

Unit 3

Thinkers on Education - I

Contents

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
- 3.3 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)
- 3.4 Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)
- 3.5 Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)
- 3.6 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)
- 3.7 Conclusion
- 3.8 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the perception of Indian thinkers on education;
- compare and contrast their viewpoints; and
- articulate your own point of view on education.

3.1 Introduction

In this unit we will explore the viewpoints of Indian thinkers on education. Against the backdrop of the growing discontent with western education in India, there is an impending need to understand how Indian thinkers have conceptualized the education system particularly in terms of its nature, extent, and scope. They represent indigenous thought with which both students and educators are able to relate. The purpose here is to look for viable alternatives that would play a transformative role in society and create a just and humane social order.

3.2 Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Rabindranath Tagore was born in Kolkata to a deeply religious family of landowners. His father Debendranath was a man of integrity, spiritual acumen, and strength of character. He cast a deep impact on Rabindranath in the formative years of life. Like many other children of aristocratic families of that time, the major part of Rabindranath's childhood was spent in servants' quarters under the care and authority of those who served his family. His first lessons were from the Bengali primer, *Varna Parichaya*. Later, he joined the Oriental Seminary, then the Normal School (which followed the teaching-learning pattern of English schools). He sought admission to the Bengali Academy in order to gain a grounding in English. He remained far from happy in school. The rooms were dismal, in fact, the entire building was unsuitable for human habitation. There were no pictures, not a stroke of colour, nothing that would motivate the students to attend school. Naturally, many of them played truant; those who did attend school regularly would remain filled with depression (Tagore 1966). The grim, monotonous, unhappy experience in school compelled him to consolidate his ideas on meaningful education and revolutionize the whole process of education.

Tagore was opposed to the western system of education that emphasized learning from books with the sole objective of developing the intellectual potential of the child. He believed that education should be aimed not merely to develop the intellect but the complete personality of the child. An education

system should cultivate and nurture among children the ability to learn directly from nature and life as such. Students should lead a simple, self-disciplined life based on the virtues of sociability, compassion, and the spirit of brotherhood. According to him, moral and spiritual values constituted the most important aspect of education. He criticized western education for treating the child as a receiver of packaged information in a way that did not awaken his/her own creativity and innate abilities. The children, in turn, pick up bits and pieces out of the information thrust upon them and present themselves for examination of their ability to retain the information. According to Tagore it was not enough to pass on information. What was important was the ability to put to use what one has learnt and to develop curiosity and alertness of mind. The child should be able to appreciate a sense of freedom acquired by free movements of the body in the midst of the natural environment. It may be understood at this stage itself that for Tagore, education stood for freedom from ignorance and from passion and prejudice.

He upheld that the child learns the first lessons on freedom from nature which is the basic source of knowledge. According to Tagore, the ideal school should be established in the midst of fields, trees, and plants, under the open sky and far removed from human settlements. This would keep the children away from the turmoils of daily life. More importantly living in the forest was associated with austere pursuits and renunciation. Firm on his ideas, Tagore set out to develop an appropriate system of national education for India. He founded the Ashram school at Santiniketan in 1901 with emphasis on non-duality (*advaita*) in the domain of knowledge, friendship for all, fulfilment of one's duties without concern for the outcome(s). Here education was combined with disciplining of the senses and one's own life. In talking about education for life, Tagore did not ignore the significance of science teaching. He did value inventions and discoveries in so far as they made life less burdensome. What he condemned, however, was the race for material prosperity at the cost of creative genius and dignity. He expressed the view that the current education system was not geared to inculcate the ability to think independently. According to Tagore, teaching through a foreign language was both difficult and unrealistic. He was opposed to borrowed knowledge that distanced pupils from their own social and cultural fabric. He said that education which imparts knowledge but bears no relevance to life situations is of no avail. He said that the curriculum should be developed by teachers and students together. It should be based on their needs and requirements. He laid stress on discussion as a mode of delivery of knowledge. The books should serve as mere supplements to knowledge acquired through life situations and independent thinking. Learning should proceed from familiar situations to unfamiliar situations. This meant that children should be made familiar with their own environment before exposing them to alien ones. They should be encouraged to learn from and about the natural phenomena that they encounter in their daily lives.

