“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

—Nelson Mandela
Chapter 8

PRESENT RELEVANCE
8.0 Introduction

In a research work no study is complete unless the researcher considers the present day implication of his /her work. Researcher should examine the practical benefit of the work, such as how the work might inform policy, improve some aspect of people’s lives, make a process more efficient or help the environment. This chapter seeks to find out the relevance of the educational ideals and practices of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori in today’s educational scenario. The relevance of Tagore and Montessori in the context of 21st Century has been explored in this section from the perspective of child centric education, peace education, environmental education, constructivism, policies and the various educational commissions in India.

8.1 Child Centricism in the Ideals and Practices of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori

Modern education stresses on child centric education. Today, the child occupies the central position in education. Development of mind, body and spirit of the child are reflected in the programme and planning of education. The spirit of the child centered education upholds the dignity of the child in the academic and social fabric. The system of education gives respect to the individuality of the child. Child centered education regards education as the fundamental right of the child. The curriculum, syllabi and teaching are organized in accordance with the needs and interests of the children. It aims at the all-round development of children. In modern world the responsibilities of the teacher has enhanced considerably and his/her functions are varied and complex. The main features of child centric education are freedom, activity, spontaneous development and experience based education.

Rabindranath Tagore was utterly dissatisfied with the mechanical system of education prevalent during his time. He established ‘Patha Bhavan’ at Santiniketan where he tried to translate his own educational concept to reality. Freedom of activity and expression and direct communication with nature are the two major characteristics of Tagore's progressive school. This was expressed in his first educational address "Sikshar Herpher" which lamented the confinement of the undernourished Bengali
child within an unsuitable system and argued that simply letting the child play in nature would produce more intelligent, happier and healthier children. (Tagore 1972). He also pointed out that “we rob the child of his earth to teach him geography of language, to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the Epic but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates. Child nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering subdued at last into silence by punishment” (Tagore 1917). Tagore cried for the freedom of child, which is one of the most important characteristic of child centric education.

“Children need training in self-reliance and self-help from their early childhood. Let the child never tire in his effort to give play to his creative joy by inventing things with the help of whatever material lies readily at hand. Let him at the same time learn to find delight in voluntarily performing tasks calculated to add to the health, happiness and comfort of community. We are always ready to suppress any initiative on the part of the children to organize their own immediate environment for themselves.” (Tagore 1951)

At Santiniketan and Sriniketan he gave importance on practical and physical training. Training of sense formed the important part of the curriculum. These thoughts and ideas reflect the relevance of Tagore's educational thought in modern child centric education.

Maria Montessori (1870-1954) is also another well-known name in the realm of child centric education. She evolved a new method of learning, which she described as auto education in which the child learnt by himself without any interference or imposition from the teacher. She strongly advocated unstrained freedom of the child and asserted that the true learning takes place spontaneously if the sense organs are properly trained. The Montessori Method of teaching is based on the concept of sense training. It has now become highly popular and is widely used in all progressive countries of the world. She fought for child’s dignity and autonomy.

“The adult has become egocentric in relation to the child not egoistic, but egocentric. Thus he considered everything that affects the psyche of the child
from the standpoint of its reference to himself and so misunderstands the child.......and in adopting such an attitude which consciously conceals the child's personality, the adult feels a conviction of zeal, love and sacrifice.” (Montessori 1936).

She talked of the hidden man that is a hidden child as a buried living being who must be liberated and the task of the education is to discover the child and facilitate his/her liberation. As we have already discussed in chapter seven, the major features of the Montessori Method namely auto education, freedom, spontaneous activity and prepared environment. All these features form an important aspect of modern child centric education.

8.2 Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori as Pioneers of Peace Education

Peace education in UNICEF refers to the process of promoting the knowledge skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adult to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural. It also aims to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national and at international levels.

Peace education today has a place in all societies. Effective peace education is necessarily a long term process. It occupies the base of schools and other learning environments. The United Nations from time to time made a number of declarations on the importance of peace education. Firstly for international understanding, peace, human rights and fundamental freedom and secondly UNESCO'S 1994 action plan for education for peace, human rights and democracy (which was endorsed by 144 countries) are the two prominent landmarks. 2000-2010 was declared by the UNESCO as the “International Decade for promotion of a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence” for the Children of the world.

