struggle on his return to India. His social philosophy – particularly *Sarbodaya*, *Satyagraha* etc. – became powerful tools of struggle in the hands of activists all over the world. Needless to mention that his concept of education is closely related to his social philosophy.

Paulo Freire initiated his crusade for the pedagogy of the oppressed in Brazil, his native land, but found worldwide acceptance among the poor and the oppressed as well as among renowned thinkers in Europe, America and Australia. He himself experimented with his pedagogy in many countries across diverse continents. His theories of conscientization, liberation and humanization are unique additions to the philosophy of education.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

To understand the full significance of Tagore and his philosophy of education, one has to appreciate how he is judged by his own people. We shall quote from three different authors writing on Tagore in the 1940s, the 1960s and the 1990s. Let us examine how he has been evaluated over a period of half a century since he breathed his last.

In 1948, Buddhadeva Bose, a well-known poet and educationist, evaluated Tagore thus: "Rabindranath Tagore is a phenomenon. If Nature, manifest in the even light of the Sun, forsook the forms of fields and hills and trees, and flowered in words, that, indeed, were he" ..... Does it sound fantastic? Bose concurs and elaborates.

"Rabindranath is our Chaucer and Shakespeare, our Dryden, and our equivalent of the English translators of the Bible.... He compresses in one man's lifetime the development of several centuries."[1]

Our next authority is Krishna Kripalani, the biographer of Tagore. He wrote: "Essentially a poet, Tagore was much more than a poet as understood in the Western sense of the term, as Gandhi was more than a politician or patriot. He was a poet in the traditional Indian sense of the word, *Kavi*, a seer ..... Like the Sun after which he was named ..... he shed light and warmth on his age, vitalized the mental and moral soil of his land, revealed unknown horizons of thought and spanned the arc that divides the East from the West."[2]

Ketaki Kushari Dyson, an eminent Tagore scholar and Oxonian, introduced Tagore thus: "Rabindranath Tagore's achievements are, by any criterion, outstanding. He is one of the world's great writers and many other things besides. A great poet, a great composer of songs, ... a great writer of short stories, a great novelist, he was also a dramatist, ... a wide ranging essayist, a literary critic, a polemicist, a writer of delightful travelogues and memoirs, a great letter writer, an inimitable writer for children and an author of classic text books."

She went on to say, "He was a pioneer in education. A rebel against formal education in his youth, he tried to give shape to some of his own educational ideas in the school he founded at Santiniketan in 1901. There is no doubt that to some extent, he tried to revive the ancient Hindu concept of the place of learning as *tapovana* or a sacred grove, ... To his school he added a university Visva-Bharati, formally instituted in 1921..... Through his work in the family estates, he became familiar with the deep-rooted problems of the rural poor and initiated projects for community development at Shilaidaha and Patisar, the headquarter of the estates. At Patisar he started an agricultural bank in which he later invested the money from his Nobel Prize... in the village Surul, renamed Sriniketan, adjacent to Santiniketan, he started an Institute of Rural Reconstruction....."[3]

Over the years, following his death in 1941, Tagore's stature has grown in India with each passing year. Unfortunately, the West, save the Spanish speaking nations,[4] has relegated him to oblivion.

To understand the emergence of Tagore in the proper historical context, we have to delve into the history of Bengal Renaissance of the nineteenth century of which Tagore was the most luminous star.

BENGAL RENAISSANCE

Raja Rammohan Roy and the Brahmo Samaj

Raja Rammohan Roy, born in 1774 and thus a contemporary of Pestalozzi (1746–1877), Froebel (1782–1851) and Grundtvig (1783–1873), earned the distinction of being the initiator of the Bengal Renaissance.[5] He was not only a great social reformer - he led a movement that culminated in the banning of *suttee* or widow-burning—but he was also the father of the modern Bengali language. Besides, due to his untiring efforts, English language and education got introduced

in India. Roy was also a great religious reformer who founded the *Brahmo Samaj* that sought to cleanse Hindu orthodox society of obnoxious practices. To understand and appreciate the real contribution of Roy, it is necessary to remember that the British East India Company started its rule in India in 1757. When Rammohan Roy was a young man, the euphoria of making money by any means resulted in the evaporation of all ethics and morality from urban society. In a bid to find favour among the English and other European settlers, the *nouveaux riches* used to amass wealth through all sorts of unethical practices and spend it on grand feasts, betting, musical extravaganzas, brothel-visits and such other activities. The so-called Bengali "Babu" culture had its origin there. The British, fearing that the natives might go against colonial rule if they intervened in their religious, educational or social "customs", turned a deaf ear to any call for progress or reform.

The state of education was alarming. According to a survey[6] in 1801 by Hamilton, a Briton, in a large number of districts not a single primary school existed. As the rulers continued to administer justice in Persian, there were a few *madrasas* which trained pupils in that language and Arabic. There were also a few *tols* where Hindus could learn Sanskrit. However, in practice, these traditional schools were degenerate orthodox institutions and opposed to all sorts of enlightenment in society. Under these circumstances, the primary schools, *pathsalas*, founded mainly by ill-educated people, became the only place of learning available to the community. Each household sending its wards to these schools had to pay fees in cash and kind. Wards from poor families were ill-treated. They were caned, beaten and punished – the various forms of punishment could be the subject of a dissertation – on any pretext whatsoever. Boys used to shudder at the very proposition of going to these schools. Raja Rammohan Roy was the pioneer in opening up the doors of education. With his direct involvement and support, on January 20, 1817, Hindu College, the most important national institution of the time, was established in Calcutta and grew to be the nursery of the Bengal Renaissance. It produced the most progressive and revolutionary individuals over the centuries.

The same year European and Indian intellectuals founded the School Book Society[7]. Its members took up earnestly the task of publishing textbooks in Bengali and English. Previously, missionaries like William Carey and Marshman had started great intellectual activities in the Danish colony of Serampore.[8] There they translated the Bible into Bengali and other Indian languages. They also wrote books on the Bengali grammar. These activities were of immense significance in the history of the development of the Bengali language.

By 1801 the British Government had established a college at Fort William in Calcutta for training English civil servants in the language and the customs of the local people. The need was felt to translate and write books in Bengali. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the greatest social reformer after Rammohan, and who successfully conducted a great social movement for widow remarriage, joined this institution and started writing Bengali texts for English students. His great literary activities gave the Bengali language its modern flavour. It may be interesting to note that in 1855 Vidyasagar wrote the most popular primer which is still used to teach children.[9]

With time the British began to appreciate the importance of modern education for the Indians. As shrewd colonial masters, their aim was not to universalize education but to create a small section of upstarts who would act as a buffer between the British masters and the people of India. In 1857, the University of Calcutta was established.

However, as early as the 1870s Keshab Chandra Sen, one of the leaders of the *Brahmo Samaj* and himself a great social and religious reformer, started a host of activities. He inspired his disciples to take up publishing low-priced books to popularize Bengali literature. He also initiated movements for the establishment of schools for the toiling masses, for female education, for promotion of charitable work and also against drinking. Thus Keshab Chandra Sen can be considered as the pioneer of adult education in India.[10]

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861 in an illustrious family of Bengal. His father Debendranath revived the *Brahmo Samaj* movement after the death of Raja Rammohan Roy, whose principal associate Dwarakanath was Rabindranath's grandfather.

