Gandhi and *Nai Talim*: Rural Craft Education for a New Village-Minded Social Order

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Zusammenfassung

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, die Ikone der indischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung, war überzeugt davon, dass eine neue soziale Ordnung für ein Indien frei von kolonialer Unterdrückung und basierend auf seinen Ideen von *sarvodaya* (Wohlstand für alle), *swaraj* (Selbstbestimmung) und wirtschaftlicher Unabhängigkeit nur mit einem radikalen Wandel im Bildungsbereich Realität werden konnte. Er kritisierte, dass Bildung vornehmlich auf die Bedürfnisse der städtischen Eliten, der Kolonialverwaltung und -wirtschaft ausgerichtet war und hatte die Vision einer ‚neuen' Bildung, später auch bekannt als Basic Education oder *Nai Talim*, basierend auf ruralem Handwerk und Landwirtschaft und damit besonders fokussiert auf die ländliche Bevölkerung. Die vorliegende Dissertation rekonstruiert die Herausbildung von Gandhis Bildungsideen und verschiedene Versuche zu deren Institutionalisierung. Dabei kontextualisiert sie seine Sichtweisen vor dem Hintergrund der Debatten um diverse Vorstellungen einer neuen sozialen Ordnung in der indischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung, zeigt auf, wie seine Bildungsideen eng verknüpft waren mit seiner Kritik an der britischen Kolonialherrschaft und nimmt seine Ideen vom Zusammenhang zwischen Bildung und sozialer Transformation in den Blick. Besonderes Augenmerk gilt dabei Gandhis Vorstellungen von manueller Arbeit in der Gesellschaft und welche Rolle er ihr im Bildungsprozess zudachte. Bei der Analyse seiner zentralen Ideen und Metaphern und seiner Vision von *Nai Talim* nimmt die Arbeit auch die diversen damit verbundenen Inspirationsquellen in den Blick und fokussiert auf die von ihm konstruierten symbolischen Bedeutungswelten und visuellen Elemente, die ein wichtiger Teil seiner Selbstrepräsentation und Massenmobilisierung waren und später auch ihren Niederschlag in Bildungsrealitäten fanden. Nicht zuletzt analysiert die Arbeit Institutionalisierungsprozesse, ihre Widersprüche, die Kritik an Gandhi's Ideen und den Wandel von Gandhis ‚Pädagogik der manuellen Arbeit' hin zu einer ‚Pädagogisierung der manuellen Arbeit'.

Abstract

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the icon of the Indian independence movement, was convinced that a new social order for an India free from colonial subjugation and based on his ideas on *sarvodaya* (the welfare of all), *swaraj* (self-rule) and economic self-sufficiency could only become reality with a radical shift in education. He criticized the fact that, hitherto, education had been primarily targeted at the urban elites and the needs of the colonial government and economy and envisioned a 'new' education, later also known as Basic Education or *Nai Talim,* centred on rural crafts and agriculture and targeted especially at village populations. This dissertation traces the historical development of Gandhi's educational ideas. It reconstructs his vision of *Nai Talim* primarily based on his own writings and reflections, contextualises it in ongoing debates in the independence movement on the future of India's social order and analyses how his vision was embedded in his critique of British colonial rule and in the connection he made between education and social reconstruction. A focus thereby is also his understanding of manual labour in society and its relationship with the education process. Analysing key ideas and metaphors in his educational thought, the dissertation refers to his sources of inspiration, his use of symbolism and the visual in his self-presentation and mass mobilization and how elements of these symbolic worlds of meaning also became part of education programmes. Finally, it also deals with the diverse institutional developments based on Gandhi's education ideas, their inherent contradictions, the criticism they generated and the shift from his 'pedagogy of manual work' to a 'pedagogization of manual work'.

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Introduction

> My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequence.[1]

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the icon of the Indian Independence Movement, wrote this in 1937, the year in which his education ideas were debated most fully in his lifetime. In his view, a social revolution was urgently needed to overcome British colonialism, which had left Indian society alienated and impoverished. With his ideas on *sarvodaya*,[2] he envisioned a new social order based on rural self-sufficiency, which, he argued, would help the welfare of all, bringing about equality and an equitable distribution of wealth. For him, education was thereby the central tool with which to achieve this 'silent social revolution', and should be especially geared towards the needs of the rural population. He criticized the fact that, hitherto, education had been primarily targeted at the urban elites and the needs of the colonial government and economy. In his view, this focus had to be radically shifted. This 'new' education, based on rural crafts and agriculture, should enable all people, but especially village populations, to become self-sufficient and be able to produce their food and clothing, as well as other necessities of everyday life themselves. According to Gandhi's vision, the education concept, also known as Basic Education or *Nai Talim*, should contribute to the evolution of a new 'village-minded' social order, able to overcome the divide between urban and rural areas and the negative impacts of colonial rule. With this, he also expressed his particular vision of India's social development after independence, which was opposed to notions of large-scale central planning and industrialization, or other conceptions discussed within and beyond the Indian National Congress.

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[1] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: The Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Gov. of India, 2000), http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/cwmg.html. Vol. 72, p.259. In the following, I will refer to the Collected Works in an abbreviated form as CWMG.

[2] The term was coined by him and he translated it as 'the welfare of all'. *Sarvodaya* was also the title for his translation of the book by John Ruskin, *Unto this Last*. See also: CWMG Vol.44, p.313

Gandhi and his legacy remain a highly contested field of study. Very recently, for example, Faisal Devji has provoked criticism with his book *The Impossible Indian*, which provides a critical re-evaluation of Gandhi's thought on non-violence, and also addresses the inconsistencies in the mainstream historiography on Gandhi. He argues that Gandhi is often viewed from a stereotypical perspective on India's spirituality, rather than taken as a modern intellectual.[3] The problem of hagiography, of treating Gandhi as a mystical saint and teacher, can also be found in the literature on his education ideas. Many authors do not provide a critical analysis, but rather promote Gandhi's ideas in a way to facilitate their implementation anew.[4] Apart from the problem of hagiography, there is very limited historical analysis on the subject and, so far, the research literature on *Nai Talim* has focused mainly on pedagogical and philosophical aspects.[5] However, a few historical studies about aspects of the education model were helpful as a starting point for my dissertation. These are: the work of Kumar on *Nai Talim* in the context of debates about national education,[6] Billimoria's article on the issue of production in Gandhi's education concept,[7] Sinclair's paper analysing the statistics of the implementation of Basic Education between 1937 and 1964,[8] and Fagg's analysis of the debates about Basic Education in 1937.[9]

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[3] Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian. Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), p. 4.

[4] To mention a few: D.P. Nayar, *Towards a National System of Education: Educational Development in India* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1989); Krishna Kumar, "Crafts at School", *India Seminar* 570, February (2007) Maurice Saliba, "An Analytical Review of Basic Education", in: *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Education* 23(1977) 3; B.M. Sankhder, "Gandhi and the National Education Movement", in: *The Contested Terrain. Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998). But, in the German context, there is also a glorification of Gandhi's education ideas, as, for example, in: Gregor Lang-Wojtasik, "Gandhis Nai Talim Im Kontext Von Education for All", in: *Bildung Zur Eigenständigkeit. Vergessene Reformpädagogische Ansätze Aus Vier Kontinenten*, ed. by Asit Datta and Gregor Lang-Wojtasik (Frankfurt: IKO-Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2003).

[5] See, for example, Glyn Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Christian Bartolf, *Gandhis Pädagogik* (Berlin: Gandhi Informationszentrum 1995); Gopalakrishnan Ramanathan, *Education from Dewey to Gandhi. The Theory of Basic Education* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962); Krishna Kumar, "Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi", in: *PROSPECTS* 23 (1993) 3/4.

[6] Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education. A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991); *Politics of Education in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2013).

[7] Purushottama Billimoria, "Gandhi's Vision of Productive Education", in: *The Journal of the Foundation for Education with Production* 9 (1993) 2.

[8] Margaret Sinclair, "Gandhian Basic Education", in *Notes, Comments...* 12 (1976).

[9] Henry Fagg, *Back to the Sources: A Study of Gandhi's Basic Education* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2002).

For my perspective on the history of *Nai Talim*, I am inspired by the debates of a comparative research project on education reforms headed by Professor Jürgen Schriewer. I was part of this from 2009 to 2013, and I worked on the example of India. The project was part of a research project at Humboldt University entitled 'Konstruktion sozialer Deutungsmuster aus dem Geist nationaler Selbstbestimmung: Beruf und Bildung im peronistischen Argentinien und in der indischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung'. In the project, we worked on a framework for a comparative analysis of reform projects, focusing on vocational education in periods of crisis and social change geared at national self-determination. The two cases in our analysis were the education reforms initiated by Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Gandhi's *Nai Talim* in India.[10] We thereby paid particular attention to the history of semantic resources, such as interpretation patterns of manual work and how they supported, impeded or prevented the establishment of specific models of education and vocational training.[11] Of special interest for us were also different visual sources related to the reform projects, such as photographs, paintings and advertising material. Furthermore, in order to better contextualize the reform projects we included a perspective on their 'connected history' – the ways in which they were embedded in transregional and international processes – and the various sources of inspiration that were important for Perón and Gandhi in the formation of their education concepts.

The theoretical framework and the discussions in the research project helped me to develop a critical perspective on much of the available research on *Nai Talim*, and made me curious to find additional primary sources in order to bring to light aspects of *Nai Talim* that have hitherto not been examined. I was also keen to analyse Gandhi's education ideas from the perspective of a connected history of education, that is, looking at the diversity of sources that were inspiring for Gandhi and contemporary transnational flows of ideas that prepared the ground on

[10] See the work of Verónica Oelsner: *"Produzenten Statt Parasiten": Entwürfe Und Wirklichkeiten Beruflicher Ausbildung Im Modernen Argentinien*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XI Pädagogik (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012).

[11] See also: Jürgen Schriewer and Klaus Harney, "Beruflichkeit Versus *Culture Technique*: Zu Einer Soziogenese Arbeitsbezogener Semantik", in: *Arbeit Und Nationalstaat. Frankreich Und Deutschland in Europäischer Perspektive*, ed. by Peter Wagner, Claude Didry, & Bénédicte Zimmermann (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2000); Oelsner, *"Produzenten Statt Parasiten"*; Barbara Schulte, *Zur Rettung des Landes. Bildung und Beruf im China der Republikzeit*, Eigene und Fremde Welten (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008).

which his education ideas germinated.[12] This perspective has been employed by various researchers in their work on Gandhi,[13] but, to my knowledge, only to a very limited extent with regard to his work in education. In this dissertation, I present a complex picture of Gandhi's ideas on education, their formation, his understanding of the role of manual work and related sources of inspiration, their embeddedness in Gandhi's critical view on the legacies of British colonial rule and his vision of a new social order, his employment of symbolism for mass mobilization and its relevance for the realm of education. Moreover, I look at the diverse attempts that have been made to implement his ideas and the contradictions and criticism they generated.

The dissertation is thereby structured as follows. In the first chapter I introduce some key topics discussed among Indian nationalists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries about the effects of British colonial rule on Indian economy and education, and also point to some of Gandhi's early standpoints in these debates. In Chapter 2 I then present Gandhi's key ideas related to his educational thought and his understanding of the relationship between education and social transformation, and point to diverse aspects and personages connected to the history of *Nai Talim*, including Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin and the Progressive Education Movement. Gandhi's employment of symbolism is the focus of Chapter 3, where I discuss the role of symbolism in his self-presentation and the symbolic meanings of his own clothing style, and show how he developed the objects and activities of spinning/the spinning wheel and handmade cloth (*khadi*) into central symbols of his mass mobilization. Institutional developments, and the debates and problems arising with the implementation of his ideas on education, are the focus of Chapters 4 and 5. The story begins in South Africa with the setting up of schools in the two rural communities founded by Gandhi: Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm. After his return to India, and especially during the Non-Cooperation Movement of the early 1920s, he intensified his activities in education, leading to the founding of further education institutions following his

[12] See also: Barnita Bagchi, Eckhardt Fuchs, & Kate Rousmaniere, *Connecting Histories of Education: Transactions, Transculturalisms, and Transnationalisms* (Oxford & New York: Berghahn Books, 2014)

[13] See, for example: Kathryn Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life* (London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006); Thomas Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

ideas. The subject of Chapter 5 is, first, the intensified conceptualization by Gandhi of a model for national education, a seven-year course later also called the Wardha Scheme, Basic Education and also *Nai Talim*. At an education conference in 1937, this scheme was adopted as the key concept for national education and, consequently, there were controversial debates about its basis and practicability. In this chapter I also argue that, in the negotiations about the scheme, one central aspect of Gandhi's original concept had to be given up in order to maintain the other parts of the scheme: the idea of the self-sufficiency of the education institutions. I thereby also discuss Gandhi's role in the institutionalization of the concept and, although this is beyond the main focus of this dissertation, provide a limited outlook with regard to developments concerning *Nai Talim* after independence and Gandhi's death. In the final chapter, also referring back to Chapter 3 on symbolism, I present the results of my case study of education institutions in Sevagram, the *ashram* founded by Gandhi in 1934, on the basis of booklets of photographs I found during my archival research in India. For this I used the set of methods called serial-iconographic photograph analysis and thereby point to the potentials of including visual sources into research on *Nai Talim*.

The primary sources on which the dissertation is based have been collected in archives and libraries in New Delhi (National Memorial Library, National Gandhi Memorial Library, Central Secretariat Library), Berlin (Staatsbibliothek and University Library of Humboldt University) and Berkeley (UC Berkeley Library). The most important primary sources for the dissertation are the online edition of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* and several different editions of his writings, reports of the Basic Education conferences, reports of different government and non-governmental bodies, archival materials of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and materials related to the institutional developments, such as syllabi and photographs as well as reports of contemporary witnesses. The dissertation also draws on secondary sources on Gandhi and his educational thought, his sources of inspiration and Indian history.

Here, it is also important to clarify some of the terminology in the context of Gandhi's education ideas. While Gandhi himself in his writings rarely uses the term, *Nai Talim* (literally 'new education') is the term most frequently used in the

secondary literature to denote the education concept based on his ideas. In the 1940s and 1950s the term was, at times, also used as an umbrella term denoting the different educational stages that developed out of Gandhi's ideas (from kindergarten age to adult education). After the Wardha Conference of 1937, the term first used was Wardha Scheme and later Basic Education when talking about the scheme of seven years' education suggested by Gandhi and adopted by the conference. Gandhi also used the terms 'vocational education' and 'vocational training' at times to describe his educational ideas. As he was not very precise, it is important to keep in mind that what he meant by these terms was primarily a kind of education based on rural traditional craftsmanship training and on rural self-sufficient life (agriculture, manual textile production etc.).

1 Debates on Economy and Education and the Search for Alternative Visions in Early 20th-Century India

1.1 The Textile Industry, Debates on the Economic 'Drain of Wealth' and the *Swadeshi* Movement

Dissatisfaction with British colonial rule culminated in the *Swadeshi* Movement in Bengal (1903–08).[14] The original reason for the protests was the partition of the Bengal Presidency into a predominantly Hindu West Bengal and a predominantly Muslim East Bengal, following Britain's divide-and-rule strategy. But protests against the partition soon broadened into widespread agitation against British colonization per se. India's dependency in colonial economic relations was thereby a central issue in the political mobilization of the movement. From the 1870s onwards, nationalist economists such as Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) developed the 'drain theory', according to which colonial economic relations led to the exploitation of India for the benefit of Britain's industrial economy. Naoroji identified a 'drain' of India's wealth through three different mechanisms. The first was the employment of British professionals instead of Indians, who were excluded from higher ranks of civil service. Naoroji called this the 'moral drain' of India.[15] Secondly, military expenditure was taken from the Indian budget; and thirdly, India had to pay interest on loans for public works such as railways and irrigation.[16] That this drain actually existed is confirmed by recent research on the economic history of India. The historian Amiya Kumar Bagchi argues that the 'home charges', consisting of 3–4 per cent of the country's national income, had

[14] *Swadeshi* is a Hindi word – *swa* means own and *deshi* means country.
[15] John McLane, "The Drain of Wealth and Indian Nationalism at the Turn of the Century", in: *India and the World Economy, 1850–1950*, ed. by G. Balachandran (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 84.
[16] Ajit Kumar Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Economic Thought* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 76–8.

to be paid by India for the 'maintaining of the apparatus of British rule in India'.[17] Most of it was invested in troops and civil servants. Another source of income for the India Office was indirect taxation on consumption goods, such as salt, and the export of opium.

For the *Swadeshi* Movement, this 'drain' of India's wealth, especially unfair economic trade relations in the textile industry, was an important theme for political mobilization. Before colonization India had a successful industry of artisanal textile production.[18] Indian spinners and weavers were highly skilled at producing fine cotton materials, such as Dhaka muslin. These materials were exported by the British EIC to Europe and to South-East Asia.[19] Throughout the 19th century, however, India changed from being an exporter of manufactured textiles into an exporter of raw cotton and an importer of textiles. Industrialization had led to a rapid development of the industrial manufacturing of yarns and cloth in textile mills in England, and, from the 1820s onwards, the flow of goods was reversed and British manufactured cloth was exported to India.[20] This created a massive competition for handloom weaving in India, as 'large amounts of manufactured wares from Britain's Lancashire mills had begun drawing native consumers away from traditional textiles, which had at one time drawn much of the world to India's markets'.[21]

The decline of traditional artisanal textile production due to the competition from machine-spun yarn was not a secret to the colonial administration, and was justified as the price that had to be paid for Indian modernization. An industrialized textile production sector in India did develop, but it remained small when compared with that in England. By the 1850s, the first textile mills were opened in India, mainly in Bombay and later also in Ahmedabad and Kanpur.[22] However, due to the highly developed English technology in their spinning and

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[17] Amiya Kumar Bagchi, "Indian Demography and Economy in the Long *Fin-De-Siècle* 1876-1914", in: *Colonialism and Indian Economy*, ed. by Amiya Kumar Bagchi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 150.