The program of action on a culture of peace was adopted in 1999. The 1998 UN resolution on the culture of peace state that it is an integral approach to prevent
violence conflicts and an alternative to the culture of war and violence was based on education for peace, the promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for a human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament. The Hague agenda for Peace and justice for the 21st century said people from a wide range are for peace movements, all regions and multiple worldwide cultures agreed that the most fundamental requirement for achievement of the goals set forth in the agenda was universal education for peace. (Reardon and Cabbezudo, 2002)

UNICEF viewed that peace education is an essential component of quality basic education. Various documents of UNICEF advocated that the goal of basic education as a process of having knowledge skills, attitudes and values required to live peacefully in an interrelated world. Article 29 of the Convention the Rights of the Child 1989 declares that the education of the child shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendships among all people.

In India, education for peace programmes has traditionally been concerned with promoting certain core values. National Curriculum framework 2005 states that education in true sense should empower to clarify their values to enable them to take conscious and deliberate decisions taking into cognizance the consequences of their actions, to choose the way of peace rather than violence, to enable them to be makers of peace rather than consumers of peace. National curriculum framework (2009) for teacher education published by NCTE New Delhi endorsed the proposal on peace education in the framework of national curriculum framework of 2005 of NCERT. NCTE 2014 has included Peace Education as a part of Teacher Education Curriculum.

So from the above discussion it is clear that peace education occupies an important place in the twenty first century. Peace education has been an integral part of education at all times and in all cultures. Every culture regards peace as a noble ideal to attain. Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori were the pioneers of Peace Education. Tagore pursuing the noble idea of international cooperation established the
Visva-Bharati. The Tagore's view on peace education is clearly reflected through the Sanskrit text which was selected as the motto of Visva-Bharati: “Yatra Visvam Bharati Eka Nirham - where the world makes home in a single nest.” The Visva-Bharati is an asana of pure friendliness on which can gather all in unity where man can meet man in a free relationship of joy; where country, politics dogma, religious faiths and sectarian names can create no barrier where the path for both accepting and bestowing the worthiest contributions of the world will ever be open; where all thoughts will unite Bharata with Visva and not separate them; where all actions will be towards the welfare of the whole and not against it; where good will be worlds good, love will embrace the world humanity; and peace will be peace of the world. No nation can be proud of isolating its life & culture intellectual cooperation between nations. He said that the call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself for the dawn of a new era, when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings.

Rabindranath's life was filled with ceaseless activity. The urge to travel, and the necessity to collect funds for his university, took him to all parts of the world and the West as much as the East welcomed him with open arms. Wherever he went, he spread the message of peace and stressed the importance of intellectual co-operation between nations. His quest for the unity of man in the midst of diversity led Tagore to travel to the farthest corners of the world. He pointed out that uniformity is not unity, only those who are different can unite. To him nations that wipe out the independence of other nations are the destroyers of interdependence. On his 80th birthday Rabindranath wrote his last essay on 'The Crisis of Civilization' he concluded with the following word:

“I look around and see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility and yet, I shall not commit the previous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in history after cataclysm is over……a day will come when unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquests despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage”(Tagore 1941).
In today's world people have become immune to violence, cruelty and the total lack of gentleness to others. It is not as if becoming resistant is some form of self-defense or protective attitude. On the contrary it is actually an extreme form of meanness and a deep failure of humanity as a whole. In this troubled world it is becoming there is a need to reconcile the values of ‘universal' and 'diversity', a belief that Tagore pioneered not only in thought but also in his life of action. There was not a great deal he or any single individual could do to bring about a change in the prevailing world and reduce the inequality and injustice. But he was never indifferent to the need of the hour, and he tried hard to make a difference with whatever constructive work was possible for him. We can bring back Tagore's legacy in our individual lives by understanding and actually implementing his ideal of universal brotherhood and peace.

Maria Montessori most passionately argued that education was the only means of eliminating war once and for all. Values such as global citizenship, personal responsibility and respect for diversity she argued must be both an implicit and explicit part of every child's education. In 1936 she addressed the European Congress for peace in Brussels with these words:

“We are all single organism one nation. By becoming a single nation we have finally realized the unconscious spiritual and religious aspiration of the human soul, and this we can proclaim to every corner of the earth......................In a word contemporary man has citizenship in the great nation of humanity. It is absurd to believe that such a man endowed with powers superior to those of nature, should be Dutchman or Frenchman or an Englishman or an Italian. He is the new citizen of the new world- a citizen of the Universe.”(Montessori 1972).