Rabindranath hailed from a large joint landlord family and was brought up by many servants and maid-servants. It was from them that Tagore learnt the stories of the Indian epics- the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. These humble illiterate people left a lasting influence on Tagore just as Grundtvig learned form his nurse, Malene. How great was the contribution of the common people to the culture of a nation![11]

Tagore was admitted to school in his early childhood. Here his experiences reveal a marked parallel with that of Grundtvig. Some uncouth teachers used vulgar language in the classrooms. They were rude and rough with the children. In later years, Tagore expressed his dislike of those teachers building some of his well-known characters on them in the short stories drawing on this childhood memory. He was equally disgusted with private tutors who had the uncanny ability to turn unique literary pieces into the most uninteresting ones. Over the years, Tagore changed schools a number of times until finally he ceased going to school altogether. Thus the greatest Indian of the 20th century, on whom later many institutions from all over the world had conferred honorary doctorates, did not possess even a school-leaving certificate.

However, Tagore had the great insight to understand the nature of the malaise of the prevalent Indian education system. He came to espouse the view that the mother-tongue should be the only vehicle of imparting real knowledge. In a colonial set-up, education through English would produce an English-speaking elite isolated from the society. It is well-known that Grundtvig and Gandhi held the same view regarding the medium of instruction.[12]

Tagore wrote a number of articles on education in his late 20s. These writings were widely accepted by the Indian intelligentsia for their thought-provoking arguments against many aspects of the colonial education system. In an article on education

written in November 1892,[13] he expressed his opposition to learning by rote in order to cross the hurdles of examination. He also pointed out the utter futility of learning through a foreign language, which does not allow any space for imagination for the children.

In his early 40s, Tagore thought of developing a system of education in line with the ancient Indian tradition of Brahmacharya where a student would receive education in harmony with nature at the residence of the guru, away from the influences and distractions of city life. One could find the echo of Kold[14] in the Tagorean scheme. Tagore founded the *Brahmacharyashram* - the school - at Santiniketan in 1901.

In a concurrent article, Tagore emphasized the need to organize country fairs which would bring together entrepreneurs and consumers to bridge the gap between people's needs and innovative solutions and thus give rise to a national awakening and encourage self-reliance.

Tagore always believed in sustainable development. He felt that development could be brought about not from above but by the efforts of each individual dedicated to a national cause. He despised big talks and little action. In 1905 a great political movement took shape against the partition of Bengal. In this period of political turmoil, the British government issued a number of black circulars to restrain school and college students from joining this movement.[15] To protest against these repressive measures, some educationists contemplated developing what was called national education, through establishment of national schools; and the idea of establishing a National University was also mooted. Many national schools were set up at various locations in Bengal. Tagore was fully supportive of these ideas although he doubted how many of these mushrooming institutions would stand the test of time.

During the movement for the restoration of unity to Bengal, Tagore started his own movement for self-reliance. He took a number of measures in his estate in this direction. He firmly believed 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. It may be pointed out that cooperative concepts had not at that time gained ground in India. He also started a night school for adults in a village of "untouchables".

The movement for repealing the partition of Bengal also witnessed widespread boycotting of British goods. Tagore felt that without a viable alternative the movement would fizzle out. He, therefore, started a school for the revival of the Bengal handlooms. All these programmes were incorporated into the Visva-Bharati University which came into being later. In 1907, under a village improvement programme, he took the initiative in the construction of roads, the digging of ponds, the clearing of bushes etc. He believed that *Swaraj* (self-rule) called for all these and also for uplift of the so-called lower strata of society. His activities with regard to development of village infrastructure, formation of cooperatives, introduction of labour-saving machinery in agriculture, development of diverse cottage industries, diversification of agriculture and such other activities earned

the wrath of the British colonial administration against his *Brahmacharyashram* at Santiniketan. A circular was issued to restrain government servants from sending their wards to his school.

In 1913, Tagore received the Nobel Prize for literature. He kept the prize money (British pound 8,000) in the cooperative rural bank he had created, in order to boost the local economy and help the development work which was being carried out in the rural community.

In 1916, Tagore initiated a village development programme in his estate in North Bengal.[16] His scheme consisted of:

1. Improvement of health and hygiene of the rural people by providing facilities of treating the ailing in the village itself.
2. Organisation of a village library.
3. Construction of roads, digging of ponds and wells and clearing of bushes.
4. Protection of peasants from money-lenders.
5. Resolution of local disputes through negotiations.

These programmes had a direct relationship to his own scheme of things at Santiniketan. His concept of Visva-Bharati evolved out of his concept of development. In all other countries, he wrote, education had a link with the life of the people. Only in colonial India, he lamented, was education synonymous with qualifying for a salaried livelihood. Our education, he said, was not in the place where it ought to have been, that was where peasants were working, oilseeds were being crushed, potter's wheels were turning. The reason was that our universities did not have any root in our soil. If we really had a national university, it would utilize its knowledge in such areas as economics, agriculture and health, for the development of villages and the people residing there. This university would employ superior methods in agriculture, animal husbandry and cottage industries, and would develop economic self-sufficiency through cooperation. All these would bind together the students, the teachers and the local community. He declared that Visva-Bharati, established in 1918, would be such a university. And he realized these ideals when on February 6, 1922, he established the Rural Reconstruction Wing at Visva-Bharati.

Tagore's Institutions

Tagore's conception of education has been reflected in the various practical applications he made. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to study these institutions to get a comprehensive idea of Tagore's thoughts.

A. Brahmacharyashram. On December 22, 1901, Tagore inaugurated his school at Santiniketan, in the district of Birbhum, Bengal. There were only five students and as many teachers. His eldest son was also one of the students. Three among the teachers were Christians. The school did not attract many students though boarding and tuitions were free.

The life in the Ashram was simple. The students had to attend to all their needs themselves. They had to sweep the floor and keep things in order. Food was simple and vegetarian[17]. All instructions were given in the mother-tongue to help the child express himself freely and happily[18]. The idea of teaching through some form of activity and craft was implemented here long before Mahatma Gandhi devised his *Nai Talim* or Basic Education[19]. The classes in Santiniketan were held in the open, under the trees, in close proximity with nature. The students were encouraged to study and love nature as it unfolded over the seasons[20]. Music and fine arts helped refine the child's emotions and sensibilities and these were parts of the curricula[21]. Emphasis was laid on community service and corporate action[22]. Finally, Tagore opposed rote learning and burdening the young minds with too many books. It will not be out of place to quote from a satirical piece he wrote: 'The Parrot's Training' which was an indictment of the prevailing colonial education[23].

"Once upon a time, there was a bird. It was ignorant. It sang all right but never recited scriptures. It hopped pretty frequently but lacked manners.

Said the Raja to himself: Ignorance is costly in the long run.....