Salkar (1990) wrote that Tagore was aware that children store in their brains the images of all that they observe. This was more marked in the early period of childhood when curiosity is sharp. He favoured teaching of history and geography through field exposure by way of educational tours to specific places for learning and widening of horizons. He wanted to set up a school based on his ideals for which he travelled far and wide. Tagore settled at Santiniketan where he founded the Brahmacharya Ashram with only five students. The emphasis here was on a personalized relationship between teachers and pupils. Tagore himself taught English in the Ashram School. He would narrate stories from Indian history in the evening to the children. Having prepared the ground for school education, he diverted attention to higher education and established the Visva Bharati.

Box 3.1: Tagore on Visva Bharati

“In every nation, education is intimately associated with the life of the people. For us, modern education is relevant only to turning out clerks, lawyers, doctors, magistrates and policemen.... This education has not reached the farmer, the oil grinder, or the potter. No other educated society has been struck with such disaster.... If ever a truly Indian university is established it must from the very beginning implement India’s own knowledge of economics, agriculture, health, medicine and of all other everyday knowledge from the surrounding villages. Then alone can the school or university become the centre of the country’s of living. This school must practice agriculture, dairying and weaving using the best modern methods.... I have proposed to call this school Visva Bharati” (Tagore 1963, cited here from Jha 1997: 610).

He believed that the basic task of education was to produce, gather develop, and disseminate knowledge to the younger generation. In the Visva Bharati, two autonomous institutions survive: the Kala Bhawan (the school of fine arts) and Sangeet Bhawan (the school of music and dance). Tagore is no more but the ideals of education he laid down and the institutions he established keep him alive in the minds of the people.

Box 3.2: Major Works of Rabindranath Tagore

My Reminiscences. 1917. London: Macmillan

Nationalism. 1917. London: Macmillan

Ashramar Roop O Vikas [The Form of the Ashrama School]. 1941. Santiniketan: Visva Bharati

Siksha [A Collection of Essays on Education]. 1990. Santiniketan: Visva Bharati

3.3 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar situated in Kathiawar, Gujarat. His father and grandfather were chief ministers in Kathiawar. After completing school education he went to London to study law. He came back to the country and practised law in Mumbai and Rajkot. He did not get much success in the profession and went to South Africa on an unexpected offer. His experiments in education started when he returned to South Africa in 1897 with his two sons and a nephew for whom he searched for an appropriate school. He could have sent them to the school for European children but did not think that English as a medium of instruction employed in those schools was worthwhile. He used to run the ‘Tolstoy Farm’ which could not afford to pay the wages that qualified teachers would demand. So, he took upon himself the task of teaching the children. He decided to live among the children and lay the foundation of character-building and self-dependence in them. Gandhi encouraged the children to undertake all the chores ranging from cooking to scavenging themselves. Certainly, a teacher would cooperate and guide them throughout the endeavour. Apart from physical training he engaged in spiritual training of students (Prasad 2001). He returned to India in 1914 where he was destined to play a major role in the freedom struggle and importantly, in the educational reconstruction of the country. There is no denying that colonial rule had eroded the traditions and values of the education system as people were imparted western education that prepared them for minor positions in the government machinery of the British. This class of people educated in the western system easily gave in to the lucrative offers of the colonialists at the expense of their own dignity. He tried hard to overthrow colonial education and present an alternative that people could relate with and find useful.

Gandhi was concerned with the rising trend of people giving up their vocation after acquiring western education. Cobblers, carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, tailors tended to surrender their vocations treating them as inferior. They would take pride in joining the position of clerk in offices.

Box 3.3: Gandhi on alternative pedagogy

“As against this, take the case of a child in whom the education of the heart is attended to from the very beginning. Supposing he is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture, etc., for his education and in that connection is given a thorough and comprehensive knowledge relating to the theory of the various operations that he is to perform and the use and construction of the tools that he would be wielding. He would not only develop a fine, healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is tested from day to day by experience. His intellectual education would include knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If to this is added literature by way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole” (cited here from Fagg 2002:9).