Montessori devoted much thought and energy to the question of world peace and the role of education in promoting peace in her later years of life. From 1930s until her death in 1952 she addressed many peace conferences, wrote extensively on the subject of peace education and was twice nominated for the noble prize. In 1932 address to
the Office of Geneva she said: "what is generally meant by the world peace is the
cessation of war, but this negative concept is not an adequate concept of genuine
peace..............preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the
work of education. We must convince the world of the need for universal, collective
effort to build the foundation of peace." (Montessori 1972)

Montessori said;

“Peace is a practical principle of human civilization and social organization
that is based on the very nature of man. Peace does not enslave him; rather, it
exalts him.... And because it is based on man’s nature, it a constant, a universal
principle that applies to all human beings. This principle must be our guide in
building a science of peace and educating men for peace.” (Montessori 1972)

She believed that education is capable of saving humanity. To her it is not a
small undertaking. It involves the spiritual development of man, the
enhancement of his/her value as an individual, and the preparation of young
people to understand the times in which they live. So she said “Directing our
action toward mankind means, first and foremost, doing so with regard to the
child. The child, that ‘forgotten citizen’, must be appreciated in accordance
with his true value. His rights as a human being who shapes all of mankind
must become sacred, and the secret laws of his normal psychic development
must light the way for civilisation.” (Montessori1972)

Montessori explains that while the weapons of war have grown more sophisticated,
education has remained at the level of the bows and arrow. She emphasized that
education for peace does not mean merely preventing child's fascination for war,
eliminating toy weapons or ending the study of history as a series of battles, where
victory on the battlefield is a supreme honour. She says it is not even enough to instill
love and respect for all living things although that is indeed important.

Montessori was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize consecutively for three years 1949 ,
1950 and 1951 for connecting the educational method for establishing world peace.
She believed that through education we can help more and more children to grow up in a world that welcomes them and help them to live together in peace.

Both Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori are pioneers in peace education. They focused on the development of the whole child and prized the creative and critical thinking skills, along with inter-relational skills. These skills are so crucial that men and women will be both inspired and equipped to build lasting peace, which is likely to have a special relevance in the present day education.

8.3 Constructivism in the Ideals and Practices of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori

Constructivism is a new approach of the teaching process that has made learning process in the modern world more activity oriented and learner centric. Constructivism is a theory that explains how people know and what they know. The core idea is that problem solving is at the base of learning, thinking and development. As people solve problems through reflecting on past and immediate experiences, they construct their own understanding and discover the results of their actions. Learning is thus an active process that requires a change in the learner. People only understand deeply what they have constructed.

The psychological roots of constructivism begun with the development work of Jean Piaget (1896- 1980) developed a theory that compared the development of the mind to evolutionary biological development. He highlighted the adaptive function of cognition. For Piaget the development of human intellect develops through adaption and organization. Assimilation and accommodation are the two processes of adaption where external events are assimilated into existing knowledge while unfamiliar events are accommodated into the mind, there by changing and reorganizing the existing knowledge.

The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s (1896-1934) constructivism derives from his theories about language, thought and their mediation by society. Vygotsky believed that the child gradually internalizes external and social activities through
communication with more competent others. Vygotsky stressed that learning environments should be guided by interactions that will help children reflect on their irregularities and help them to change their conceptions through communication.

So Piaget’s constructivism contributed the idea of transformation in learning and development through adaption and organization of experiences. Vygotsky’s constructivism contributed the idea of transformation in learning and development through social communication and interactions with others.

The basic pedagogical implication of constructivism are-

- Knowledge is subjective, contextual, relative and changeable.
- Learners construct new knowledge by acquiring and applying knowledge.
- Teacher creates the environment so that the students can construct their own knowledge.
- Active and interactive learning process is followed to solve meaningful problems.