[18] See also: Tirthankar Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[19] Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation. Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 2.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 19.

[22] See also Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, *Existence, Identity and Mobilization: The Cotton Millworkers of Bombay, 1890–1919* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004).

weaving industry, which India couldn't match, the Indian textile industry concentrated on cheap grey cloth, mainly producing for the domestic market. This had the effect that workers remained unskilled or semi-skilled, since the production of the coarse cloth and yarn didn't require occupational improvement.[23] Also, the development of the textile industry in India depended on an import of machinery. This was bound to Britain and its Lancashire technologies, which, at the end of the 19th century, were already outdated in comparison to other European countries (e.g. German spinning technologies were then much more advanced). Skilled personnel (weaving masters, engineers) were first sent from England, and only later were Indians trained according to Lancashire technologies.[24] The Indian textile industry thereby never became successful, even in supplying sufficient material for the domestic market, and Bagchi, furthermore, argues that there was a:

> persistent attempt on the part of the Lancashire interests to increase the sale of their products in India and to depress any increase in sales by Indian mills in the Indian market … in the long run the Lancashire interests managed to impose the policies desired by them on the Government of India.[25]

The shift from being an exporter of excellent manufactured textiles to a mere provider of cotton and cheap grey cloth was especially serious in Bengal, because it had a history of producing world-renowned fine Dhaka muslin. In the *Swadeshi* Movement, textiles and related symbols, such as the spinning wheel, were employed to mobilize mass agitation against India's economic dependence. Protest strategies included the public boycott of foreign manufactured products, especially British textiles, and the call to buy *swadeshi* products, which meant products made in India.[26] The effects of these boycotts were, as intended, a decline in the purchase of imported goods and a rise in the demand for domestic products. In 1906 in Calcutta, there was a '22% fall in the quantity of imported cotton piece goods, 44% in cotton twist and yarn, 11% in salt …' compared with

[23] Dietmar Rothermund, *An Economic History of India. From Pre-Colonial Times to 1991* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2002), p. 53.
[24] Bagchi, "Indian Demography and Economy", p. 182.
[25] Bagchi, "Indian Demography and Economy", p. 178.
[26] For a detailed analysis of the movement see: Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010).

the quantities of the previous year.[27] The Indian textile industry expanded its production following the increasing demand of *swadeshi* textiles, and, between 1904 and 1910, 39 new cotton mills and more than 30,000 looms were established.[28] While Indian textile mills could not produce fine-quality cloth, which was mainly imported from Britain, there was a revival of handloom weaving of fine materials, accompanied by an 'intellectual trend glorifying handicrafts as the Indian or Oriental way to avoid the evils of large-scale industry'.[29]

1.2 Rural Poverty and the Debate about Caste

During British colonial rule, urban centres such as Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were growing. While, in the early 19th century, 11 per cent (17.6 million) of the population lived in cities, the urban population had doubled to 32.8 million by 1911 (but, due to the general growth of the population, it remained at 11% of the total population). After 1920 there was a rapid increase of the urban population: between 1921 and 1951 it more than doubled, and, by 1951, 17.3 per cent of India's total population lived in cities.[30] However, despite the increase of the urban population, the rural population continued to be the large majority and consisted of 82.7 per cent by 1951. This meant that, 'barring the cotton mills, tea and coffee plantations, a few sugar refineries and distilleries, the greater part of India outside the few centers of industry was agricultural', as the historian Bagchi observed.[31]

These figures do not directly show the effects of the disastrous famines that occurred in different regions during British rule. It is estimated that, between 1860 and 1910, the victims of famines and the resulting diseases, such as cholera, amounted to 20 million people.[32] The reasons for the famines were very

[27] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947* (New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 1983), p. 116.
[28] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress. Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 334.
[29] Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, p. 116.
[30] Douglas E. Haynes & Nikhil Rao, "Beyond the Colonial City: Re-Evaluating the Urban History of India, ca. 1920–1970", *SouthAsia. Journal of South Asian Studies* XXXVI (2013) 3, pp. 322–3.
[31] Bagchi, "Indian Demography and Economy", p. 184.
[32] David Arnold, *Südasien*, ed. by Jörg Fisch, Wilfried Nippel, & Wolfgang Schwentker, Neue Fischer Weltgeschichte. Band 11 (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2012), p. 412.

complex.[33] However, one important factor also connected to the aforementioned economic developments increasing India's dependency, was an increased vulnerability to food shortages due to a change in cropping patterns. After the 1850s, there was a 'rapid expansion of new types of exports from India – Western Indian raw cotton, Punjab wheat, Bengal jute, Assam tea, south Indian oilseeds and hides and skins, etc.'.[34] The Industrial Revolution in England generated huge demands for such raw materials and, at the same time, the construction of the railways and the opening of the Suez Canal made agricultural exports of cash crops on a large scale possible. This led to a massive shift in cropping patterns, with a reduction of the land used for food crops and increased production for export. This is seen as an important factor in escalating the vulnerability of the rural population especially, to hunger and even famine.[35]

While the colonial government invested comparably little in agriculture, at the same time enormous investments were made in the building of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways (starting in 1844) and telegraph links, in order to enable the export of raw materials to England and the import of manufactured goods. These investments were financed through tax and, because farmers and farm labourers comprised the majority of the population, mainly through their taxes, increasing their financial pressures. Despite this, these investments barely created any skilled labouring jobs for the rural population.[36]

Quite apart from the difficult economic situation of the rural population, another topic that is important to keep in mind for this dissertation, because it captured Gandhi's attention – particularly during the 1930s – is caste. Caste is a complex factor in the history of marginalization of (not only) the rural population, and even though the topic is far too complicated to go into detail here, it is important to mention some key issues. The economist Sukhadeo Thorat defines caste as a 'system of social and economic governance (…) based on distinct principles and customary rules'. Thereby, the caste system 'involves the division of people into

[33] See, for example: Sanjay Sharma, *Famine, Philanthropy and the Colonial State: North India in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[34] Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, p. 25.
[35] Surinder Jodhka, "Agrarian Structures and their Transformations", in: *The Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology*, ed. by Veena Das (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 1220–1.
[36] See the argument in chapter 3 of Rothermund, *An Economic History of India*, pp. 19-30

social groups (or castes) in which the social and economic rights of each individual caste are pre-determined by birth'.[37] There is also controversial debate concerning how static a definition of caste can be, but I will not go into that matter in detail here.[38] The mechanisms of oppression based on caste, such as unequal and hierarchical division of rights, have been the subject of massive protests, especially among those who were (and are still today) suffering most from caste-based discrimination, that is, the so-called 'untouchables' at the lowest strata of society.[39]

In his preoccupation with the marginalized role of manual work in society, Gandhi, himself a member of a rather privileged caste, also saw caste as to blame due to its rigid ideas of segregating society according to a hierarchical order of 'better' and 'worse' or 'pure' and 'impure' occupations:

> We look down upon those who do manual work. In Kathiawad one has to bathe if one happens to touch a weaver. Since all this is being done in the name of religion, we have become complacent. The main reason for all this is that we acquiesced in our slavery and abjectness for so many years. Had we assigned to craftsmen and artisans a place of dignity in society, like other countries we too would have produced many scientists and engineers. But now we must wake up.[40]

For Gandhi, it was a shame that those working with their hands and belonging to the lowest strata of the caste system were regarded as impure and therefore often subject to caste-based discrimination; he also saw this situation as connected to India's 'slavery' in colonial power structures. In his critical statements on caste he was not alone. Issues of caste and caste-based discrimination had, for a long time, been at the centre of controversial debates among nationalists with regard to a reform of Hinduism and Indian society.[41] In the search for a solution with which to address the situation, Gandhi held a moderate standpoint. He was not, in general, opposed to the caste system, and believed in a voluntary 'change of heart'

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[37] S. Thorat, "Caste, Exclusion and Poverty", in *Unquiet Worlds: Dalit Voices and Visions*, ed. by M. Sharma (New Delhi: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2004), p. 21.

[38] See, for example, the recent publication: Sumit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2013).

[39] The term used today is Dalits, meaning 'downtrodden' or 'oppressed'. See, for example, an historical overview of the Dalit Movement in: G. Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991).

[40] CWMG Vol. 95, p. 332 Gandhi

[41] See especially chapters 4 and 6 in: Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

of those privileged by it rather than in radical reforms.[42] At the same time, he also stressed the importance of social work benefitting what he called the *harijan* communities.[43] His approach was heavily criticized by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), a lawyer and social reformer born into an 'untouchable' community, who had studied in England and the USA.[44] Contemporary to Gandhi, he became the most prominent voice of what today is called the Dalit Movement. Ambedkar criticized Gandhi's approach towards the problem of caste-based discrimination as too weak and his approach as paternalistic.[45] The two men also had very different ideas on education as a tool to solve the problem. While Gandhi, as I will further develop in the next part of the chapter, section 1.3, strongly opposed the kind of education that developed during British colonialism, Ambedkar was convinced of the liberating effects of English education in the fight against upper-caste domination, and wanted to increase the access of 'untouchable' children to higher education.[46]

1.3 Beyond Colonial Education: The Search for Alternative Visions

The main political platform where Indians raised criticism against British colonialism was the Indian National Congress (INC), founded in 1885. Education was, from very early on, a major subject in debates about the effects of colonial rule, and the historian Sabyasachi Bhattacharya even argues that '… the habits of mind and the disposition to participate as citizens in debating how to chart the

[42] On his take on the caste system see: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Varnashramadharma* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962).
[43] *Harijan* means 'children of god', a term often criticized as paternalistic.
[44] For further information, see also: Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*; Christophe Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability. Analysing and Fighting Caste* (London: Hurst, 2005); Vasanth Moon (ed.), *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Writings and Speeches* (Bombay Education Department. Government of Maharashtra, 1991).
[45] On the debate see also: S. Nikam, *Destiny of Untouchables in India. Divergent Approaches and Strategies of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar* (New Delhi: Deep&Deep Publications, 1998). Important writings of Ambedkar in this regard were: B.R. Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables* (Bombay: Thacker & Co., 1943); *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (Bombay: Thacker, 1946); and his book, first published in 1937, *The Annihilation of Caste* (New York: Columbia University, 2004).
[46] See also: Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education*, p. 105.

course of development of the nation began to form in the educational discourse'.[47] The demands for education by the nationalists were manifold and cannot be treated as a unified voice. However, some similar themes can be identified. There was, for example, criticism of the fact that the government only gave a low priority to education in their public expenditures, that there existed racial bias in appointments to the government education service, and that scientific and technical education was neglected. Demands were also made for more self-government – (not only) in the realm of education policies – for the promotion of vernacular languages and for the inculcation of patriotism through education.[48]

For the first time in his writings Gandhi laid out his ideas on education in his political manifesto *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1908, when he was still living in South Africa.[49] Foreshadowing his later engagement in the field after his return to India in 1915, in one chapter of *Hind Swaraj* he formulated his critique on the current state of education in India, and his suggestions to overcome the problems. He thereby presented three main arguments: firstly, that he was concerned that education of Indians in the English language made them strangers in their own country and that, therefore, education should take place through the vernacular languages. Secondly, he was convinced that India needed its masses to be educated, and that a solution therefore lay in the model of pre-colonial village schools. And, finally, he criticized the fact that education was mainly concentrated on 'book learning', and argued in favour of practical education, which, for him, was also closely connected to moral education. In the following, I will take a closer look at Gandhi's arguments in *Hind Swaraj*, and contextualize them in wider debates about the future of education.

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[47] Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 'Introduction', in: *Educating the Nation: Documents on the Discourse of National Education in India 1880–1920*, ed. by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Joseph Bara, & Chinna Rao Yagati (Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors in association with Educational Records Research Unit, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2003), p. x.

[48] Ibid., p. ix-xxiv

[49] For a detailed contextualization of *Hind Swaraj* see: Anthony Parel, *Gandhi: 'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings (Centenary Edition)* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2009), as well as: Tridip Suhrud, "Gandhi's Key Writings: In Search of Unity", in: *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, ed. by Judith M. Brown & Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

1.3.1 The 'Enslavement' of Indians through English Education

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi argued that the introduction of English as language of instruction in schools was an enslavement of the Indians: 'The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us …. Is it not a sad commentary that we should have to speak of Home Rule in a foreign tongue?'[50] With respect to abandoning the English language within education, he argued that education in the vernacular languages needed to be revived in order to 'drive the English language out of the field in a short time'.[51] With this criticism, Gandhi referred to massive debates about the role of English versus the local languages in colonial education policy. When the East India Company (EIC) first started to play an active role in education it did so primarily by acting as patron for existing religious higher educational institutions, which mainly taught in Persian and Sanskrit.[52] After the 1790s, when pressure in England grew to include 'moral improvement' of the 'natives' as an important part of the colonial enterprise, missionaries started to open schools in the territories of the EIC, teaching in the local languages.[53]

In the Orientalist–Anglicist Controversy of the 1830s, the Orientalists favoured education in Indian languages and culture (so-called 'oriental education'), while the Anglicists wanted to introduce education in English.[54] From 1835 onwards, this latter group became most influential in the Committee for Public Instruction of the EIC. Lord Macaulay, for example, was very influential in the introduction of English education, and argued that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'.[55] Out of this cultural

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[50] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Madras: G.A. Natesan & Co., 1922), p. 91.

[51] See also: "Every cultured Indian will know in addition to his own provincial language, if a Hindu Sanskrit; if a Mahomedan Arabic; if a Parsee Persian (…) A universal language for India should be Hindi, with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters", in: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 94.

[52] Harald Fischer-Tiné, "Vom Wissen Zur Macht. Koloniale Und 'Nationale' Bildungsmodelle in Britisch Indien, Ca.1781-1920", in: *Südasien in Der 'Neuzeit'. Geschichte Und Gesellschaft, 1500–2000*, ed. by Karin Preisendanz & Dietmar Rothermund (Vienna: Promedia, 2003), p. 93.

[53] Ibid., p.94

[54] For a detailed account of the so-called Orientalist–Anglicist Controversy see: Lynn Zastoupil & Martin Moir, *The Great Indian Education Debate. Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781–1843* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999).

[55] See reprint of "Lord Macaulay's Minute", in: *Britain in India, 1765–1905. Volume 3: Education and Colonial Knowledge*, ed. by John Marriott & Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), p. 147.

arrogance he proposed to educate a 'class' of mediators, helpful in the colonial efforts:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.[56]

Following this rationale, Governor-General William Bentinck filed a resolution in 1835 that education in government-funded schools had to be conducted in English.[57] The strategy behind this was called 'downward filtration', and the idea was that English-educated indigenous elites would serve the colonial administration and pass their education on to the general population. However, it is important to note that the expansion of English education was not only desired by the colonizers but also by Indian elites, and wealthy Indians even materially supported its introduction.[58]

By 1854, it became clear that this strategy of filtration did not work. Charles Wood, after surveying the situation of education, came to the conclusion in his 'dispatch' that the idea had failed and that a more efficient kind of education was needed in order to:

> teach the natives of India the marvellous results of the employment of labour and capital, rouse them to emulate us in the development of the vast resources of their country (…) and at the same time secure to us a large and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufactures and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour.[59]

Wood's dispatch led to the introduction of a three-tiered education system based on English models and English curricula. Consequently, the first universities following an English model were established in 1857 as administrative and examination institutions, together with affiliated colleges.[60] The secondary schools prepared for the matriculation exam for entry into the universities and fed

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[56] Ibid., p. 158

[57] Tim Allender, "How the State Made and Unmade Education in the Raj, 1800–1919", in: *Transformations in Schooling: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by K. Tolley (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 68.

[58] Ibid., p. 72

[59] B.D. Bhatt & J.C. Aggarwal, *Educational Documents in India, 1813–1968. Survey of Indian Education* (Delhi: Arya Book Depot, 1969), p. 10.

[60] Institutions in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Allahabad were founded after the model of the University of London and its affiliated colleges.

into the colleges. The schools at the primary level were the least changed (that is, government village/*tahsil*[61]/*zilla*[62]/Anglo-vernacular schools).[63] This system was totally geared towards university admission, with the effect that '… even at the lower levels of government schooling, simplified but fragmented learning about Western subjects attempted to prepare students for these later examinations'.[64] With this system, knowledge of English became of central importance for Indians looking to secure future lucrative employment. On the other hand, those with insufficient knowledge in English were further excluded.