Gandhi proposed ‘nai talim’ or basic education which emphasized the introduction of productive handicrafts in the school curriculum and in doing so bestowed honour and dignity to those who are adept at them. In the words of Kumar (1997: 508), “It implied a radical restructuring of the sociology of school knowledge in India, where productive handicrafts had been associated with the lowest groups in the hierarchy of castes. Knowledge of the production processes involved in crafts, such as spinning, weaving, leather work, pottery, metal-work, basket-making and bookbinding had been the monopoly of specific caste groups in the lowest stratum of the traditional social hierarchy. Many of them belonged to the category of ‘untouchables’. India’s indigenous tradition of education as well as the colonial education system had emphasized the skills (such as literacy) and knowledge of which the upper castes had a monopoly. In terms of its epistemology, Gandhi’s proposal intended to stand the education system on its head.” The basic education, hence, favoured the children belonging the lowest rungs in society. This facilitated the process of social transformation. According to Gandhi, schools should be self-sufficient so that the poorest of the poor could educate themselves. This could happen only if the schools could generate enough resources for themselves. Further, schools that are self-sufficient do not fall prey to the whims and interference of the state. Teachers should not be made to give in to the dictates of bureaucracy and teach out of the curriculum laid down by it. Learning was not confined to memorizing contents in the textbooks. Gandhi believed that in India where more than 80 per cent of the population subsists by agriculture and about 10 per cent by industries, delimiting the scope of education to literacy was not appropriate. Boys and girls should be encouraged to value manual labour. In fact, carpentry, spinning and other crafts may be used as a means of stimulating the intellect. This can be made possible by explaining the underlying mechanism. When a child interested in spinning, for instance, is explained the mechanism of the working of the wheel, the history of cotton, the method of determining the strength of the yarn, his/her intellect gets sharpened. This was true education. He was in favour of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, for English creates a divide between those who are ‘highly educated’ and the many uneducated people. Moreover, comprehension is faster and better when children are taught in their mother tongue. Gandhi clearly stated that if English were removed from the curriculum of primary and secondary or high school education then it would be possible to make the children go through the whole course in seven years instead of eleven years.

Reflection and Action 3.1

Compare and contrast Gandhi's and Tagore's ideas on education

Gandhi stayed with Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan for about a month. In the course of close interaction between the two thinkers emerged consolidated ideas on the future of education in India. Gandhi set up his ashrama in Sabarmati in which he also established a school for children. He proposed the following scheme for education: (i) adult education of the whole community, including the parents of newborn babies; (ii) pre-basic schooling from 2 to 7 years; (iii) basic schooling from 7 to 14 years; (iv) post-basic education from 14 to 18 years; and (v) university and teacher training institute education. The schedule consisted of rendering morning prayers, cleaning of the campus including lavatories, engaging in productive work (e.g., spinning, weaving, cultivation and others), preparing meals, and studies (that related to the day's work and its scientific, mathematical and other aspects). Students were taught to think before doing and think after doing. All of them were imparted training in music and art. Stagecraft and management were an important part of education. In the afternoon, before dinner, they played games. The evening prayer was ecumenical. In the scheme of nai talim, there was no place for textbooks, but the students were encouraged to use the library to enhance their knowledge. Over a period of time nai talim schools were set up throughout the country (Prasad 2001). Nai talim schools did not succeed as institutions. They were thought to be meant for villagers so the political elite did not support them. Gandhi's ideas on education, however, continue to inspire many intellectuals and humanists.

Box 3.4: Major Works of Gandhi

An Autobiography or The Story of my Experiments with Truth. 1963. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House

Basic Education. 1951. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House

Education for life. 1937. Rajamundry: Hindustan Publishing Co.

3.4 Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)

Sri Aurobindo was born in Kolkata. His father, Dr. K. D. Ghose, acquired a medical degree from the West and had developed deep appreciation of its lifestyle. In fact, his values of life and lifestyle were largely westernized. Sri Aurobindo's mother was Swarnlata Devi – the daughter of Rajnarayan Bose who was often referred to as 'rishi' which means ascetic and as the 'Grandfather of Indian Nationalism'. Rajnarayan Bose could not exercise much influence on Sri Aurobindo because he was sent to Darjeeling for schooling at the age of five. The school was known for imparting western-style education. It was meant for European children. Two years later his parents sent him to England. He, along with his brother, stayed in Manchester in the care of a Latin scholar. In 1890, he was admitted to the Indian Civil Services as a probationer but was later disqualified due to certain reasons. Anyway, he came back to India and joined as Professor of English and French in Maharaja College, Vadodara. This marked the beginning of his deep insight into the ancient lore, mastering Sanskrit and Bengali languages (see Das 2000). In 1910 he went to Pondicherry with the objective of devoting his entire time to the practice of yoga and spirituality. In the course of forty years there, he evolved a method of spiritual practice that came to be known as Integral Yoga. In 1926 he founded the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in collaboration with his wife who is better known as the Mother.