Rabindranath Tagore created a natural environment for his students to learn things better which they could retain for their lifetime. According to educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore a young boy wanted to be a great scientist for instruction and training. The scientist teacher took the boy inside a vast laboratory and taught him nothing. When asked why he had taught him nothing he replied that if the boy did not learn anything from the environment of such a laboratory, it would be no use teaching him either. True education is got from stimulating atmosphere. Ancient Indian Education was based upon this theory. The child was handed over to the Guru (Preceptor) with whom he talked, worked, lived, walked, studied, rendered him service to him. He paid homage in love, labour and values of the Guru. The Guru looked after the child just like a father. Tagore exactly believed in such a theory of education through stimulating atmosphere. To him education was not “conscious process of filling but the subconscious process of absorption.” (Taneja 1980)
At Santiniketan the children were given diverse atmosphere of learning different types of activities. The freedom and beauty of the natural setting at Santiniketan transformed the method of learning different subjects. Subjects were learned in open air, under the shade of trees, besides this, there were activities that served us expressions of life. These joyous exercises of inventive and constructive energies helped to build up character. The pupils learnt to manage themselves and learnt to take responsibilities. The first important lesson to learn was improvisation, for learning was spontaneous and not imposed on them by external authorities. Santiniketan to them was like their own world, they reacted completely and freely to create. Festivals like Basantotsab and Paushotsab were also celebrated in different seasons to inculcate creativity, invention and constructive efforts among students. Each student at Santiniketan created an own world and contributed to the creation of whole Santiniketan. Tagore opposed autocratic authority, as according to him children had their own place in school administration. They were free to participate in whatever level they wished to. Students were also free to participate in whatever level they liked and free to create their own learning agenda. So we can see that the environment and spaces for learning at Santiniketan was constructivist in nature.

Montessori’s educational ideas following common traits with constructivism stresses that knowledge constructions do not always correspond with reality, but a certain inner teacher leads a child who learns from experience. She also underlined that a child was not to be interrupted in his discoveries. In Montessori Method, the educational process is based on self-direction. In this environment, specially trained teachers accompany the child in a careful and respectful manner. Every child has responsiveness for a particular learning content at different sensitive phases. The most important aspect of Montessori pedagogy is independent work. The child chooses what he likes to do and as long as he wants to work on it. In being able to freely decide, a child develops the discipline that exits within. Her pedagogy also encourages creative problem solving skills. It encourages individual creativity while solving problems, teaches independence and supports the development of self-control with the teacher assuming the role of a facilitator. ‘The children are now working as if I didn’t
exist.’ (Montessori 1995) The teacher does not control the classroom. Montessori recommended for a different model of classroom that emphasizes upon opportunities for student participation and interaction in a structured environment that supports children’s natural curiosity. All these features of Montessori education reflect the similarities with constructivism.

So we can say that Rabindranath Tagore’s concept of education in a natural setting at Santiniketan and Maria Montessori’s concept of auto education are reflections of constructivist learning.

8.4 Environmental Education as envisioned by Tagore and Montessori

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stresses the role of Environmental Education in safeguarding future global developments of societal quality of life (QOL) and the protection of the environment, eradication of poverty, minimization of inequalities and insurance of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2014). The ultimate aim of Environmental Education is to help citizens in becoming environmentally aware. It aims to develop skills and dedicate themselves in working individually and collectively toward achieving and maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between quality of life and quality of the environment.

Tagore’s vision was concentrated to save our nature and natural world with human touch. Different festivals were encouraged in Santiniketan and Sriniketan by Tagore. Festivals were the milestones of Tagore’s awareness about the earth. In July, 1927 Tagore started the observance of the festival of the earth through ‘briksharopan’, ‘halakarshan’ and ‘barshamongo’. He was an environmental pioneer and was aware about the relation between progress and preservation of environment. He expressed his concerns about environmental exploitation even a century ago. At Santiniketan, Tagore not only let the children spent their time outside the classroom during school hours but also celebrated seasons with them and incorporated literature, plays and music that praised nature, into the daily campus life. Students decorated the campus with nature’s material like flowers, petals and leaves. This helped them to identify the
aesthetic in nature. Through this, he hoped to facilitate the spiritual identification with the nature, which in turn will lay the basis of environmental education and protection of nature.

Maria Montessori believed that an awareness of interdependence and the sense of gratitude that comes from that awareness were two things necessary for raising peaceful human beings. In her concept of ‘Cosmic Education’, children are exposed, not just to humans, but they are exposed to all the elements and forces of nature, the animals (extant and extinct), the plants, the rocks, the oceans, the forests - even the molecules and atomic particles. These undertones of gratefulness echo constantly in the Montessori elementary classroom and children gain a sense of importance, purpose, and responsibility, which they carry into adulthood. The basis of her cosmic education was to teach the students that Planet Earth is a gift to each and every one of us. The students learn to respect, protect, understand and enjoy the natural world. It is about learning about human’s place on the earth and the role we play in both the preservation and destruction of the planet. Montessori’s ‘Cosmic Education’ is about learning to work together to protect the earth and the living things that live in it.