In 1857, colonial rule was confronted by a large protest movement, called the 'mutiny' or 'revolt'. As a consequence, the colonial administration withdrew from rural areas – deemed as unsafe – and instead concentrated its activities in urban areas that were more easily controlled.[65] This trend also continued when the British Crown took over the rule from the EIC in 1858. Governance of education was, from then onwards, executed by the secretary of state for India and the viceroy in Calcutta, while the administration of education lay in the hands of provincial governments.[66] After the revolt, Wood's successor, Stanley, introduced stricter government control of the education sector in 1859. The instrument to regulate the introduction of English education was called the Grants-in-Aid System, and aimed at the opening of schools by educated Indians and missionaries. Private educational institutions could, under this system, apply for government funding if they complied with certain standards, such as the implementing standardized curricula and maintaining religious neutrality. The role of the colonial government, therefore, was mainly the setting of standards, the running of few model institutions to be copied by the Indians and the supervision of the aided educational institutions.[67] This policy of a planned expansion of English education stirred a debate about the role of the vernacular languages in

[61] Administrative division also known as *taluka*, the second layer between the village and the district.
[62] Can be translated as 'district'.
[63] Allender, "How the State Made and Unmade Education in the Raj, 1800–1919", p. 76.
[64] Ibid., p. 78
[65] Ibid., p. 68
[66] Clive Whitehead, *Colonial Educators. British Indian and Colonial Education Service 1858–1983* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2003), p. 6.
[67] Allender, "How the State Made and Unmade Education in the Raj, 1800–1919", p. 76.

education.[68] At the same time, elementary education remained the most neglected of the three educational tiers, and, until 1882, only 1 per cent of the Indian population received a school education.[69]

The construction of the idea that English language and knowledge systems were superior was also manifest in the government education service. There was overt discrimination against 'natives' who wanted to work in the education service. English personnel were seen as far more adequate to ensure that the Indians would comply with the standards of education set by the colonial government. From 1896 onwards, there existed an official programme, the Indian Education Service, which sent British education personnel (mainly young university graduates) to India to work in the highest administrative and technical positions.[70] Indians could only get posts at the lower provincial level, a state of affairs which they opposed strongly.[71]

1.3.2 The Superiority of Pre-Colonial Education Models

Returning to Gandhi's opinions, as expressed in *Hind Swaraj*, in his second argument he pointed to the superiority of pre-colonial models of education. He thereby also referred to a certain definition of 'liberal education', and pointed to its importance in transforming the instrument of education into something better than an instrument of colonial domination.[72] In this definition, Gandhi drew on the 1869 essay by Thomas Huxley (1825–1895), biologist and specialist in science

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[68] See section V of the documents in: *Educating the Nation: Documents on the Discourse of National Education in India 1880–1920*, ed. by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Joseph Bara, & Chinna Rao Yagati (Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors in association with Educational Records Research Unit, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2003).

[69] Fischer-Tiné, "Vom Wissen Zur Macht. Koloniale und 'Nationale' Bildungsmodelle in Britisch Indien, ca. 1781-1920", p. 101.

[70] For a detailed study of the Indian Education Service (1896–1924), sending British education professionals to India, see: Whitehead, *Colonial Educators*. In the 1920s, the Education Service became more and more Indianized, finally leading to the end of the programmes of the IES by 1924. Sending British education professionals to work in all of the British colonies was then continued by the Colonial Education Service (1924–61).

[71] For original sources criticizing racial discrimination, see section III in: Bhattacharya, Bara, & Yagati (eds.), *Educating the Nation*

[72] In this regard, Gandhi later also found very clear words for his criticism: 'The British had a selfish motive in introducing this system of education because they wanted to rule over you. They provided you a system of education that produced clerks. It was an administrative trick of the British to give us such education as would automatically bind us to their service, as clerks to bosses in an office.' CWMG Vol. 95, p.77

education.[73] Huxley stated that a person whose 'body is the ready servant of his will', who has a clear intellect and 'whose mind is stored with the fundamental truths of nature' has had a liberal education. Furthermore, a person educated in such a way has trained all passions and 'respects others as himself'.[74] Gandhi used Huxley's point to support his argument that religious and ethical education was most important and that 'Western education' was not needed to achieve this: 'Our ancient school system is enough. Character-building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.'[75]

Gandhi here referred to an argument prominent in nationalist debates about education, namely that, rather than taking over alien models of education, Indians should re-evaluate their own roots. Before colonization, so the argument went, there had been a well-functioning system of village schools that needed to be revived. Information on this pre-colonial educational landscape in India had also been collected in detailed surveys authorized by the EIC. The Adams Reports documented the situation of indigenous education and a vital system of village schooling.[76] In these schools, a group of children was taught by one teacher, often in the open air or on a veranda, and the schools combined academic education with learning a trade.[77] There also existed occupational apprenticeships, and craft education took place in caste communities and families.[78] Also, recent research points to the existence of *patshalas* and *tols* (Sanskrit schools) for Hindus;[79] *maktabs* (village schools) and *madrassas* (Koran schools) for Muslims. Access to the *tols*, the Sanskrit schools, was reserved for high-caste groups and '… it was believed that a person learned in these should not engage in manual labour'.[80]

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[73] The complete text of Huxley's *A Liberal Education* originally published in 1868 is available online at: http://grammar.about.com/od/classicessays/a/huxleyeducation.htm (retrieved 08.02.2015).
[74] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, pp. 89–90.
[75] *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 91.
[76] William Adam's extensive surveys of the village schools of Bengal and Bihar up to 1838, for example, found literacy rates to be 6.1 per cent for males and 3.1 per cent for females; see Allender, "How the State Made and Unmade Education in the Raj, 1800–1919", p. 70.
[77] Sarada Balagopalan, "Constructing Indigenous Childhoods: Colonialism, Vocational Education and the Working Child", in: *Childhood* 9 (2002) 1, p. 26.
[78] Ramanbhai Bhatt, *The Role of Vocational and Professional Education in the Economic Development of India, from 1918 to 1951* (Baroda: Baroda Pub. House, 1964), pp. 135–7.
[79] Village schools or 'community-based schools for the lower classes'. See: Balagopalan, "Constructing Indigenous Childhoods", p. 26. See also the research of Jana Tschurenev on *patshalas*: "'Patshalas into Schools'. Das 'Monitorial System of Education' in Bengalen (1815–35) ", *Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* 16 (2011), pp. 11-38.
[80] Balagopalan, "Constructing Indigenous Childhoods", p. 27.

This means that this 'ancient school system' was also highly segregated according to pre-colonial frameworks of caste hierarchy. In his arguments in *Hind Swaraj*, this was however not a point to which Gandhi paid special attention, but, as already mentioned, he dealt with problems related to caste-based discrimination more fully later in his life. Gandhi argued that it was the fault of the colonizers that the 'beautiful tree' of ancient education in India had perished:

> I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago … , because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things, as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root, and left the root like that, and the beautiful tree perished.[81]

As already mentioned, the destruction of indigenous education by British colonial rule was a very prominent argument in nationalist education debates. However, recent research has also pointed to the inherent complexities of the colonial encounter.[82] On the one hand, the education scientist Madhu Singh argues that:

> One of the most immediate effects of colonial involvement in India was to destroy indigenous education patterns which had close links to technical and vocational learning and cultural practices of local people. The conversion from Hinduism removed many families from the traditional caste system of occupational apprenticeship, robbing them of their traditional livelihoods systems.[83]

On the other hand, education historian Joseph Bara also points to the ambiguities arising as hitherto marginalized groups, such as tribal communities, gained access to education, for example, through missionary societies.[84]

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[81] Speech at Chatham House, London, 20 October 1931, see: CWMG Vol. 54, p.59

[82] See also, for example, the dissertation of Jana Tschurenev on the role of missionary societies and the Bell–Lancaster System in India: *Imperial Experiments in Education: Monitorial Schooling in India, 1789–1835*. Ph.D Dissertation (Berlin: Humboldt Universität Berlin, 2008).

[83] Madhu Singh, "Reflections on Colonial Legacy and Dependency in Indian Vocational Education and Training (Vet). A Societal and Cultural Perspective", in: *Journal of Education and Work* 14 (2002) 2, p. 212.

[84] Joseph Bara, "Western Education and Rise of New Identity: Mundas and Oraons of Chotanagpur, 1839–1939", *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (1997) 15, pp. 785-90; "Christian Missionaries and Popular Education in India, 1910–40", in: *Indian Social Science Review. A Multidisciplinary Journal* 2 (2000) 2, pp. 301-33; "Seeds of Mistrust: Tribal and Colonial Perspectives on Education in Chhotanagpur, 1834-C.1850", in: *History of Education* 34 (2005) 6, pp. 617-37.

1.3.3 Debates on the Relationship between Manual Work and Education

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi mainly stressed the importance of vernacular languages and moral education. This is interesting because, at the time at which he was writing – in 1908 – he and his co-workers were already starting to experiment with education in their communal farm Phoenix Settlement, and thereby especially stressed the importance of manual work and competencies related to a self-sufficient life in a rural settlement – what later became the central issue in his education concept. The fact that Gandhi, at this point, did not stress this issue is all the more interesting since Thomas Huxley, whom Gandhi quoted in his chapter on education in *Hind Swaraj*, referred very clearly to the importance of combining intellectual and manual work in his original quote, and even mentioned spinning as an example of manual work.[85] Gandhi, however, referred to an abbreviated version of the quote and skipped these parts.

While in *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi did not stress this point, the need to make education more 'practical' and relevant was debated by diverse actors of the nationalist movement. For example during the *Swadeshi* Movement the neglect of scientific and technical education by the colonial government was much debated on.[86] By the 1870s, if people had access to education at all, it was English education, primarily in the liberal arts, and those who had access to this tried to utilize it and obtain secure employment in government services. Technical education, however, was much talked about but little implemented. In his research on technical education in the context of British colonialism, the historian Daniel R. Headrick argues that it was a complex interaction of different factors that led to a very limited development of technical education in India. One important factor was racial discrimination and securing well-paying employment for the British:

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[85] Full original quote: 'That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; *whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind*; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself.' See: http://grammar.about.com/od/classicessays/a/huxleyeducation_2.htm (emphasis added).

[86] See: Haridas Mukherjee & Uma Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement*, 2nd edition [1957] (Calcutta: National Council of Education, 2000). See also the original documents in section VII in: Bhattacharya, Bara, & Yagati (eds.), *Educating the Nation*.

> It was the Europeans who were reluctant to admit Asians and North Africans into their engineering schools and scientific institutes, and into the corresponding careers. Here their argument that non-Europeans had a cultural bias against technology was not an explanation but an excuse, or even a weapon.[87]

The argument put forward was that, on the one hand, Indians per se were less able to learn to do technical work to the standard of Europeans. On the other, it was argued that caste thinking brought about a reluctance of educated Indians to be involved in practical work because of the upper-caste idea that there was a division between intellectual work and manual work: 'Among the arguments against investing in technical education, one of the most often used was the bias of middle- and upper-class Indians toward book learning, academic studies, and clerical careers.'[88] Headrick argues that there was also a fear that technologies leading to import-substitution industries 'threatened to bring forth native industrialists, engineers, technicians, and factory workers who would have challenged the authority of the colonial regimes'.[89] The limited development of technical education led to a situation where Indians held the lowest and unskilled posts in many industrial branches, while professionals were hired in England.[90] For example, in 1886 the Public Works Department employed only 86 Indians and 119 Eurasians out of a total of 1,015 engineers.[91] This racial bias was also visible in the railway sector: 'Europeans held the managerial and higher technical jobs, Eurasians the midlevel skilled and supervisory positions, and Indians were on the bottom, in the unskilled jobs.'[92]

The lack of technical education was no secret to the colonial government. In 1882, the Hunter Commission had been established to work out suggestions for the future of education in India. In its final report, the commission recommended that primary education should take place in the local languages, that education should be relevant for the everyday life of the children and not just be seen as entrance to

[87] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, p. 309.
[88] Ibid., p. 336
[89] Ibid., p. 381
[90] British civil engineers were, for example, trained at the Royal Indian Engineering College at Cooper's Hill between 1872 and 1906 for their work in India. See: Brendan Cuddy & Tony Mansell, "Engineers for India: The Royal Indian Engineering College at Cooper's Hill", *History of Education* 23 (1994) 1, pp. 107–23.
[91] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, p. 320.
[92] Ibid., p. 322

the universities, and that state education should embrace indigenous schools but interfere as little as possible in terms of curriculum.[93] However, these recommendations were not implemented and, instead, secondary and collegiate education in the cities was expanded.[94] With regard to the call for more 'relevant' education, the commission recommended a diversification of higher secondary education, 'one leading to the entrance examination of the universities, and the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literacy pursuits'.[95] However, the introduction of such 'practical' education was not met by adequate funding, and, rather than competent technicians, only *mistries* (skilled craftsmen) were employed.[96] This was also justified on the basis that those who had access to education were from the upper castes and therefore 'were less inclined to tak[e] up manual jobs than literary and administrative occupations'.[97] At the same time, this conglomerate of arguments and decision-making processes also led to a situation where education based on 'practical' knowledge (e.g. craft production) came to be seen as something for the less privileged groups of society.[98]

The already mentioned *Swadeshi* Movement, in reaction to the partition of Bengal, was a central catalyst for debates and reform initiatives, including in the realm of technical and scientific education: 'the Bengali reformers were concerned with educating the people in preparation for something akin to Jawaharlal Nehru's later concept of national industrialisation, while resuscitating the religious and moral values of traditional society'.[99] As the Bengali nationalist leader S.N. Banerjee proclaimed: 'We must be swadeshi in all things, swadeshi in

[93] Allender, 'How the State Made and Unmade Education in the Raj, 1800–1919', p. 80.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 21, quoted in Singh, "Reflections on Colonial Legacy", p. 211.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p. 210
[98] See also the arguments in: Balagopalan, "Constructing Indigenous Childhoods", and the recent research by Arun Kumar of Göttingen University on industrial schools: https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/439407.html. (retrieved 25.01.2015)
[99] Mark Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1993), p. 158. Thereby, it is also important to note that, in the realm of education, *swadeshi* was not necessarily equal to compartmentalization; see, for example, the argument in: Kris Manjapra, "Knowledgeable Internationalism and the Swadeshi Movement, 1903-1921", *Economic and Political Weekly* XLVII (2012) 42, pp. 53–62.

our thoughts, and in our educational methods and development.'[100] Student activism played an important role in the movement, and the harsh reaction by the government – such as expelling the student protesters from their educational institutions – created a spirit of self-sacrifice and increased student activities even more.[101] As an effect of the massive boycott of government-controlled educational institutions and the expelling of student activists, many students did not go to school or college. In 1906, the INC held a session in Calcutta and took up the question of 'national education'. In its resolution it:

> resolved that in the opinion of this Congress the time has arrived for the people all over the country to take up the question of National Education for both boys and girls, and organize a system of education, literary, scientific and technical, suited to the requirements of the country, on national lines and under national control.[102]

Out of the various ideas to provide alternative education, there also developed initiatives offering technical and scientific education. The National Council of Education (NCE) and the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education (SPTE) were founded in 1906 in Calcutta. The NCE worked out a new education system, made up of three years of primary education, seven years of secondary and four years of collegiate education, including scientific and technical courses.[103] It started eleven high schools in Bengal and forty in East Bengal. It also opened a model college in Calcutta, the Bengal National College. These developments were the foundation for similar initiatives in other provinces. However, the movement was strongest in Bengal.[104] The SPTE founded the Bengal Technical Institute in 1906, offering practical training in 'tanning, soap making, dyeing, ceramics, electroplating, lithography, carpentry, and elementary mechanical and electrical engineering'.[105] It was, however, difficult for these new educational institutions to survive after the British government changed course in the conflict and withdrew the partition in 1911. After the First World War, the situation of technical education changed a little, and 'the 1920s saw technical

[100] Quoted in: Rebecca M. Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel and the Making of India*, Routledge Studies in South Asian History (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 11.
[101] S.S. Dikshit, *Nationalism and Indian Education* (Delhi, Jullundur: Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd., 1966), p. 142.
[102] Ibid., p. 144
[103] Mukherjee and Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement*, p. 50.
[104] Dikshit, *Nationalism and Indian Education*, p. 147.
[105] Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*, p. 335.

schools springing up all over'.[106] Headrick argues that this was due to the fact that there was a need for basic technical training in order to introduce new technologies. However, this did not fundamentally change the power structures based on colonial racism:

> Every time a new process or piece of equipment was introduced into a colony, it came with European experts to set it up and to operate it (…) Of course it would have been prohibitive to use Europeans in semiskilled or unskilled jobs, and therefore the colonial governments encouraged technical training up to a certain level: to secondary schools in Africa, and to colleges in Egypt and India. But education to handle the newest technologies, or to install and manage complex systems, was reserved for Europeans as long as possible.[107]

In this chapter, I have mapped some of debates on the negative impact of colonial domination in the fields of economy and education. Now, against the background of this conglomerate of debates, I will turn to Gandhi's arguments and set out the major ideas and international connections in his education thought.

[106] Ibid., p. 339. He presents figures showing that the number of secondary-level technical and industrial schools rose from 242 in 1911–12 to 536 in 1936–37, and that these schools had about 30,000 students in 1936–37. He also states that the number of agricultural colleges rose from 219 in 1901–02 to 1,500 in the 1930s, but also argues that only 2–3% of the graduates worked in farming after obtaining their degree, the rest in government offices (p. 340).
[107] Ibid., p. 382

2 *Sarvodaya*, *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*: Major Ideas and International Connections in Gandhi's Thought on Education

Gandhi was interested in many different topics, and connected to and inspired by diverse thinkers and activists. With regard to his religious belief, for example, the sociologist Jonathan Hyslop concludes that he 'was in a sense developing his own religion, largely Hindu in form, but infused with Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Jain, secular-philosophical, and Theosophist ideas and texts.'[108] Such processes of appropriation and hybridization are not only typical of Gandhi's religious life, but also of his education ideas. I am therefore especially interested in such processes, his multiple sources of inspiration and how he refined his own desiderata from it.

