CHAPTER V : EDUCATION

Section I : Rabindranath's Conception About Education

"Our education to us is like the carriage to a horse; a bondage, the dragging of which merely serves to provide it with food and shelter in the stable of its master; the horse has not the same freedom of relationship with the carriage as its owner and therefore the carriage even remains for it an imposition of beggarly necessity... The great use of education is not merely to collect facts, but to know man and make oneself known to man. It is the duty of every human being to master at heart to some extent, not only the language of the intellect, but also that personality which is the language of Art.... Education can only become natural and wholesome when it is the direct fruit of a living and growing knowledge. Our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual, and our educational institutions should be in the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true education is to realise at every step how our training and knowledge have organic connection with our surroundings means the superstitious ideas possessed by the majority people of India. The best function of education is to enable us to realise that to live as a man, requiring profound philosophy for its ideal, poetry for its expression and heroism in its conduct. Owing to this
vital method of culture, the common people of India, though technically illiterate, have been made conscious of the sanctity of social relationships entailing constant sacrifice and self-control, urged and supported by ideals collectively expressed in one word 'Dharma' by which Rabindranath means the superstitious ideas possessed by the majority people of India. This is the content of Tagore's ideas on education.

Rabindranath was definitely influenced by the ideas of Herbert Spencer on Education. That the poet gave much thought to Spencer's ideas can be detected from his personal collection of books by Spencer. It is also evident from 'Jivansmriti', that when he was in Europe for the first time, that is in 1879, he read Herbert Spencer's 'The Data of Ethics'. Herbert Spencer says "the training of children - physical, moral and intellectual - is dreadfully defective. And in great measure, it is so, because parents are devoid of knowledge by which this training can alone be rightly guided. What is to be expected when one of the most intricate problems is undertaken by those who have given scarcely a thought to the principles on which its solution depends? A knowledge to the laws of life is the one thing needful. Some acquaintance with the first principles of physiology and the elementary truths of psychology is indispensable for the right bringing up of children. The development of children in mind and body follows certain laws, that unless these laws are in some degree conformed to, there:

must result serious physical and mental defects; and that can only be confirmed when perfect maturity is reached. Judge then, whether all who may one day be parents, should not strive with some anxiety to learn what these laws are.  

As far as moral education is concerned, Spencer believed that, "the greatest defect in our programme of education is entirely overlooked. While much is being done in the detailed improvement of our systems in respect of both matter and manner, the most pressing desideratum has not yet been recognized as a desideratum. To prepare the young for the duties of life, is tacitly admitted to be the end which parents and school masters should have in view; and happily, the value of the things taught, and the goodness of the methods followed in teaching, are now ostensibly judged by their fitness to this end... As physical maturity is marked by the ability to train those off springs. The subject which involves all other subjects, are therefore the subject in which education should culminate, is the Theory and Practice of Education. In the absence of this preparation, the management of children, and more specially the moral management, is lamentably at all, or else their conclusions are crude and inconsistent."

Spencer also says that "physical education of children, in various ways, is seriously faulty. It errs its deficient feeding, in deficient clothing, in deficient mental application."

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Considering the regime as a whole its tendency is too exacting; it asks too much and gives too little. In the extent to which it taxes the vital energies, it makes the juvenile life for more like the adult life than it should be. Instead of respecting the body and ignoring the mind, we now respect the mind and ignore the body. Both these attitudes are wrong. We do not yet realize the truth, that as in their life of ours, the physical underlies the mental, the mental must not be developed at the expense of the physical. The ancient and the modern conceptions must be combined.

The poet himself had been a victim of unhappy training in his childhood. Education, in those days was very much stereotyped and there was no scope for unfolding one's own personality through education. The children were made to read some volumes of Grammar, Literature, Mathematics or Science; but the method of teaching was too mechanical, both at home and at school. According to the poet children found no pleasure in those dull pages of the books. The Jorasanko Tagore family was a very cultured family of the time, and Devendranath Tagore himself took pains in educating both the men and women folk of the family in very many ways. In his childhood Rabindranath and his brothers were trained in different subjects, including music and gymnastics by different trainers. In his 'Jivansmriti' and in some of the pages of 'Chelebela', we can get a glimpse of that kind of education. Not necessarily did young Rabindranath find all the subjects equally dull; the

responsibility was probably that of those teachers who could not create some interest in their subjects. Rabin≥ranath and his brothers developed an interest in anatomical science, because they were made to learn about human body through a human skeleton which was kept in their study room. This interest was created in them by a student of Campbell Medical School (renamed after Independence, the Nil Ratan Sarkar Medical College). It was just because they could visualise that particular object that they found it to be exciting and interesting. Later, in his life, Rabin≥ranath gave repeated emphasis on education through visualisation. But the drudgery which he suffered through education is clear in some of the passages of 'Chelebela'. "A dim light used to burn in our study room. Our Mastermosai gave us lessons from Piari (Charan) Sarkar's First Book. First, I used to yawn, then I felt sleepy, and then I began to rub my eyes. Repeatedly I had to hear from my teacher, that his other pupil Satin was really a gem of a boy — that boy used to take snuff whenever he felt sleepy. But I never felt bothered and even the uneasy thought of being ignorant among all boys could not keep me awake. At nine O'clock at last I got respite."

As Rabin≥ranath himself suffered in his childhood, he later came to realise that a child's mind should have a healthy growth. If a child's mind is subjected to compulsion

and strict mechanised rules, the mind cannot bloom properly. Some scholars are of opinion that the establishment of the Ashrama school at Santiniketan directly reflected Rabindranath's own painful feelings about education in his childhood; and it was this personal feeling which probably persuaded him to give shape to a different model of education. Some time ago in a seminar at Santiniketan, an eminent scholar said that it is high time to think whether there is at all any need for maintaining a different kind of educational institution like Visvabharati in this recent world of reality. Further, he said that it is indubitably true that Rabindranath was original in his thought, but is there any practical necessity of that kind of education? There would have no question, if the whole world could accept this kind of education. When it is not possible, then it is not necessary to follow Rabindranath's principles also.

After 42 years of Rabindranath's death, this question is seriously perturbing. In a recent article in 'Desh', Dr. Jhabatosh Dutta has expressed his opinion in response to the previous opinion. He says that it is true that the agonised memory which he cherished regarding education in his childhood had a deep impact on his later thought, which framed the educational model at Santiniketan. But the urge which worked behind this great creative work was not only the poet's fanciful desire, but a big social necessity. The

glaring defect of the prevalent educational system was not only detected by Rabindranath alone, but by many other educationists. Rabindranath wrote his article 'Sikshyar Kerfer' in 1892 and it was in 1892 that Gurudas Bandopadhyaya, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University criticised the educational policy. Valentine Chirol, the British publicist, mentioned some of the glaring defects of the Westernized education in India in his book 'Indian Unrest'. "The fundamental weakness of our Indian educational system is that the average Indian student cannot bring the education into any direct relation with the world in which outside the class or lecture room he continues to live. For that world is still the old Indian world of his forefathers, and it is the Western world which claims his education." 

Rabindranath had said almost the same thing in 1892 — "When our children are at their growing stage, they should be given proper food for thought. Only dry lessons and hard work will deprive them of their imaginative trend of mind. They should be given ample scope to go through the literary products, so that their fresh imaginative minds can have their spontaneous progress. We are not given any scope to cultivate our minds in a fruitful way. When we try to penetrate into English literature, it is too tough for us, because our penetration is too shallow. We are quite satisfied with that superficial knowledge of English and in course of time we become laughing stock for

others, when we display our anglicised tendencies in a dis-
torted way. This distortion can be avoided if we can establish
a perfect harmony, between our life and thought in our child-
hood.  

Education, in our country was not only mechanical, but it lacked in any homogeneous pattern. It was only partial, because it could not give any proper knowledge of history, science or literature. A child grew up with an ambiguous sense of history — without any immensely sustained knowledge of the past and as it happened, the child when turned into a man could not grasp the modern political trends properly. "History is not only a narration of events, but it is a history of people. The historical truth can be only appreciated if there is a perfect blending between present realism and past events. 'It is difficult for us to judge a historical event, if it is lacking in source materials and based on folklores only; It is difficult to judge the historical controversies also.... So there is no credit if we go on by hearting our lessons of history written by foreigners and getting first prizes. Our history should be re-written, so that there would be no scope for new orientation in the subject."  

Rabindranath realized the need of science also in helping the people to develop an enlightened and rational outlook towards life. "The study of science always helps us to develop our enlightened outlook. Gradually we can rule out the

possibility of the entry of prejudices in our minds and even sharpen our rationale against all ill-practices. But our students, in spite of their knowledge of science are becoming more and more inclined towards irrational customs. The knowledge of science should not only be imparted, but it should be spread in the outer arena - otherwise there is no reason for us to be enthusiastic. The cause of the decline of ancient Indian science is also due to this lack of broader outlook towards life.\textsuperscript{13}

In the 19th century, educated Indians developed a tendency to imitate the British in every way. The elite began to admire English speaking people so much, that they made it a principle to become like them in manners and customs. Intellectual middle class people particularly regarded the Western manners to be the symbol of Western and hence of their own culture. After all, it was difficult in those days for the Indians to acquire even the job of a clerk without sufficient knowledge of English. In some of the contemporary writings we can get a glimpse of this gruesome social atmosphere. Dwijendralal Roy's parody 'Dileta Ferat' or Bankim Chandra Chattopadhay's 'Muchiramquar Atmakatha' are some of the glaring examples. In Sibnath Shastri's 'Rantanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bonga Samaj', we can come across the incident where the students used to learn the English word meanings in the form of tables in the tols or pathsalas.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, pp. 508-9.
\textsuperscript{14} Sibnath Shastri, Rantanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bonga Samaj, (1957), p. 74. 'Philosopher Digyalok Ploughmen Chasa Pumpkin Lau Kumro, Cucumber Sasha'.
Rabindranath was aware of this humble attitude of the Indians towards the English, but tried to instil new hope among the Indians and he had approached the problem boldly. "When we came out from schools afresh and learnt new foreign words like liberty, equality and fraternity including their meanings, we were really fascinated. We decided to worship these foreigners for the rest of our life; but now, after so many shocks that we have experienced through them, we have come to know what they are and that they would always try to utilise our incapability. We have come out of our illusion. They have also grasped our changing mentality. Though we are deprived in every branch of employment, they are becoming scared of our activities. They cannot ignore as — they have come to know that we compete with them in all academic spheres. As soon as they have come to know that the English criminals would be punished in the same way as the Indians (Ilbert Bill of 1882), their ego has become somewhat shattered. We are now relieved to discover that we are no longer displaying that old submissive attitude towards them.\(^15\)

As far as literature is concerned, the British had a patronising attitude towards Bengali literature. They were only eager to preach the messages of their own literature and to sell their own literature in the Indian market. A long preparation existed for such a commencement of English literature. In 1823 a Committee of Public Instruction had been formed in tardy fulfilment of Lord Minto's representation of...
1811. We have also the Court of Director's Despatch, dated September 29, 1830, in which they approve of the plan of establishing separate colleges for the study of English, for the cultivation of European knowledge, through the medium of the English language. It is not surprising, therefore that we read in the Report of the Select Committee for 1833 that "Desire for the knowledge of European sciences and literature has been awakened in the natives by the more recent extension and encouragement of education among them." It is also worth recording that the first volume of English verse written by a Bengali author (Kasi Prosad Ghosh) had appeared five years before. Macaulay gave judgement in favour of the teaching of English. All this shows that organized instructions on modern lines and the beginnings of liberal education in English in Bengal must be dated from 1817 rather than from 1835. Macaulay was appointed President of the Committee of Public Instruction in December 1839, shortly after his arrival in India....He declared in clear terms that English is better worth-knowing than Sanskrit and Arabic, as the key to more useful knowledge. Since presumably it was more modern, it was also easy enough for him to show that there was already an effective demand for English, where as the study of Sanskrit and Arabic could only be kept up artificially by the award of stipends and that already many Indians had a remarkable command of English, so that there could be no doubt of their being able to master English sufficiently for the purpose to view. He therefore decided in favour of English education.

The long standing controversy was thus terminated by Macaulay's energetic rhetoric and an effective end was put to the orientalistic tendency of government educational policy. His minute was dated February 2, 1835. On March 7, Lord William Bentinck quickly came to the Resolution that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purposes of education, would be best employed on English education alone".