According to Sri Aurobindo, any system of education should be founded on the study of the human mind. The reason is simple: while the material with which artists deal is inert, that of educators and educationists is highly sensitive. The major defect in the European system of education is precisely its insufficient knowledge of psychology. The means through which education could be made meaningful was to acquire an understanding of the instruments of knowledge and develop a system of teaching which was natural, easy, and effective. The teachers need to accept their role as that of a helper and guide not as an instructor who imparts knowledge, trains the mind of the children, and makes impositions on them. At best, the teacher can make suggestions and encourage the children to acquire knowledge for themselves. Admittedly, children of younger age need greater help and guidance than older children. The children should be given the freedom to choose their own qualities, virtues, capacities, capabilities, and career. It is improper to impose one's ideas on them. Education needs to be geared to drawing out the innate abilities in children and perfecting them for noble use. Furthermore, the children should be made familiar and aware of all that surrounds them and which meets them on a day-to-day basis, e.g., natural-physical environment, sounds, habits and customs, nationality. The purpose here is to foster free and natural growth, for these are the prerequisites of genuine development.

Sri Aurobindo proposed complete education of a subject(s) encompassing teaching/learning about its/their different aspects and dimensions. This stood out in contrast to the modern teaching system wherein children are taught portions of several subjects. Consequently, they are not able to master any subject. The older system was to teach fewer subjects but delve deep into each one. Sri Aurobindo felt that the practice of teaching lesser number of subjects with great thoroughness was more appropriate in so far as it built 'real culture'. He believed that the mother-tongue served as the appropriate medium of instruction. Children should acquire competence in the medium first not by making them spell words, read books but by familiarizing them with interesting parts of literature. A large part of their study should be devoted to the development of mental faculties and moral character. The foundation for the study and appreciation of art history, philosophy and science could be laid at this stage itself. Often, the idea of universal education is pursued as a mission with complete disregard of what education is or what it should ideally be. The problem gets confounded when there is demand for enforcing a national type of education in the Indian subcontinent which has witnessed clash of the Asiatic and European consciousness political subjugation that placed the control of education in the hands of foreigners. In such a situation the call for national education is likely to raise disconcerting confusion till the ideas on the basic concept of education are made clear. It is also not appropriate to decry the education imparted in schools and universities in that they are denationalizing, degrading, and impoverishing to the national mind and character only because it is governed and controlled by the British. It is important to determine by ourselves the alternative, the principle or practice we propose to replace it with. Just taking over from the foreigners the control over education and resting it with an indigenous agency that at best changes the medium of instruction and curriculum is not adequate for meeting the demands of the present much less of the future. What is called for is development an education system proper to the need, culture, and temperament of the people themselves. Does this mean return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara or return to the ancient chariot and bullock cart in the name of Swadeshi? Sri Aurobindo (1920-21, cited here from 2000: 208-209), stated "It is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with, and there the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilization and the greater possibility of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future. It is not a return to the fifth century but an initiation of the centuries to come, not reversion but a break forward away from a

present artificial falsity to her own greater innate potentialities that is demanded by the soul, by the shakti of India." The central aim of national education is to strengthen the powers of the human mind and evoke the will and the ability to use knowledge, character, and culture. Sri Aurobindo explains this through the simple example of learning science. It is not enough to acquire competence in the discipline and to have the entire knowledge at one's fingertips. The major issue is not what is learnt but what one does with that learning, the use that the knowledge is put to and the way in which it is put to use.

Sri Aurobindo upheld that one way to get to the very core to culture in India is by acquiring knowledge of Sanskrit or any other indigenous language by whatever means is natural and stimulating to the mind. When this happens, it would be possible to establish continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of our future, and how we are to learn and use English or any other foreign language so as to know helpfully the life, ideas and culture of other countries and establish own right relations with the world around us" (ibid, pp. 209). This is the aim of national education.

