Preface and Acknowledgement

At the time of submitting the thesis I have no hesitation to mention that the task of analysing the materials relating to the Upanishadic influence on the educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo is indeed a very tremendously vast job that has obscured and unfathomable depth as well. And as such, I do not exactly know how much satisfaction my examiners and readers will have from my work. However, I have tried hard to do it sincerely.

As the scientists of the modern world have been able to change the face of the world by the discovery of the subtler energies like atomic power which is still not discernable to the ordinary human mind similarly it may be pointed out here that the see-teachers of the Upanishadic age discover that the exercise of the spirit can enable man to transform him and make him capable of utilizing his faculties with more and more perfection and make him vibrant with dynamic powers. During my study in respect of this topic it occurs to me that the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic age for generations together have been putting all sorts of man-making efforts in view of creating leading personages and scholars capable of guiding new generations in their turn by not only replenishing all the human faculties but also unleashing the latent higher light or consciousness in man. In the
process ancient India emerges as a land vibrating with creativity on the one hand and on the other as a powerful torch-bearer with effulgent light among the nations of the civilised world for centuries together.

During the renaissance in India like the galaxy of stars among the luminous personages Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo appear on the scene one after the other as great teachers as well and remind us that ‘Mother India is not a piece of earth, she is a power’ and for the rebirth of the people of this land all of them severally come forward with man-making programme keeping in view the light that was lit at the dawn of the Indian civilisation as a clarion call – of course, all of them severally approaches the problem and commences to frame educational ideas separately for experimenting.

All of the three great educators Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have laid emphasis on helping the scholar – young or grown-up to find his deeper self within and give it a chance to come forward as the leader of the march for taking up most of the business of education towards realisation of the potentialities already in man. All these great teachers are aware that many of the outward features of the ancient system of instruction are not suited to modern requirements although many of the fervid lovers of the past have a demand for some such things. According to these three teachers the fundamental principles of teaching which the modern system of education cannot offer us are for all time
and the ancient discipline can only be replaced by introduction of a more advanced discipline of higher efficacy.

Like the ancient Rishis of the Upanishadic age Rabindranath looks upon the little learner as an ensouled being and he has a greater destiny that waits him in his front. He is in need of entering into a sacred life for which he must prepare himself right from the beginning of his life for the unfoldment of knowledge that lies in his deeper self within.

In his man-making educational programme Swami Vivekananda sticks to his idea that education is the manifestation of what is already in man. The mechanical ways of modern life have reduced man to the status of a machine and have undermined lofty and transcendental ideas of man. He feels that such evils ought to be eradicated through proper education. As awakening of man to his spiritual self can alone do a lot in this regard Swami Vivekananda is bent upon spreading spiritual education and surely his ideas are based on Brahmacharya and Upanishadic ideals.

To Sri Aurobindo the discovery of the deepest being which is hidden in human nature is the first necessity which develops the capacity of the psychological being of the scholar towards a positive realisation of his latent powers which cannot be had from the external routine method of the modern mechanical view of life. He has categorically said that he is not in favour of retaining the outward features of the ancient education system but with great
emphasis he observes that the fundamental ideas of the Upanishadic education system still holds good and it is for all time.

The cuckoo is called the harbinger of the spring and in the same way the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic age may as well be looked upon as the harbingers of a new humanity struggling to be born with a greater destiny out a self-centered life of pettiness and discord. The seer-teachers of the Upanishadic Education System perhaps for the first time here make the young learners capable of attaining the higher consciousness – greater in height and depth through the exercise of the deeper-self within that might enable them to exceed themselves and make them many times more powerful in their body, life and mind. Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, well versed as they are in their study of the Upanishadic system of education equally come forward to give serious thinking on the issue and severally put efforts in their own light.

Considering the panoramic profundity of some such research-work without hesitation I may confess here that indeed I am no match for such a huge and significant theme, – what has been scribbled here is nothing but an unskilled attempt only with a view to drawing attention of talented scholars to take up the lofty task for doing proper justice to it and make all concerned enlightened on the issue from a pedestal of effulgent light.
In preparing the thesis it is my sincere pleasure to express my indebtedness to all my predecessors and I would also prefer to mention here that I have received inspiration and encouragement and assistance and cooperation from a number of revered persons and institutions.

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(Sanjiban Sengupta)