That this was, despite its exaggeration essentially true for at least the modernising part of the urban middle class, is proved by the vigorous demand for English education which led to the establishment of the Hindu College and the schools which fed it; it is also proved by the opposition of Ram Mohan Roy and others to the multiplying of Sanskrit Colleges. "The tide has set in strongly" remarked Macaulay's brother Charles Trevelyan, "in favour of English education," and when the Committee declared itself on the same side, the public support they received rather went beyond than fell short of what was required. The eagerness for English education is also borne out by the number of books sold by the School Book Society, which was established in July 1817 for the express purpose of preparing and supplying useful books for use in schools. In the 6th Report of the Society dated 1825, we read:

"Since the Commencement of the Society, more than 100,000 school...

18. The Committee of the Society was composed of 16 European and 8 Indian members; among them we find Carey and Roebuck as well as Mritunjoy Vidyalankar, Tarini Charan Mitra, Ramkamal Sen and Radhakanta Dev.
books have been put into circulation. Between January 1834 and December 1835, they sold over thirty one thousand five hundred copies of English books and made a profit of 20 p.c. on the outlay, while the Education Committee could dispose of only 52 copies of Sanskrit and Arabic books which was not enough to pay even the expense of keeping them for two months, to say nothing of the cost of printing.\(^\text{19}\)

The Calcutta School Society, founded in September of 1818 by the same people who established its sister organization, the School Book Society, proved to be one of more interesting educational experiments of the orientalists. The purpose of this institution was to improve existing schools with the view to the more general diffusion of useful knowledge amongst the inhabitants of India. Throughout the 1820s, the Society, with the support of the Calcutta intelligentsia and elite, continually expanded its operations and almost completely altered the existing system of lower education in Calcutta. Though overshadowed by the dazzling achievements of Hindu College, the Society schools probably did the real formative work of training many of the students who later won distinction as Derozio's disciples. These Orientalists served as avenues linking the regional elite with the dynamic civilization of contemporary Europe. They contributed to the formation of a new Indian middle class and assisted in the professionalization of the Bengali intelligentsia. Renaissance was the highly delayed and stunted after-birth of 18th century cosmopolitanism and pragmatic

\(^{19}\) Sushil De, Op. Cit., p. 472.
British policy built around the need of an accelerated civil service class.20

It will be seen from this short account that English education in Bengal had in the beginning the same character as English rule in the country; that segments of the people as much as the government contributed to bring it about; that it is an exaggeration to attribute to Macaulay the entire credit or discredit of introducing English education, and that the movement had begun autonomously of Macaulay's rhetoric and Bentinck's decision and had achieved definite results before the famous Resolution of 1835....The advent of English as rulers of Bengal meant the advent of English ideas; it was inevitable that these ideas should germinate and take root in the surrounding soil; they belong to the colonialised spirit of time.

Rabindranath said with remorse in 1905: "The only thing of which the Bengalees could boast had been the Bengali literature, because Bengali literature had never been of slavish character. Previously, the government used to buy 3 copies of each Bengali book; but now it is heard that the government has stopped paying. Bengali literature has its own life, because it is still free from the trap of government rewards and this literature still has its own spontaneous flow. Probably, the quantity of literary texts are not large in number and probably it cannot offer much variety, but it

has its own vitality, because it is our own literature".  

In another essay, two years later he writes: "Just as the stem of a tree is very much connected with the soil, similarly the literature of a country is very much the product of its soil. It is, in its essence a local product. This folk literature is essentially appreciated by the people of its soil, not of course by foreign intruders".  

Rabindranath, we will presently find, wanted to introduce education in Bengal, with Bengali as the medium of instruction, because Bengali is our mother tongue and it is the language of our soul.

The blind fascination of Indians for European literature and the negligence of their own literature at the hands of the English, created a strong feeling of revulsion in Rabindranath in his youth. In spite of the bookish patriotism of his boyhood, the political freedom of India did not loom large in the eyes of Rabindranath in his youth and he felt the need of cultural emancipation for his country above everything else. The first impediment to this was the prevalent system of education. Tagore discerned how without a sufficient knowledge of the genesis and growth of English literature which was helped by the classics and continental literatures, their appreciation suffered miserably and how to control this. Indians were compelled to borrow the opinions of the European critics and quote passages from English literature in season

and out of season. "An educated Indian," Tagore said, "can only reproduce his master's voice and is a mere travesty of an European scholar." Historical examples of abortive attempts to imbibe and assimilate alien culture and their ephemeral consequences must have been present in Rabindranath's mind. Hellenisation, Romanisation and Hispanisation of Europe were like bubbles in the air; their direct traces were quickly effaced and they were useful only in so far as they promoted original outlook and the growth of fresh cultures in new born nations. He was, in one sense utilitarian in his studies. Tagore argued that Indian education was artificial, as British rule was unnatural. The rulers did not know the people, were ignorant of their ideals and aspirations, had no idea of the springs of action in the Indian mind and of the course of evolution, through which Indian society and polity had passed in course of centuries. What was worse, they made no effort to acquaint themselves with these, nor did they believe that they were worth knowing. The government was a machine and the educational system set up by it was too mechanical, wooden and irresponsible."  

One of Rabindranath's satirical essays, 'Totakabini' gives us an impression of the mechanical kind of education prevalent in those days and the poet's insinuating remarks against the system. Let us go through the story and get a glimpse of Rabindranath's attitude. Once there was a parrot, who was ignorant. She used to sing, but she did not chant.  

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the Sastras; she was uncivilized and was quite unaware of the civilized norms. The king said that this bird was totally useless, she was only bringing loss to the royal market by taking so much forest fruits. The king asked his ministers to give lessons to the bird. The nephews of the king were given this responsibility. There was a lot of discussion among scholars why the bird was ignorant. They came to the conclusion that education could not be accommodated in her small nest. So the foremost task would be to make a grand big cage. The goldsmith immediately got the assignment and the golden cage was ready within a few days. Everyone appreciated the cage — it was novel indeed. Knowledge was now secondary matter. The goldsmith was rewarded heavily. The scholars were now invited and heaps of manuscripts were written everyday and they were again copied and re-copied. A grand preparation went on and everyone concerned got handful of coins. But there was one critic, who reported to the king that no one was actually bothered about the bird. On enquiry, the nephews showed the long list of well-wishers of the bird — like the goldsmith, scholars, repairers and others. So the king once again relaxed. One day, the king himself wanted to see the bird's study preparation. Everyone welcomed the king with grand recital and the king was overwhelmed. When he was about to leave, the critic came from behind a bush and asked the king to see the bird for once. The king had forgotten. So he saw the parrot — he was really pleased. There was no food, no water in the cage; only the pages of the manuscripts were heaped
inside and the pages were thrust into the mouth of the bird with the edge of a pen. The parrot had no scope to sing, she could not even scream a little. The king thought it really fascinating. The critic was severely rebuked. Day by day the bird became weak, she was trying her best to cut open the bars of the cage with her weak beak. The cage was repaired once again and everyone began to speak of the ingratitude of the bird. At last the bird died; the critic spread the news, because no one actually knew when the bird died. The king asked his nephew whether the rumour true. The nephew said that the bird had completed her education. The king asked whether the bird jumped, flew, sang or screamed. All the answers were negative. The bird was brought before the king. The bird made no response, only the dry pages of the manuscripts made a rustling sound. Out there the tender leaves of the trees heaved a deep sigh in the fresh breeze of the spring. This essay shows how knowledge becomes void without its contact with nature.

In this context, we can remember another extract from Rabindranath, where he has criticised the monotonous type of education which is given to the children. "When we are at home, we should have enough time for recreation. This touch of recreation is everywhere in the universe. If we introduce a strict military type of education for our children, it is not at all healthy. Education cannot be disciplined by routined hour. It is not the fault of a child, if he does not know  

Algebra or History right from his childhood. But for grasping those subjects, he cannot be deprived of his spontaneous happiness, which he can find in the natural surroundings. If we cannot make education joyous, let us not at least turn the educational centres into prisons. Let us have at least that mercy upon the poor kids.\textsuperscript{25} The poet's composition of 'Achalayatan' (1911) was a sheer protest against rigid system of education. The rift between Panchak representing the image of joy and liberty and Mahapanchak, representing the image of conservatism and rigidity, is an apt study of the present system of education.

Most of the intellectual families of the early 20th century, sent their sons to schools and colleges with the hope that they would become ideal in all respects, acquire a good diploma or degree (preferably a foreign one) and ultimately get secured for the rest of their life by getting hold of a good job. They wanted their sons to remain totally aloof from the political happenings of the time; because political involvement would obviously bring trouble from all corners. Many of the young, daring men had to suffer because of this opposition at home. They could not achieve their ventured task. One of the volunteers of the Young Bengal Movement, Rasik Krishna Mallick had faced such opposition. He had been one of the earnest followers of Derozio and these disciples of Derozio, did not care the existing Hindu customs and they directly challenged the conventional social order. The family members of Rasik

\textsuperscript{25} R. R. - XII, \textit{Sikshya} — 'Sikshya Samasva', 1906, pp. 303-4.
Krishna became much concerned when he engaged himself in the task of reforming Hindu society along with the other members of the Young Bengal Movement. Rashik Krishna's mother became desperate and pursued by some of the ignorant ladies of the neighbourhood, she gave her son a medicine that would turn him insane. Piari Chand Mitra writes in his biography of David Hare that Rasik Krishna remained unconscious for the whole night after taking this medicine. He was sent to Kasi in this condition. Even the boat was ready and he was tied tightly. But somehow he managed to escape and he did not even come back to his parents. He now settled down in a house at Chorabagan in Calcutta, and this house became the main centre of the Derozians. It was from there that the 'Gyananwesan' magazine was introduced which was financed by Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyaya and edited by Rasik Krishna Mallick himself. In the book called 'Alaler Gharer Dulal' written by Piari Chand Mitra we can get a vivid description of the crude type of Babu culture that existed in Bengal in the 19th century and the author shows how the spoilt son of a rich family became the victim of such culture.

Rabindranath said that a student's, particularly a young man's education cannot be complete without a proper knowledge of the current trends of the day, and in that way if the student gets involved, it is a blessing in disguise. Because, Rabindranath said that these young men would form the

backbone of the nation and they would show the path of progress.

"Many of us do believe that the students should not take up any other task apart from their studies. It is undoubtedly true that education should be the main goal of the students, but at times of political unrest, the response of the students should be regarded as quite a spontaneous endeavour. In our country, specially the role of the students should be highly valued. Our society is lacking in the spirit of united resistance; resistance cannot be expected from all sections of people. Our country is ruled by foreign overlords and naturally they cannot understand the mute agony of the common people. The students can act as a channel between common man and king in this respect."

But Rabindranath also warned students about the negative side of such political training. The student has also got the option before him, either to take up the task of serving the motherland or to become a tool of the British Government and acting against the interests of the motherland. Because Rabindranath realised, the British Government of late developed this tendency of poisoning the students' minds against their loyalty towards their country. And this dangerous tendency was to be checked by no one else, but by the students themselves. So, it was a tough job for them to stand the test of time.

"If education becomes too much politically oriented by the policy of the government, it loses its spontaneous vivacity. The Irish were in vain made to turn into Saxons. The government..."
is now introducing all sorts of books published by the Macmillan Company and imparting a mechanical and distorted kind of education, where the scope of political consciousness is totally banished. The students are taught discipline to such a crude extent that they are forgetting their own natural selves. This kind of education, is also motivated to destroy self-reliance. Once, Englishmen like Macaulay had supported self-reliance, but the British stalwarts are swimming in a pool of controversy whether Indians should be made self-reliant or not. But now time is up; we should try to make education our own product". 29

Rabindranath says that the task of the student will not be the motto of becoming self-centred, but he should also take up the task of educating the ignorant mass of India. Rabindranath was never vague in his idea about service towards motherland. He was very specific when he guided the young lot for their respective duties to be observed. "If we try to analyse the cause of difference between educated and uneducated people in our country, it is our lack of sense of history that becomes the glaring reason. Common people are quite ignorant of the happenings in our country and in other countries and this ignorance stands as a hinderance in appreciating the viewpoint of the intellectuals. School education is not always possible for common people. They can be educated in the knowledge of history through folk-tales and vratas. In Europe today, historical novels and dramas are regarded as main items of the education of history. 29. Ibid, *Sikshya-Sikshya Sanskar*, 1906, pp. 293-94.
Through this medium, the imaginative trend can also be developed. In our country also, this method had been highly appreciated in the ancient days. So, why should we abandon the natural path and rely on school education only? History can be spread also in all parts of the country in a lucid way through folk tales and yatras. We try to convey our literary message through printed journals only, but this would be an easier method for the common man to understand. If the story of Vidyasundar can be staged, why not the stories of Prithviraj, Guru Govind, Shivaji and Akbar be staged through yatras? Even the stories of 'Anandamath' and 'Rajsingha' by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya can be narrated in an interesting style by good narrators.  