Box 3.5: Major Works of Sri Aurobindo

The Life Divine. 1939. Calcutta: Arya Publishing House

The Synthesis of Yoga. 1955. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo

The Human Cycle. 1949. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram

3.5 Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born in the small town of Madanapalli in Andhra Pradesh to middle-class Telugu-Brahmin parents. His father joined the Theosophical Society in 1881 and in 1901 the family came to stay in the Society's headquarters at Adyar. When he was still fourteen years old, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater recognized in him the potential to be the world teacher and proclaimed him to be the vehicle for Christ in the West and of Buddha in the East who would bring salvation to humankind. Mrs. Besant adopted Krishnamurti and took him to England where she educated him and in the process prepared him for a bigger role in world society. In 1911 she proclaimed him the head of her religious organization, The Order of the Star in the East. Between the years 1911 and 1929, he questioned himself on the need for operating through an organization in order to coerce people to follow a particular path. In the year 1929, Krishnamurti dissolved The Order of the Star in the East. He felt convinced that Truth cannot be approached through a laid out path. Humanity had to free itself from the shackles of caste, religion, sect and all that through which people feel bound. His concern was to set human beings absolutely and unconditionally free. He travelled all over the world delivering talks and discourses on the nature of truth, sorrow, and freedom. One of the themes on which he deliberated extensively was education. In fact, he established the Rishi Valley Education Centre in 1928 in Andhra Pradesh.

Krishnamurti believed that the scope of education did not consist solely of reading and learning from books, clearing examination and using the academic qualification to secure a job. In the present day, education has been used to develop conformity to society and culture by being sucked into the social, economic and political streams. It is widely believed that the only way to solve the problems of the people is to provide them education, make them read and write. More important than filling one's mind with information was developing a perspective, going beyond the words in the book in order to comprehend and appreciate what is contained in them as also to determine whether what the books say is true or false. He wrote (1963: 163) "When you go on the street you see the poor man and the rich man; and when you look around you,

you see all the so called educated people throughout the world. They have titles, degrees, caps and gowns, they are doctors and scientists; and yet they have not created a world in which man can live happily. So modern education has failed, has it not? And if you are satisfied to be educated in the same old way, you will make another howling mess of life.” Krishnamurti agreed that it is necessary to be able to read and write, and learn engineering or some other profession but mere competence in these cannot build the capacity of life. One who has undergone the process of real education could excel in mathematics, geography, history and other disciplines but would never be drawn into the stream of society primarily because it is corrupt, immoral, violent and greedy. The basic concern then is with working out the right kind of education that would develop the capacity in the mind to resist all negative influences and bestiality of the civilization. There is a need to create a new culture not based on consumerism and industrialization but on real quality of religion on the one hand and an education system that would prepare minds not given to greed or envy on the other. Right education, therefore, is one that brings about inner transformation, and awakens intelligence.

Krishnamurti (1974:20) clearly stated that intelligence is the “capacity to think clearly, objectively, sanely, and healthily.” Intelligence is a state bereft of personal emotions, opinions, prejudice, or inclination. Now, it is possible to think clearly only if one is sensitive. Intelligence implies that one is able to appreciate the beauty of the earth, the trees, sky, sunset, stars and all that envelops him/her. When that happens, the development of a child is total which means that he/she acquires not only inward understanding, the capacity to explore and examine his/her inward self and inner state, but is good at whatever he/she does outwardly. The two aspects, i.e., of inward development and outward excellence need to go hand-in-hand. Krishnamurti was opposed to the idea of competition and competitive spirit. The basis of competition is making comparison, judging and evaluating their performance. This leads to conflict, fear, and feeling of helplessness among them. In fact, he believed that one could live happily in this competitive world only if one is not competitive. More importantly, when a mind has understood the futility and absurdity of drawing comparisons and does not engage in it can a foundation from which it can start to learn in the true sense of the word be established. Then, there is no frustration, and no hankering after success. In place of competition, confidence (without the element of self-importance) should be instilled in children (Thapan 2001).