Gandhi was convinced that, for his vaguely envisioned social order, free from violence and therewith colonial domination, manual work, such as village crafts and agriculture, was the most important pedagogical tool. I say 'vaguely' here, referring to the statement of Kathryn Tidrick, a biographer of Gandhi, that, in Nehru's words, he was 'delightfully vague' when it came to a clear definition of *swaraj*, and that Gandhi believed that 'the journey and the destination were intimately conjoined'.[109] Gandhi called his envisioned social order *sarvodaya*, translated by himself as 'the welfare of all'.[110] Several biographers have pointed to the fact that he was constantly rethinking his ideas on this envisioned social order and, rather than expressing them in a succinct form, was 'thinking aloud'.[111] He presented his ideas via metaphors, topoi and imagination also, and, as I will later show in this regard, in addition to his, at times, rather unsystematic thought, represented them through his public appearance and symbolism (see Chapter 3).

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[108] Jonathan Hyslop, "Gandhi 1869–1915: The Transnational Emergence of a Public Figure", in: *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, ed. by Judith M. Brown & Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 42.
[109] Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, p. xv.
[110] CWMG Vol. 44, p. 313.
[111] Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Economic Thought*, p. 133.

In the following, I map some of the major ideas in Gandhi's thought on education. First, I take a closer look at his ideas for a new social order (*sarvodaya*) and his belief in the power of education to bring about social transformation. I thereby pay special attention to his understanding of the concepts of *swaraj* and *swadeshi*. Secondly, I point to the topos of the 'good village' that Gandhi endorsed, and I will further outline this in section 2.2. In section 2.3, I examine Gandhi's ideas on the role of manual work (what I call Gandhi's 'pedagogy of manual work') in the educational process and his sources of inspiration for these ideas. Finally, in section 2.4, I delve further into questions regarding the transnational flows of ideas, and point to some interesting connections between Gandhi and members of the Progressive Education Movement.

2.1 Gandhi's Ideas on Social Transformation

2.1.1 Sarvodaya – *The New Social Order*

For Gandhi, education was inseparable from its function within the creation of a new social order, which he called *sarvodaya*, the welfare of all.[112] He believed that this social order would bring about the transformation from an India subjugated to British colonial domination to a new society exercising *swaraj* (self-rule). His conceptualization of a new society was, therefore, based on his ideas of the importance of ethical principles in economics:

> I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus, the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral.[113]

The ethical principles in his economic thought are thereby twofold. On the one hand, he believed in the importance of a limitation of wants instead of the principle of economic growth. He saw it as important to reflect upon one's wants

[112] This was the title he gave to his Gujarati translation of the book by John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*; see: CWMG Vol. 44, p. 313. *Sarvodaya* is the composition of the Hindi words '*sarva*' = all, common, and '*udaya*' = welfare, uplift.
[113] *Young India*, 13 October 1921, see: M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, ed. R.K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1947), p. 70.

and to limit the material desire to 'basic needs' (although it was not very clear what this should mean).[114] On the other hand, he argued that the principle of *swadeshi* was important in economics. For him, this meant the moral duty to help one's neighbours and therefore to buy local products and support local producers:

> If we follow the Swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible.[115]

This vision of self-sufficient rural communities was based on his critique of the unfair economic structures implemented by British colonial rule. As he argued: 'England has sinned against India by forcing free trade upon her. It may have been food for her, but it has been poison for this country.'[116] He thus particularly concentrated his arguments on the production and consumption of textiles made in India from yarn spun by hand, instead of foreign-made industrially manufactured textiles:[117]

> But India cannot live for Lancashire or any other country before she is able to live for herself. And she can live for herself only if she produces and is helped to produce everything for her requirements within her own borders. She need not be, she ought not be, drawn into the vortex of mad and ruinous competition which breeds fratricide, jealousy and many other evils. But who is to stop her great millionaires from entering into the world competition? Certainly no legislation. Force of public opinion and proper education, however, can do a great deal in the desired direction.[118]

This quote also points to his strong belief in the power of education to change even the mind-set of India's 'great millionaires'. However, while he reiterated the central elements in his view, such as non-violence (meaning, for example, service to others rather than their exploitation), simplicity, life in rural village republics, and undertaking manual work, especially agriculture and village crafts, ultimately leading to the self-sufficiency of the communities, Gandhi remained quite vague

[114] Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Economic Thought*, p. 141.
[115] Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, p. 124.
[116] CWMG Vol. 15, p. 163.
[117] Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Economic Thought*, p. 143.
[118] Date of original publication not mentioned, Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, p. 123.

when it came to the practical realization of this new social order.[119] But, at times, he did formulate a glimpse of his vision, as in this example:

> The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central factor, and it will have village Panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi.[120]

Interestingly, in this utopian quote he not only mentioned the importance of hygiene, the accessibility of wells and temples (pointing to caste-based discrimination and the ban of so-called 'untouchables' from using village wells or entering temples) and cooperative agriculture,[121] but also the centrality of 'industrial' education. The term 'industrial education' had been used as an equivalent for 'vocational education' in the missionary and colonial literature since the late 19th century,[122] and in my interpretation Gandhi also used the term here in this sense, as he was strictly opposed to industrialism and machine-made articles.[123]

According to his argument, machine-made articles (especially machine-made textiles) became a symbol of Western or 'modern' civilization. He argued that, by copying the model of 'modern civilization' brought to India by the English, *swaraj* (self-rule) could not be achieved. He thereby defined civilization as '… that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty'.[124] Arguing with the framework of the 'canonical aims of life' (*puruṣārtha*) derived from

[119] As already mentioned, Gandhi did not present a coherent vision for the new social order. J.C. Kumarappa, an economist and close co-worker of Gandhi (he was also professor at Gujarat Vidyapith, and later secretary of the All-India Village Industries Association in Wardha), worked out this 'Gandhian' economy most thoroughly in: *Economy of Permanence* (a Quest for a Social Order Based on Non-Violence) (Rajghat; Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1957). http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/economy-of-permanence.pdf (retrieved 30.3.2015)

[120] Date not mentioned, in: Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, p. 99.

[121] So far, an examination of Gandhi's connections to international proponents of the so-called Cooperative Movement has not been undertaken. A starting point, therefore, could be the references in Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India. An Intellectual and Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), or, with a perspective on global history: Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[122] See also the research of Arun Kumar on 'industrial schools': https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/439407.html. (retrieved 25.01.2015)

[123] Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, p. 108. On Gandhi's ambivalence in this regard, see also: Stephen Hay, "The Making of a Late-Victorian Hindu: M. K. Gandhi in London, 1888-1891", in: *Victorian Studies* 33 (1989) 1, pp. 75–98.

[124] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 55.

Hinduism, Gandhi criticized 'modern civilization', claiming it only aimed at achieving the goals of *artha* (wealth and political power) and *kama* (pleasure), while neglecting *dharma* (ethical integrity) and *moksha* (spiritual transcendence).[125] He thereby wanted to offer an alternative version of *dharma* to the Indians, stressing ethical principles and spiritual welfare.[126] Dating back 'western civilization' to the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, Gandhi argued that '… from western civilization, there flow two propositions which have almost become maxims to live by – I call them fallacious maxims. They are "might is right" and "survival of the fittest".'[127]

Consequently, he argued that the struggle for independence could not, be won by violence because it was 'no remedy for India's ills, and her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection'.[128] Rather, he saw the only feasible way towards social transformation through the use of dialogue and persuasion. He viewed violence as an inherent feature of 'western civilization', and thereby employed a broad definition of it, encompassing not only physical violence, but also work conditions based on exploitation.[129] Ridding oneself of all forms of violence was, in his view, the most important prerequisite for helping establish a new social order.[130] Gandhi also criticized the view held by many Indians that the country had to follow the path of 'the West' towards industrialization. He contested the idea that industrialization was important for India, and argued that the introduction of machinery would create massive unemployment: 'I know that it is criminal to displace hand labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles, unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their houses.'[131] He also argued that industrialization would bring about a concentration of wealth in the hands of few and further industrial development would, in his view, increase the dependency of villages on the cities.

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[125] Parel, *Gandhi: 'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings (Centenary Edition)*, p. xxi.
[126] Ibid., p. xxix
[127] *Indian Opinion*, 6.6.1908, see: CWMG Vol. 8, p. 320.
[128] Parel, '*Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule'*, p. v.
[129] This broader definition was later also termed 'structural violence', as, for example, in the work of Johan Galtung. See chapter 10, on the inspiration of Galtung by Gandhi, in: Thomas Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[130] For a detailed analysis of Gandhi's, at times ambiguous, conceptualization of non-violence, see: Devji, *The Impossible Indian*.
[131] *Young India*, 5.11.1925, see: Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, 30.

In a quote from 1946 to illustrate *sarvodaya*, Gandhi used the antagonism of pyramid (= hierarchical society) versus circles (= non-hierarchical) as a metaphor for the new social order:

> In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village.[132]

While it is not clear what Gandhi actually meant by 'perish' in this context, I want to point here to an interesting similarity in metaphors. In historical-comparative research focusing on the history of vocational training in Argentina, Verónica Oelsner found that Perón used similar metaphors in his attempt to create a new social order in Argentina, also based on the idea of a dignification of manual work.[133] Analogous to Peronism, the social order envisioned by Gandhi can be regarded as a 'third way' in the positioning between the large political and social projects based on capitalism or socialism. Gandhi regarded both capitalism and socialism as 'Western' conceptions, and also criticized the fact that they were based on violence and massive capital investment.[134] He wanted to bring about social change 'without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India'.[135] Also, he argued: 'Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it.'[136] This quote is also typical in his construction of cultural differences between 'us' (Indian values) and 'them' (Western values). Interestingly, with his conception of a new social order based on self-sufficient villages, Gandhi did not position himself as anti-modern. On the contrary, he claimed that the new social order was based on principles which were even more

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[132] *Harijan*, 28.7.1946, see: CWMG Vol. 91, p. 326.
[133] Oelsner, *"Produzenten Statt Parasiten*", see especially pp. 160–4.
[134] However, he later also framed his ideas under the label of socialism, but insisted that his was a non-violent kind. See also: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *My Socialism*, compiled by R.K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1959); Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Socialism of My Conception*, ed. by Anand T. Hingorani, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966).
[135] E.W. Aryanayakam, *The Story of Twelve Years* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1950), p. 2.
[136] *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 2.8.1934, see: Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, 27.

modern than the 'Western' models of capitalism and socialism. For the historian Anthony Parel, *Hind Swaraj* therefore 'marks the beginning of the emancipation of the modern Indian political mind from dependency on Western frameworks for understanding India and its people'.[137]

2.1.2 The Roots of Gandhi's Notion of Swaraj

Like other contemporary intellectuals and reformers, as, for example, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Gandhi criticized the copying of the 'western civilization' brought to India through British colonization and he stated: 'My resistance to western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asians are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West.'[138] For him, it was not just important to get rid of British colonial rule, but also to initiate a social transformation amongst the colonized and colonizers that would lead to a new society, free from any forms of subjugation and violence. Thereby, in his search for alternatives, one important source of inspiration was religion.[139] During his early time in South Africa, which was a time of important religious maturation for him, he was involved in different (also esoteric) Christian communities. Gandhi was a very spiritual person highly interested in religious reform.[140] He was born and raised as a Hindu and, during his time in London, he came into contact with Hinduism from another perspective, as he was involved in theosophical circles interested in Indian spirituality. He read the *Bhagavat Gita* for the first time in his life and was fascinated by its principles of *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *samabhava* (equability).[141] Spirituality was, for him, the source of guidance for self-improvement which he thought was central in life. He thereby followed the idea of religious pluralism and equal respect for all historical religions because, 'Religions are different roads

[137] Parel, *Gandhi: 'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings (Centenary Edition)*, p. xiv.
[138] Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform. An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, revised ed. (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, & London: Sage, 1999), p. 90.
[139] For a more detailed analysis see, for example: M.N. Srinivas, "Gandhi's Religion", in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 30 (1995) 25, pp. 1489–91.
[140] See also: Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*.
[141] Ibid., p. 65

converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal?'[142]

Thus, Gandhi defined the term *swaraj* (self-rule) in a broad way. For him, it was not just self-government, but also self-rule and self-improvement on an individual level. As he wrote in *Hind Swaraj*: '… if we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves.'[143] In a quote from 1931, he gives a more detailed account of the connection he saw between self-government and self-improvement or 'self-purification',[144] and contrasts it with 'independence':

> The root meaning of swaraj is selfrule. 'Swaraj' may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within and purna means 'complete'. 'Independence' has no such limitation. Independence may mean licence to do as you like. Swaraj is positive. Independence is negative. (…) The word swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means.[145]

This connection between individual self-improvement and the achievement of national self-determination was key to Gandhi's conceptualization of *swaraj*.

It is interesting to mention here, particularly with regard to his later thought on education, Gandhi's exchange of letters with Leo Tolstoy in 1909.[146] The background of their conversation was Tolstoy's open letter 'A Letter to a Hindoo: The Subjection of India – Its Cause and Cure', which he wrote at the request of the Bengali scholar and anti-British activist Taraknath Das (1884–1958) in 1908. Das had immigrated to the United States in 1906, and published the monthly journal *Free Hindusthan* there. As a means of political mobilization, Das had asked Tolstoy to write a letter giving his opinion on the injustice done by the British to the Indians.[147] As the following quote from the letter shows, Tolstoy underlined the fact that colonization, and its effects on India, was rooted not just

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[142] Gandhi, '*Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 41.
[143] *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 60.
[144] 'I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange King Log for King Stork. Hence for me the movement of swaraj is a movement of self-purification.' *Young India*, 12.6.1924; see: CWMG Vol. 28, p. 137
[145] *Young India* 19.3.1931, in: CWMG: Vol. 51, p. 220.
[146] Gandhi was not the only Indian to correspond with Tolstoy: others included A. Ramaseshan, Baba Premananda Bharati and Taraknath Das; see: Christian Bartolf, *Letter to a Hindoo: Taraknath Das, Leo Tolstoi and Mahatma Gandhi* (Berlin: Gandhi Informationszentrum, 1997).
[147] For further information on Das see also: Tapan Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile* (Kolkata: National Council of Education, 1998).

in the guilt of the British colonizers, but also in the voluntary servitude of the Indian population:

> If the English have enslaved the people of India it is just because the latter recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of the social order. (…) A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand men, not athletes but rather weak and ordinary people, have subdued two hundred million vigorous, clever, capable, and freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that it is not the English who have enslaved the Indians, but the Indians who have enslaved themselves?[148]

The letter spurred heated debates among Indian intellectuals on the question of how India could achieve self-rule, and many, among them Das himself, contested Tolstoy's argument. Gandhi, however, was convinced of the importance of Tolstoy's message, and published it in his journal, *Indian Opinion*. He also sent Tolstoy a copy of *Hind Swaraj*. Tolstoy's views influenced Gandhi with regard to his ideas on self-transformation and civil disobedience. He read Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' in 1894, and wrote in his autobiography that he was overwhelmed by its message.[149]

Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828–1910) had been born into a family of the Russian nobility and became a famous writer. The aforementioned essay is part of a book containing three essays, in which Tolstoy described his interpretations of the ethical teachings of the Bible: 'My Confession', 'My Religion' and 'The Kingdom of God is Within You'.[150] Tolstoy became radicalized throughout his life by his interpretation of the Bible, and saw pacifism and non-violence as the logic consequences of biblical teachings. His book was banned in Russia, and by 1901 his views on Christianity led to his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church. Similar to the ideas on 'civil disobedience' by the American writer Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862),[151] Tolstoy argued in the book in favour

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[148] Excerpt from Taraknath Das' original letter, reprinted in: Bartolf, *Letter to a Hindoo*, p.25.

[149] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. I. An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1994), p. 204.

[150] Leo Tolstoy, *'The Kingdom of God is within You': Christianity not as a Mystic Religion but as a new Theory of Life* (London: William Heinemann, 1894).

[151] Henry David Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, [1849]. Online version: https://ia902608.us.archive.org/32/items/civildisobedienc00071gut/71-h/71-h.htm (retrieved 05.03.2015).

of refusing cooperation with state structures and institutions that one deemed violent and as reproducing injustice. In a letter to Gandhi in 1910 Tolstoy argued:

> the life of the Christian nations presents a greater contradiction between what they believe and the principle on which their lives are built: a contradiction between love which should prescribe the law of conduct, and the employment of force, recognized under various forms – such as governments, courts of justice, and armies, which are accepted as necessary and esteemed.[152]

These ideas on non-violent resistance were also formative for Gandhi's political campaigns, first against the racist legislation in Natal and, after 1915, in his activism in India. Similar to the ideas of Tolstoy and Thoreau, Gandhi stated in his autobiography: 'If man will only realise that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.'[153] Gandhi also listed Thoreau's writings in the appendices of *Hind Swaraj*.[154] He called his technique of non-violent resistance or civil disobedience *satyagraha*,[155] and argued that those who practised civil disobedience had to undergo a moral transformation as, for him, political praxis was equal to moral praxis and 'those who want to become passive resisters for the service of the country have to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness'.[156] By 1906 he had decided to live as a *brahmacharya*, which meant practising absolute celibacy. The idea was that, with the preservation of his sexual energy, he would be stronger and be able to better serve the community.[157]

Gandhi was convinced that such individual self-improvement of people would lead to social change. With regard to the unequal distribution of wealth, for example, he argued that the wealthy should take a strong leadership role in socially serving society, which he called the 'theory of trusteeship'.[158] In his view,

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[152] Letter to Gandhi, 7 September 1910: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Correspondence_between_Tolstoy_and_Gandhi (retrieved 13.03.2014).