The pundits were summoned and at once went to the root of the matter. They decided that the ignorance of birds was due to their natural habit of living in poor nests. Therefore, the first thing necessary for the bird's education was a suitable cage....

Then the pundits decided more text books were needed, so scribes were called who copied from books and copied from copies, till manuscripts were piled up to an unreachable height... At length, the Raja summoned his Education Department to see how they were doing. They came to the great hall with conch-shells, gongs, horns, bugles, trumpets, cymbals, drums, kettle-drums, tom-toms, tambourines, flutes, fifes, barrel organs and bag-pipes. The pundits chanted mantras, while the goldsmiths, scribes, supervisors and countless cousins all cheered. The Raja thought it all seemed fearfully like a sound principle of education.

Finally, some fault-finder asked the Raja if he had seen the bird, and the Raja had to admit he had forgotten entirely about it. Turning to the pundits, he asked about the method they followed in instructing the bird. It was shown to him and it was so impressive that the bird looked ridiculously unimportant by comparison. By this time, the bird's throat was so choked from the pages of books that it couldn't complain. Sometimes though, it would flutter its wings in the morning light so a blacksmith was called and a chain was forged and the bird's wings clipped. Finally the bird died.

The Raja's nephews came to him and told him the bird's education had been completed.

"Does it hop"? The Raja enquired.

"Never" said the nephews.

"Does it fly"?

"No"

"Bring the bird" said the Raja

The bird was brought, the Raja poked its body: Only its inner stuffing of book leaves rustled, while outside the murmur of the spring breeze amongst the newly budded *asoka* leaves made the April morning wistful.

B. Visva-Bharati. The foundation was laid on 22 December 1918. On the same day, three years later, the University was formally inaugurated. But it was far from his intention to create it in the model of the West – an Oxford or a Cambridge, for example. It was rather like a Nalanda or a Taxila of the Buddhist period.

Tagore believed that on each race devolved the duty to keep alight the lamp of its own mind and that the lamps of all the races would come together to illuminate the whole world. Thus each race, according to Tagore, is important, with all its distinctive features. Once India had this lamp. The time had come to rekindle it so that it would not only illuminate its own courtyard but also would glow more brightly by absorbing the radiance of other cultures.[24]

The constitution[25] designated Visva-Bharati as an Indian, Eastern and Global cultural centre:

a) To study the mind of Man in his manifold realisation of truth from diverse points of view;
b) To bring people into more intimate relations with one another through patient study and research of different cultures of the East, on the basis of their underlying unity;
c) To approach the West from the standpoint of such unity of life and thought intrinsic to Asia.
d) To seek to realize in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West and thus, ultimately, to strengthen the fundamental condition of world peace through the free communication of ideas between the two hemishperes. Studies facilitating exchanges between the East and the West that would contribute to strengthening of world peace.
e) And with such ideals in view to provide at Santiniketan a centre of culture where research into the study of religion, literature, history, science and art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and other civilizations may be pursued along with the culture of the West, with that simplicity of externals which is necessary for true spiritual realization, in amity, good fellowship and co-operation between the thinkers and scholars of both Eastern and Western countries, free from al antagonisms of race, nationality, creed or caste, and in the name of One Supreme being who is *Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam.*

C. Sriniketan (or Institute of Rural Reconstruction). On February 6, 1922, Rabindranath inaugurated the Institute of Rural Reconstruction. As noted earlier, Tagore realized the problems of the rural folk in the 1890s when at the age of twentynine he took charge of the family estate in East Bengal. He started a literacy centre cum library for education of the village community. He initiated there experiments relating to cooperative farming, common water supply, network of roads and other programmmes of village development and empowerment. Tagore had urged, through numerous articles and speeches, the effectiveness of organizing rural fairs for development and dissemination of local art and craft. In Tagore's scheme of things, folk songs and plays had vital roles in keeping alive the cultural traditions of the rural community. He wanted villages to be developed as self-supporting units with schools, workshops, granaries, co-operative stores and banks.[26]

Way back in 1906, he sent his son Rathindranath and another young man Santosh Mazumder to study agriculture at the University of Ilinois-Urbana. On their return, they were put in charge of the land purchased at Surul village, adjacent to Santiniketan, in 1912. They encountered apparently insurmountable problems – suspicious villagers, dense jungles, attacks of malaria, soils of inferior quality, droughts and floods. The reconstruction effort received momentum when Leonard Elmhirst, a British agronomist from Cornell, joined the team in November 1921. From February next, the Reconstruction wing started functioning as a unit of Visva-Bharati. The aims and objects of the Sriniketan workers were[27]:

1. To win the friendship and affection of villagers and cultivators by taking a real interest in all that concerns their life and welfare and by making a lively effort to assist them in sharing their most pressing problems.
2. To take the problems of the village and the field to the classroom for study and discussion and to the experimental farm for solution.
3. To carry the knowledge and experience gained in the classroom and experimental farm to the villagers, in their endeavour to improve their sanitation and health, to develop their resources and credit, to help them sell their produce and buy their requirements to the best advantage; to encourage them to learn and practise arts and crafts; and to bring home to them the benefits of associated life, mutual aid and common endeavour.

During the next few years, numerous educational, cultural and developmental initiatives were undertaken in the villages around.

Four general areas, agriculture, craft and cottage industry, village welfare and education, were identified for immediate attention. The agricultural unit included farming, vegetable gardening, orchards, dairy and poultry, sericulture and fishing. The crafts and cottage industry wing sought not only to rejuvenate the existing local industries but also promote new industries, innovate artistic designs and crafts such as leatherwork, tailoring, carpentry, lacquer work, raw silk production, pottery, tile making, cane work, embroidery, book binding and so forth. The village welfare department looked after rural health. With a dispensary as a base, cooperative health societies were founded to provide health education. The villagers were also provided with free treatment on a limited scale. Educational initiatives were undertaken at all levels. By 1929, night schools were established for both children and adults in twelve villages. Rural circulating libraries were also set up.[28]

The Sriniketan experiment incorporated all that Tagore had visualized. It was a holistic development programme meant for individual and social as well as material and spiritual growth.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Gandhi was a great genius of enlightenment who reached almost every household of the nation. Under his leadership, the spirit of India was aroused. All of Gandhi's movements had deep social connotations. Gandhi's educational ideas were unique. Since the advent of the British rule, many educationists and thinkers had condemned

the British-imposed colonial education system as unreal, inadequate, rootless, shallow, alien, demoralizing and denationalizng. Gandhi condemned it in moral terms - 'conceived and born in error, nurtured in sin'.[29]

Gandhi's experiments in education began in South Africa with the foundation of the Phoenix settlement in 1904 and the Tolstoy Farm in 1910. He laid stress on education through craft. He used to say, "There is no point developing the brain only. One has to develop one's brain through one's hands. If I were a poet, I would write a beautiful poem on the possibility of the five fingers of the hand... Books are never sufficiently interesting to hold the interest of the mind. The mind begins to wander. Only manual work brings you back to reality".[30]

Gandhi wanted students to work for furthering the cause of freedom for the country suffering under the yoke of foreign rule. The aim of his philosophy of education was not only *Swaraj* (self-rule) but also *Sarvoday* (welfare of all). His social and educational principles are explained in numerous books and articles. He envisioned true education coming about primarily through a particular pattern of life in a community and not merely through formal instructions in schools. To understand the evolution of his educational thoughts, one has to study the details of the life the man lived.