Krishnamurti was deeply interested to keep in touch with the schools in India, Brookwood Park in England, the Oak Grove School at Ojai, California. He proposed to write a letter to them every fortnight explaining what an ideal school should be, to convey that schools are not the centres for academic excellence but much more in that they are to remain engaged in cultivation of the total human beings. They are to encourage the students and educators to flower naturally, bring out their innate abilities in an environment not plagued with fear, pressure of authority, or competition. After Krishnamurti's death, a few more schools were established, like the Sahyadri School near Pune. It is a boarding school which caters to children belonging to upper class families. Two other schools are the Bal Anand in Mumbai and the Bhagirathi Valley School in Uttar Pradesh which is attended by children belonging to lower-middle class families. Krishnamurti's ideas on education found manifestation in the Rishi Valley Education Centre in Andhra Pradesh set up under the auspices of Krishnamurti Foundation India. The Rishi Valley Education Centre was set up with the mission to usher in a different kind of education that would provide the children with knowledge and at the same time make them understand that acquisition of knowledge was not the ultimate objective of life and that it was equally necessary to be sensitive to trees, birds, to know what it is to love, and to be generous. This is possible when the educators are themselves able to reach out to realms beyond words in the

books and are able to draw out the best in children. Certainly, authority is destructive. Care has to be taken that children learn from themselves. It is a fruitful process in the sense that it leads to wisdom. Children learn to depend on themselves more than on anybody else. When a person depends on certain people for safety, for money, for pleasure, there is a strong possibility that one feels frightened, irritated, angry, jealous and frustrated when they do something that upsets him/her.

Reflection and Action 3.2

Do you think Krishnamurti's ideas on education are practical in the present day? Discuss with your co-learners at the study centre.

In the Rishi Valley Education Centre and other schools established by the Krishnamurti Foundation India, learning takes place through exploration and discovery, and interaction between teachers and students. Despite the fact that they follow a clearly laid out curriculum (because they are affiliated with a centrally or state-level administered education board that conducts examinations at the class X and XII stages), there are co-curricular activities that apart from the focus on arts, are intended to creatively engage the students in their immediate environment. The students are guided to understand their inner self, psychology process, emotions thoughts, and problems. The Krishnamurti Foundation India school in Chennai has developed a well-drafted curriculum for Environmental Studies which has been adopted by the Indian Council for Secondary Education (ICSE) Board for schools affiliated with it (Thapan 2001). There is no denying that Krishnamurti continues to survive through his ideas, writings and institution to inspire both students and educators alive. What awards greater significance to his works is the integration of education with individual and society.

Box 3.6: Major Works of Jiddu Krishnamurti

You are the Word. 1972. Madras: Krishnamurti Foundation India

The Wholeness of Life. 1978. London: Gollancz & Harper Row

Letters to the Schools. 1981 madras: Krishnamurti Foundation India

3.6 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was born in Tiruttani near Chennai. He specialized in the understanding of the ethics of Vedanta. In fact, he wrote a dissertation on the ethics of the Vedanta and its metaphysical presuppositions. His interest and study of Indian philosophy developed a great deal after he was offered a position in the Department of Philosophy at the Madras Presidency College following which he joined as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Mysore. Radhakrishnan was subsequently appointed to the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science in the University of Calcutta. Later, representing India, he addressed the Philosophical Congress at Harvard University. He was invited to join the Manchester College, Oxford. He severed as Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University and Fellow of the British Academy. Back in India, he remained Vice Chancellor (between 1939 and 1948) of the Banaras Hindu University, Leader Of Indian delegation to UNESCO (between 1946 and 1952), Ambassador of India to the USSR (between 1949 and 1952), Vice President of Indian (between 1952 and 1962), President, General Conference of UNESCO (between 1952 and 1954), Chancellor, University of Delhi (between 1953 and 1962), and President of India (between 1962 and 1967). Radhakrishnan believed that an education system should be geared to both train the intellect as also instill grace in the heart and in doing so bring about balanced growth of an individual. The students should not only be intellectually competent and technically skilled but also

civilized in their emotions and refined in their purpose because their worth as members of society desires not solely for intellectual ability or technical skill but devotion to a great cause. This was crucial in the present age marked with greed anxiety, defeatism, and severe constrain on independent thinking. People in the modern age are given to accepting whatever the society and its channels of expression (e.g. the film, radio, television, newspaper) put into circulation. Intellectual integrity remains at stake. A significant way to free oneself from the debilitating effects and strain of modern life was the study of literature, philosophy, and religion that interpret highé laws of the universe and provide a philosophy and an attitude to life. Hence, one must learn to read the classics that deal with life and destiny of humankind. Quiet study of classics develops independent reflection. Individuals master philosophy, acquire more knowledge in universities – places of higher learning.