Rabindranath gave much thought to the medium of instruction and institutions through which education would be imparted to the nation. In a brilliant essay entitled 'Sikshyar Herpher' (Vagaries of Education - 1893), Rabindranath made the interesting point that the foreign medium had actually hindered the assimilation of progressive western values in two ways - by confining the benefits of education to a small minority and by rendering superficial the enlightenment of even that narrow elite. He also answered in advance most of the arguments against a change in the medium of instruction - the absence of text books, the allegedly irreplaceable role of English as our window on the outside world - which is still in use today after 90 years. In course of the succeeding decade, Rabindranath time and again returned to the fundamental problem.  

of the alienation of the bhadralok from the masses and suggested most notably in his 'Swadeshi Samaj' address of 1904 - variety of imaginative forms of popular education including the use of traditional folk *mela* (the *mela, yatra, kathakata*) as well as modern audio-visual method of magic lantern talks. The national education movement of the Swadeshi days accepted in theory the need to establish Bengali as the medium of instruction, but few among its leaders shared Tagore's passion for the mother tongue or his agony of alienation.\(^1\)

As far as educational centres like Universities were concerned, Rabindranath remarked, "Universities should never be made into mechanical organizations for collecting and distributing knowledge. Through them the people should offer their intellectual hospitality, their wealth of mind to others and earn their proud right in return to receive gifts from the rest of the world. Educational institutions in our country are India's alms-bowl of knowledge; they tower our intellectual self-respect; they encourage us to make a foolish display of decorations composed of borrowed feathers.\(^2\)

Rabindranath, in his own life never liked to imprison himself within the four walls of idea of obtaining good marks in examination in order to retain a spirit of competition and challenge against his friends. He thought that it not only hampered fellow feeling, but it also hindered the path of acquiring true knowledge with a free spirit. He remarked about...

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the system of education: "Success consists in obtaining largest number of marks with the strictest economy of knowledge. It is a deliberate cultivation of disloyalty to truth, of intellectual disloyalty of foolish impositions by which the mind is encouraged to rob itself." 

Education, in his opinion would be liberal and free from all sectarian beliefs. Rabindranath placed great emphasis on the pre-eminent role of education that he considered till the last day of his life as the ultimate and most secure basis of human emancipation. Rabindranath had always discouraged the imitation of western culture, but he earnestly believed that in order to establish education on a liberal ground, the Western educational ideas should be borrowed. "Let us hope that we will be able to establish education on a liberal ground. We shall no longer lose our track, but we shall try to gather all the diverse elements imported from different parts of the world and give shape to a co-herent system of education. We shall receive the Occidental gifts and we shall offer our oriental gifts to them, so that there will be a perfect blending between the two cultures. It will be possible for us to know our true selves and we will be able to make ourselves free from foreign bondage. We can pave the path of India's enlightenment in this way".

Education, makes a man enlightened and this enlightenment only would help him to love his own country, to feel for his own country. It was for this reason that Tagore had time

and again asked the young generation to awaken the rural people who are still in the abyss of ignorance and suffering. "The origin of nationalism is deep rooted in its soil, but we fail to understand that. We will first have to educate them, feed them, care for them. It is no use being only Mazzini, Garibaldi, Hampden or Cromwell, without having any connection with the people of our land. We will first have to make our country self-sufficient, than we can think of independence. We must bountifully extend our service to our country and that will be the first sign of our patriotism. It is really very odd when we borrow the languages of Burke or Macaulay, whenever we are talking of our own country." 36

Section II: Implementation of Rabindranath's Ideas About Education

Rabindranath's experimental school at Santiniketan was established both as a challenge against the rigid system of education and as a triumph of his own liberal thoughts. The background of Indian thought and Indian society was brought home to the students as graphically as possible. Critics may look upon this as nostalgic — as an attempt to avoid the challenge of modern age, its struggles and temptations. Some may consider this to be a reaction against the soulless and mechanical education and indolent and luxurious habits prevalent generally among youths in wealthy families of Calcutta. But Rabindranath looked upon it as the only natural system of upbringing of juveniles, although he admitted that the picture of ancient Tapovana and Ashram was floating in his mind when he decided to found his school in sylvan surroundings on the lonely highland of Bolpur. His views which took concrete shape in 1921, were partly the outcome of his experience of European and American education and a change of academic outlook in India itself. Tagore's own national instincts, strengthened by the upsurge of patriotism in India, particularly in Bengal in the dawn of the 20th century, had also suggested them in part. 37

Rabindranath's Santiniketan represented a poet's imaginative reaction against the factory-like atmosphere of

conventional urban schools. Children should be given the chance, he eloquently pleaded, to learn from nature herself under open skies, where the rhythm of the seasons and the starlit nights could teach them far better science than any formal textbook of class lecture. The *ashrama* ideal of ancient India attracted him strongly with its austere simplicity, so traditionally natural to a poor country like ours and its close personal ties between the *guru* and the pupils. Traditionalist pulls were also strong on the Tagore of this period, as it indicated, for instance by the important role assigned to Bramhabandhav Upadhaya during the *ashrama*'s first days, the poet's evocation of an idealist Hindu past in a new year address of 1902 and his choice of the socially orthodox Gurudas Banerjee as leader of the prospective *Swadeshi Samaj* in 1904. Even caste distinctions during meals were observed at the *ashrama* for a brief while. It was Gandhiji, who first enquired with a shudder why such discrimination should remain in a place like Santiniketan, which was said to be far above these narrow prejudices. But all this was just a passing phase. Simplicity and close links with nature was sought to be retained till the end but the content of education was steadily broadened till Santiniketan developed into *Visvabharati*. "*Yatra Visva bhabet ekamidan*" (where the whole finds its home in one nest) and the institution which had been started on stern principles of *bramhacharya* became a pioneer of education. 38

It is noteworthy to mention some fragments of his letters which he wrote to some of his close friends during the early years of the 20th century. These letters reveal some of his ideas which were working in his mind during this time. In a letter to Jagadish Chandra Bose in 1901 he wrote, that he was trying his best to start a school at Santiniketan, where the ancient ashramic ideals would be followed. There would be no scope for luxury there and the rich and the poor would have to equally follow the rules of Bramhacharya. He also writes that it would be very hard to combine the modern trend of education with the ancient ideals blissed with nature and he was in desperate search of teachers who would educate the pupils in such trend. In another letter to Romain Rolland he writes:

Santiniketan
May 30, 1922

My very dear friend,

Two weeks ago I had a letter from my young friend Kalidas Nag informing me about his meeting you and your letter following his own has given me great happiness. I have often talked of you to our friends and have wished that you could come and helped us in the work we have just commenced. There has been a great political upheaval, as you know in our country. It has no doubt, roused the minds of the people, but has led it through a narrow channel and by incessantly harping upon wrongs due to us and belittling cultures foreign to India has allowed their aim to get mixed up with passions that are evil. What hurts me deeply is the fact that his movement fails to drew its inspiration from a large vision of humanity, but on the contrary deliberately obscures it in.

the minds of its followers in order to intensify to a
glowing red heat the consciousness of national individuali-
ty. I felt the utter loneliness of my position when I came
back to India, longed for co-operation from men like
yourself with whom I feel my kinship. I shall look forward
to the time when it will be possible for you to come to us
and please never think that language barrier will wholly
stand in the way of our communication of hearts.

Yours devoted friend
Rabindranath

In the great task of knowing the country, as Rabindranath
could correctly note, there is no substitute to first-hand
experience and hard field work. We thus get a rational and
pragmatic Rabindranath who, in the first place by emphasizing
the study of Indian society has revealed his great love for the
country on the one hand and his scientific sociological thinking
on the other; and secondly, by emphasizing quality work rather
than mere quantity of job done, has revealed the most important
indicator of true knowledge and progress. Tagore could rightly
realise the menace of 'totalitarianism' to the development of
world peace and human personality. Unlike Greece and Rome India
has shown her social vitality in keeping her great tradition and
culture intact despite many changes in dynasties and empires.
The society of India, unlike that of the West has never been one
of organised power and aggression. But this absence of 'organis-
ed power' also accounts for the lack of an overall integration
of India. Rabindranath himself has observed — "The nations
today are busy in enlightening themselves. Long ago India was

40. Collection from the Archives of Rabindra-Bhavan, Santiniketan
— Photocopies of the correspondence between Romain Rolland
and Rabindranath — May 30, 1922.
seeking the path of enlightenment. The Universities should be furnished with men of letters, so that the Universities will be in a position to radiate proper education among people. This cannot be possible by imitating foreign university projects. It should be also remembered that education should be linked with the living of the common men. Education must be free from middle class phobia, it should have direct link with the soul of the common lot, like the farmers and the artisans. Farming, weaving or cattle rearing should also be enlisted in the University curriculum. I have suggested that this ideal educational centre would be named Visvabharati. 

Rabindranath was probably the first poet to become the Founder-President of an University. Tagore's objects in founding Visvabharati as set out in a memorandum were inter alia 1) To bring into more intimate relations with one another through patient studies and research of different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity. ii) To approach the West from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia. Tagore had also another object of transcending cultural considerations in founding an international university. His conceptions of world peace was linked with his idea of international cultural fellowship, just as Indian nationalism was associated in his mind with Indian education.

But Rabindranath was in a very perturbed mind in this period. His letter to Romain Rolland can help us to understand

his conflicting thoughts at this time.

February 28, 1924

My very dear friend,

Before I sail for China, the time for which is drawing near, I must thank you for the delight that your last letter has given me.

Pearson had an abundant gift of friendship, which he freely offered to those who because of their obscurity failed to attract notice. He was sensitively conscious of the immense value of the individual man, irrespective of his special merits and uses, and this made him keenly suffer whenever that individual was ignored or hurt in consequence of social mal-adjustment or tyranny of civilization. This grew in him to such an extent that he became jealous of all institutions which represent some ideal, which had a wide range transcending the limits of the concretely personal. In fact lately, his mind was distracted when Santiniketan out-grew its vocation as a mere educational body belonging to the immediate locality, when it tried to respond in its various efforts to what I consider to be the great call of the present age. He was afraid lest our attention should in the last measure be diverted from the children attending our school into a channel for the communication of ideas and formation of a community. There is such a thing as the enjoyment of emotional prosperity, where the stimulation to our personal feeling of love is constantly supplied. Pearson found it when he first came here and his own natural instinct of attachment had its full scope among our school children and the neighbouring villagers. Then came the idea of Visvabharati like a strong breeze scattering the petals from our flowers, claiming its fruit. Pearson never was fully reconciled to it to the end of his days. Intellectually he had nothing to say against it, but his heart ached for his mind was like the new bee which has nothing to do with the fruit but only with the flower.
I understand this conflict in his mind because I myself have a kind of civil war constantly going on in my own nature between my own personality as a creative artist who necessarily must be solitary and that as an idealist who must realise himself through works of a complex character needing a large field of collaboration with a large body of men........

Rabindranath Tagore

Santiniketan, Visvabharati and Sriniketan may be said to constitute Tagore's educational trinity through which he endeavoured to develop his educational theme in three different complementary directions. The school came first in the field and it embodied all the poet's main teachings about education. The three institutions thus displayed a discernible pattern of growth and expansion, illustrating their underlying creative unity. Tagore, always looked upon the decay of India's civilization as synonymous with the decadence of her countryside, the disintegration of her rural life. Throughout the active life, he had therefore thought deeply about the problem and wanted India's countryside to be resurrected and a new life infused in the villagers. Community development is no new idea in India. Rabindranath had given his mind to it ever since the Swadesi days and tried now, with his limited resources he had at his command, to apply his ideas on rural uplift through his Sriniketan workers by visual demonstration and oral propaganda.