Biographical Outline

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, later known as Mahatma Gandhi, was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, a small town (on the western coast of India) in the province of Gujarat. His father Karamchand Gandhi was the *dewan* (finance minister) of the princely state of Porbandar. Gandhi came of a middle class family belonging to the trading caste.

He first studied at a primary school at Porbandar. Gandhi, in his later life, could recall that he learnt the multiplication table with difficulty. He also recalled that he called the teachers names. Since nothing else Gandhi could recall from this period, he concluded in his autobiography that he did not have a sharp brain[31]. When his father was transferred to Rajkot, another small town, Gandhi had to change his school, too. He studied in this school till he was twelve years of age. He remembered not to have ever deceived his teachers or friends in that school. He was very shy and did not have many friends. He used to rush home after the hours in school which was like a cage to him. He was always afraid that his classmates would tease him on the least pretext.

An incident during his high school days could be a pointer to his later day sense of truthfulness. The Education Inspector visited his class and set a spelling test. He asked the students to spell five words. One of the words was 'kettle' which Mohan spelled wrong. The class teacher prompted him with his toe to copy the correct spelling from his neighbour's slate. But Gandhi obstinately ignored the hint and was later chided for his 'stupidity'. 'I could never learn the art of copying', recalled Mahatma Gandhi'.[32]

At the age of thirteen he was married to Kasturbai who was of the same age. He was still a student of the high school. He longed to see his wife after the school hours.

He admitted in his memoirs that he was then full of lust to the point of being cruel to others. An incident which he considered a 'black spot' in his life took place on the night his father died. He was in attendance at the sick bed, but his thoughts hovered round the young wife lying in bed, waiting for his coming. When his uncle offered to relieve him, Mohan was overjoyed and rushed to the bedroom. The poor wife was fast asleep. He woke her up. A few minutes later, a knock on the door interrupted his frenzy with the melancholy news that his father had expired. Incidentally, his wife was pregnant at that time. The new-born did not live for more than a few days. In his later life, Gandhi objected to child marriage with a crusader's zeal.[33]

Mohan passed his matriculation examination in 1887. He then got himself admitted to Samaldas College at Bhavnagar. He found the subjects tedious, the English medium difficult and the atmosphere uncongenial. As Gandhi got increasingly frustrated, he was visited by a family friend who suggested that to get a good job he should become a barrister in England. Gandhi personally preferred medicine to law. However as practising human dissection was unthinkable for a member of his orthodox Hindu family, the legal profession stood out as the best option.

After procuring the necessary finance through borrowing and sale of jewellery, Gandhi set sail from Bombay on Sept 4, 1888. He was declared an outcast by his own community for crossing the 'black waters'.

The first few days in England were miserable. It became more so because of the vow he took before his mother that he would not touch women, wine and meat. The food he ate was tasteless and bland. One of his friends read out to him the theory of utility from Bentham. But the vow was a vow. He would rather suffer than to break the vow.

One day he discovered a vegetarian restaurant in Farringdon Street. The sight of it filled him with the joy of a child. Having had his first satisfactory meal in London, Gandhi bought a copy of Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*. Reading it, he was more than delighted. From now on he became a vegetarian by conviction.

His vegetarian contacts began to expand. He started to read great deal on the subject. He was introduced to *The Ethics of Diet* by Howrad Willams. He read in this book that Jesus was a vegetarian. He came across a book which suggested that many diseases could be cured by changing the diet only. All these readings had an enormous impact on him. He would in his later life experiment with the regimen even in the midst of grim political battles.

He was now introduced to the theosophical thoughts of Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. It was through the Theosophists that he came to know the *Bhagabad Gita* in Arnold's English rendering. He also read Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, life of the Buddha. In Carlyle's *Hero and Hero Worship* he read the teachings of Mohammed. He read the *Bible* and fell in love with the 'Sermon of the Mount'. His young mind began to unify the essential teachings of the major religions.

The callow youngster who landed at Southampton had by now matured considerably. He looked upon vegetarianism as an experiment with truth. He had, by now, developed his ethical sense and was prepared to express it. In one of the meetings

of the executive committee of the Vegetarian Society, a motion was moved to expel a member for supporting birth control. Although Gandhi personally opposed birth control, he felt that the advocacy did not violate the principle of vegetarianism. He, therefore, opposed the motion.

Three years passed and Gandhi was called to the bar and got himself enrolled in the High Court on June 11, 1891. The young barrister sailed back home the following day.

It was not too tough for Gandhi to become a barrister. But it was quite difficult for him to take up practising law as a profession. He had studied Western laws but had no grounding in Hindu or Muslim laws. He was not confident. He felt helpless and nervous as he came to India.

In Bombay, Gandhi continued with his experiment with diet while trying to establish himself in the legal profession. For the upkeep of a barrister with all the pomp and paraphernalia befitting it, a large sum of money was needed. But cases were not forthcoming. He used to doze in the court room for want of brief.

One day he was engaged to defend a petty suit in the Small Causes Court. As he rose to cross-examine the plaintiff's witness, his congenital nervousness overpowered him. His head was turning and he felt as though the court was also turning likewise. He could not ask any question. He sat down in confusion and returned the fee to the client's agent. He then sought a part-time job as a teacher of English. Here, too, luck was against him. When the Principal found that he had no degree in the subject, he was refused the job.

After a luckless adventure of six months in Bombay, young Gandhi wound up his establishment and went to Rajkot. Whatever hopes he might have had of receiving state patronage or an appointment at the Court was dashed after an unhappy encounter with the British political agent.

In these hours of predicament, an opportunity opened before him, as if God-sent. A Muslim firm having large business interest in South Africa offered to send him there for instructing and assisting their counsel in a big law suit. The terms were attractive and the period of engagement was only one year. To escape from the humiliating dilemma in which he had been trapped and for a chance to try his luck in the big world outside, Gandhi gladly accepted the offer and sailed for Durban in April 1893.

Experimenting with Truth in South Africa

Disembarking at Durban, also called Port Natal, Gandhi was received by his employer Abdullah Seth. At the port itself, he observed that the way the whites were treating the Indians was anything but courteous. However, his first humiliating experience came on the second or third day of his arrival, when he went to the Durban court with his client. The magistrate kept staring at him and finally asked him to take off his turban. Gandhi refused and left the court room. Then Gandhi sent a few letters to the local Press defending his right to wear the turban. He was immediately dubbed an 'unwelcome visitor'.