So both Tagore and Montessori stressed on the importance of environment. They have directly or indirectly given priority to close interaction of the environment and children in the teaching learning process. Even today the festivals like ‘Brikhoropon’, ‘Vasant Utsav’ and ‘Poush Mela’ are celebrated at Visva Bharati campus. The campus is even today decorated with nature’s material like flowers, leaves and trees. This forms an important characteristic of today’s environmental education.

8.5 Influence of the Ideals and Practices of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori upon the Commissions and Policies in India

The present day relevance of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori’s ideals into the national policies as well as, commissions is explored in this section. In the Indian context the Radhakrishnan Commission or the University Education Commission under the-Chairmanship of Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan was the first commission of India The commission gave utmost priority to rural education. This reflects the
Tagore's educational scheme of Sriniketan which was rural reconstruction scheme. He cried for the upliftment of villages. To make the villages self-reliant and self-respectful was one of the major objectives of Sriniketan. Moral education formed an important part of the recommendation. We have already discussed in the sixth chapter that moral and spiritual development of the child was an important aim of education advocated both by Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori.

The Mudaliar Commission or the Secondary Education Commission in 1952-53 was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. A Laksmanswamy Mudaliar. The commission recommended for diversified curriculum which leads to all round development of the individual. Multipurpose secondary school was a new concept recommended by the Commission. Craft, social studies and general science were included in the curriculum which aimed at orienting students towards an industrial and science centered democratic life. These recommendations again reflect the educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori. Both the educators have given priority to diverse activities in their curriculum. Tagore’s Santiniketan was an ideal example of modern time multi-purpose school. Maria Montessori's Casa Dei Bambini contained an activity based curriculum. Life skills were given importance by both these educators.

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) popularly known as Kothari Commission was the first commission in India to examine all aspects of the educational sector in India. It was formed on 14th July 1964 under the Chairmanship of Daulat Singh Kothari. It pointed out that "the destiny of India is now shaped in her classrooms." Education must help to solve the pressing problems of national development in all directions. Kothari Commission wanted to relate education to productivity in fields and factories. For linking education to productivity it stressed on the study of science, work experience in education, vocationalization of education and improvement of scientific and technical education. Tagore in 'Sriniketan' had given priority to socially useful productive work which was an important recommendation of the Kothari Commission. Maria Montessori in her cosmic education pointed out that adolescents have a strong desire to build and understand connections and they
need to know what they are learning is relevant to their lives. She talked about creating opportunities for children to develop skill necessary for financial independence. Developing job skills and practical life activities of adolescence formed an important aspect of Tagore and Montessori's curriculum.

The National Policy of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in post-independence India. Its aim was to promote-national progress; develop a sense of common citizenship and culture to strengthen national integration. It laid stress on the need for a complete reconstruction of the education system, to upgrade its quality at all stages and gave priority to science and technology, the cultivation of moral values and a closer relation between education and the life of the people.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was adopted by Parliament in May 1986. It regarded education as a unique investment in the present and the future. This cardinal principle was the key to the National Policy on Education. The National Education Policy 1986 recognized the impact of early years in the development of a child. It made room for early childhood care and education through Integrated Child Development Services programme. As regards to primary education the policy makes three important commitments: universal enrollment, universal retention of children up to age 14 and improvement of quality of education. It pointed out that education will adopt a child centered approach, hence catering on an individual level to the needs of the child is important. These commitments of the national educational policies of 1968 and 1986 synchronize with the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori. Both these educators have given importance to the life centric education, moral education and child centered approach to education.

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 focused on 'learning without burden" to make learning a joyful experience and moved away from textbooks and rote learning for examination and to remove stress of children. Freedom and joyful experience had been the cry for both these educators. Rabindranath Tagore experimented with his concept of freedom in Santiniketan. In his institution he tried to make provision for three aspects of freedom- the freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will.
Today Santiniketan is one of the famous institutions in India. Montessori also stressed on the freedom of child. Children in Montessori's ‘Children House’ were free to choose their own activity. The teacher was only an observer.

Right to Education Act 2009 passed by the Indian Parliament on 4th August 2009. This was a landmark step in the field of education. It ensured free and compulsory education to all children of India in the age group of six to fourteen years. This served as a huge step forward in realizing the goals which Tagore has dreamt of a century ago. Maria Montessori also believed in education as the vehicle of peace. So education for each and every child should be the first and foremost responsibility of the state.