In a letter to Kalimohan Ghosh from Berlin in 1930 he wrote that he had become very much depressed after comparing his country

43. Collection from the Archives of Rabindra-Bhavan, Santiniketan. Photocopies of the correspondence between Romain Rolland and Rabindranath - 28th February, 1924.
with the countries of Europe that he had visited. He wrote that he once again felt the necessity of co-operative production and distribution. Only theoretical knowledge would not be of use, but it would depend on the imaginative efforts of some men and in this respect we should follow the example of the West.\footnote{Collection from the \textit{Archives of Rabindra-Bhavan, Santiniketan} — Correspondence between Kalimohan Ghosh and Rabindranath.}

The \textit{Prabasi} of Magh 1328, tells us that Visvabharati was established with the purpose of distributing all kinds of knowledge to its students, who were invited to come to Santiniketan from all parts of the world. The \textit{Prabasi} of Kartik 1303 again tells us that Visvabharati's department of Handicrafts had been opened at Santiniketan. Here book binding, works of lac, cloth wearing, stitching of cotton wrappers, making of wooden and clay toys are taught. The department is mainly run by the women.\footnote{\textit{Prabasi : Samayik Patra Rabindra Prasanga} (1303-1348 Asar) Ed. Somendranath Bose (1976), pp. 69-70.}

L. K. Elmhirst, one of the architects of the Sriniketan School of Handicrafts narrates, "The following outdoor crafts can be learned and practiced by small children to have economic benefit and have their intimate contact with life, their definite (utility to the family or group : 1) Poultry keeping and chicken rearing for egg production, 2) Care of fuel and water supply, 3) Seedbed preparation, manuring and planting, 4) Cultivation of flowers and vegetables, 5) Drainage and irrigation; wood cutting and jungle cleaning. As the capacity of the child grows and his experience enlarges, there will come at a later stage a natural demand for that grammar of his art upon which depends more accurate observation more
precise influence, more fruitful knowledge, as well as a desire for communion with fellow workers in the same field whose experiences and thoughts, whose struggles and approach are stored up in books - not in such case task books to drudge over, but help mates and friends carrying them out into newer and wider fields of human knowledge.\(^4\)

Rabindranath himself said about Sriniketan — our ideal should be to make ample provision in our homes and in our schools for that development of our spiritual relationship with the Supreme Being, which may best give us a sense of freedom in all departments of life. We know full well that life divested of a deeper consciousness of the infinite can breed only new and diverse forms of slavery under the appearance of liberty.

Along with this, there should be some common sharing of life with the tillers of the soil and the humble workers in the neighbouring villages; studying their crafts, inviting them to the feasts, joining them in works of co-operation for communal welfare; and in our intercourse we should be guided, not by moral maxims or the condescension of social superiority, but by natural sympathy of life for life, and by sheer necessity of love's sacrifice for its own sake. In such an atmosphere students would learn to understand that humanity is a divine harp of many strings waiting for its one grand music. Those who realise this unity are made ready for the pilgrimage through the night of suffering and along the path of sacrifice to the great meeting.

of Man in the future, for which the call comes to us across the darkness.\footnote{48} In 1924, the Sikshyasatra which was established at Santiniketan was started with the motto - "From the start the child enters the Sikshyasatra as an apprentice in handicraft as well as housecraft. In the workshop, as a trained producer and as potential creator, it will acquire skill and win freedom for its hands; whilst as an inmate of the house which it helps to construct and furnish and maintain, it will gain expanse of spirit and win freedom as a citizen of the small community".

Nothing will illustrate better how deeply Tagore was implicated in Sriniketan than these extracts from his letters to L. K. Elmhirst.

13th November, 1922
My dear Elmhirst,

You know my heart is with Surul. I feel that it has life in it — it does not deal with abstractions, but has its roots deep in the heart of reality. You may be absolutely certain that it will be able to weather all storms and spread its branches wide.

Yours
Rabindranath Tagore

18th April, 1922
My dear Elmhirst,

The work in Surul is a work of creation, for in it you are not following some fixed path prescribed in books, but giving expression to your own creative personality, to which even the opposition of obdurate materials ultimately brings help for shaping the structure.

Yours,
Rabindranath Tagore

25th June, 1924

My dear Elmhirst,

I believe I have the power of vision which seeks its realization in some concrete form. Unless our different works in Visvabharati are luminous with the fire of vision, I myself can have no place in them. This is why all the time when Sriniketan has been struggling to grow into a form, I was intently wishing that it should not only have a shape, but also light; so that it might transcend its immediate limits of time, space and some special purpose. A lighted lamp is, for us the end, and not a lump of gold.

Yours
Rabindranath Tagore

Sriniketan represented a new world freed from the burden of the past. It stood for freedom from want, freedom from ignorance and for the vision of an ampler life, created through modern knowledge, self-help and co-operative effort. Indeed, it could be said with perfect truth that Sriniketan was the first tangible fruit of international—Indian, English, American and Japanese collaboration in its most creative sense.

Rabindranath’s major emphasis was on the education of the village boys and girls. He had realised that the success of his entire scheme of rural reconstruction would ultimately depend upon them. He expected the future leadership in the villages to come from the educated boys and girls. This is actually what has happened. In Sriniketan, under the poet’s guidance, a happy balance seems to have been found for the problem of adjusting economic to creative urge.

49. Ibid, p. 33.
Dr. Premchand Lai in his book 'Reconstruction and Education in Rural India' said "Besides the Poet, the two people who were most directly responsible for the starting of this experiment in rural education were Mr. L. K. Elmhirst, the first Director of the Institute and Mr. Santosh Chandra Majumdar". After two years of the establishment of the Sikshyasatra, Santosh Chandra Majumdar wrote: "Physical vitality was our first concern. The gain of the boys in height, weight and strength has been very remarkable. The boys have made considerable progress in gardening, weaving and construction; they cut and sew and make their own garments, their own tables and boxes, can look well, as well as paint, write a neat hand in Bengali, recite poems, know addition, subtraction, multiplication and division not mechanically, but in relation to life situation. They have begun to feel in their own little way that the individual's effort is not purely individual, but invariably has social reactions. They are realising the value of mutual aid and have acquired the social habits of kindliness and brotherliness".

After the death of Santosh Chandra Majumdar Arium (Aryanayakam) took up the responsibility. Asha Devi, who married Aryanayakam also had been an active member of the organization. Lakshmiswar Sinha joined Visvabharati in 1923 and published his first article on 'wood craft' in 1925. He went to Sweden in 1928 to have Sloyd training in Nans Educational Centre. In 1933

51. Premchand Lai, Reconstruction and Education in Rural India, p. 94.
52. Quoted from typed manuscript, Rabindra Bhavan, Santiniketan.
he again went to Sweden to introduce that art in Bengali, from 1933-36 he three times visited Lapland and in 1936 he rejoined Sriniketan. He wrote to his Gurudev Rabindranath from Skagen on 30th August, 1935 that he was sending Miss Cederblom to Sriniketan who had acquired her fame after introducing Sloyd art in many parts of Europe. She was often invited to many European countries to teach her works of handicrafts and Lakshmiswar Sinha also certified her as an author in the Scandinavian Countries. She was about to go to Sriniketan in the year before, but due to her illness, Miss Jeanson was sent to Sriniketan. He hoped that Sriniketan's school would be benefitted by the experience of Miss Cederblom. These two ladies, in fact did much to train the pupils in the art of carpentry and tannery. It was reported in Visvabharati News that: "Not that we did not have handicrafts before - indeed Rabindranath had all along insisted on their being included in the Ashrama activities but lately thanks to our friend Lakshmiswar Sinha, a new life has been put in the work of the hands."  

Tagore was essentially an individualist, a believer in the right and freedom of the individual to shape his life in his own way. But Tagore's individualism was basically Indian in conception and this fact gave a peculiar colouring to it. In his individualism there was wide room for a belief in the fundamental unity of mankind and not only of mankind but of the

53. Copy from the Original Paper — Collection from the Archives of Rabindra-Bhavan, Sriniketan.
54. Visvabharati News, November 1932, p. 35.
whole universe of nature and man. In the criticism of the existing systems of education, Rabindranath as well as the protagonists of Basic Education are unanimous; but where as Tagore places his emphasis mainly on the spiritual aspect of man, in the philosophy of Basic Education- though the individuality of the child is not neglected - we find greater emphasis on directing the educative processes for the purposes of building a co-operative social order. Basic Education aims at replacing the present system by a more constructive, more humane and better integrated system. "The scheme envisages the idea of co-operative community in which the motive of social service will dominate all the activities of children during the plastic years of childhood and youth." There are certain aspects in Tagore's educational philosophy which are not explicitly present in the philosophy underlying Basic Education. Where as Tagore regarded education as a joyful adventure, Basic Education is looked upon more as a social and economic duty.

The essence of Rabindranath's Basic Education was 'opportunity for continuous initiative' (Graham Walles); this initiative is freedom and the keynote of modern education is freedom. Gandhiji made his education 'insurance against unemployment'. There is in fact little difference between the two. The first draft of Gandhiji's idea of Basic National Education was published in Harijan Patrika on 11th December, 1937. It became known as 'Activity Curriculum'. Gandhiji

56. Ibid, pp. 188-89-90.
called his programme as 'Rural National Education' instead of 'Basic National Education'. The comments of Tagore on this plan of Gandhiji was published in Visvabharati News and in other papers at the end of 1938. Rabindranath wrote: "Now that Mahatma Gandhi has taken up the cause of mass education in earnest, we may be sure of great results in the near future. Already great interest has been roused in the country and controversy provoked over the question whether education can be made self-supporting. Before you too are likewise provoked to violent agreement or disagreement with the proposal, I would remind you that Gandhiji's genius is essentially practical, which means that his practice is immeasurably superior to his theory. As the scheme (Vardha) stands on paper, it seems to assume that material utility rather than development of personality, is the end of education, that while education in the true sense of the word may be still available for a chosen few who can afford to pay for it, the utmost that the masses can have is to be trained to view the world they live in, in the perspective of the particular craft they are to employ for their livelihood. It is true that as things are even that is much more than what the masses are actually getting, but it is nevertheless unfortunate that even in our ideal scheme, education should be doled out in insufficient rations to the poor, while the feast remains reserved for the rich. I cannot congratulate a society or a nation that calmly excludes play from the curriculum of the majority of its children's education and gives in its stead a vested interest to the teachers in the
market value of the pupil's labour. But these defects seem such only on paper, for no man loves the children of the poor more than the Mahatma and we may be sure that when the scheme is actually worked out by him we shall discover in it only one more testimony to the genius of this practical stage where deeds suppress his words.\textsuperscript{57}

Rabindranath read William James' books. The book called \textit{Talks to Teachers and Students} (1899) is an essential book on education. He got the book from Jagadish Chandra Bose and Jagadish Chandra Bose got this book as a present from Sister Nivedita. The poet mentioned about this book to many of his inmates, including Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, who narrates this fact. The book is now kept at Rabindra Bhavan, Santiniketan.\textsuperscript{58}

Educationists know how the pragmatic opinions of men like William James (1842-1914) and Charles Peirce (1839-1910) influenced the later educationists and philosophers like John Dewey (1859-1952) and others. Findlay in his book called 'The Foundation of education' (1930) said "There are two great men in our epoch, John Dewey in the East, whose wisdom not only illumines the general mind, but has stopped to the level of the children. Both men are now passing into old age, but it was in the prime of life, during the closing years of the last century, that both of them resolved to keep school. With Tagore, the environment, the Ashram, the star and the sky, friends and neighbours are the means, whereby an inner happiness is fostered."