After about a week's stay at Durban, his host decided to send him to Pretoria, the capital of the then Boer Republic of Transvaal. A first class ticket was purchased for him. When the train reached Mauritzburg, the capital of Natal, in the evening,

a white passenger boarded the train. Seeing a 'coloured' man in the compartment, he contacted the railway official who ordered Gandhi to shift to the 'van compartment'. Gandhi refused. So a constable pushed him out and his luggage was taken care of by the railway authority. It was a bitterly cold winter night. Gandhi sat in the dark waiting room thinking 'Should I stand up for my right or should I go back to India?'

But there was more to come. He continued the train journey the next evening. A bigger mishap lay in wait on the journey the next day from Charlestown to Johannesburg which had to be covered by stage coach. Gandhi was made to sit with the coachman on the box outside while the white conductor sat with the white passengers inside. In the middle of the journey, the conductor wanted to have some fresh air outside. So he asked Gandhi to sit on the foot-board. He refused and started explaining why. But then something terrible happened. Wild with rage, the man swore vilely, rained blows on the 'coolie' and tried to throw him down. Gandhi clung desperately to the brass rails, refusing to yield his seat and refusing also to be provoked to retaliate. Some of the white passengers protested at this cowardly assault, and the crestfallen conductor was obliged to let Gandhi remain where he was.

Having come face to face with the appalling conditions in which his compatriots were forced to live in the dark continent, one of Gandhi's first acts was to call a meeting of the Indian community. There he delivered the first public speech of his life. This time he did not fumble or falter or sit down in shame. He unconsciously discovered the well of courage within him.

The speech was remarkable in the sense that it had no bitterness or rancour. Instead of ranting against the racial intolerance of the white minority, Gandhi dwelt on the duties and obligations of the Indians. Truthfulness in business, cleanliness in personal habit, the courage to stand by one another, and the feeling of being one people, irrespective of one's particular religion, caste and community were virtues worth cultivating – these were young Gandhi's advice.

Gandhi often said in his later life that he loved nothing better than being a teacher. No one was too young for him to teach and none too old to learn from him. His method and act of teaching was multipurpose. He instructed, moralized, preached, propagated, and disciplined – all simultaneously in one single process. This address in Pretoria was the first demonstration of this act as a teacher.

Phoenix Settlement[34]

A few years later, when Gandhi had become quite well-known in South Africa as the undisputed leader of the Indian community, he read a book by John Ruskin *Unto This Last.* He found some of his deepest convictions reflected in Ruskin's thesis. Ruskin had argued that the true wealth of a community lay in the well-being of all its members, the good of the individual being contained in the good of all; that all work had the same value, the barber's no less than the lawyer's; that the life of one who worked with hands on the soil, or at a craft, was the most useful life.

Gandhi made up his mind to put these principles into practice. He bought a dilapidated farm of 100 acres with a little spring and a few fruit trees on it. With the help of one of his friends, Albert West, he shifted the office of the *Indian Opinion* to an improvised shed. There he started the experiment of making the residents do all the work by themselves. The settlers had their families shifted there. A real working community grew up – the motto was dignity of labour. The children – sons and daughters of the residents – all took part in the work joyously. They learnt through their work. Here Gandhi started his experiment in education in a unique way which would be refined at the Tolstoy Farm a few years later.

Tolstoy Farm[35]

In 1906 Gandhi started his famous *Satyagraha* (urge for truth) which he called civil disobedience movement. Prospect for this movement appeared bleak. The tempo of the movement got slowed down and the spirit was flagging. Hardly any funds were left to meet the minimum recurring expenditure to keep the struggle going. In this hopeless situation, Gandhi took recourse to the path of self-help as a means of continuing this struggle. Kallenbach, his German collaborator, had purchased a farm of 1100 acres, about 22 miles from Johannesburg. He offered this in the service of the struggle - for housing and maintaining the families taking part in the civil disobedience movement. Here, among other things, Gandhi continued his experiments with education. Everything, right from sweeping, cleaning, preparing food, doing agricultural work, making all necessary implements, including shoes, were being done by the settlers. So formal classes for the children could not be organized in a disciplined and orderly way. The students used to come to the class in the afternoon, after finishing all sorts of manual work. The teachers were tired too. Apart from Gandhi, Kallenbach used to teach the children. Both the teachers and the students used to fall asleep owing to over-exhaustion. There were other difficulties. Students were from Tamil, Telegu, and Gujrati speaking milieu. There were Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The age group varied between seven and twenty. Girls and boys studied together. With great patience Gandhi taught this heterogeneous group. He discovered that story-telling was the best method of attracting the students' attention. As far as practicable he used the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. History, geography and mathematics were taught in a lively and unconventional way. The students learnt to chant prayers.

The children mixed freely among themselves. The experiment was quite daring since any misadventure could have jeopardized the life of the settlement. The children used to sleep together, bathe together and pray together. Gandhi used to keep an eye on their behaviour.

Gandhi came back to India in 1915. He travelled extensively to arouse the Indian people from their ignorance and apathy and imbibe in them a new consciousness. He went to the remotest villages to organize peasants against inhuman conditions of living and ruthless exploitation. He organized workers and fought for their rights. He lived and worked with the so-called 'untouchables' and vowed to end

the evil practice. All these experiences led him to refine his own ideas about education of the Indian masses. For a period of twenty years he continued working on these issues in India and, finally, placed his draft of Basic Education to the nation.

Gandhi considered that the British-imposed education in India made Indians intellectual slaves of the British empire. It was rootless, alienating and anti-national[36]. He believed that education should be imparted through the mother-tongue[37]. Education, especially primary education, should be conducted in such a manner that a relationship was established between the child's environment at the school and that at home. This could be done by educating the child in the craft he/she found most relevant. The family vocation and the child's education could thus be complementary[38]. Alphabetization was not for Gandhi the be-all and end-all of all education. Education and alphabetization were two different things to him. A person could be highly educated without being literate. The vice-versa was also true[39]. Alphabetization that did not uplift a person morally was not desirable. Gandhi felt that physical education and craft education would develop the student's intellectual capabilities[40]. Gandhi was opposed to too many text books. He preferred that students should be taught, at the initial stages, orally and through dialogue and story-telling. Text books might be introduced later, but not those usually written for rote-learning. Text books which would connect the child with his/her environment should be written. Guide books for teachers were needed more than text books to enable the teachers to do their work properly[41]. History, geography, mathematics should be taught in such a way that the child could find interconnection between his/her own life and the subjects taught. New kinds of text books, meant more for teachers than for students, should be written keeping these things in mind[42]. Higher education, Gandhi felt, should not be provided at State expense[43]. Gandhi wanted a mass movement for education of the adults[44]. Gandhi was aware of the deliter-acisation process of the adults and felt that if education and life-requirements could be harmonized and integrated, the adults would be able to utilize the new-found knowledge. The process of deliteracisation could be checked in this way. Gandhi never emphasized alphabetization and did not consider it of much value. Gandhi wanted women to be educated as much as men. He felt that women were mother-teachers of a nation. Therefore, they should be educated properly to play their special role as mother-teachers. However, they would need special orientation in home science and child rearing[45]. Gandhi was against punishing children[46].