[153] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 80.

[154] The following two titles by Thoreau are listed in the appendices to *Hind Swaraj*: *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* and *Life without Principle*.

[155] Literally: 'insistence on truth'; Gandhi translated it as 'soul force'.

[156] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 85.

[157] For a detailed analysis of Gandhi's views on sexuality, see, for example: Joseph Lelyveld, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

[158] See for example: Ajit Kumar Dasgupta, *Gandhi's Economic Thought* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996); J.D. Sethi (ed.) *Trusteeship. The Gandhian Alternative* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1986). For a more detailed critical discussion see: Benjamin Zachariah, "In

wealthy people had to understand that their wealth did not belong to them individually, but they too only had 'the right to an honorable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community.'[159] Gandhi argued that the equal distribution of wealth within society depended on the self-reform of the wealthy and the redistribution of wealth on a voluntary basis. The rich should regard themselves as stewards of society. This 'theory' can also be viewed as an attempt by Gandhi to reconcile elements of capitalism with socialist critique. For his campaigns, this strategy of collecting donations worked out quite well, and many of his activities were financed by rich Indian industrialists. As he wrote in 1939:

> I am not ashamed to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced Socialist or even Communist. But our methods differ, our languages differ. My theory of 'trusteeship' is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all theories.[160]

Gandhi argued that 'the State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form', and if it suppressed capitalism this would lead to violence. Since the state was 'a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.'[161] Paradoxically, while he argued against a strong role of the state in this quote, he also argued that if people didn't behave as trustees voluntarily, the state should interfere and 'deprive them of their possessions (…) with the minimum exercise of violence'.[162] The connections between Gandhi and Indian business were quite vital, and Indian industrialists such as G.D. Birla or Purushottamdas Thakurdas invested in nationalism under Gandhi's leadership; probably not only because they were convinced of his ideas of a future economic order based on self-sufficient villages,

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Search of the Indigenous: J.C. Kumarappa and the Philosophy of 'Gandhian Economics'", in: *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*, ed. by Harald Fischer-Tiné & Michael Mann (London: Anthem Press, 2004).

[159] *Harijan*, 3.06.1939, quoted in: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Village Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), p. 51.

[160] M.K. Gandhi, "Theory of Trusteeship", in: *Harijan*, 16.12.1939, quoted in Sethi, *Trusteeship. The Gandhian Alternative*, p. 8.

[161] Originally published in: *The Modern Review* in October 1935, quoted in Ibid., p. 211.

[162] Ibid.

but also because they were able to 'hide behind the rhetoric of Gandhism'.[163] It was therefore quite favourable for Indian business that Gandhi's ideas on *swadeshi* were, on the one hand, too vague for radical and immediate change. On the other hand, measures of his political activism, such as the boycott of foreign-made products, boosted their own sales.[164] Thereby, by the 1930s, Gandhi's economic demands, such as the protection of the Indian cotton textile industry, were similar to the demands put forward by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, founded in 1927.[165]

2.2 The Topos of the Good Self-Sufficient Village

In a recent article on reformist education discourse in India, the historian and sociologist Barnita Bagchi states that 'traditions are often reinvented, and modernities are often rooted in the past, in educational spaces in twentieth-century India'.[166] I find this observation also to be true for the topos of the good and self-sufficient village at the heart of Gandhi's argument for a new social order. He promoted moral self-transformation based on truthfulness, non-violence, simplicity and service for the community, and thereby regarded the rural cooperative communities or *ashrams*[167] he founded as educative spaces where such self-transformation should take place (see also the later references to these *ashrams*). The ancient 'ashramic' system of education called *gurukul* was thus an important source of inspiration for him.[168] According to the historian Mark Thomson, key to this ashramic system

> was the pervasive influence of religion upon the total configuration of ideals, practices and conduct. Education was a living expression of Hindu

[163] On the complex relationship between Gandhi and Indian business see, for example: Zachariah, *Developing India*, p. 165.
[164] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, pp. 97–8.
[165] Rothermund, *An Economic History of India*, p. 92.
[166] Barnita Bagchi, "Writing Educational Spaces in Twentieth Century Reformist Indian Discourse", *Social and Education History* 1 (2013) 1, p. 81.
[167] Originally *ashram* meant monastery or place of spiritual hermitage. Gandhi used the term to denote his settlements or communities in India: Satyagraha Ashram and Sevagram Ashram.
[168] M.K. Gandhi, *Towards New Education* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1953), p. v. See also, on the revival of the *gurukul* idea in the context of Indian nationalism: Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul Kangri oder die Erziehung der Arya Nation. Kolonialismus, Hindureform und 'nationale Bildung' in Britisch-Indien (1897–1922)*, Beiträge zur Südasienforschung; 194 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2003).

> religious philosophy, a means of studying the fundamental truths of life, and an aid to detachment from worldly concerns and self-realisation. For Gandhi these were truths which permeated his educational theory.[169]

Similar to Tolstoy, Ruskin and members of the Progressive Education Movement, Gandhi also constructed an opposition between the 'bad city' and the 'good village'. While the cities 'rose in answer to the requirements of foreign domination',[170] Gandhi argued that the villages had always been the core of India's identity and its central economic unit before colonization. He thereby saw the simple cooperative life practised in the villages as an important model for the future:

> 'Our ancestors', as he wrote in *Hind Swaraj*, 'have dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as it existed thousands of years ago. (…) our indigenous education remains the same as before. We have had no system of life-corroding competition. Each followed his own occupation and trade (…) It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They (…) decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet. They saw that our real happiness and health consisted in a proper use of hands and feet.'[171]

In this quote, Gandhi gave a taste of his argument regarding the superiority of 'bread labour' that he developed on the basis of the ideas of Ruskin and Tolstoy, as will be elaborated on in section 2.3. It is thereby interesting to note that Gandhi here employed an idea dating back to early colonial discourse. The supposedly ideal state of Indian pre-colonial village life had been 'discovered' by colonial ethnography, and became central in the conceptualization of India's past.[172] Sir Charles Metcalfe, Governor General of Bengal in 1835–36, for example, wrote in 1830: 'The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down (…) but the village communities remain the

[169] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 163.
[170] This quote by Gandhi is taken from an article written in October 1947. See: CWMG, Vol. 97, p. 155.
[171] *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, pp. 55–6.
[172] See also: Surinder S. Jodhka, "Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar", in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 37 (2002) 32, p. 3343.

same.'[173] In a similar vein, Sir Henry Maine concluded, in 1889, that the Indian villages 'include a nearly complete establishment of occupations and trades for enabling them to continue their collective life without assistance from any person or body external to them'.[174] In the hegemonic colonial discourse, such romanticizing representations about Indian village life served multiple purposes. On the one hand, they were used to legitimate colonial rule on the basis that India was 'backward' and stagnant and therefore needed the support of the colonizers. On the other hand, they became part of a romanticized view of India that was attractive for critics of industrialization. In contrast, however, to these to these romanticized and simplistic representations of Indian villages, historical research has revealed complex power structures and relationships of dependence operating in pre-colonial rural communities.[175]

Different nationalists followed the ideas that the 'real India' was in its villages. However, there were also important internal differences in interpretation. Thus, Nehru regarded the village primarily as backward, Ambedkar saw it as a space of caste-based oppression and Gandhi hailed the village as authentic.[176] All three had their own visions of how the village population needed to be transformed, developed or liberated. As will be further elaborated lateron, Gandhi thereby saw the need of transforming or 'reconstructing' the village with helpers coming from outside, working for the 'village movement'. He believed the problem was that the urban elites had neglected the villages for too long, and saw an urgent need to 'establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of villagers'.[177] However, Gandhi's attempts at 'reviving' the villages were also criticized, for example by Ambedkar, who claimed his approach to caste-based discrimination of the so-called 'untouchables' was paternalistic and did not contribute to real social change (see also 2.3.2).

[173] Quoted in: Jodhka, "Agrarian Structures and their Transformations", p. 1217.
[174] Henry Sumner Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West. Six Lectures Delivered at Oxford* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1889), p. 125. Gandhi refers to this study of Maine in the appendices to his book *Hind Swaraj*.
[175] See overview in: Jodhka, "Agrarian Structures and Their Transformations".
[176] Jodhka, "Nation and Village", p. 3343.
[177] *Harijan*, 20.2.1937, see: CWMG Vol. 70, p. 427.

2.3 Developing a 'Pedagogy of Manual Work'

2.3.1 Tolstoy, Ruskin and the Dignification of Manual Work

For Gandhi, economic self-sufficiency was the most important element of the new social order based on cooperative village life:

> A country remains poor in wealth, both material and intellectual, if it does not develop its handicrafts and its industries and lives a lazy parasitic life by importing all the manufactured articles from outside. There was a time when we manufactured almost all we wanted. The process is now reversed and we are dependent upon the outside world for most manufactured goods.[178]

In order to transform this 'lazy and parasitic life', dependent on imports, he argued, in line with the supporters of the *Swadeshi* Movement, that it was important to 'return' to a state of self-sufficiency. Gandhi thereby regarded education as a very important tool to achieve this. Not only did he argue that the practising of manual work as part of the educational process was favourable with regard to its economic outcomes, but he was also convinced that it had important pedagogical effects. Therefore, he attributed a wide range of positive effects to manual work, which is what I call Gandhi's 'pedagogy of manual work'.

For this, he drew on many different sources of inspiration, most prominently work by Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin. In his essay 'On Labour and Luxury', published in 1887, Tolstoy argued that it was an important part of the dignity of man to be involved in practical work, an activity he also called 'bread labour':

> The dignity of man, his sacred duty and obligation, consists in using the hands and feet which have been given to him, for that for which they were given to him, and that which consumes food on the labor which produces that food; and that they should be used, not on that which shall cause them to pine away, not as objects to wash and clean, and merely for the purpose of stuffing into one's mouth food, drink, and cigarettes.[179]

In 1932, Gandhi wrote about being inspired by Tolstoy in this respect:

> Tolstoy observes that his discovery of the vital importance of bread labour is one of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times. The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food, and his

[178] *Young India*, 20.8.1931, see: CWMG Vol. 53, p. 245.
[179] Leo Tolstoy, "On Labour and Luxury", in: *What to Do? Thoughts Evoked by the Census of Moscow* [1887]. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3630/3630-h/3630-h.htm (retrieved 29.03.2015)

> intellectual faculties must be exercised not in order to obtain a living or amass a fortune but only in the service of mankind. If this principle is observed everywhere, all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from many a sin.[180]

Gandhi was fascinated by Tolstoy's conception of 'bread labour' and the idea that it was an important part of 'service to mankind'. He developed a firm belief in its pedagogical effects, and argued that leading a simple life and practising manual work would improve a person's character, so they would refrain from idleness, indulgence and elitism: 'How can a man who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread", says the Bible.'[181] This training in 'bread labour' should, in his view, start from very early on, and everyone should, 'from our very childhood, have the idea impressed upon our minds that we are all scavengers',[182] because it will 'help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man'.[183] For Gandhi, the most important kind of 'bread labour' was agricultural work, but he also saw other occupations as suitable for his desired transformation of society, since he realized that not everybody could instantaneously be involved in agricultural work: 'A person can therefore spin or weave, or take up carpentry or smithery, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture however to be the ideal.'[184] He deemed agriculture to be so important because, for him, it was a 'pure' occupation, which was not based on the evils of 'modern civilization':

> Agriculture is the true occupation of man. It is therefore contrary to divine law to establish large cities, to employ hundreds of thousands for minding machines in factories so that a few can wallow in riches by exploiting the helplessness and poverty of the many.[185]

This argument also reveals quite a static perception of agriculture, and a rejection of inventions that made agricultural work easier.

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[180] "History of the Satyagraha Ashram", see: CWMG Vol. 56, p. 169.
[181] M.K. Gandhi, *Bread Labour. The Gospel of Work* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1960), p. 6. Originally written during his imprisonment of 1932 to 1933, in: "From Yeravda Mandir".
[182] Scavengers means latrine cleaners. It is thereby important to note that, until today, latrine cleaning is done predominantly by members of Dalit communities, see, for example: Bhasha Singh, *Unseen: The Truth About India's Manual Scavengers* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2014).
[183] Gandhi, *Bread Labour*, p. 8.
[184] Ibid., p. 7
[185] *Indian Opinion*, 2.09.1905, see: CWMG Vol. 4, p. 400.

Another part of Gandhi's pedagogy of 'bread labour' was the improvement of character through voluntary poverty, self-restraint and asceticism. Supporting the argumentation from the beginning of this chapter on Gandhi's inspiration by and hybridization of multiple sources, he yet again referred to his inspiration as being from the Bible, for example, Matthew 19:24: 'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' As a consequence, he started to bake his own bread, do physical labour and make his children clean the latrines so that they would not 'develop any aversion for scavenger's work'.[186] Gandhi himself decided to change his life, according to the ideal of living in a rural simple place in community with other people and practising manual work. As he described in his autobiography, this decision was inspired by the ideas of John Ruskin and his book *Unto This Last*,[187] given to him in 1904 by Henry Polak, a friend he knew from the Theosophy Society in Johannesburg.[188] John Ruskin (1819–1900) was an English artist, art critic and social thinker. He was a founding figure in the *Arts and Crafts Movement*, a philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, aiming at education and social life through renovating 'authentic' arts, and therefore favouring handmade craft production and traditional manufacturing skills over industrial manufacturing.[189] In his book, Ruskin criticized the fact that economic theory was based on egoistic values, such as individual utility maximization (which he called 'the bastard science of economics'), and he argued in favour of human values in economics ('the science of political economy'), 'which teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life'.[190] For Gandhi, the book 'brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation of my life', and he summarized the main points for him as follows:

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[186] "Autobiography", see: CWMG Vol. 44, p. 322.
[187] John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* [1862], http://muff.uffs.net/skola/dejum/ruskin/texts/unto-this-last/unto_this_last.pdf, (retrieved 22.01.2015). The book is a publication of the four essays "The Roots of Honour", "The Veins of Wealth", "Qui Judicatis Terram" and "Ad Valorem", written by Ruskin for the *Cornhill Magazine*.
[188] See also the chapter on Henry Polak in: Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*, pp. 54-69.
[189] On the Indian proponents of the movement see: Patrick Brantlinger, "A Postindustrial Prelude to Postcolonialism: John Ruskin, William Morris and Gandhism", *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1996) 3, pp. 466–85.
[190] Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 40.

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.[191]

As he reported, the idea that 'the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living' was the most eye-opening point for him, and he was 'ready to reduce these principles to practice'. [192] However, as several authors point out, Gandhi interpreted Ruskin's writing quite freely: Ruskin only stated the first of the three points that Gandhi found so inspiring in his original writing, while the other two points are primarily Gandhi's own.[193] The cultural historian Patrick Brantlinger even argues that Gandhi 'would probably have arrived at the three main lessons he draws from *Unto This Last* even if he had never read it'.[194] Gandhi's enthusiasm for his own reading of Ruskin was so strong that, in 1908, he paraphrased the book and translated it into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya*.[195] The case of Ruskin can therefore be seen as an interesting example of Gandhi's hybridization and appropriation of writings of quite ambiguous thinkers.[196]

The reading of Ruskin was certainly not the only reason why Gandhi decided to move to the countryside. He had, for a long time, been inspired by communal living, and was especially fascinated by a Trappist monastery near Durban as a 'functioning example of a micro-community living on the basis of voluntary poverty, self-renunciation and constructive work'.[197] The monastery was apparently nearly self-sufficient and it offered training for members of the Zulu

[191] Gandhi, CWMG Vol. 44, p. 313.
[192] Ibid.
[193] See also Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, p. 67.
[194] Brantlinger, "A Postindustrial Prelude to Postcolonialism", p. 468.
[195] John Ruskin and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Unto This Last, a Paraphrase by M.K. Gandhi. Translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai.* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951).
[196] While Gandhi was probably not aware of his other writings, Ruskin's thinking was also based on imperialist and racist ideas and he was part of the Eugenics Movement, following the idea that the genetic quality of the human population could be improved by active intervention in birth promotion or restrictions. See also Ruth C. Engs, *The Eugenics Movement: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005). See also the analysis in: Brantlinger, "A Postindustrial Prelude to Postcolonialism", pp. 466–85.
[197] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 38.

community in different crafts such as blacksmithing, tanning or shoemaking.[198] This combination of spirituality and industriousness greatly inspired Gandhi's own settlements.