8.6 Manifestations of Tagore and Montessori’s Educational thoughts on the Education in the Twenty-first Century

The discussion above, pointed out that various policies and commissions of India have from time to time taken several measures to improve the condition of education in India as well as in the world. The main focus of the India's current education system is only a means to future employment, creating an obsession with passing examinations which in turn forces textbook oriented learning. The present education system is joyless, colourless, painful and lifeless. Students in a democratic society need to imagine and see things from varied perspectives. Education needs to nurture the student's soul and its purpose is not just employment, but more importantly personal fulfillment and self-improvement. The ability in to empathize with others viewpoints is a key cause of apathy, oppression, racism, violence and war in today's world. Today's education is more of a certificate oriented mechanism, bereft of intelligence and having no correlation with nature.

The Delors Commission in its report “Learning – The Treasure within” on education for the twenty first century outlined a grim picture of the global scenario in the twenty first century which would indeed be a cause for concern to every educational policy maker. Educational reforms over the past several decades have been searching for a “new educational order”. Addressing the major challenges facing education in 1970's,
the international commission on the Development of Education (The Faure Commission 1972) wrote in its report “The physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of individual into complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim of education.” A quarter century later the Jacques Delors Commission went a step further to establish its belief that education should bestow to every person’s full development of mind and body, intelligence and spirituality. The commission also saw education “as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance oppression and war.” The Delors Commission pointed out that the concept of learning throughout life emerges as one of the keys to the Twenty first century. Commission has stressed on the four pillars of education. They are-

**Learning to know** implies ‘mastering of the instruments of knowledge themselves’. Acquiring knowledge is a never ending process and can be enriched by all forms of experience. Learning to know focuses on the development of the faculties of memory, reasoning, imagination, problem solving and the ability to think in a logical and critical way. It is “a process of discovery” which takes time. It involves going more deeply into the information/ knowledge provided through subject teaching. It calls upon the power of memory, thought and concentration. It serves both as a means and an end in learning itself in life. As a means it serves to enable individual to understand the nature, humankind and its history, his environment and the society at large. It enables the learner to experience the pleasure of discovering, knowing and understanding as an end.

Rabindranath Tagore believed that neither books, nor teachers should simplify information, but should rather stretch their young reader’s abilities. Through this, they would encourage critical thinking, imagination and continuous work of the unconscious with what has been already read or learnt. He believed that students should learn from the known to the unknown and apply knowledge rather than learning “abstract knowledge”. By the "method of nature," students should explore and examine and educate themselves through independent work. At Santiniketan,
Tagore tried to provide the children with a wide range of activities focusing on the faculties of imagination, reasoning, critical and creative thinking and problem solving.

Knowledge, according to Montessori, is life. It is the result of the experience that we gain from manipulating our environment and analyzing our senses that increase our knowledge of the world around us and allow us to live as productive members of the society. Montessori thought knowledge was acquired. The environment that students would manipulate for knowledge and gain experience was an important part of Montessori’s vision. Montessori believed that the environment regulates knowledge. It is the combination of the physical and the social experiences. The ability to critically think about these experiences increases knowledge. Montessori developed sound apparatuses for children to manipulate in the classroom which were developmentally and scientifically appropriate. “…help children prepare for life with a more organized approach to academic skills and problem solving and the development of the child’s independence, self-discipline, and interest in learning” (Hainstock, 1997). It was through interaction between the structured materials and the environment that a student would gain knowledge. To simplify it to its purest sense, knowledge is the result of the learning process. Knowledge, according to Montessori, is developed out of the ability to observe, examine, analyze, criticize, and interpret information in a meaningful way. Knowledge is the manipulating the environment, then critically reflect upon the senses, and analyzing the information meaningfully. Knowledge is earned through research, motivation, hard work, and interest. So both Tagore and Montessori gave importance to the aspect of learning to know.