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, pp. 120-121.
Dewey seems to leave such influences to the subconscious; his 'means whereby', the American boy and girl are to solve the riddle of life spring from impulses of curiosity and intelligence; significance is found in relating the materials and tools of today with the unfurnished equipment of society in earlier epochs...". 59

Another well-known educationist, Kilpatrick, who was a disciple of John Dewey, came to India in 1926. He was invited to India to give his lectures on Moga School. At this time, he visited Santiniketan and after four years, that is in 1930, he gave his speech in the International House in New York on the 'Educational Situation in India and Tagore's school'. It was at this Conference that Ar lamps Williams (Aryanayakam) also gave his speech on Santiniketan. Kilpatrick was very much impressed after seeing the room called 'Mukut' decorated by the pupils of Santiniketan. But he felt bad, because in spite of many qualities that the school at Santiniketan possessed, it had to follow some of the rigid rules of the prevalent examination system. He said with remorse - "I regret myself that he has to do it. I hope the day will come when India can give up this type of education - which has split the soil of its youth. I hope that day may come, and I am sure the poet will be the first one, in his own school to herald that day." 60

According to authors like Sasadhar Sinha, 'both Rousseau and Rabindranath owed their interest in education to remarkably similar circumstances, highly sensitive minds and profoundly

60. Ibid, p. 123.
unhappy experiences at school in childhood. It was therefore only natural that the Indian poet should have come so powerfully under the influence of the master's educational thinking, as many others had done before him. Nor could it have been a mere coincidence that Rabindranath's ideas bore such a striking resemblance to those of Rousseau, sometimes in their formulation. But one cannot wholly agree with the statement of Sasadhar Sinha. The circumstances were not similar and the experiences were not also similar. But their ideas on education had a striking similarity. Rabindranath was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and the opportunities for education also were ample before him. Rousseau, on the other hand, began his life with the climax of disasters, the death of his mother, when he was but a week old. With an abiding sense of grief, he long after bemoaned his loss: "I cost my mother her life, and my birth was the first of my misfortunes." Too poor to pay for the proper education of his son, the father who was a watchmaker was likewise too busy and injudicious to train the lad himself when JeanJacques was six, his father taught him to read, choosing as texts some old romances which belonged to the mother. Before he was seven, the two had read aloud, in turn "whole nights together, and could never stop until we had reached the end of a volume. These books were big volumes like Plutarch's 'Lives' and Bassuet's 'Discourses on Universal History'. The consequences of this overstimulation were disastrous. Jean Jacques became 

passionately fond of reading, but incapable of acquiring the conventional habits and attitudes of normal life. According to his 'Confessions', he stole, lied, played dirty tricks, and was bright, but indolent, irritable, ill-bred and thoroughly unprincipled.

When he was ten, his 'best of fathers' ran away and Jean Jacques together with a cousin, was sent to school for several years in the village of Bossey. This constituted the only training he was destined to receive. Here for a time he was happy, played with zest, learned to garden, and acquired that mystical love of nature which moved him frequently to tears. But even this short period of schooling ended in disappointment. He returned home with his cousin and shared lessons in drawing and colouring, and during the time of leisure, "they made cages, flutes, kites, drums, houses, pop-guns and cross-bows" 63.

So, the unhappiness of these two great men - Rabindranath and Rousseau were entirely different. We have already seen why Rabindranath was unhappy in his childhood and how he also developed a fondness for nature. As far as love-life is concerned, both were unhappy. But while Rabindranath received love from all quarters, both at home and outside and regarded love as a gift of God, Rousseau was deprived of love and affection right from his childhood. So, from his manhood, the love that Rousseau developed, was basically earned love. Rabindranath could not get rid of his solitude inspite of love, friendship.

affection and respect which he received from all; Rousseau could not get rid of his solitude because of his utter loneliness in the world, and because of the jealous and suspicious nature which he developed for his extreme misery throughout his life.

The most striking similarity between the two philosophers is that both of them shared some very valuable ideas regarding education. In fact, if we place the educational ideas of Rousseau and Rabindranath together, we cannot omit the name of Herbert Spencer also, about whose educational ideas we have already discussed. Actually, what Rousseau showed through his 'Emile' was a new point of view in the field of education in the 18th century. "Through all centuries the theory and practice of education had been determined from the standpoint of adult interests and adult social life. No one had dreamed there could be any other point of view from which to approach the training of the young. Rousseau boldly assailed this basic assumption as not only utterly false, but absolutely harmful. In place of the ideas and views of the adult, he substituted the needs and activities of the child and the natural course of development. No change could have been more revolutionary. Just as Copernicus destroyed medieval cosmology, Rousseau put an end to the traditional theological conception of nature and that he acts and grows in harmony with her laws."  

64. Ibid, pp. 334-35.
"What is to be thought of that cruel education which sacrifices the present to an uncertain future, that burdens the child with all sorts of restrictions and begins by making him miserable in order to prepare him for some far-off happiness which he may never enjoy? The age of enjoyment is spent in tears, punishments, threats and slavery. Who can say how many children fall victims to the excessive care of their fathers and mothers? Men, be humane, that is your first duty; be so for every age and station, kind to all that is not foreign to humanity, what wisdom can you find that is greater than humanity? Love childhood, indulge in sports, its pleasures, its delightful instincts. Why rob these little innocents of the joys which pass so quickly, of that precious gift which they cannot abuse?

How people will cry out against me! I hear from afar the shouts of the false wisdom that is ever dragging us out of ourselves, counting the present as nothing and pursuing without a pause a future which flies as we approach, that false wisdom which removes us from our place and never brings us to any other..."

The ideal which Rabindranath wanted to set up, at Santiniketan, was almost the same. Like Rousseau, Rabindranath also believed in the freedom of children and their akinness with the nature. Herbert Spencer too, when he wrote about moral education, held almost the similar view, when he says, "A knowledge of the laws of life is the one thing needful. Some acquaintance with the first principles of physiology and the..."

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elementary truths of psychology is indispensable for the right bringing up of children. The development of children in mind and body follows certain laws; that unless these laws are in some degree confronted to, there must result serious physical and mental defects.66

In another context Rousseau says: "The exercise of the natural arts, which may be carried on by one man alone, leads on to the industrial arts which call for the co-operation of many hands....The value set by the general public on the various arts is in inverse ratio to their real utility. They are even valued directly according to their uselessness. This might be expected. The most useful arts are the worst paid, for the number of workers is regulated by the demand and the work which everybody requires must necessarily be paid at a rate which puts in within the reach of the poor. On the other hand, these great people who are not artisans but called artists - who labour only for the rich and the idle, put a fancy prince on their trifles; and as the real value of this vain labour only relies on opinion, the price itself adds to their market value and they are valued according to their costliness. The rich think so much of these things, not because they are useful, but because they are beyond the reach of the poor. Agriculture is the earliest and most honourable of arts; metal work I put next, then carpentry and so on. This is the order in which the child will put them, if he has not been spoilt by vulgar prejudice.67

It was Rabindranath's life-long endeavour to keep Santiniketan above politics. To man like Rabindranath and Satishchandra Mukhopadhyaya, the conception of national education initially had little to do with politics; it formed a part of their vision of constructive swadeshi of the autonomous development of the resources of the country. It was in 1920, that Rabindranath was writing to C.F. Andrews:

New York
November 4, 1920

My dear Andrews,

There is one thing about which I wish to speak to you. Keep Santiniketan away from the tumults of politics. I know that the political problem is growing in intensity in India and its encroachment is difficult to resist. But all the same, we must never forget that our mission is not political. Where I have my politics, I do not belong to Santiniketan....

We must clearly realize this fact, that the name of Santiniketan has a meaning for us, and this name will have to be made true. I am anxious and afraid lest the surrounding forces may become too strong for us and we succumb to the onslaught of the present time. Because the time is troubled and the minds of men distracted, all the more must we, through our Ashram, maintain our faith in Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam.68

Yours Gurudev

This letter of Rabindranath stands as a great contrast to the speech which he gave in 1905 to the young generation, where he said that education should not be the main goal of the...

students and at times of political unrest, the response of the students should be regarded as quite a spontaneous endeavour.\textsuperscript{69} It was Rabindranath who in 1908 wrote poems like 'Udayer pathe suni kar bani, bhoj nai ore bhoj nai' - there is no longer any fear, the bright day is ahead.\textsuperscript{70}

But a political impulse was really necessary to transform national education into a popular movement and graft on to its programme the militant slogan of boycott of existing educational institutions and that impulse of course came from Curzon. Well before 1905, the spirit of self-help had started, expressing itself through works. From the early '90s, numerous efforts were being made to promote swadeshi sales through exhibitions and shops - the latter often started by political leaders like the efforts of Brajendranath De, I.C.S. in Hooghly district to start exhibitions and melas from the 1890s,\textsuperscript{71} Rabindranath's Swadeshi Bhandar in 1897, Jogeshchandra Chaudhuri's India Stores in 1901, Sarala Devi's Lakshmir Bhandar in 1903. The message of self-help in industry and education was being spread among the Calcutta student elite by Satishchandra Mukhopadhyaya through his journal 'Dawn' (started in 1897) and his 'Dawn Society' (1902-7). Bhagavat Chatuspathi (1895) connected with Satishchandra Mukhopadhyaya, the Dawn Society's weekly classes and seminars, the Saraswat Ayatan of Brahmobandhab Upadhyaya (August 1902)\textsuperscript{72} and Tagore's ashram near Bolpur (started in December 1901, with Upadhyaya as the main adviser for the first few months) mark the

\textsuperscript{70} Rabindranath Tagore, 'Suprabhat' - Samayik Patra - Sanchayita, p. 482.
\textsuperscript{72} Haridas and Uma Mukherji, Upadhyaya Brahmobandhab O Bharatiya Jatiyatabad (1961).
beginnings of a national education movement. The enthusiastic response to Jogendra Chandra Ghosh's proposal (March 1904) for an association to raise funds for students going abroad for technical training was symptomatic of the new atmosphere in Bengal. Finally, the call for a break with the traditional type of agitation was raised from the presidential chair at the Burdwan Provincial Conference of June 1904. Asutosh Chaudhuri's dictum 'A subject nation has no politics' and his plea for constructive self-help in place of mendicancy aroused a lot of interest, and was welcomed by Tagore in his Swadeshi Samaj address.

Yet beneath the surface unity differences of approach and outlook remained, to express themselves once the first rapture was over. Moderate tendencies of a slideback towards old style politics have been mentioned already; mere constructive swadeshi soon failed to satisfy also Pal, Upadhyaya, Aurobindo, and their followers, intent upon developing the boycott into a movement of full scale passive resistance. Constructive swadeshi still had its adherents, however; keeping more or less aloof from political agitation, whether of the old or new variety, men like Prafullachandra Roy, Nilratan Sircar, Ambicacharan Ukil and Biprodas Pal Chaudhuri concentrated their energies on industrial and commercial self-help and a broadly similar outlook characterised the group around Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya which constituted the hard core of the Bengal

National College. Satishchandra personally was a friend of Brahmobandhab and Aurobindo, but his journal concentrated mainly on constructive themes, and the sketch of basic principles published in the Dawn of March 1907 as a kind of swan-song for the Dawn Society emphasised self-help in industry, education justice and rural life to the exclusion of a direct political clash with the foreign government. The BandeMataram of 3 May 1903 attacked the National Council of Education, for its tendency to move away from politics. Rabindranath had broken away with the politicians even earlier, devoting himself after the summer of 1906 to village reconstruction efforts in his Central Bengal estates and educational experiments at Santiniketan. The swing away from moderate politics and westernist ideology did not go unchallenged. Prithwischandra Roy and Premathanath Roy Chaudhuri defended in 1904-5, the old style of politics against Rabindranath’s criticism. "Work certainly, but why not words also? Why should we stop protesting against wrongs?......Words have been wasted often enough, we admit; but have they been entirely futile always?"75

In a brilliant essay entitled 'Sikshar her-pher' (Vagaries of Education-1893), Rabindranath made the interesting point that the foreign medium had actually hindered the assimilation of progressive western values in two ways - by confining the benefits of education to a small minority, and by rendering superficial the enlightenment of even that narrow... 

In the writings of Satishchandra Mukhopadhaya, the polemic against the established system of instruction is focused rather on the quality and the content of higher education. Through numerous articles in the *Dawn* and particularly his long essay 'An examination into the present system of University Education in India and a scheme of Reform' (April-June, 1902), Satishchandra attacked the Indian Universities for being merely examining bodies and for their utter failure to develop any kind of creative thinking or research. He suggested a division of students into two categories, 'general' and 'special' with the latter — the brilliant few who love learning for its own sake as distinct from the mass of job seekers — being trained through 'high standard' lectures and examinations given and conducted by specially equipped teachers, who should themselves be 'Original workers' in their respective subjects.76 The emphasis upon developing a 'higher culture' among the elite is evident also in the work of the Dawn Society, founded by Satishchandra in 1902 with the best students of Calcutta University among its leading members. The cadres trained by him were to form the core of the Bengal National College in its first years.