2.3.2 The Pedagogical Effects of Manual Work

Gandhi was convinced that 'true education is that which proves useful in life and makes you industrious'.[199] He thereby criticized what he saw as the widespread devaluing of manual work, which was also related to ideas about the caste system:

> We are apt to think lightly of the village crafts because we have divorced educational from manual training. Manual work has been regarded as something inferior, and owing to the wretched distortion of the varna we came to regard spinners and weavers and carpenters and shoe-makers as belonging to the inferior castes and the proletariat.[200]

This 'wretched distortion' of caste was, in Gandhi's view, the reason for discriminatory practices of exclusion based on the idea of 'untouchability' against those groups that were regarded as the lowest of society. As becomes clear in the quote, he contested the widespread view that, due to dominant ideas on caste, manual workers such as spinners should be regarded as inferior to those employed in non-manual professions. However, as already mentioned, Gandhi was not, in general, opposed to the caste system.[201] In line with his general approach towards social change through individual change of behaviour and not through coercion, he appealed to those of higher castes to stop the discrimination of members of lower castes. During the 1930s especially, he became active in the question of caste-based discrimination, and constructed the term *harijans* for those regarded as having the lowest status in the caste hierarchy (Hindi for 'children of God'). In a conversation with *harijans* in 1936, he explained the meaning of the term as this:

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[198] Ibid., p. 39
[199] CWMG Vol. 96, p. 109.
[200] *Varna* refers to the caste system, the idea that society is divided into four sections (*varnas*): *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. The quote is taken from *Harijan*, 18.09.1937, see: CWMG Vol. 72, pp. 227-8.
[201] In his writing *Varnashramadharma*, for example, Gandhi clearly states that he is not opposed to the caste system.

> It means a devotee of God, and as God is the help of the helpless, and as it is the helpless who naturally turn to God, I thought you deserved the name better than I for instance. For whilst I have to aspire to become a Harijan you are Harijans in the very nature of things.[202]

Even at that time the term was highly contested, for example by B.R. Ambedkar, an important leader of the Dalit Movement, on the basis that it was patronizing.[203] Gandhi attributed all sorts of favourable effects on character development to the 'use of hands' in the educational process. While this would prevent idleness and arrogance and contribute to the development of altruism ('service to others'), it would also eliminate discrimination based on caste. More specifically, he argued that education based on undertaking manual work was an important tool for developing a feeling of solidarity among both the urban and the rural populations. In 1916, for example, he argued that, while 85 per cent of the population worked in agriculture and 10 per cent were engaged in crafts (mainly weaving), only 5 per cent of the population did other kinds of work. If this elite 5 per cent really wanted to serve the masses, they should learn about the reality of rural life and acquire some knowledge about rural craftwork. At the same time, the 95 per cent should gain additional knowledge of their traditional occupations, especially agriculture and weaving, in order to improve their economic situation. Therefore, 'all our schools should be located, not in the densely populated parts of towns or cities, but in places where big farms may be developed and where classes may be conducted in the open air'.[204] Furthermore, as he wrote in a letter in 1916, 'Keeping in view the conditions in the country I feel a general knowledge of agriculture, and weaving, and health education should be included in the

[202] *Harijan*, 4.04.1936, see: CWMG Vol. 68, p 328.

[203] For a critical evaluation of Gandhi's activism against caste-based oppression and Ambedkar's opposition to Gandhi's approach see: Arundhati Roy's introduction "The Doctor and the Saint", in: B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2014).

[204] *Samalochak*, October 1916, see: CWMG Vol. 15, p. 257: 'Not less than eighty-five per cent of India's population are engaged in agriculture. Ten per cent are engaged in various other crafts and a majority of them are weavers. The remaining five per cent belong to the various professions. If these latter really desire to serve the people, they must acquire some knowledge at least about the occupations of the ninety-five per cent of the people. And it should be the duty of the ninety-five per cent to acquire a proper knowledge of their traditional occupations. If this view be correct, our schools must provide for the teaching of these two occupations – agriculture and weaving – to the pupils from childhood onwards. In order to create the right conditions for imparting a good knowledge of agriculture and weaving, all our schools should be located, not in the densely populated parts of towns or cities, but in places where big farms may be developed and where classes may be conducted in the open air.'

education for everybody.'[205] Thereby, this new kind of education would, in his view, help to overcome the widespread prejudice against manual work and give equal status to all kinds of occupations: 'I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturalist and of a schoolmaster.'[206] He believed that only a society which valued simple rural occupations would be able to create equality, and on this, ultimately, he formulated his vision that 'there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees …'[207]

The emphasis on the importance of practising rural crafts and agriculture was not, however, only based on Gandhi's moral arguments. He also had to find a solution for the problem of financing education mainly geared towards the rural population. As a strong proponent of temperance, he clearly contested the idea of financing education out of the tax revenue derived by alcohol taxation, as practised by the colonial government.[208] Therefore, he claimed that universal education could only be achieved when educational institutions were independent from government financing, and argued for his idea of establishing a kind of self-financing education. The argument used was that children naturally like to work. As his co-worker Marjorie Sykes (see also 5.7) reported: 'Gandhiji clearly saw and fearlessly practiced the truth that children by their very nature find great joy and satisfaction in work, in purposeful, responsible activity.'[209] The products produced in schools by the students should, according to Gandhi, then be used to finance their education:

> The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose, for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour.[210]

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[205] Letter to Durlabhdas Shyamji Dhruve, 17.09.1916. See: CWMG Vol. 15, pp. 248-9.
[206] *Harijan*, 15.01.1938, in: Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, p. 71.
[207] *Harijan*, 18.01.1948, quoted in Gandhi, *Village Swaraj*, p. 10.
[208] *Young India* 15.06.1921, in: Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, p. 45. On Gandhi and the Temperance Movement see: Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, & Ian R. Tyrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, Inc., 2003), pp. 256-7.
[209] Marjorie Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education (Adolescent Education in Nai Talim)* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1954), p. 4.
[210] *Young India*, 1.9.1921, in: CWMG Vol. 24, p. 157.

Thus, a pedagogical effect that Gandhi also attributed to this self-financing was the development of self-confidence in children.[211] The idea of self-support was later also included in the concept of Basic Education. Based on the idea that children had to work in order to finance their education from early on, it was argued that they would be able to earn their living after finishing a seven-year Basic Education course. Related to the argument, the ideal age to start Basic Education was considered to be 7, because 'by this age the children's powers of muscular coordination have developed sufficiently for them to take pleasure in the skills of craftsmanship'.[212]

2.4 'Education of Head, Heart and Hand' and Gandhi's Personal Connections to the Progressive Education Movement

2.4.1 The New Education Fellowship and Connections to India

A recurring argument in Gandhi's education thought was also the importance of including 'head, heart and hands' in the educational process. In the context of the *Non-Cooperation Movement* of the early 1920s, for example, Gandhi argued that the existing kind of education was 'defective', because 'it ignores the culture of the heart and the hand, and confines itself simply to the head'.[213] The theme of child-centred and holistic education, taking into account 'the head, heart and hand', and the everyday environment of the children, was a central idea of the Progressive Education Movement, which developed out of several pedagogical reform movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Criticizing approaches to education based on rote learning and discipline as not supportive for the development of children, progressive educators proclaimed more active, natural, child-centred methods of education. Popular figures associated with these new pedagogical ideas were, for example, Maria Montessori, John Dewey and

[211] Marjorie Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim. Fifty Years of Education at Sevagram (1937–1987)* (Sevagram, Wardha: Nai Talim Samiti, 1988), p. 27.
[212] Ibid., p. 29
[213] *Young India*, 1.9.1921, in: CWMG Vol. 24, p. 156.

Friedrich Froebel.[214] In the following, I want to place Gandhi's thoughts on education in the context of contemporary international debates on education reform, and point to several parallels in ideas as well as his personal connections to members of the movement. Unfortunately, hitherto there has been very limited research on such personal connections, and while a thorough analysis is far beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will at least point to some promising issues that could be followed up in later research. While historical research on personal connections is limited, secondary literature on *Nai Talim* often compares Gandhi to progressive educators.[215] Steele and Tailor, for example, argue that 'both Dewey and Gandhi were products of early capitalist development and both believed in the small-scale rural community, composed of industrious, self-respecting and generous citizens'.[216] In fact, parallels to Dewey's ideas on democracy in schools can also be found in photograph documentation of the *Nai Talim* institutions in *Sevagram Ashram* (see Chapter 6). Also R.V. Rao, in his book describing the education institutions in Sevagram, mentions prominent proponents of the Progressive Education Movement: 'The maxim of Kilpatrick that education must be for a changing civilization and the maxim of Dewey that education is for life is practised here.'[217]

The formation of the Progressive Education Movement goes back to 1921, when sympathizers founded a network called the New Education Fellowship (NEF) in Calais, France.[218] The origin of the NEF lies in the Theosophical Educational Trust founded in 1913, which emerged from the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott. The central idea behind theosophy was to stress

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[214] See, for example: William J. Reese, "The Origins of Progressive Education", in: *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (2001) Spring, pp. 2-24.

[215] For example: Ramanathan, *Education from Dewey to Gandhi*; Tom Steele & Richard Tailor, "Against Modernity: Gandhi and Adult Education", in *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 13 (1994) 1, pp. 33-42.

[216] Steele & Tailor, "Against Modernity", p. 38.

[217] R.V. Rao, *Sevagram; Gandhiji's Ashram and Other Institutions in Wardha* (Sevagram, Wardha: Sevagram Ashram Pratishthan Publication, 1969), p. 36.

[218] Its founding members were Beatrice Ensor (English theosophist), Elisabeth Rotten (German) and Adolphe Ferrière (French). See also: Kevin Brehony, "'A Dedicated Spiritual Movement': Theosophists and Education 1975-1939", in: *XIX International Standing Conference for the History of Education* (National University of Ireland Maynooth, 1997); Kevin J. Brehony, "A New Education for a New Era: The Contribution of the Conferences of the New Education Fellowship to the Disciplinary Field of Education, 1921-1938", *Paedagogica Historica* 40 (2004) 5, pp. 733–55.

the fundamental unity of all religions.[219] From the beginning of its work, the Society was concerned with education. In 1879, it moved to India and established contacts with the *Arya Samaj*, a reformist Hindu movement. After distancing itself from *Arya Samaj* activities some years later, the Society founded its own institution in Adyar in South India. In 1913 the Society founded the Theosophical Education Trust, operating schools in the surrounding area of Adyar.[220] A book, *Education as Service*,[221] written by one of the most famous Indian members of the Society, Jiddu Krishnamurti, inspired English theosophists to form an education organization as well: the English Theosophical Fraternity in Education. By 1919, it had 560 members. Its membership grew so rapidly that it was decided to form an international network to promote theosophical ideas in education: this was the root of the establishment of the NEF. Its aim was the 'creation of a global educational approach that would link people via education in spite of the political and racial differences separating them'.[222] The rhetoric of the pedagogical idea of educating head, heart and hands is, for example, apparent in the journal *The New Era*, published by the NEF.[223] In this quote, one of the founders of the NEF, Beatrice Ensor, presents her understanding of the basis of the new education approach:

> In educating, we of the newer discipline must never lose sight of the fact that a human being is composed of a soul (the ego) and its three vehicles: The body, the mind and the emotions. We must give freedom to the soul to develop along its own particular line: to the studious, the opportunity to study; to the artistic the opportunity to express itself artistically; to the active, the opportunity to do. The soul must be left free or freed. But its vehicles of expression must be trained to serve it well and faithfully. The

[219] For more detailed information on the *Theosophical Society* see, for example, the dissertation of Maria Moritz: "'Globalizing Sacred Knowledge': South Asians and the Theosophical Society (1879-1930)". Also: Sita Anantha Raman, "Theosophical Society", in: *Encyclopedia of India*, ed. by S. Wolpert (Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons: Thomson Gale, 2005).
[220] Lawson states that 20 schools in India and 400 schools in Ceylon were under the auspices of the Theosophical Society. See: M.D. Lawson, "The New Education Fellowship", p. 24.
[221] Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Education as Service* (Chicago: The Rajput Press, 1912). See also, on the idea of 'service' in the nationalist movement: R. Srivastan, "Concept of 'Seva' and the 'Sevak' in the Freedom Movement", in: *Economic and Political Weekly* XLI (2006) 5, pp. 427–38.
[222] Hermann Röhrs, "The New Education Fellowship: An International Forum for Progressive Education", in: *Progressive Education across the Continents. A Handbook*, ed. by Hermann Röhrs & Volker Lenhart (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 183.
[223] See also the detailed analysis of NEF's main organ, *The New Era*: Steffi Koslowski, *Die New Era der New Education Fellowship: Ihr Beitrag zur Internationalität der Reformpädagogik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2013).

> body must be trained to good and temperate habits, the mind to clear and concentrated effort, the emotions to restrained and adequate expressions.[224]

Between 1921 and 1935 the NEF became an influential international institution, and by 1930 counted 7,400 members. From 1925 onwards, the *Bureau International d'Éducation* in Geneva became the coordinating institution of the network.[225] The NEF organized seven international conferences between the world wars. Over the years, the organization moved away from its theosophical origins: its members came from various backgrounds and 'something approximating what might be termed a global education conscience took shape, with figures such as Tolstoy, Blonski no less operative than John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, Helen Parkhurst, Alexander Neill, Maria Montessori, Paul Geheeb and Georg Kerschensteiner'.[226]

The connections between Progressive Education thinking, activists and institutions in India are diverse, as the history of the foundation of the NEF has already shown. One channel through which diverse education concepts were brought to India was, for example, missionary societies. During the 19th century, mainly concerned with their own agenda based on a 'civilizing mission', missionaries were often quite critical of the government-controlled educational institutions.[227] Similar to some ideas of Progressive Education, they also, at times, criticized the predominant education methods as too repetitive and lacking practical experience. In their experimentation with new approaches, they also drew on the ideas of education thinkers such as John Dewey or William Kilpatrick, the 'father of the project method' based at Columbia University Teachers College.[228] In section 4.2.2 I will further engage with the connections

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[224] Beatrice Ensor in: *The New Era* (July 1929), quoted in Lawson, "The New Education Fellowship", p. 27.

[225] In 1931 the Weltbund für die Erneuerung für die Erziehung became the German section of NEF and, in 1932, the NEF amalgamated with the American Progressive Education Association, and the latter became its American section.

[226] Röhrs, "The New Education Fellowship", p. 183.

[227] See, for example: Joseph Bara, "Christian Missionaries and Popular Education in India, 1910–40".

[228] An important primary source presenting different schools that draw on Progressive Education ideas implemented by missionaries in rural India is the following: W. J. McKee, *New Schools for Young India. A Survey of Educational, Economic, and Social Conditions in India with Special Reference to More Effective Education* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1930).

between missionary societies and Gandhi's work in education, and present the example of the Danish missionary Anne Marie Petersen.

Another interesting example of Gandhi's personal connections to key figures in the Progressive Education Movement is his relationship with Maria Montessori, a central figure in the NEF. Gandhi met her in 1931 in London and attended a conference organized by her and teachers following her method, and Gandhi was quite impressed by what he saw:

> The most important thing was that the children felt no burden of learning as they learnt everything as they played. Secondly, the aim is to develop all the senses and organs of the child, that is, its hands, feet, nose, ears, tongue, skin and the mind, and they have very carefully planned a teaching programme with that aim in view. In the programme very little place is given to memorizing. Music has an important place, and it accompanies physical exercises also. They teach dancing too, and it gives plenty of exercise to the body. The children do most of the things by themselves and learn without effort to concentrate attention.[229]

Also, during their meeting in 1931, Gandhi said to her: 'Friends in India ask me to imitate you. I say to them: no, I should not imitate you, but should assimilate you and the fundamental truth underlying your method.'[230] Gandhi referred to Montessori in the Collected Works several times, although, quite interestingly, in 1945 he admitted in a letter that 'I may say I have not read any writings of her.'[231] In 1939, she came to India following the invitation of the *Theosophical Society*. Due to the Second World War, she could not return, and had to stay until 1946.[232] There is no evidence that Gandhi and Montessori met while she was in India.[233] However, for further research on the connections between Gandhi and Montessori, her contacts with two other Indian educators would be of interest. The first is Gijubhai Badheka, a Gujarati educator, who was a strong protagonist of the movement to promote Montessori's approach.[234] The second educator is Shanta Narulkar, who worked with Gandhi in the Sevagram experiment. Narulkar

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[229] CWMG Vol. 54, p. 429.
[230] Ibid. Vol.53, p.475.
[231] Ibid. Vol.85, p.312.
[232] See also: Ehrenhard Skiera, *Reformpädagogik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Eine kritische Einführung* (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2003).
[233] Gerald Lee Gutek (ed.), *The Montessori Method. The Origins of an Educational Innovation: Including an Abridged and Annotated Version of Maria Montessori's the Montessori Method* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 39.
[234] Gijubhāī Bhagavānajī Badhekā, *Divasvapna. An Educator's Reverie*, trans. Chittaranjan Pathak (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1990).

initiated Pre-Basic Education in Sevagram, utilizing many ideas of the Kindergarten Movement and directly referring to Montessori in her writings.[235]

2.4.2 Tagore, Gandhi and the NEF

A key figure with regard to Gandhi's connections to proponents of Progressive Education is Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), the Bengali poet, educator and first Asian recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. In 1901 he had founded an ashram, including a school, in Shantiniketan, the 'place of peace'. Disappointed with his own experiences in school, Tagore wanted to create a new kind of education based on Indian tradition, creating an educational setting close to nature rather than in classrooms, teaching arts and crafts, and combining urban life (science and technology) with rural life (traditional knowledge and skills).[236] His concern was to revive Indian self-respect and Indian traditions that had been lost through colonial domination.[237] With his Nobel Prize money, Tagore financed the establishment of *Visva Bharati* in Shantiniketan, which became acknowledged as a 'national university' in 1921. Some elements in its conceptualization reveal similarities to Gandhi's ideas, such as the self-sufficiency of educational institutions, the importance of undertaking manual work and ideas on 'rural reconstruction':

[235] See, for example: Shanta Narulkar, *Plan and Practice* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1950).
[236] A recent detailed analysis of Tagore's education philosophy can be found in: Christine Kupfer, *Bildung zum Weltmenschen. Rabindranaths Philosophie und Pädagogik* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014). Other important secondary sources include Kathleen O'Connell, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Poet as Educator* (Kolkata: Visva Bharati, 2002) and the work by Uma Das Gupta: "Tagore's Educational Experiments at Santiniketan and Sriniketan, 1901–1941", in: *The Contested Terrain. Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998), pp. 265–74; "Tagore's Ideas of Social Action and the Sriniketan Experiment of Rural Reconstruction, 1922–41", in: *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008) 4, pp. 992-1004; "Using a Poet's Archive to Write the History of a University: Rabindranath Tagore and Visva-Bharati", in: *Asian and African Studies* XIV (2010) 1, pp. 9–16.
[237] Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education*, pp. 161–6.