**Learning to do** stands for the application of what learners have learned or known into practices; it is closely linked to vocational and technical education and work skills training. Learning to do refers to the ability to communicate effectively with others, ability to do team work, social skills to develop meaningful interpersonal relations, adaptability to bring change in the world of work and in social life, aptitude in transforming knowledge into innovations and job creation and readiness to take risks and resolve or manage conflicts.
Rabindranath Tagore has always stressed on the principle of doing in his curriculum at Santiniketan. He wanted to connect the students with living reality through the application of knowledge to daily life and work of common people outside of Santiniketan. At Sriniketan, Rabindranath Tagore tried to revive cottage industries and crafts. Training centres were set up to restore local industries with craft. One of the main objectives of the institute was to carry the knowledge and experience gained in the classroom and experimental farm to the villagers in the endeavour to improve the life and conditions of the pupil. The development of resources and teaching better methods of growing crops and vegetables was also one of the aims. The principle of cooperation is the key note of the institute.

Maria Montessori’s Montessori Method stressed on the principle of doing. She stressed on practical life skill activities. The purpose and aim of practical life activities is to help the child gain the coordination and control of movement and help the child to be independent and adapt to the society. In the Erdkinder program for adolescents, she recommended a school where the children live in a farm. The goal of Erdkindler is to produce adults who are equipped with confidence in themselves and actual skills to live in the real world. Maria Montessori pointed out that her vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding to that certification from the secondary school to the university. She believed in individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher, through their own activity and their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual. Both the educators stressed on activity based learning and development of social and life skills for living. So we can say that learning to do, have been emphasized by both the educators.

The Commission has laid greater stress on “Learning to live together” by developing an understanding of other people’s history, traditions and spiritual values. This will help to understand the common interdependence of each other. It will help to manage and analyze the conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way. It implies an education taking two complementary paths: at one level discovery of others and at the other, experience of shared purposes throughout life. It stresses on the development of qualities like caring, sharing, empathy and the competence of working together.
Rabindranath Tagore through his Visva-Bharati tried to unite the people of India and the world. He wanted to unite the different streams of culture in India and to link them all with the global civilization of the mankind. He wanted to establish a living relationship between East and West to promote international amity understanding and fulfil the highest mission of the present age – unification of mankind.

Maria Montessori on the other hand, as we already discussed was a messenger of peace. She argued that education was a means and the only genuine means for eliminating war from the earth. She believed that values such as global citizenship, personal responsibility and respect for diversity, must be both an implicit and explicit part of every child’s and adult’s education. These values are every bit as important as the subjects like Mathematics, languages or sciences. Learning to live together by developing an understanding of others, developing qualities of sympathy and empathy have been given priority by both the educators.

**Learning to be** was first conceptualized in the Report to UNESCO in 1972. Learning to be may therefore be interpreted as learning to be human, through acquisition of knowledge, skills and values conducive to personality development in its intellectual, moral, cultural and physical dimensions. This implies developing qualities of imagination and creativity, acquiring universally shared human values, developing critical thinking, exercising independent judgment and developing personal commitment and responsibility. All these aspects of education have been stressed by both Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori. Both the educators were humanist and focused on holistic human development. Rabindranath Tagore through Santiniketan tried to provide a humane educational system which was in touch with the environment and aimed at the overall development of the personality.

Maria Montessori said that education should not limit itself to seeking new methods for mere transmission of knowledge but its aim should be to create the necessary conditions for human development. The urgent need of this world is to develop ‘new man’ that is the ‘man of values’. So the life of man and his values are interrelated and
that must be considered developed. Both the educators stressed on the fullest development of the individual for an all-round complete person.

It is important to note that the four pillars of learning relate to all phases and areas of education. They support and interrelated one another and should therefore be applied as basic principles for integration of various subjects and learning domains. Both Tagore and Montessori have called for harmony and balance between materialism and spiritualism. As we have seen above that all the pillars of the Delors commission have been echoed in educational thoughts and ideas of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori.

The world leaders gathered at the United Nations to shape a broad vision to fight poverty in its many dimensions at the beginning of the new millennium. The vision that was translated into eight Millennium Development Goals has remained the overarching development framework for the world for the past 15 years. The eight goals are:

1. Eradicat e extreme poverty and Hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce Child mortality
5. Improve maternal Health
6. Combat HIV AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 pointed out that as the world looks beyond 2015 it is important to reflect on and address the main causes of limited development in youth literacy in some parts of the world. It is also necessary to analyze new approaches to directly assess whether children have developed the skills they are taught and whether they are being taught the skills that are necessary in the
The government of India is coming up with the New Education Policy 2016. So this is the right time to look back to the educational ideals propagated by Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori.