Nai Talim or Basic Education[47]

The New Education Fellowship conference was held in December 1937 in Calcutta. Rabindranath Tagore was the President of the India Chapter. Foreign invitees at the conference included Tolo Svenska Samkola and Lavrin Zilliacus, President and Rector of N.E.F, respectively, Salter Davis of England and Pierre Bovet of Switzerland. They met Tagore who could not attend the conference because of failing health. Aryanayakam, Tagore's erstwhile colleague and now Gandhi's right-hand man in the matter of education, was also present. Some of these members attended the Wardha Education Conference convened by Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was deeply concerned about the kind of education India would adopt for its masses. That one of the principal aims of education was to make a person economically, politically and intellectually independent was the realization he had while working in South Africa and India.

In 1937, the Congress Party gained limited power in eight states. Gandhi thought that his ideas of Basic Education could be implemented in these states. Accordingly, at the Wardha conference (22–23 October 1937), Gandhi placed before the nation his draft of Basic Education for discussion.

In this draft he said that the prevailing education system could not meet the needs of the nation. English being the medium of instruction in higher education, the current system was creating a gap between the English-educated upper strata and the general masses of people... Since manual labour played no part in the system of education the so-called educated people were rendered unfit in the production process... Primary education had been absolutely ineffective. The students tended to forget almost everything they learnt and whatever they retained lacked any utility so far as meeting the needs of the urban community was concerned. The tax payers received nothing against what was being spent on education.

– Primary education should cover a period of seven years. The students should have enough general knowledge by the end of this period. English would not be taught at the primary level.
– For proper blossoming of their faculties, children should be taught through some crafts and thus they would also be able to utilize their knowledge for earning. Firstly, students would be able to set aside for their own use a part of what they had produced and they would earn something out of that production. Secondly, by this process the children would grow up as perfect human beings with strength and virtue.

The Wardha conference discussed Gandhi's proposal and took the following resolution:

1. Seven years of free and compulsory primary education should be provided.
2. One's Mother-tongue would be the medium of instruction.
3. Seven years of training would be based upon productive labour-oriented education. For all round development of the child some environment friendly crafts would be taught.
4. Teachers would earn their remuneration through such trainings.

In February 1938, the Congress Party at its Haripura Congress presided over by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, adopted the following resolution:

– That the conference endorses the proposal by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period (Age 7–14) should center around some form of manual and productive work and that all other abilities to be developed or training given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.
– That this conference expects that this system of education will gradually be able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

Although the Congress Party adopted the above resolution, little was done to implement Gandhi's policies after achieving independence.

PAULO FREIRE

Paulo Freire, the Rousseau of the 20th century, is one of the greatest philosophers of education. His work on the educational methods and practices of the oppressed brought about a qualitative change in the philosophy and practice of adult education. He is the first philosopher to connect literacy with liberation. Not only in the sphere of theory but also in the domain of practice he brought about revolutionary innovations. In his unique method, an illiterate person could gain literacy within a period of thirty hours. The method he devised was derived from his philosophy of education of the adults.

Biographical Sketch

Born on September 19, 1921, this great educationist and philosopher started his life against lots of odds. Paulo was the youngest of his four brothers and sisters. However, two others died even before Paulo could be conscious of their presence[48]. His father, though an army officer, was moderate in temperament. His mother was a cool-headed lady.

Paulo learnt his alphabets in the garden under a mango tree in company of his parents, while he played with them. This lively, natural and free way to initiation into literacy influenced him greatly when he discovered his unique method.

The world economic crisis of 1929 affected the Freire family adversely. His father could not cope with the rising cost of living in Recife and therefore, shifted to a nearby place called Jaboatao. He lost his father, the sole earning member of the family, at the age of thirteen. As a consequence of this tragedy, Paulo stopped going to school. He resumed his schooling at Recife when he was sixteen. Most of his classmates came from affluent families. Paulo was tall, thin and undernourished.

At Jaboatao, Paulo was as free as a bird. Many of his playmates were from the countryside. Some of them were sons and daughters of working class families. Through his acquaintance with them Paulo came to appreciate the beauty of the diction and the grammar of their languages. Of course, on hindsight, he could feel that there were unbridgeable differences between him and his playmates[49].

Paulo was admitted to the University of Recife at the age of twenty. Here he came to know a primary school teacher named Elza Maia Costa de Oliveira, five years' senior to him. He married Elza in 1944 when he was twenty three. Elza helped Paulo develop his unique method of literacy. She was a companion in his work[50].

Paulo joined the Social Service of Industry (SESI) in 1946 and worked there for eight years. SESI was an employers' institution whose objectives were to assist the workers. While working there Paulo came face to face with the stark reality of the conditions of the working class. There he gradually became a teacher who would always like to innovate. While working with their children, Paulo discovered that dialogue was the best way to teach. At that time he studied extensively. He came to know and appreciate the best writers of Brazil. His aim was to utilize the knowledge thus gained in his own works.

Thereafter, he joined the cultural extension wing of the University of Recife. In 1950, while working here, he discovered a new method of adult education. In 1959 he wrote his dissertation *Present Day Education in Brazil.* This dissertation earned him the Ph.D degree and the chair of History and Philosophy of Education at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Recife.

The evolution of Freire's epistemology can be traced to the living conditions of the majority of the people of North East Brazil in the 1960s. They were victims of the culture of silence. It was necessary to break this 'culture' so that they could take an active role in creating a new Brazil.

Paulo's first large-scale experiment took place in Angicos of Rio Grande do Norte. Three hundred agricultural workers learnt to read and write within 45 days. The President of Brazil, Joao Goulart, and the Minister of Education, Paulo de Tarso Santos, invited Paulo to take charge of the national literacy programme. Freire conceived of 20,000 cultural circles so that two million people could be made literate by 1964. This and other pro-people actions of the Government infuriated the ruling class. A military coup took place. Paulo Freire was arrested. On being released he left, first for Bolivia, and then, Chile. He continued the work that he had started in Brazil. In 1967 he wrote *Education as the Practice of Freedom.* In 1970 his most important work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published. Paulo connected education with conscientisation. There was no one before him who lent such a strong voice to the education of the oppressed.

Paulo Freire died in 1997.

Educational Thoughts of Paulo Freire

In his introduction to the first U.S edition of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Richard Schaull wrote, "Fed up as I am with the abstractness and sterility of so much intellectual work in academic circles today, I am excited by a process of reflection which is set in a thoroughly historical context, which is carried on in the midst of a struggle to create a new social order and thus represents a new unity of theory and *praxis*..."[51]. The same process of intellectual dissection dealing with non-essentials also befell Freire[52]. In this article we shall briefly place before our readers some of the essential thoughts of Freire.

Paulo Freire's major contribution was to provide a theoretical foundation for adult education. Adult education, especially literacy, used to be equated with alpha-betization. If, through acquiring literacy, a person could write his/her name, identify street names and do such other works, it would be considered an achievement. Still now, in India, most of the literate people view adult education in this way. Freire discarded all these notions. He linked literacy with culture and liberation. Freire writes:

"The first literacy attempt took place in Recife, with a group of five illiterates of which two dropped out on the second or third day. The participants who had migrated from rural areas, revealed a certain fatalism and apathy in regard to their problems. They were totally illiterate... During the twenty first hour of study, one of the participants wrote, confidently 'I am amazed at myself'..."