Satishchandra's educational ideas were at once less unconventional and more in tune with the revivalist currents of the age. Unlike Rabindranath, Satishchandra was firmly rooted in orthodox Hinduism. The *Dawn* proclaimed that 'while remaining fully alive to the usefulness and the necessity of other systems of culture', Western or Eastern, as Hindus we propose to make a special study of Hindu life, thought and

76. 'Dawn', *On education and examination, March, May, July* 1901. Ibid, 'An Examination into the Present system of University Education in India and a scheme for Reform' — April-June 1902, Both were by Satishchandra Mukhopadhaya.
faith in a spirit of appreciation. ... Satishchandra eagerly accepted and tried to implement later on through the National Council, Sir George Birdwood's suggestions regarding Indian education conveyed to him in a letter dated 9th September, 1898 that Western Science and technical instruction must be retained and promoted.

To men like Rabindranath and Satishchandra, the conception of national education initially had little to do with politics; it formed a part of their vision of constructive swadeshi, of the autonomous development of the resources of the country ignoring rather than directly opposing the foreign rulers. At this juncture Rabindranath gave the proposal to use four different dialects in the primary schools of Bengal — a move in which educated circles saw yet another proof of the divide and rule designs of Risley and Curzon. The first three issues (April-June, 1905) of Bhandar, the new monthly started by the poet, carried a stimulating discussion of the problem (posed by Surendranath Banerji) of bridging the gulf between the educated elite and the masses. Summing up, Rabindranath stated that all his contributors seemed agreed on the need for mass education; and for this independent efforts were evidently necessary, since the government would obviously try to keep the scope of primary education rigidly confined, so that the peasant learnt to be a good peasant and nothing more. National education at the collegiate level posed a very serious problem

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78. The Dawn of June 1899 reprinted this letter under the title, "Indian Problems from an English Point of view".
of employment, as its products were likely to be excluded from
government jobs. For this reason too, it would be wiser to
concentrate on primary and secondary education with which should
be combined training in useful crafts. Similar ideas were put
forward by Ramendrasundar Trivedi and Lalit Kumar Bandopadhaya
both of whom in the winter of 1905-6 suggested that efforts
should be concentrated on mass education rather than trying to
start a model college or providing research training for the
student elite. It is a pity that this excellent advice was
largely ignored by the national education movement of the
Swadeshi days, which plunged into the ambitious adventure of a
parallel university and adopted as its guide Satishchandra,
with his somewhat esoteric ideals of higher education, rather
than Rabindranath.

Whatever be the differences with other educational
institutions or universities of the time, Santiniketan, Sriniketan
and Visvabharati stood as noble symbol of freedom and fraternity.
However it is interesting to note the rather derisive on the
one hand, and somewhat bewildered, on the other response of the
English newspapers at this venture attempted by Rabindranath.

Daily Telegraph - 26.2.1914 — A Poet's School
The quick fire, percussion cap, enthusiast for all that
is new in literature, who recently became so enthusiastic
about the prose poems of Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali
poet, and helped to obtain him the Nobel Prize for literature,
may be interested to learn that he keeps a school......The
boys sit on mats under trees. Each morning and evening they

80. Bhandar, Baisak – Asar 1312 B.S. (April–June 1905),
R. R. - XII, pp. 515-17, 521-23.
81. Ramendrasundar Trivedi, 'Swadeshi Visvabidyalaya',
Bangadarshan – Agrahayan 1312 B.S. (1905), Lalit Kumar Bandopad-
hay - Prastabita jatiya Visvabidyalaya, Bharati,
Agrahayan – Chaitra, 1312 B.S. (1905-6).
parade the school garden, singing hymns. Twice a day they sit in meditation, seeking Nirvana during a quarter of an hour; and twice a week they assemble for worship and a sermon from Rabindranath Tagore. These items of the curriculum, are suited to the climate or the school's religion, of course, but there are other features about this school which enthusiasts may well find suitable for introduction over here. Thus all the housework, and even the washing is done by all the pupils and the masters — let us introduce that pleasing practice at Eton and in the Council schools, forthwith. The teachers choose the headmaster, who acts as such for one year — how beautifully democratic! The boys elect courts of justice from among themselves and these courts dispense school justice — what English boy would now shout for that plan?83

The Youngman, July 1914 — Tagore's teaching is many sided and his statement of it bewitchingly beautiful. The multitude of God's gifts should fill us with gratitude. Communion with nature is a great duty we Westerns need to learn. The mystical vision of the universe is invaluable. But Christ reveals a father who loves and cares for us, even to the least event and smallest need of life. His strokes are blessings. He brings God near to me as a Father. He has taught me not simply to look at Him as an Universal spirit absorbed in the matter of His own, His creation, but as a Father in the Universe, and also over it, and who dies in the Person of Christ to express His love of the sinful, I miss the cross in the teaching of Tagore and yet he breathes the very love of God in Christ Jesus. Tagore is sublime — that is the only word I can find to describe him. 'The Crescent Moon' is too charming for words.84

84. News Paper Clippings, Rabindra—Bhavan, Santiniketan.
Section III: Rabindranath's Contribution in the Field of Literature and Science

Literature — Bengali literature owes its first debt to Iswarchandra Vidyasagar who introduced a proper prose style in Bengali. Lyrical language was of course known to the Bengalis through the Charyapadas, Mangal Kabyas and the Gitikabitas. The absence of any proper prose style still kept Bengali language in the dark. So, Vidyasagar took up this laborious task and Rabindranath himself has admitted his gratitude to this great man in the pages of 'Charitrapuja'. But it was Rabindranath himself, who gave a touch of lucidity as well as reality in the Bengali prose style, and the poems also saw a revolutionary and wonderful change at the hands of Rabindranath. Pramatha Choudhury says that Rabindranath has turned the Bengali language into a beautifully rich product. We are all indebted to him for this richness of language. Whatever be our content, whether prose or poetry, we must look back to Rabindranath for style and approach.85

As an educationist and as a humanist Rabindranath thought that education did not mean only the knowledge through text books and the class room lectures. Apart from the training in social work and political programme, he wanted to educate his countrymen through literature — and this literature was served in a distinct original style of himself. With the goal of social reforms in his mind, he wrote most of the stories or

plays with a socio-political background. The literary thought of Rabindranath can be divided into two aspects - the first being the analytical or descriptive part, the other one being the remedial side. But he never saw the two aspects from a different angle; so his thoughts were blended together.\(^{86}\)

The poet has touched the varied problems of human life in his short stories and poems. The frustration of young Binu in the poem 'Phanki' in 'Palataka',\(^{87}\) the unnecessary punishment of Chandra in the story 'Shasti',\(^{88}\) the humiliation of Binu in 'Strir Patra' - all these are apt problems and who is responsible for their sufferings? Whoever be responsible, the society or tradition, Rabindranath has boldly revealed these problems. Some of the characters in his short stories and poems have revealed their personal sufferings in a different way and these characters have become immortal. The sufferings of Ratan in the story 'Postmaster',\(^{90}\) the helplessness of Nibaranchandra in the story 'Madhyabartini',\(^{91}\) the desperate tears of Charulata and the agony of her husband Bhupati in the story 'Nastanir'\(^{92}\) or the forlorn hope of Upen in 'Dui Bigha Jami'\(^{93}\) are some of the living characters in the writings of Rabindranath. These

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\(^{86}\) Subodhchandra Pramanik, Rabindranather Samajchinta, (1368 B.S.), pp. 1-4.
\(^{87}\) Rabindranath Tagore, Sanchayita - Palataka - Phanki, pp. 556-61.
\(^{88}\) Rabindranath Tagore, Galpaguchha, 1st Part.
\(^{89}\) Ibid, 2nd part.
\(^{90}\) Ibid, 2nd part.
\(^{91}\) Ibid, 1st part.
\(^{92}\) Ibid, 2nd part.
characters show their hopes, joys and tears like any other man struggling in real life - only the characters have become more human by the touch of his pen.

Even some of the major problems of the society like untouchability or labour unrest have been depicted by Rabindranath in his literature. The problem of untouchability finds an immortal shape in the lyrical play 'Chandalika'. The insufferable protest and anguish of the mother and daughter against this particular norm of which they were the victims, came as a protest from Rabindranath also. In his 'Rektakarabi', he has presented the anguish of the labourers who were suffering for ages under the exploitation of their master and Nandini is shown as the symbol of protest as well as happiness amidst gloom. According to Hiron Kumar Sanyal and other critics these symbolic dramas of Rabindranath are "more real than reality itself". 'Muktadhara' shows a conflict between 'man and machine and his 'Raja' reminds us of Freezer's saying, "Man made God in his own image". 'Achalayatan' is a protest against mechanical system of education. A state revolution, which is a modern conception is indicated in 'Tapati' and the glorification of the Sudras takes place in 'Kaler Yatra'. In some of his novels, like 'Chaturanga', he has criticised some of the traditional Hindu prejudices like idolatry or caste consciousness. 'Char Adhaya' declares the triumph of women's liberation. The character of Ela has a revolutionary spark which inspires the

'Gora', of course carries much weight as far as social education is concerned. The last passage of 'Gora', where he comes to know of his own caste is illuminating.

"Today I have become an Indian. Now I am free from all prejudices that I practiced so long. Today, all the castes of India are my caste and India's food is my food....So long I had a barren feeling in my mind. I tried to cover that barrenness with all sorts of superficial means - because so long I saw India partially and not wholly. Today, I am free from all superstitions."

Rabindranath has shown how Gora's Brahmanical illusion was shattered into pieces after the knowledge of his Christian identity. In another novel 'Ghare Baire', he has very artistically shown the shattering of Bimala's illusionary world, after the quiet exit of Nikhilesh from her life. The two novels are of two different categories — but the same picture of social strain and human anguish are portrayed in a bold manner. So, through his numerous works, Rabindranath wanted to educate man and wanted to make them conscious of the manifold problems of society.

In the second place, when our discussion on remedial issue comes, we will have to look back to his educational schemes once again. Rabindranath was not only contented in writing grave essays on educating the society in the pages of 'Kalantar' or 'Sikshya', but he took up some educational projects and tried to make his experiment a successful one.

In his personal life, Rabindranath had all along sought for happiness — happiness of soul. But unfortunately, either death or separation with loved ones brought him mental agony throughout his life. The touch of this mixed feeling, happiness and agony were also reflected in his poems and songs. Some of his poems and songs also bear the testimony of his extremely romantic character. The extracts from *Manashi* (1255-1297 B.S.), *Sonar Tari* (1298-1300 B.S.), *Mahua* (1333-1335 B.S.) and *Sanai* (1345-1347 B.S.) prove that the romantic trend of the poet's mind remained unaltered even when he was aging. It is also significant to note that some of the old style poets like Vidyapati and Chandidas had an immense influence on Rabindranath. It is quite interesting to locate certain extracts from the personal diary of Rabindranath where he noted down some of his favourite quotations. Probably, these quotations gave some food to his thought.

"Happiness requires limitations — the very thing that you call narrowness — just as wine requires a glass to hold it". Hallock

"The faith that sustains must bring out of the moment of the soul's need. For each agony is its own peace". Richard Pe. Gallienne

"New love is brightest and long love is greatest; but revived love is the tenderest thing known upon earth". Thomas Hardy

"There are few things which human nature resents more than a theft of grievances". Anthony Hoper

96. Notes from Rabindranath's Personal Diary, Archives, Rabindra Bhavan, Santiniketan.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
"Life is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel." Horace Walpole

Many of Rabindranath's own writings bear similar meanings; probably these writings had some indirect reflections on Rabindranath's mind.