The ideals and practices of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori as we have seen directly or indirectly been adopted by many educational policies and commissions of India as well as the world. But the sad part is that they have remained at the theoretical level. It is time to actually implement their ideals in its true sense and this can be done only if deeper look is taken into the institutions established by the great educators more than a century ago. Today Rabindranath Tagore is a household name in every Bengali family. Majority of the Bengali families begins their day by listening to Rabindra Sangeet, the songs composed and set to music by Tagore himself. There are innumerable institutions and places named after Rabindranath Tagore. For example: Tagore town is a neighborhood in Allahabad, India. It was built in 1909 and is predominantly populated by Bengalis. Rabindranath Tagore Nagar is an area in north Bangalore, named after the Noble Laureate and educator. Rabindra Bharati University is a university in Kolkata, India. It was founded on May 8th, 1962, to mark the birth centenary of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, under the Rabindra Bharati Act of the Government of West Bengal in 1961. It is located at the Tagore’s ancestral home, Jorasanko Thakur Bari. Rabindra Mahavidyalaya, established in 1971, located in Champadanga, in the Hooghly district is a general degree college. It offers undergraduate courses in arts, commerce and sciences. The college is affiliated to the University of Burdwan. To meet the need of Open Learning System State Open School came up as a wing of the education department in 1997. It was renamed as Rabindra Mukta Vidyalaya in 1998 and it grew into a statutory organization with effect from 1st August 2001 on the basis of Rabindra Mukta Vidyalaya Act 2001. The Rabindra Parishad is a multi-purpose cultural centre located on Beer Chand Patel Path in Patna, India. Rabindra Sarobar is an artificial lake in south Kolkata in the Indian state of West Bengal. Rabindra Tirtha Complex is a cultural center in Narkel Bagan, New Town, Kolkata. It is a project developed by the HTDCO. It is housing an exhibition of Tagore's paintings, archives. There is an auditorium, a research centre.
for students opting to conduct their research on Tagore and dormitories for students. Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School is a secondary school within the Mahatma Gandhi Institute family. It was founded in 2003 by Mr. Putty and named after the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. The school is found in Pamplemousses, a small village in Mauritius. Rabindra Nath Tagore Medical College is a public medical college situated in the city Udaipur, in the Indian state Rajasthan. These are only few of the numerous of them.

Maria Montessori she is not an Indian but her brief stay in India started the Montessori movement in India. There are numerous pre-primary schools which are adopting the Montessori Method of education. There are many institutions and organizations, both in India and abroad, which are named after Maria Montessori For example: Calcutta Montessori Training Centre founded by Sircar and Bose in 1983 is one of the oldest and reputed Montessori Teacher Training Centre in eastern India. The Indian Montessori Centre (IMC) is a society with its headquarters in Bangalore, India. The Indian Montessori Centre supports the India, Montessori Training Courses (IMTC) and propagate the Montessori philosophy and method of education. Indian Institute for Montessori Studies was started in 1996 with the main objective of providing quality Montessori teacher training programs from Bangalore, India. It also aimed to bring back the ideas and methodologies of Dr. Maria Montessori. Keeping the basic principles the same, the method was adapted to suit the needs of the children and teachers in India. To meet the growing need for Montessori training in Chennai, Navadisha Montessori Foundation, established in 2004. The mission of the Foundation is to offer training of a high standard, helping graduates integrate theory and practice. International Montessori Teachers Training Institute (IMTTI), established to help meet the growing demand for Montessori teachers in India and abroad. Students from all states of India, North America, Europe, South Africa, Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, Gulf countries and Far East countries participate in various courses offered by IMTTI. This course equips participants to educate children in the Montessori Method at pre-school level (3 to 6 years of age) anywhere in the world. The Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) is a pan Indian organization.
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established to promote Montessori education in India. It is an affiliate of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) which has its headquarters in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The true relevance of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori as educators will be realized, not only merely by adopting names but also by taking lessons from their lives.

8.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the relevance of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori’s educational ideals and practices in the present day have been explored. Both these educators shall remain relevant in this world for a long time to come. Today child centric education, peace education, environmental education, constructivism are the major concerns of education. Tagore and Montessori stressed on all these aspects of education. The Delors Commission pointed out the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Both Tagore and Montessori’s educational principles reflected on the four pillars of education as pointed out by Delors Commission. The chapter pointed out that today we need to listen once again, to the ideas of Tagore and Montessori, favouring an education that cultivates the critical capacities that fosters the complex understanding of the world and its people.
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Chapter References