'We began with the conviction that the role of a human being was not only to be in the world, but to engage in relations with the world – that through the acts of creation and re-creation, man makes a cultural reality and thereby adds to the natural world, which he did not make. We were certain that man's relation to reality, expressed as a Subject to an object, results in knowledge, which man could express through language...'

'From that point of departure, the illiterate would begin to effect a change in his/her former attitudes, by discovering himself/herself to be a maker of the world of culture, by discovering that, he/she as well as the literate person, has a creative and re-creative impulse. He/she would discover that culture is just as much a clay doll made by artists who are his/her peers as it is the work of a great sculptor, a great painter, a great mystic or a great philosopher, that culture is the poetry of lettered poets and also the poetry of his/her own popular songs – that culture is all human creation....'[53]

By one master stroke Freire elevated a scavenger to the level of a professor. Don't we find an echo of Ruskin and Gandhi in Freire's thoughts?

Freire further writes '.... The literacy process as a cultural action for freedom, is an act of knowing in which the learner assumes the role of knowing subject in dialogue with the educator'[54]

But it is not always easy for the illiterates to look at the world in the way it is proposed by the elites. Freire writes, 'Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything – that they are sick, lazy and unproductive – that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness.'[55]

This notion was further elaborated by Freire, 'In the culture of silence the masses are "mute", that is they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society and therefore prohibited form being. Even if they can occasionally read and write because they are "taught" in humanitarian - not humanist - literacy campaigns, they are nevertheless alienated from the power responsible for their silence.'[56]

It is imperative to break this culture of silence. The process of liberation starts with the opening up of the oppressed as he/she begins to know the word and the world.

And here we come to the threshold of Paulo Freire's method of imparting literacy to the adults. Freire writes, 'To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to *communicate* graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables - lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe - but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context.

'Thus the educator's role is fundamentally to enter into dialogue with the illiterate about concrete situations and simply to offer him/her the instruments with which he/she can teach himself/herself to read and write. This teaching cannot be done

from top down, but only from the inside out, by the illiterate himself/herself, with the collaboration of the educator. That is why we searched for a method which would be the instrument of the learner as well as of the educator, and which in the lucid observation of a Brazilian sociologist "would identify learning content with the learning process."

'Hence, our mistrust in primers, which set up a certain grouping of graphic signs as a gift and cast the illiterate in the role of the object rather than the Subject of his/her learning. Primers, even when they try to avoid this pitfall, end by *donating* to the illiterate words and sentences which really should result from his/her own creative effort. We opted, instead, for the use of "generative words", those whose syllabic elements offer, through re-combination, the creation of new words.'[57]

From his concept of literacy which leads to liberation, Freire clarified the concept of authentic education and the role of educators and the educatee. Freire writes, 'Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adopt to the world of oppression. This accusation is not made in the naive hope that the dominant elites will thereby simply abandon the practice. Its objective is to call the attention of true humanists to the fact that they cannot use banking educational methods.... Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings.... They must abandon the educational goal of deposit making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world.'[58]

Like the Einsteinian concept of space-time, Freire innovated a new concept in consonance with his concepts of humanization and democracy. In the field of practical adult education, the validity of this concept cannot be questioned. He writes:

'.....problem-posing education, which breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education, can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom only if it can overcome the above contradiction. Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-students and the students-teacher. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself/herself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on ''authority'' are no longer valid, in order to function, "authority" must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects....'[59].

In an essay entitled "Extension or Communication" Freire put emphasis on dialogue. Elsewhere, Freire says, 'Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming – between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them...'[60]

'Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education.....'[61]

While criticizing the so-called 'extension' carried out by the development workers, Freire says, 'Cultural invasion through dialogue cannot exist. There is no such thing as dialogical manipulation or conquest. These terms are mutually exclusive. Although I have said that not all agronomists who are called extension agents practice cultural invasion, it is not possible to ignore the ostensible suggestion of cultural invasion in the term extension.'[62]

Thus Freire could easily relate his ideas across diverse fields. Modern-day development communication owes much to this small essay.

Freire brought the illiterates on the centre-stage and developed all his concepts with these persons in mind who are oppressed, tortured, marginalized, ridiculed, traumatized and brutalized in the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Tagore, Gandhi and Freire worked in the colonial / post-colonial societies of the Third World fragmented by narrow domestic walls of racism, casteism and class-antagonism. All three of them deeply contemplated on the plight of the mute millions of their people and sought ways and means by which their economic, political and social conditions could be improved. Though Tagore worked only in India, Gandhi and Freire had their fields of activities spread out in diverse continents with different objective conditions. Most of the educational writings and experiments of Tagore and Gandhi centred around education of children and adolescents. Though Freire carried out research on education of children of the working class, he concentrated on education of adults as his primary area of intervention. However, the trio's thoughts transcended the specific domain and became rather universal.

If we consider the theories propounded by Tagore and Freire, we shall observe that both of them considered education as the practice of human freedom. Tagore called it 'Atma Shakti' or strengthening of the soul. All his endeavours were geared towards fruition of this inner strength. For Freire, education is the process of *becoming.*

Tagore's concept of education called for an all-round development of the personality. Culture played a very significant role in this process. Fine arts and crafts, dance and music, literature and science – all these he prescribed for the proper growth of the faculties of the child. Freire started his literacy process from the premise of culture and then broadened it in the realm of freedom.

Both Tagore and Freire opposed rote-learning. Tagore considered creativity to be the key to the development of personality of the child. For Freire, creation and re-creation constitute the process of liberation. Narrative concept of education was anathema to both of them.

Gandhi and Freire contributed two most significant concepts to humanity – *satyagraha* and *conscientizacao.* Gandhi's social and political movements emanated from his concept of *satyagraha.* Vehemently opposed to any untruth or falsehood, *satyagraha* was the bedrock of Gandhi's philosophy.

Gandhi says, 'The literal meaning of *satyagraha* is to get hold of the truth and so the meaning of the word is strength of the soul.... Violence has no role to play in *satyagraha.*' He explains elsewhere, '*Satyagraha* and passive resistance are

as different as the two poles. Passive resistance is the weapon of the weak. Those who believe in passive resistance are not opposed to taking recourse to violence to meet the objective, should opportunities arise. On the other hand, *satyagraha* is the weapon of the strong and there is no place of violence in it.'[63] Gandhi used *satyagraha* to attain any goal, political, social or cultural.