> Our centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life also. It must cultivate land, breed cattle, to feed itself and its students; it must produce all necessaries, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. Its very existence should depend upon the success of its industrial ventures carried out on the co-operative principle, which unite the will of teachers and students in a living and active bond of necessity. This will give us also a practical industrial training, whose motive-force is not the greed of profit. Such an institution must group around it all the neighbouring villages and vitally unite them with itself in all its economic endeavours. Their housing accommodation, sanitation, the improvement of their moral and intellectual life-these should form the object of the social side of its activity.[238]

Tagore's educational institution and his activities with regard to reviving arts and crafts and alleviating poverty in villages became well known throughout India. He also was a very well-connected figure, travelling throughout Asia, Europe and the USA. One example of his manifold international connections was the English agricultural scientist Leonard Elmhirst. As a graduate of Cornell University (USA) he was inspired by Tagore's ideas on rural reconstruction and followed him to Shantiniketan. He became his right hand in the village development programmes and the establishing of the *Institute for Rural Reconstruction* in 1922 in Sriniketan, a village close to Shantiniketan. Its aim was to train the village population in agriculture techniques and health. The institute was also active in creating and supporting artisan cooperatives, and initiated a Boy Scout movement.[239]

Gandhi and Tagore had a close relationship, but despite their similarities, they differed substantially in some views. At the time of his reorientation phase after his return to India in 1915, Gandhi, and a group of relatives and followers, settled in Shantiniketan. By that time, an experimental school with 125 students had been established, and Gandhi took over supervision of the school programme. He implemented his 'teaching method', tried out in Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm, that saw the children involved in all kinds of work (cleaning, cooking etc.), in order to learn 'self-help'. However, the original timetable of the school was

[238] Rabindranath Tagore, "Thoughts on Education", in: *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly. Education Number* XIII, no. I&II (1947, reprinted 2004)): 6.

[239] For further information see: Uma Das Gupta, "Tagore's Ideas of Social Action and the Sriniketan Experiment of Rural Reconstruction, 1922–41", in: *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008) 4, pp. 265–74.

kept as it was, leading to immense problems, because the lessons of 'self-help' took a lot of time. When this led to conflicts, Gandhi realized that Shantiniketan was not the place to further develop his ideas and moved on to establish his own community, Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad (see also 4.2).[240]

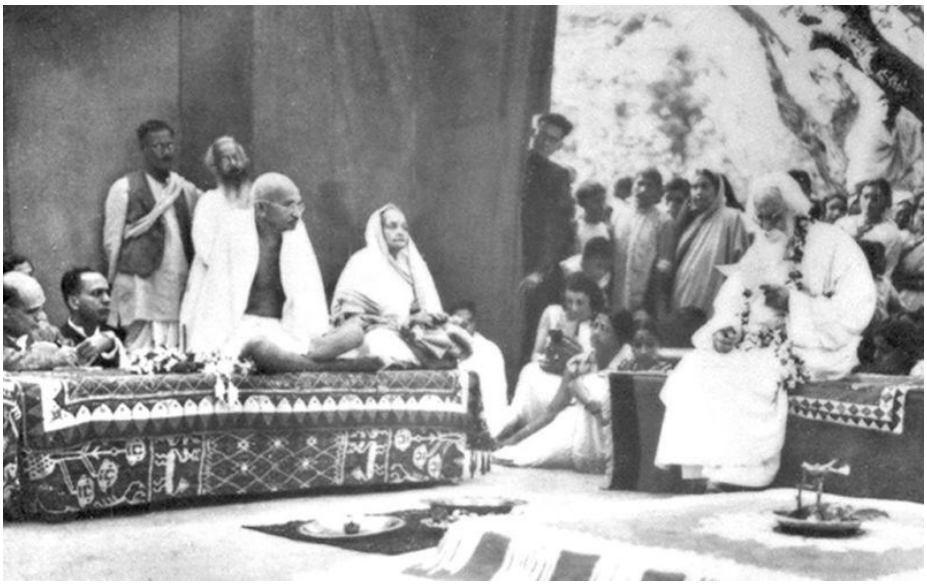

Figure 1: *With Tagore, on one of Gandhi's visits to Shantiniketan, 1940*[241]

The diverging views of Tagore and Gandhi in their approaches to education have already been analysed in detail and I only want to point to one controversy here.[242] Gandhi did not understand Tagore's emphasis on the fine arts in a situation where they were dealing with massive poverty. He argued that such emphasis was a waste of resources and that 'rather than cultured aesthetes' India needed its 'youth to be efficient instruments of public service'.[243] He wrote for example about Tagore's approach:

> I have not found it necessary to give any special importance to music, drawing, etc. Keeping in view the conditions in the country I feel a general knowledge of agriculture, and weaving, and health education should be included in the education for everybody.[244]

[240] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 93.
[241] Peter Rühe, *Gandhi* (London: Phaidon, 2001), p. 168.
[242] R.K. Prabhu & Ravindra Kelekar (eds.), *Truth Called Them Differently (Tagore-Gandhi Controversy)* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961); R.S. Mani, *Educational Ideas & Ideals of Gandhi and Tagore. A Comparative Study with Relevance to Modern India* (New Delhi: New Book Society of India, 1961); Poromesh Acharya, "Educational Ideals of Tagore and Gandhi: A Comparative Study", in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (1997), pp. 601-06.
[243] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 159.
[244] Letter to Durlabhdas Shamji Dhruve, 17.9.1916, see: CWMG Vol. 15, pp. 248-9.

However, as I will point out in the following chapters, there were many personal connections between Gandhi's and Tagore's institutions, and teachers from Shantiniketan came to work in Sevagram.[245]

Coming back to Gandhi's personal connections to the NEF, it is important to keep in mind that, while the NEF concentrated its activities mainly in Europe and the USA, secondary sources on its activities also point to the fact that its members undertook 'missionary' trips 'to spread the new educational word in various parts of the world'.[246] Bits and pieces of information point towards NEF activities in India.[247] For example, Rabindranath Tagore's collected works contain a speech he gave at the opening of a 1936 conference of the NEF in Calcutta. Therein, he invited participants to come and visit his educational institutions in Shantiniketan after the conference.[248] There is also evidence in a letter from Pierre Bovet to a French couple (Edmond and Yvonne Privat) that the NEF members Pierre Bovet, Professor Davies and Dr Zilliacus were present at the Wardha Conference in October 1937, and that a NEF delegation visited Gandhi in 1938.[249] During that visit the delegation expressed its sympathy with the Wardha Scheme and wished Gandhi success for its implementation.

While these are all preliminary results, they still point to the various personal connections of Gandhi to proponents of the Progressive Education Movement, and explain why Gandhi's concept resonated with some of their ideas. It is therefore not surprising that Progressive Education was often used as a reference point, as well as justification, in the later debates on Basic Education. Rajendra

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[245] See, for example, the case of E.W. and Asha Devi Aryanayakam (more details can be found here: 5.5)

[246] See Röhrs, "The New Education Fellowship", p. 183.

[247] More detailed information will soon be published, available from Elija Horn's Humboldt University dissertation project on "The Transnational Exchange between Indian and German-speaking New Educationists", see: http://iaaw.hu-berlin.de/suedasien/forschung/promotionen/zweitgutachten/the-transnational-exchange-between-indian-and-german-speaking-new-educationists. (retrieved 12.01.2015)

[248] Tagore, Rabindranath. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* [1996], Vol. 2 (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2006), pp. 814–16. The archival records of the Institute of Education in London also show that, in 1960, NEF held its international conference in Delhi.

[249] See the following archival item: Edmond Privat 1889–1962, Revue neuchâteloise no 43/44, été–automne 1968, p. 67. Reproduction partielle de la lettre de P. Bovet à Edmond Privat, de Bombay le 7 janvier 1938. See for example, p. 19 of: http://www.swiss-quakers.ch/ge/library/cat/GMM-library-20121223.pdf. (retrieved 17.01.2015). Also, there is a brief summary of the meeting between Gandhi, Ziliacus and the NEF delegation in *Harijan*, 15 January 1938, see: CWMG Vol. 72, p. 434.

Prasad, for instance, in his opening speech to the second All-India Basic Education Conference, argued: '(…) what was regarded as the fad of a person infatuated by spinning had really the backing of the latest educational thought in the West and the most up-to-date psychologists'.[250] Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain argued a little later that Basic Education was 'in consonance with the best trends of progressive educational thought'.[251]

[250] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Two Years of Work. Report of the Second Basic Education Conference Jamianagar, Delhi, April 1941* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1948), p. 14.
[251] K.G. Saiyidain, "Basic Education", in: *The New Era in Home and School* 27 (1946) 3, p. 55.

3 Gandhi's Symbolism: *Charkha*, *Khadhi* and the Visual Representation of the New Social Order

A statement by Gandhi often quoted in the secondary literature about him is the following: 'There is no such thing as "Gandhism", and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems.'[252] Even if he might not have wanted to create a sect, very early in life he had developed a charismatic authority to which many people felt drawn, and biographers refer to the fact that Gandhi knew very well what effect he had on his admirers.[253] Internationally renowned photographers contemporary to Gandhi, like Margaret Bourke-White and Henri Cartier-Bresson, were fascinated by him. His public self-presentation and charisma has also been dealt with by several authors.[254]

Many writers emphasize the importance of including visual sources in research on the nationalist movement, such as Christopher Pinney,[255] in his research on chromolithograph Hindu deity prints, and, more specifically related to Gandhian history, Rebecca Brown and Lisa Trivedi.[256] In this chapter I want to delve into an analysis of Gandhi's construction and use of visual symbolism and I also want to use this as a basis for my discussion of the photographs of *Nai Talim* experiments in Chapter 6. Gandhi was a public figure who used his appearance and his body in combination with visual elements, such as the wearing of self-made clothing and hand-spinning with a spindle or spinning wheel, as a means of conveying his messages and mobilizing the masses in support of his cause. This also has to be

[252] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 252.
[253] See for example: Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, p. 65. Gandhi himself called it the 'glamour' of his personality.
[254] See, for example: Claude Markovits, *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi. The Life and Afterlife of the Mahatma*, Anthem South Asian Studies (London; New York; Delhi: Anthem Press, 2004). Harish Trivedi, "Literary and Visual Portrayals of Gandhi", in: *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, ed. by Judith M. Brown & Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[255] Christopher Pinney, *Photos of the Gods. The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).
[256] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*; Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*.

seen against the background of a context of high illiteracy rates and a diversity of languages, which made visual communication all the more important and the task of mass mobilization all the more difficult. Both spinning (*charkha*, the spinning wheel) and *khadi* material/dress were the central symbols of Gandhi's political activism. Recent studies have provided a detailed analysis of the iconography of the spinning wheel and the history of *khadi*.[257] This research is an important basis for my interpretation. However, the available studies focus very generally on the genesis of these symbols and their role for mass mobilization, and do not pay attention to the relevance of the symbols in the field of education. But, as I will show in later chapters, spinning and the production of *khadi* cloth were of key importance in the educational processes of *Nai Talim*. Also, in the course of the spread of the education model, thousands of children were involved in spinning and cloth production as part of their daily schooling experiences.

3.1 Gandhi's Clothing Experiments: Attempting to Decolonize the Body

One way of approaching the topic of Gandhi's visual self-presentation is through his clothing.[258] There are certain moments in his life when he deliberately chose to change his self-representation and not only was it important to him how he was dressed, but he was also quite aware of the effects of his clothing style.[259] I will lay out in the following how Gandhi underwent dramatic changes in his self-presentation, starting as a lawyer dressed in suit and tie and ending as the 'half-naked fakir' (as he was called by Winston Churchill) and leader of the masses, dressed only in a small piece of *khadi* cloth wrapped around his waist.

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[257] Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*; Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*; Rahul Ramagundam, "Khadi and Its Agency: Organizing Structures of Philanthropic Commerce", in: *Social Scientist* 32 (2004) 5, pp. 51–68; Rahul Ramagundam, *Gandhi's Khadi: A History of Contention and Conciliation* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2008); Rebecca M. Brown, "Spinning without Touching the Wheel: Anticolonialism, Indian Nationalism, and the Deployment of Symbol", in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 29 (2009) 2, pp. 230–45.

[258] I owe the idea to follow the changes in Gandhi's clothing style over the course of his life to the chapter rewritten by Susan Bean: "Gandhi and Khadi: The Fabric of Indian Nationalism", in: *Cloth in Human Experience*, ed. by A.W. Weiner & J. Schneider (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1989).

[259] Ibid., p. 366

Gandhi's first phase in life can be characterized by his inclusion into the mainstream colonial discourse on the superiority of 'the West'. Clothing styles played an important role and were used by the British as a 'central feature of authority and a primary marker of difference'.[260] Prescription of dress took place, for example, in the context of the employment of Indians in the colonial bureaucracy.[261] Besides, 'proper' dress became an issue in the context of a colonial civilizing mission, thereby teaching the 'natives' how to dress in Western clothing, which came to be associated with progress and civilization. As the following photograph illustrates, during his time in London, where he studied law between 1888 and 1891, Gandhi dressed as an English gentlemen, in suit, white shirt and tie.

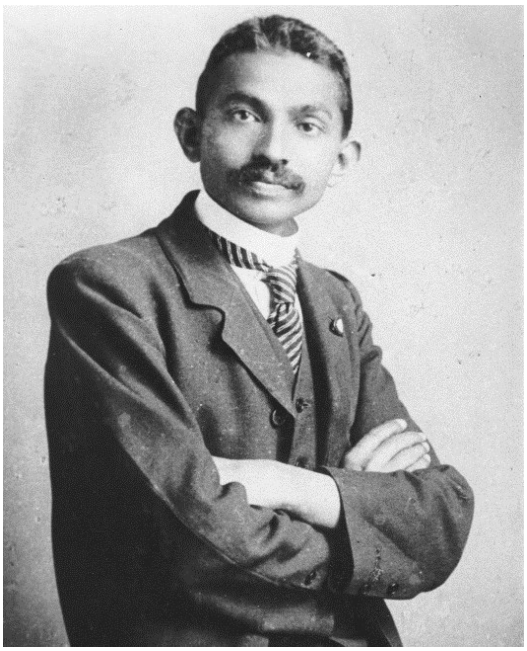

Figure 2: *Gandhi as a student in London, 1888–91*[262]

In an act of what Homi Bhabha calls 'colonial mimicry',[263] of imitating and taking on cultural markers of the colonizers, Gandhi attempted, with this clothing style, to be a 'better native'. According to this idea, a colonized subject following the English clothing norms would be regarded as 'more civilized' than traditionally

[260] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, p. xx.
[261] Ibid., p. xvii. See also E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies. The Physical Experience of the Raj, C. 1800–1947* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).
[262] http://purehistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Gandhi_costume.jpg (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[263] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

dressed 'natives', and therefore attain the same rights as the English.[264] This mimicry – behaving as a 'better native' – is also of relevance in Gandhi's early years in South Africa.[265] He was thrown off the train when travelling first class in 1893, due to the regulation that Indians were not allowed to travel first class, and this racial violence was a traumatic experience for him.[266] He was, however, still convinced that he could individually ameliorate the situation through 'good' behaviour. He reapplied for a first-class ticket, this time perfectly dressed, and succeeded, since the stationmaster acknowledged him to be a 'real gentleman'.[267]
In 1896, Gandhi's wife and children followed him to South Africa. The picture below shows his family on their arrival.

Figure 3: Gandhi's wife Kasturba and their children, c.1896
on their arrival in South Africa[268]

Gandhi's attempt to imitate the Europeans and to achieve this through 'proper' clothing is apparent in the following quote: '… in order to look civilized, our

[264] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 357.
[265] By 1893 'South Africa' as a political entity did not exist. In 1910, the Union of South Africa was formed from four previously separate British colonies: Cape Colony, Natal Colony, Transvaal Colony and Orange River Colony. Before this, the British colony of Natal, in which Gandhi arrived from India in 1893, existed between 1843 and 1910.
[266] Hyslop, "Gandhi 1869–1915", p. 36.
[267] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 357.
[268] http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/kasturba_gandhi_children_20070827.jpg (retrieved 20.10.2014)

dress and manners had as far as possible to approximate the European standard. Because I thought only thus could we have some influence and without influence it would not be possible to serve the community.'[269]

Two pictures from Gandhi's time in South Africa (1893–1914) show the first radical change in his clothing style in the context of his political activism, interests in reform ideas and his move to a rural commune. The first picture shows him in 1905 in front of his office. He is still dressing as an English gentlemen. The second picture shows him in simple clothing and wearing sandals.