In an address at Moscow University on June 18, 1956 Radhakrishnan (cited here from print version 1992 : 10), “ But buildings do not make a university. It is the teachers and the pupils and their pursuit of knowledge, these make the soul of a university. The university is the sanctuary of the intellectual life of a country. The healthy roots of national life are to be found in the people. They are the wellsprings of national awakening. They are the spirit behind revolutionary movements of society. When we give education, we start a ferment of debate and discussion of first principles. The educated youth will voice their thoughts and find fault with things as they are. We train in this university not only doctors and engineers but also men and women who think for themselves. They will not judge everything by the party line. If we destroy the initiative, the freedom of the people we do so at our peril. If men lose intellectual vigour, the future of civilization is bleak indeed.” The students of a university need to be trained to fight ignorance, injustice, oppression, and fear. Indiscipline among students rises when they are not trained to deal with the problems of life with fortitude, self-control and sense of balance. Those serving in universities are in a position to prepare mindset that would accept the idea of establishment of a world community with a common consciousness and common conscience. An important function of the university was the advancement of international understanding and international peace. Radhakrishnan reiterated the role of the university in establishing and affirming peace in several speeches. In an address at the Calcutta University, he said that universities of the world form a great fraternity binding together their members all over the world. Again, in another context he stated that the university fraternity transcends caste, class, creed, and nationality. It honours achievements and scholarship in art and literature, and science.

According to Radhakrishnan, an attempt should be made to draw the best minds into the teaching profession. What often happens is that the teachers are paid low salaries. They do not fully appreciate the intellectual value of their service and take to writing textbooks and seeking examinerships. In order to avoid such tendencies, the teaching profession has to be made more lucrative. Apart from disinterested teachers, the higher education system is fraught with the problem of inadequate opportunities for conversation and debate. Radhakrishnan believed that true education calls for free and fearless exchange of opinions, thoughts, and ideas between and among students. Occasions and situations in which this would be possible are hardly made available to students. Furthermore, there is no adequate provision for games and other activities in which a large member of students may engage together. He favoured the idea of students joining the National Cadet Corps in large numbers because its membership posts discipline, teamwork sprit, and sense of dignity of labour. He drew attention to the fact that education of the youth does not find a place of significance in the schemes of development adopted by the centre and the states. He cautioned that the experiment in democracy would suffer if education was not accorded high priority and that future leadership would be imperiled if the level of university education was allowed to deteriorate.

On November 4, 1948, the Government of India appointed the University Education Commission under the chairmanship of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. This commission, therefore, came to be referred to as the Radhakrishnan commission. The major task before this commission was to suggest improvements in higher education. The Commission clearly stated that the teachers occupy a crucial place in the education system. It is their responsibility to inculcate right values and truth in students along with generating interest in the field of study. Apart from others the Commission recommended that vocational institutions should be established in order that students could choose to pursue vocational courses after schooling of 10-12 years.

It is widely accepted that Radhakrishnan's vision of higher education in general and in the context of India in particular was grounded in the conviction that it should provide leadership in politics, administration, industry, and commerce at one level while at the other it should lead to self development, fearlessness, and integrity.

Box 3.6: Major works of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

The Essentials of Psychology. 1912. Oxford: The University Press

The Hindu View of Life. 1927. London: George Allen and Unwin

Indian Philosophy. 1923. London: Allen and Unwin

3.7 Conclusion

We have come to realize that Indian thinkers on education weave strands from philosophy and pragmatism together as warp and woof. According to them, the scope of education extends beyond letters and words to encompass the totality of being. Meaningful education, they laid down, is preparation for life, for meeting challenges squarely, and for self-enrichment. Education is freedom from fear and ignorance leading to liberation. In this sense it is both the means as also the ultimate objective of life.

3.8 Further Reading

Jha, Narmadeshwar. 1997. "Rabindranath Tagore." In Zaghoul Morsy (ed.) *Thinkers on Education*. Vol. 4. New Delhi: UNESCO/Oxford & IBH Publishing

Kumar, Krishna. 1997. "Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi." In Zaghoul Morsy (ed.) *Thinkers on Education*. Vol. 4. New Delhi: UNESCO/Oxford & IBH Publishing