Conscientizacao is Freire's option. This term refers to 'learning to perceive social, political and economic conditions and to take action against oppressive elements of reality'. Freire explained, 'I have encountered, both in training courses which analyze the role of *conscientizacao* and in actual experimentation with a truly liberating education, the "fear of freedom". Not infrequently, training course participants call attention to "the danger of *conscientizacao*" in a way that reveals their own fear of freedom. Critical consciousness, they say, is anarchic. Others add that critical consciousness may lead to disorder. Some, however, confess: Why deny it? I was afraid of freedom. I am no longer afraid! In one of these discussions, the group was debating whether *conscientizacao* of men and women to specific situation of injustice might not lead them to "destructive fanaticism"or to a "sensation of total collapse of their world." In the midst of the argument, a person who previously had been a factory worker for many years spoke out: "Perhaps I am the only one here of working-class origin. I can't say that I've understood everything you've said just now, but I can say one thing – when I began this course I was naive and when I found out how naive I was, I started to get critical. But this discovery hasn't made me fanatic, and I don't feel any collapse either'[64]. The people who participated in Gandhi's *satyagraha* would also testify how their whole vision changed as they practised it.

Both Tagore and Gandhi were born in the same decade – the 1860s in colonial India. Both of them had very unpleasant experiences at school. Both of them visited England in their teens. Having seen the English system of education and participated in it on the English soil, they knew exactly what they should aim at for their own people in India.

Both Tagore and Gandhi were of the opinion that the medium of instruction should be the mother-tongue. Both of them favoured craft education. For Tagore, craft was one of the subjects to be taught to the students. However, for Gandhi, craft was the centre around which all education should revolve. The differences in their opinions came into the open when Gandhi offered his concept of basic education to the Indian nation in 1937. The interesting fact is that Gandhi borrowed heavily from Tagore's *Sikshasatra* experiment in which craft education played a major role. In fact, two of Tagore's lieutenants, Aryanayakam and Asha Devi, who worked at Santiniketan for ten years, left Tagore in 1934 and joined hands with Gandhi. They were instrumental in formulating the Basic Education Policy of Gandhi.

Tagore's view of education, compared to Gandhi's, was definitely broader. Gandhi, in organizing the Indian masses, knew more intimately the rural, colonial India. Gandhi could easily see that Tagore's concept could be implemented in one or two villages. But the 700,000 villages of India, lacking the most rudimentary material infrastructures and human resources could not achieve any progress under

the colonial system. Craft-centered education could be the only way out in the prevailing situation. Self-reliance was the only alternative open to Gandhi. In retrospect, it can be said that Gandhi's concept was more down to earth and realistic. Can't there be a blend of Tagore, Gandhi and Freire?

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CHAPTER 2

N.F.S. GRUNDTVIG

Educationist Extraordinary

Homage of an Indian Adult Educator

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 on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary. 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 Soeren Kierkegaard? All his books and journals are translated into English. I have often heard people offering this excuse 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 has given rise at its 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 the key role, was uniquely successful as an alternative path to social progress, not only do Grundtvig's ideas merit a place in the international community, both as part of the historical record and as a still-usable pattern for the future, but also because Denmark, as part of Europe and part of the world, has a duty towards achieving this goal. The world has a right to learn from the theory and practice of Grundtvig.

As an Indian and as an adult educationist, therefore, I want to read in Grundtvig what is universal in his thinking. Grundtvig was born two and 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 past 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 today's world, terrorised by Islamic Jihadis and arrogant crusaders, Gurndtvig'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, rejuvenated and remotivated with 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 gifted the world two great epics - *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata.* In the field of politics, Kautilya's *Arthasastra* (300 B.C.) is a masterpiece on statecraft. Susruta and Charaka (1000 – 300 B.C.) compiled two outstanding treatises on medicine and health care. The theory and practice of Yoga is an Indian innovation roughly dating back to 3000 B.C.

This glorious and illuminating past intermittently experienced highs and lows in its long journey till the seventeenth century, when industrial products from India, particularly textiles were 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 in 1676; English translation with notes, appendices, by V. Ball, 1889)

> As to the commodities of great value and which drew 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 Francois 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). In Feldbaek's writings one finds from a modern historian's perspectives an assessment of the conditions as described in the above book.

When 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 the elite. The percentage of literacy in India was 7.16 in 1821, 9.50 in 1831 and as low as 16.10 in 1941.

However, India saw the emergence of a host of great thinkers like Raja Rammohan 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 the 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 the lower classes and castes and engaged in agriculture, remained outside the ambit 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 has been done to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of these people. Today, 320 million are still living in poverty in India and 440 million are illiterate. The child mortality rate is 79 per 1000; 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 skewed priorities. The policy makers laid 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 Grundtvig witnessed some of the most eventful years which had far-reaching effects on the future of Denmark as a nation. The British attack on Copenhagen and seizure of the 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 Egeloekke, 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 *Laerebog I Verdenhistorie for De tvende oeverste Klasser i Schouboes Institut* (Text book on world history for two upper classes of Schouboe's Institute) (GSkv 1, 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, became an integral part of his thoughts. He also discovered at this point the living, spoken word not only as a mode of communication to the divine but also as instrumental for 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 by 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 a free and frank interaction between the teacher and the taught. One comes across this newly found outlook 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 *enevaelde* (absolute monarchy) to appease demands for democratic government – imbued him with admiration for the use of the 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-Klover* (The Danish four-leaved clover) *(GSkv II, 7).*

In the following years Grundtvig published a series of books on education: *Til Nordmaend om en Norsk hoejskole* (To Norwegians concerning a Norwegian High School) (1837) *(GSkv II, 63), Skolen for Livet og Academiet i Soer* (The School for Life and The Academy at Soer) (1838) *(GSkv II, 79), Om Nordens videnskabelige Forening* (On the academic unions of Scandinavia) (1839) *(GSkv II, 126),* and *Lykoenskning 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's range of knowledge is truly awe inspiring. 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 people as a whole. Science and learning are abstract, but popular education is concrete. Most importantly, Grundtvig felt that the learning of an upper class minority goes astray if there is no education for the people to face it. People of the developing world face this phenomenon rather regularly where the 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 existentialism promoted by his contemporary Soeren 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 helps blossom the person, gives life and strength, guides and guards the individual. The life of the people is the determining factor 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 selfish, 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 today's world. Their perceptions 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 inordinate 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 also be proper to add that he was anxious about the possibility of people having a right to vote, people 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 legends, 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 for 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 had feared in Denmark. He wanted a fairly enlightened electorate who would exercise their right judiciously and would not reduce democracy to 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.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thoughts of Grundtvig, Tagore, Gandhi and Freire can be assimilated into 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 to uplift the masses of the developing world.

Grundtvig's concept of enlightenment is closely related to the awakening of the people through the literature, history and culture of a 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 complementary?

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 a student's upbringing. Fine arts and crafts, dance and music, literature and science are the constituent elements of culture and are rooted to the nation. Freire started his literacy process from the premise of culture and extended it to 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 ways.

Grundtvig, Gandhi and Freire contributed some of the most significant key words and concepts of humanity. Grundtvig's concept of *folkelighed* and enlightenment

awaken a whole nation. Gandhi's *Satyagraha* urges people to hold on to the truth at all costs. Freire's conscientizacao accentuates the faculty of critical thinking. Together, they constitute a philosophical whole.

ABBREVIATIONS

Gskv I-II : K. E. Bugge (1968), *Grundtvigs Skoleverden i tekster of 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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