The connection of Rabindranath with today's concept of 'progress' must recently have troubled many minds. We hear on the one hand that Tagore was the poet of the deprived with intimate links with the common people, even the proletariat. We have also come across the opinion that he was bourgeois, the symbol of aristocracy, that it is no injustice to brand him in the last resort as a reactionary. No doubt, Rabindranath to the last was indifferent towards Marxism. Even the wonder he experienced in his visit to Soviet Russia did not draw him to Marxian theory. According to Susobhan Sarkar, there is no dearth of anti-progressive ideas in the life and thought of Tagore, yet he was in the balance on the side of progress.101

Let us see another opinion. Rabindranath, through many of his songs and poems wanted to feel the pulse of the mass. But his 'blue blood' stood as a barrier to have intimate contact with the common people. Though theoretically, he was very near the common lot he could not achieve the same in practice.102 It was the aim of Rabindranath to present his thought through literature to his countrymen, he could realise the limitation of his capacity to do so. In his later life, he expressed with

100. Ibid.
contempt his failure to become a poet of the common people in his poem 'Oikatan' (1941) where he says that his actual place was far from the common man. He, in vain had tried to win their hearts, his aristocracy always stood on his way.\(^{103}\)

Science — In the first half of his life, Rabindranath's connection with science was rather rudimentary. The traces of science which are found in the poems of 'Sonar Tari' (1298-1300 B.S.) and 'Prabhat Sangeet' (1288-1289 B.S.) are rather the reflections of Darwinian theory. 'Sristi Stiti Pralay', 'Basundhara' or 'Samudrer Prati'\(^{104}\) are some of his very good poems of early years, where we are acquainted with his scientific outlook. In his earlier writings emotion had mastered science; so there was very little scope for science to take any shape in his writings; for example in his poem 'Nirjharer Swapnabhanga' (1288 B.S.), the poet's romantic spirit blurs the idea of science. After 1914, that is after the First World War, his poems of 'Balaka' (1321-1322 B.S.) were written, where we come to know about Rabindranath's matured scientific thought. 'Chanchala' is one such poem, where he describes the laws of nature with vigour. The eternal queries of man of the mystery after death, has been nicely put in 'Chabi'. Gradually the poet came down from the illusionary world and became familiar with the materialistic trend of the world. The poet now began to judge the good and bad effects of science in the making of the civilization.


\(^{104}\) Prabhat Sangeet (1288 B.S.), Sonar Tari (1299 B.S.), Sonar Tari (1300 B.S.).
Rabindranath had always welcomed the spirit of progress and the advancement in science. Science, he believed would not only educate man, but it would also help man to form his own rational faculty. A nation can also make its progress through the advancement of science. He had also warned men about the abuses of science which would bring harm to society: "When science is applied for the benefits of mankind, its real contribution can be assessed. Science, in that case is a constructive phenomenon. On the other hand, when science is utilised for narrow individual or national interests, it is a destructive phenomenon. It gives rise to chauvinism, which again hinders the path of international peace. Let us only hope that Europe will not be totally swayed by this materialistic trend of science after so much endeavour and she will invent some new pattern for the ensuing generation." 105 But after only two years Rabindranath watched with dismay: "Man has today got hold of the mastery of the universe with the help of science. But still the nations are not satisfied and they are often committing political crimes for the ensuing terror of being smashed down by other nations. Each nation is showing the cause of necessity in committing the crimes."106

The marching success of science in all fields helped Rabindranath to look through the inventions of science with a new angle. We can remember two of his extracts written in 1925:

"From time immemorial man started inventing machines out of..."
natural products. When man first invented plough, a new history began in the history of human civilization. Gradually man learnt the art of weaving and started making new stone weapons. Man now began to utilise his hands for manifold purposes and a revolutionary change took place in the history of mankind. Today, in the machine age the more powerful men are exercising their power over the weak lot... On another occasion, he wrote: "It was a great day for man when he discovered the wheel. As soon as man could exercise his triumph over machine, he began his mastery over Sudra community also... It is true that this wheel or charka has showed man the path of prosperity, but it has also detached man from his spontaneous self."

It was in 1927, that we get from him poems like 'Natarai', where he has welcomed the scientific theory of dynamism. Rabindranath's 'Visvaparichay' is probably one of the best specimens of his scientific temperament; 'Sadhana', which was started in the winter of 1928, produced several astronomical articles of Rabindranath. The conception about the living world found a verile expression in his 'Jivan Devata'. Through his 'Jivan Devata', he wanted to expose the 'ever evolving personality' which first found its revelation in 'Sasundhara' in 'Sonar Tari'. Rabindranath's analysis of atomic power with the universal creation can be found in some of the poems of 'Chaltali' and 'Naivedya'. 'Sristi Sthiti Prolav', the poem which was written in his early years got a matured

form in 'Savitri' of 'Purabi'. In Sisutirtha of 'Punascha', the mystery of the creation of the universe is described. 'Tumi Prabhater Suktara' of 'Sesh Saptak', 'Ami' of 'Shyamali' are some of his writings of deep scientific thought. In the latter poem, the mathematical God is probably represented. 'Chalti Chabi' of 'Senjuti' is the picture of the warsick world. The poems of 'Navalatak' are worth mentioning. Literary beauty has been applied to mechanical devices in poems like 'Pakshimanab', 'Sarenata', 'Istisan' and in other poems. The eternal quaries of universal mystery has been put forward in poems like 'Prasna', 'Rater Gari' etc. The ideas about pre-historical animals and the theory of evolution finds place in some extracts of 'Rogsajaya'. If we go through his writings, we will find that he touched more or less all themes of scientific study, from Bacteriology to Physics and from Astronomy to Geology.

That Rabindranath gave much thought to scientific issues and devoted much of his valuable time to scientific studies is evident from the list of books found in his personal library. The following books were found in his library (This list has been arranged according to the year of publication of the books):

10. Mivart, George (St), *An introduction to the elements of Science*, (London 1894).

It is evident from his *Jivansmriti*, that when the juvenile poet was staying at a residence in Suddar Street, he felt a genuine urge to read Science Books and it was at this time that the poems of 'Prabhat sangeet' were published (1885). [109]

He says, that at this time he devoted much time in reading Thomas Huxley's books on Zoology and Lockyar and Newcomb's books on Astronomy. Moreover, he himself admits that he had a very close relationship with the nature from his very childhood, so that he could write such poems (Prabhat sangeet or Sandhyasangeet) based on nature.\textsuperscript{110}

This is not of course the entire list of Rabindranath's scientific study and one must not also think that Rabindranath developed his theory after having some theoretical knowledge only. He had his own ideas and these ideas were also enriched after coming into contact with some great scientists of the day.

That was the time when India was passing through a new phase of nationalism which threw for outstanding personalities in literature, science and politics. And the Indian middle class felt the need of concerted efforts for reviving her ancient glory as a great nation. It was therefore not an accident that bonds of affection and mutual respect brought Tagore, Jagadish Chandra Bose and Sister Nivedita close to one another. Their close co-operation also was the need of the times for building a reascent India.\textsuperscript{111}

In 1897, Bose and Tagore become friends. Tagore wrote in the mid 1920s - "For the first time in my life I tasted the pleasure of friendship when I came into contact with

\textsuperscript{111} Collection from the documents written by Viswapriya Mukherjee on Jagadish Chandra Bose and his works, Chapter VII, pp. 49-57.
Jagadish. He pulled me out from my grove, just as the radiant splendour of the sunrise in dewy autumn mornings always forces me out from my bedroom... I saw radiance in my friend... Tagore's insight prove true when Bose emerged as a representative of scientific renaissance in India.

When they became friends, neither of them had attained world-wide fame. Evidently, no careeristic self-interest impelled them towards each other. What really drew them together into close bonds was the fact that both had synthetic minds and both were in quest of an ultimate cosmic unity in the midst of diverse manifestations of Nature. "Another sphere", writes Tagore, "where Jagadish felt an affinity towards me was his profound patriotism. In 1931, on the occasion of Tagore's 70th birthday, Bose reminisced: "It is more than a third of a century that the poet Tagore and I have been drawn together in closest bonds of sympathy. His friendship has been unfailing through years of my ceaseless efforts during which I gained step by step a wider and more sympathetic view of continuity of life and its diverse manifestations... The barrier which seemed to separate kindred phenomena was found to have vanished, the plant and the animal appearing as a multi-form unity in a single ocean of being... The same cosmic unity has unfolded itself to Tagore's poetic vision and has found expression in his philosophic outlook and in his incomparable poems."

112. Ibid, pp. 51-52.
Tagore reminisced (January 1938) about his friend just after Bose had passed away...."Years ago, when Jagadish Chandra, in his militant exuberance of youthfulness, was contemptuously defying all obstacles to the progress of his endeavour, I came into intimate contact with him, and became infected with his vigorous hopefulness....I found in him a dreamer, and it seemed to me, what surely was a half-truth, that it was more his magical instinct then the probing of his reason which startled out secrets of nature before sudden flashes of imagination. In this I felt our mutual affinity, but at the same time our difference, for to my mind he appeared, to be the poet of the world of facts that waited to be proved by the scientist for their final triumph, where as my own world of vision had their value, not in their absolute probability, but in their significance of delightfulness. All the same, I believe that a part of my nature is logical, which not only enjoys making playthings of facts, but seeks pleasure in an analytical view of objective reality. I remember often having been assumed by friend that I only lacked the opportunity of training to be a scientist, but not the temperament. Thus in the prime of my youth. I was strangely attracted by the personality of this remarkable man and found his mind sensitively alert in the poetical atmosphere of enjoyment which belonged to me".

Thus Bose and Tagore complemented and widened each others' vision of cosmic unity, Sister Nivedita came into...
their midst at the end of the 1890s, as a flame of patriotism and a symbol of rectitude. Nivedita wrote to Tagore (16th June, 1899, Calcutta). ... "I really wanted to add a new friend to those with which India has already blessed me and you are so dear to my friend Dr. Bose, that I could not help hoping you should be my friend too...". Although Nivedita made the acquaintance of the Boses and a year after Tagore had come into contact with them, it was she whom Tagore once requested to write for him a coherent account of the actual discoveries which Prof. Bose had made and of the difficulties under which he had laboured in making them.

In 1913, when Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize, Bose wrote to him: "I always felt unhappy at not seeing you decorated with a victory garland. Today I am free from that unhappiness". Tagore on his part immortalized Bose through many essays and poems. To mention a few, Tagore as the editor of 'Bangadarsan' (edited earlier by late Bankim Chandra Chatterjee) as well as 'Bhandar', wrote a series of popular articles on Bose's researches and achievements in those periodicals, so that educated lay readers of Bengal could understand the essence of those investigation and could thereby realise the importance of his work in the world of science. Tagore composed quite a few poems in praise of Bose. What prompted Tagore to compose a poem on Mimosa, becomes evident from the role of this plant played in Bose's plant physiological researches. It is also noteworthy that in 1913 Bose
presented Tagore with a potted Mimosa — a symbol of sensitivity — when felicitating him at Santiniketan on his receiving the Nobel Prize. On 30th November, 1928 Bose completed 70 and December 1 saw the festive celebration of Bose's birthday at his Institute. Tagore took the initiative in celebrating the occasion in a befitting manner. Tagore was assisted among others by Ramananda Chatterjee and Bidhan Chandra Roy. On the eve of this celebration (on 29th November, 1928) Bose delivered a lecture 'Plant as an Anchoral Animal'. Although Bose never sentimentally attributed human qualities to plants, he did not look upon them as insentient automatons either. Bose's discerning understanding of the plant sentience was by his poet friend Tagore on a lyrical plane. This found expression in a splendid dedicatory poem composed by the latter for this birthday celebration. Tagore concludes this poem reminiscing that he had stood by his friend when the latter had to wade alone through agonising sufferings; and now in the hour of his spectacular triumph, the poet would join the multitude in singing his praises. Significantly, Tagore included this tender verse in his book of lyrics, 'Vanavani', the Message of the Forest — published three years later.

When Bose founded the Bose Institute in 1917, Tagore composed an inspiring inaugural song at his friend's request. In 1922, Tagore made Bose the Vice-President of his newly founded international University, Visvabharati.
Bose's approach to the problem of disseminating science in India is clearly expressed in the following interview given in 1905 to the editor of a Bengali magazine, Bhandar. The editor was Rabindranath Tagore.

Editor:

"Should the standard of education and examination in our country be made stiffer?"

Bose:

"It is common knowledge that study of science in our country has not been widespread even among the educated. One proof of this is that our science has not advanced to the extent our indigenous literature has.

"In such a situation, our universities must proceed by critically analysing the circumstances and inadequacies of our country. If we try to imitate other countries, we won't get the benefits which they enjoy; moreover, we would be deprived of the benefits that we could hope to get...."

"...Our method of instruction must be made simple in order to create a taste, for all that is introduced for the first time. A stricter policy for education may be considered only when education strikes root among many and our countrymen develop a taste for knowledge".

"...If we wish to see the emergence of real servants in science, we cannot expect to achieve the desired result simply by introducing a difficult standard of education and examinations. What is needed is disseminating of general scientific ideas in our country. Students must not be confined to dry bookish knowledge; they must have opportunities for developing scientific insight into the
workings of Nature through keen observation. Suitable ways must be devised to these ends.\textsuperscript{113}

Later in his life, Rabindranath came into contact with Pramathananath Sen Gupta, Boshi Sen and others and gradually he could polish his own scientific knowledge in depth and analysis. He met Einstein in Germany on July 14, 1930, and was overwhelmed by the vastness of his knowledge and he came to know of Satyendranath Bose from Einstein only. After coming back to India, he met Satyen Bose and had a close link with him throughout. By the initiative of a number of well-known scientists, Meghnad Saha, Gyanchandra Ghosh, Satyen Bose and others was formed the Indian Science News Association, which later developed into Indian National Academy of Science. C. V. Raman was also associated with the Calcutta University at that time. Meghnad Saha, particularly had a close link with Rabindranath. It was in November 1938 that Meghnad Saha visited Santiniketan and the lecture which he gave at Singhasadan at Santiniketan is memorable for its rich philosophy of science. Saha very clearly and rationally explained the theory of the evolution of earth and he discouraged our traditional ideal of the Satyayug or Tretayug. He said that every man would have to make his struggle for existence and this struggle has begun in India. Comparing our production with the Western countries, he said our output of labour and production is very meagre. So, we would have to utilise more of our natural resources in order to increase production and labour hard, otherwise our poverty cannot be

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, Chapter XII, pp. 95-96.
ruled out. Meghnad Saha said that it is no solution to echo the slogan of 'go back to village'. Rather we would have to strengthen our key industries. In the West, these key industries are all under state control; in our country also this method can be followed and private firms should in no way be encouraged. He cited the example of China where in 1923, Sun Yat Sen had followed the same method, in order to save China from ensuing crisis. Rabindranath heartily agreed with Meghnad Saha almost on all the issues. In fact, he expressed almost similar kind of view in his essays of 'Palli-Prakriti'. Saha was very much interested in re-appointing Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the Congress; because that would help the working of the Planning Commission in a successful way. He found in Subhas Bose a man who was gifted with scientific and progressive outlook and Saha wanted to persuade Tagore also to appreciate this idea. Unfortunately, the effort of these two men - Rabindranath and Meghnad Saha in giving India an economic solidarity through the Planning Commission did not bear much fruit.

Rabindranath had invited Jawaharlal Nehru to Santinikotan in November 1938 to discuss the whole thing with him. Anil Chanda, the secretary of Rabindranath, also referred the matter to Meghnad Saha and Meghnad Saha was eagerly hoping for the best. But the letter of Jawaharlal Nehru to Rabindranath was a little disappointing.

Anand Bhavan
Allahabad,
December 1938

My dear Gurudeva,

Thank you for your letter. The state of Bengal is certainly distressing and it is up to all of us to improve conditions there. It is a curious paradox, but the very fact of Bengal being clever and advanced in many ways has brought about various crises. As a matter of fact, the whole of India is rapidly going towards crisis. I do not for the moment refer to a conflict with British imperialism which is always possible, but to an internal crisis due to our own weaknesses. I suppose we have to pass through these periods and cannot easily avoid them.

I should greatly like to discuss many subjects with you and to have your advice with regard to them. If you will permit me I shall come a little later, after various executive meetings including the working committee which takes place soon. I can well understand your distress at the state of Bengal and India. Every sensitive person in India must feel this distress. I suppose the only thing to do is to face these problems fairly and squarely and do one's best.

Yours affectionately,

Jawaharlal

But even after two months Jawaharlal could not make any time to visit Tagore at Santiniketan. On 16th December, Jawaharlal wrote to Anil Chanda (the Private Secretary of Rabindranath) that he would be going to Calcutta on 2nd January, 1939 and probably on 4th January he would drop at Santiniketan.

On 25th December, Jawaharlal wrote another letter to Anil Chanda, that he was going to Almorah for some rest and probably he would visit Santiniketan at the end of January or beginning of February. Naturally, both Tagore and Anil Chanda became quite depressed after receiving the last letter, because in the meantime, the election of Congress President would be over.

The indifferent attitude of Jawaharlal was a great blow to Rabindranath; but he did not lose hope. He wrote personally to Subhas Chandra Bose on 14th January, 1939 and asked him to come to Santiniketan, on 19th January 1939, in order to have a discussion on the ensuing President's election. It is true that Rabindranath did not give any open speech favouring Subhas Chandra, like Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy and Ramananda Chatterjee, but his personal persuasion is noteworthy. The poet gave a royal reception to Subhas Bose on 21st January, 1939 at Amrakunja in Santiniketan. A portion of his speech is translated here...."I have made an arrangement here at Santiniketan for the students who are humiliated in this country. It is an arrangement for those students who are suppressed from their childhood in the name of education devoid of mental peace, beauty or freedom. I am trying to liberate as many students as possible from their prisons - you can well understand the joy of it, because you have suffered the shackles of prison.......

The others who have seen my experiment, have praised it. It is not merely an imitation. I have tried to give my pupils the

117. These two letters are preserved at Rabindra Bhavan, Santiniketan.
joy of liberty - there is something new in it....I have not been able to associate myself with everybody. If you help me in my incomplete work from the state level, I will be very happy.

On 29th January, 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose was elected the President of the Congress and there was much commotion throughout the country. But Mahatma Gandhi and some other Congress leaders were highly disturbed at the victory of Subhas Bose. Gandhiji's candidate was Pattabhi Sitaramayia and at the defeat of Sitaramayia Gandhiji declared - "Sitaramayia's defeat is my defeat". Jawaharlal also was in same tune with Rabindranath. But Rabindranath's and Meghnad Saha's dream of establishing economic solidarity through Subhas Chandra was nipped in the bud. The political turmoil at Tripuri Congress, Subhas Chandra's 'Strange illness' (Subhas Chandra himself had called his illness 'Strange illness' and wrote a book entitled so) and the passive attitude of the Mahatma finally led the way to Subhas Chandra's resignation to the honourable post in 1939.

Rabindranath was not only contented by analysing scientific theories through his writings, but he made elaborate arrangement of experimental work in Santiniketan and Sriniketan. He was writing to Jagadananda Roy in Bhadra 10, 1319 B.S. (1912) that they must help the pupils to free their minds from all idleness - they must get proper food for thought. Only book

knowledge would not help them in any way. They must accept the world through their minds, through nature.\textsuperscript{119} He was writing to his son, Rathindranath Tagore in 1929 that he had opened the President's Fund for the efficient arrangement of Handicrafts, machine work, sense-training, social training at the Patha-Bhavan school. These trainings should be made compulsory and not intentional.\textsuperscript{120}

As already mentioned, Miss Jeanson and Miss Cederblom gave Sloyd training at Sriniketan in Swedish style. Professor Lakshmiswar Singha of Benoy Bhavan introduced wood craft. As a zamindar, Rabindranath not only thought of collecting money, but he gave much thought for village reconstruction and the resurgence of small scale industries. One big occupation for women in rural Bengal was husking of paddy. That industry was practically in a ruined state and that particular section of people became jobless. That industry was more or less conducted by the big merchants of the towns. The poet became alarmed of the ensuing rift between the two sections owing to the ruin of this industry. In 1326 B.S. (1929), in the Santiniketan Patrika, Rabindranath wrote one article called 'Aharer Abhyas'. Prior to this, in 1919, he wrote an article on food problem called 'Khadva Chai'. There he had instructed men for preparing food at low cost.

In December 1935, Mrs. Margaret Sangar, one of the leaders of the Birth Control Movement, came to meet Rabindranath
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 17th March, 1929, Visvabharati Patrika, Shravan-Aswin, (1379 B.S.), pp. 1-3.
at Santiniketan. After the First World War, population problem became very intense in almost all parts of the world. Malthus (1766-1834) had already propounded his theory in the book called *Principle of Population* (1793). In the second edition (1803), he documented his argument, relinquished influence of moral restraint as a preventive check, and remained pessimistic of possibilities of future progress of mankind in the rapid growth of population throughout the world. In the 20th century, the women first took the lead in giving shape to the Birth Control Movement. A lady doctor of England Mary Stopes and Ellen Key (Karoliva Sofia) of Sweden joined Mrs. Margaret Sanger in this movement. Mrs. Sanger met Gandhiji at Wardha, before going to Travancore in South India for attending the All India Women's Conference. The discussion which took place between Gandhiji and Mrs. Sanger can be found in the life sketch of Gandhiji. But we have not got any document of the discussion which took place between Rabindranath and Mrs. Sanger. But, when ten years before, that is in 1925, Gandhiji had violently reacted against the Birth Control Programme, Mrs. Sanger wrote to Rabindranath on 12th August, 1925: "The Indian papers just received report that Mahatma Gandhi has been visiting you at Santiniketan. Perhaps you have seen his recent statement in opposition to Birth Control. You have travelled all over the earth and you have observed the joys and sorrows and miseries of the world and we take it for granted that with your international outlook on life and

human society you cannot but feel friendly towards Birth Control. After receiving this letter, Rabindranath wrote a long letter to Mrs. Sangar, which was later published in *Birth Control Review*. The poet wrote: "I am of opinion that Birth Control Movement is a great movement not only because it will save women from enforced and undesirable maternity, but because it will help the cause of peace by lessening the number of surplus population of a country scrambling for food and space outside its own rightful limits. In a hunger-stricken country like India it is a cruel crime to bring more children into existence than could properly be taken care of, causing endless suffering to them and imposing a degrading condition upon the whole family. It is evident that the utter helplessness of a growing poverty very rarely acts as a check controlling the burden of over-population. It proves that in this case nature's urging gets better of the severe warning that comes from the providence of civilized social life. Therefore, I believe that to wait till the moral sense of man becomes a great deal more powerful than it is now and till then to allow countless generations of children to suffer privations and ultimately death for no fault of their own, is a great social injustice which should not be tolerated. I feel grateful for the cause you have made your own and for which you have suffered."  

Rabindranath made elaborate experiments in the field of agriculture. Rathindranath's tutor, Professor Lawrance began a thorough study on silk worm and its cultivation. The introductory note which he wrote for Pramathanath Sen Gupta's 'Prithwi Parichay' carries a very natural scientific outlook of Rabindranath, who was now determined to spread the light of science in our underdeveloped country.\textsuperscript{124} The journalist Hemendraprasad Ghosh produced Rabindranath's article on 'Pallisamiti' in his book 'Congress'. There, we get valuable suggestions for economising goods of daily use. The tree festival which he introduced at Santiniketan, was another scientific experiment in the field of plantation, which we have discussed in the earlier chapter.

Sense-training was a novel experiment of educating children in Santiniketan. With the help of the senses, the quantity and quality of products had to be assessed by the students. It was a kind of natural therapy of enlivening the human senses.

Many scholars are of opinion that just because Rabindranath was a poet and essentially an artist, he could not always accept the victory of science or he could not welcome mechanisation or materialism whole heartedly. It is true, that a number of essays or poems give ample proof of his anti-materialistic attitude. In his book 'Parasye', he expressed his distrust for aeroplanes, which he thought another...\textsuperscript{124} Amiya Kumar Majumdar, \textit{Rabindranather Baigyanik Manas}, (1965), pp. 90-92.
ill device for destroying human civilization. He thought that this extensive growth of trade and commerce would ultimately damage the existing civilization. He could not stand the sight of the ports which were the busy centres of trade and commerce. He could not tolerate the excess of mechanisation. Rabindranath thought that this machine civilization would deprive men of their natural senses — so there is always the feeling of revulsion between Bibhuti and Abhijit in 'Muktadhara', between Raja and Nandini in 'Raktakarabi'. In the pages of 'Kalantar' also, he expressed his fear of the excessive utilities achieved through science. Here is the contradictory pull in Rabindranath. The poet was not anti-progressive, as we have seen from the study of his works, but his humanist and artistic senses were not always at par with the vibrant forces of the modern world. But most of the time, his scientific rationality worked perfectly well with his humanistic appeal. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyaya is of opinion that Rabindranath was enriched with the twin idea of extramundane romanticism and scientific materialism. So his works are all products of both romance and science.

The essence of Rabindranath's idea of education was work, sacrifice and the joy of mind which would lead us to our cherished goal. Rabindranath says that we must be always undaunted in achieving our auspicious mission of work and sacrifice and we must brush aside all obstacles and give shape to a better morrow.

125. Rabindranath Tagore, Gitavitan, p. 264
"Subha karma utthe dhoro nirdho gay
Saba durba sansoy bok abasan..."