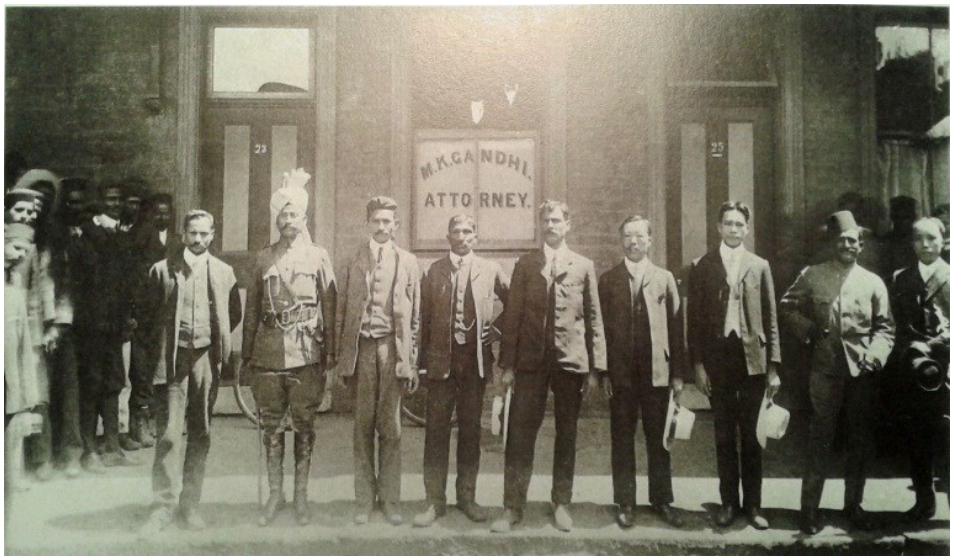

Figure 4: *Gandhi (third from left) in suit and tie, in front of his law firm in 1905*[270]

[269] Quoted in ibid.
[270] Rühe, *Gandhi*, p. 30.

Figure 5: *Gandhi, wearing 'workman's dress', with Sonia Schlesin and Hermann Kallenbach, in South Africa, 1913*[271]

While, in the picture taken in 1905, Gandhi still wore a suit and tie, by 1908 he 'no longer believed that European garments were an index of civilization and Indian ones of its lack'.[272] As he wrote rather ironically in *Hind Swaraj*: 'If people of a certain country, who have hitherto not been in the habit of wearing much clothing, boots, etc., adopt European clothing, they are supposed to have become civilized out of savagery.'[273] As one expression of this radical shift in thinking, Gandhi adopted a 'labourer's dress', consisting of European-style trousers and shirt, adopted from prison uniform.[274] This shift was an expression of his change in life, beginning in 1904 with the move to his first rural commune Phoenix Settlement, which I will talk about in more detail in section 4.1.2.

[271] Hermann Kallenbach had sewn the photograph into his clothes when he travelled to England during the First World War, because he feared internment, and thus confiscation of the photograph. See also: Rühe, *Gandhi*, p. 40.
[272] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 359.
[273] Quoted in ibid.
[274] Ibid., p. 365

Figure 6: *Gandhi wearing the satyagrahi uniform in 1914*[275]

Another step in the changes to Gandhi's clothing style was the development of his *satyagraha*[276] 'uniform'. In the context of his activism against the so-called Black Act, requiring the registration and fingerprinting of all Asians, Gandhi launched a movement, together with the Indian Muslim community, to fight against this racist legislation.[277] He called the method he developed in building up this movement *satyagraha*. Based on the principle of non-violence (*ahimsa*), the idea was to resist the legislation in a peaceful way through the means of boycott. The *satyagraha* dress he invented 'was a cross between South Indian dress, a monastic habit and a military uniform'.[278]

On his arrival back to India in 1915, he 'was dressed as a Kathiawari (Gujarat) peasant, in *dhoti*, *angarkha* (robe), upper cloth, and turban, the most thoroughly Indian of his costumes'.[279] With this dress, he explicitly used his clothing to mark his Indian identity and his pride in it. Later, when he was wearing his *mahatma*

[275] Catherine Clement, *Gandhi. The Power of Pacifism*, Discoveries (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), p. 45.
[276] Can be translated as 'insistence on truth'.
[277] Hyslop, "Gandhi 1869–1915", p. 44.
[278] Catherine Clement, *Gandhi. The Power of Pacifism*, Discoveries (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), p. 45.
[279] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 366.

dress, he ironically remarked: 'with my Kathiawadi cloak, turban and dhoti, I looked somewhat more civilized than I do today'.[280]

Figure 7: *Gandhi in Kathiawari peasant dress, and his wife Kasturba on their return to India (1914)*[281]

This was not yet the last step in Gandhi's transformation of clothing style, as he soon found that the dress of a Kathiawari peasant was too strongly linked to a certain region and class. He instead wanted to create a dress that transcended social boundaries. By 1921, in what the historian David Arnold calls 'the final step in his personal journey towards bodily decolonization',[282] Gandhi adopted the *mahatma* dress, consisting of loincloth and *chadar* (shawl) made from *khadi* material,[283] the rest of his body was bare and his head uncovered.[284] Since the production of *khadi* was expensive and complicated, Gandhi argued that he

[280] Quoted in ibid.
[281] source: http://www.gandhimedia.org/cgi-bin/gm/gm.cgi?action=view&link=Images/Photographs/Personalities/Mahatma_Gandhi/1915_-_1920&image=IMPHPEMG1915015001.jpg&img=&tt= (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[282] David Arnold, *Gandhi*, Profiles in Power (Harlow: Longman, 2001), p. 128.
[283] Gandhi was given the title *mahatma*, which means 'great soul', by Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali artist, poet and educator, when Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915.
[284] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 367.

wanted to use as little cloth as possible for his dress. This kind of clothing became part of his appearance as an icon of the Indian nationalist movement:

Figure 8: *Gandhi using a spinning wheel*[285]

This was the final step in his visual transformation from a colonial subject to a critic of British colonialism and with this public appearance 'Gandhi had completely rejected the English gentleman and replaced him with the Indian ascetic, the renouncer, the holy man'.[286] With the presentation of his bare skinny body, he personified his message to live a life of simplicity and self-sufficiency and by that presented the ideal rural manual worker, an imagination on which his vision of a new social order was based. This public appearance also visually transmitted the message of the moral superiority of practising self-restraint in life, such as through celibacy, voluntary poverty and dietary restrictions and the duty of discipline and hard work in the name of the nationalist movement.

[285] http://www.bridgemanimages.com/en-GB/asset/314418/german-photographer-20th-century/gandhi-using-a-spinning-wheel-b-w-photo (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[286] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 367.

3.2 The (Re-)signification of the Spinning Wheel and *Khadi* Clothing

> We had many long conversations about the condition of India and I saw as in a flash that without the spinning wheel there was no swaraj. I knew that everyone had to spin.[287]

As he later reported in 1908, Gandhi 'discovered' the spinning wheel as a symbol for his political activism in a kind of 'epiphany', and in his vision 'to make India free and to enable her to stand on her own legs, the spinning-wheel had to hum in every home'.[288] The spinning wheel as a symbol used in anti-colonial activism was not new. As already pointed out, textile production in the context of India's colonization was a highly political issue long before Gandhi's activism in this regard. Spinning wheels had been used as a symbol in the protest against British colonial domination in the *Swadeshi* Movement in Bengal (1905–08). Throughout this movement '… handlooms became the concrete, material symbols of the imagined simplicity and purity of rural life, of folklore, of a distinctive Indian tradition, of forms of life regarded as outside the modern colonial era'.[289] Already, then, the spinning wheel (or handloom as it is termed here) was used to symbolize India's subjugation in colonial economic relations. During the movement, textiles as a typical Bengali product were employed as a symbol to mobilize against economic dependence. Thereby, British manufactured clothes were stylized as a symbol of the unequal terms of trade. Protest strategies included the public boycott of foreign manufactured textiles, the revival of domestic-made products (called *swadeshi* products) and production techniques which would support economic independence. As the historian Manu Goswami argues:

[287] *Young India*, 20.9.1928, in: CWMG Vol. 43, p. 34.
[288] Ibid., Vol. 91, p. 378
[289] Manu Goswami, "From Swadeshi to Swaraj: Nation, Economy, Territory in Colonial South Asia, 1870–1907", in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1998) 4, p. 625.

> The broad socio-aesthetic complex of the movement's repertoire included the reconstitution of social taste from Manchester cloth to coarse handloom, the boycott of foreign commodities in marketplaces; the social ostracism of consumers of foreign goods, the valorization of indigenous handicrafts as the material symbol of historical continuity with the past glory of the nation, and the social scrutiny of consumption practices as indicators of authenticity and patriotism.[290]

This repertoire was certainly important for Gandhi's later activism. But much older strands of meaning might also have been helpful in Gandhi's construction of the spinning wheel as a symbol. For example, in its form of a wheel or circle, the symbol of the spinning wheel referred to ancient traditions of *chakra*: 'Used extensively in the Buddhist and Hindu contexts, the chakra carried a variety of meanings. It resonated with the Indic understanding of cycles of time and the cycle of birth and rebirth.'[291] Also, during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, spinning was often depicted in paintings by Indian artists that were sold by the EIC in Britain. As the art historian Rebecca Brown argues in her study on Gandhi and the spinning wheel, these paintings, echoing an image of India based on orientalism and nostalgia for a simpler time, appealed to a British audience. This nostalgia found expression in the *Arts and Crafts Movement*, influential in arts and architecture in Europe and the USA between 1880 and 1920.[292] At the heart of this movement was the critique that traditional craftsmanship was in decline due to industrialization and needed to be revived. In this context, spinning was constructed as a lost craft in 'the West', while still alive in India.[293] European writings about India from this period often repeated the same theme about spinning.[294]

Against the background of these diverse aspects of symbolism, Gandhi actively constructed new meanings for the spinning wheel and *khadi* clothing. One important aspect thereby was the 'liberation' of spinning from the female domain. In India, spinning was traditionally done by women as domestic supplementary labour, not as an occupation associated with a particular community. Studies from

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[290] Ibid., p. 624
[291] *Chakra* can be translated as 'wheel'. See: Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, p. 103.
[292] See for example: Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World 1880–1920* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004); Oscar Lovell Triggs, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York: Parkstone Press, 2009).
[293] Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, p. 78.
[294] Ibid., p. 50

the mid-19th century show the gender divide in cloth production: men cleaned the cotton and worked in many steps of the cloth-making process, while women spun the cotton. Also, spinning was done in the domestic sphere and '… in addition to its gender-specificity, often only certain classes of women spun'.[295] Brown argues that Gandhi managed to achieve a 'resignification' of spinning, in the sense of Judith Butler's work on gender and performative resignification.[296] Butler's point is that repeated enactments of certain activities challenge gender norms and thereby help to overcome dominant ideas related to gender.[297] Gandhi tried to create such a performative resignification with his idea that 'everyone had to spin', not just women. He span himself, in public and not in the domestic sphere of the home, and, with this, challenged entrenched gender norms on a daily basis. He thereby also challenged racist stereotypes of Indians as being weak and 'unmanly':

> Unlike other anti-colonial leaders, who aimed to portray themselves as masculine, modern and (often) militaristic, Gandhi produced an image of his body that played on the British stereotype of the weak and feminized Hindu. Gandhi in his physicality and teaching, instead of conceding the coloniser's version of gendered identity, affirmed complex indigenous forms of masculinity, femininity, and ambiguity, and a new form of strength, that of the satyagrahi.[298]

The efforts by Gandhi and his followers to construct new meanings of spinning and to detach the activity from the female and domestic sphere were quite engaged. For example, a portable *charkha* (also called *peti* or box *charkha*) appeared in photographs for the first time in 1931.[299] It can be seen in the photograph below. The invention was an attempt to overcome the gendered iconography of spinning connected to the upright spinning wheel, and therefore make it more accessible to the male masses.

[295] Ibid., p. 87. Brown here also refers to a study which shows that some upper-caste women saw spinning as prohibited by their caste.
[296] See: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [1990] (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).
[297] Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, p. 88.
[298] Hyslop, "Gandhi 1869–1915", p. 49.
[299] Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, p. 100.

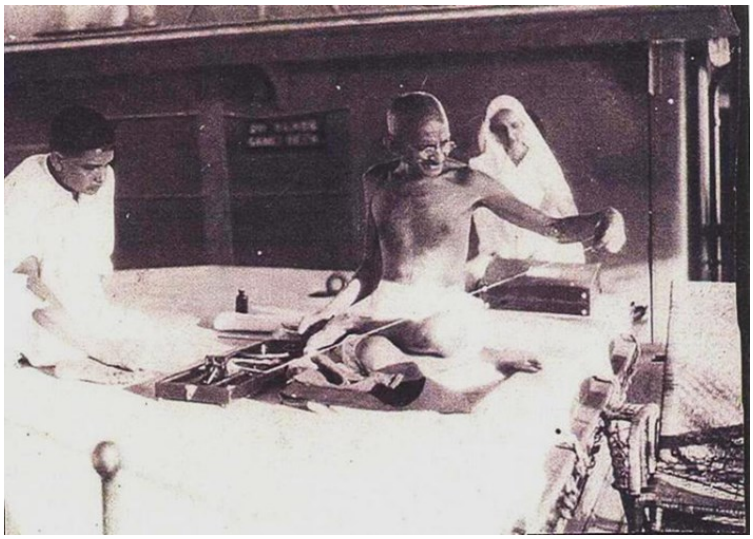

Figure 9: *Gandhi spinning with a box charkha*[300]

Maganlal Gandhi, Gandhi's nephew, was very active in researching new techniques of spinning and was the key inspirer for this new spinning device.[301] Brown argues that the box *charkha* with 'its deviation from the gendered imagery of the upright *charkha* meant that it provided an alternative vision of spinning, one that significantly, if still only partially, escaped spinning's strong connection with the feminine.'[302] The very different flat design was seen as being 'modern' and innovative.

In a next step she goes on to show how the connection of spinning to the female sphere was also helpful in creating a new inclusive meaning of the spinning wheel, transcending the lines of differentiation in society. Since spinning was associated as belonging to the female domain '... the spinner doesn't represent a caste or an occupational group. She represents a particular constructed vision of India, one bound up with images of village life, authentic rural encounters and the bucolic, happy peasant.'[303] Interestingly, photography in the context of colonial India was another factor which detached the symbol of the spinning wheel from a certain social group. During the second half of the 19th century, with the introduction of photography, the spinning wheel faded as a motive in photographs. Brown sees a connection to colonial ethnographic knowledge

[300] http://blog.tadpolestore.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/charkha2.jpg (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[301] See also the chapter on Maganlal Gandhi in: Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*.
[302] Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, p. 102.
[303] Ibid., p. 65

production.[304] Photography mainly served the desire to collect ethnographic data in the colony, thereby marking identities with the aim of 'producing and recording identity through imaging the body, face and attributes of types across India – that is, marking people as representatives of a caste, occupation, rank or tribe'.[305] With its association with the realm of the feminine, spinning was unable to fulfil this kind of 'typologisation of caste, tribe and profession', and could be reworked by Gandhi as a nationalist symbol. As Brown argues:

> On the one hand, the waning of spinning anchors Gandhian narratives about the craft; the perception of its demise produces a need to save spinning and thereby salvage the Indian nation. On the other hand, spinning's consistent iconography makes it recognizable. Its inability to assimilate to the requirements of colonial ethnographic projects left it free to be reworked for swaraj (self-rule).[306]

Gandhi therefore succeeded in constructing a new meaning for the activity of spinning, namely political activism and an active creation of a new social order. The following quote by Devdas Gandhi thereby exemplifies the highly idealized nature of the figure of the spinner: 'the self-spinner has no class high or low. He spins because he takes a pleasure in spinning and because he sees its importance, if not to himself … to the vast masses of the country. He spins in sympathy for the poor …'[307]

Khadi material could be produced through relatively easy-to-learn manual work (spinning and weaving). Wearing clothes made from *khadi*, or even producing it with self-spun cotton, therefore became an easy-to-practice form of political activism in support of Gandhi's ideas. The material thus, on the one hand, had a unifying effect, visually unmarking the social boundaries of caste, class and religion. On the other hand, it became a marker of being part of the envisioned new social order, of transforming 'a colonized body into an Indian body'.[308] To dress in *khadi* therefore 'meant to transform a heterogeneous, Westernized, and elite-dominated subcontinent into a unified India and national community',[309] and

[304] She refers to the collection of photographs entitled "The People of India", first published in 1868. Within this collection there is only one picture of spinning. Ibid., p. 49
[305] Ibid., p. 63
[306] Ibid., p. 41
[307] Quoted in: Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, p. 74.
[308] Ibid., p. 68
[309] Ibid., p. 80

symbolized the transformation of the person into an 'Indian', struggling for the national cause. For Gandhi, *khadi* thereby transmitted a message 'of simplicity, service of mankind, living so as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant'. [310] As Trivedi argues:

> khadi clothing made it possible for elite men and women to ally themselves with the masses; imagining themselves as Indian was a crucial step in transforming their identities. This clothing made it possible for others – Britons and villagers – to see them as Indian as well. Men who replaced their Western dress with khadi clothing visually expressed their autonomy from the colonial regime and announced their affiliation with a national community in which class, caste, regional and religious identities had been subsumed.[311]

Similar to his imaginations on the positive effects of 'bread labour', for Gandhi, the production and wearing of *khadi* also had a strong moral economic dimension. On the one hand, it had a disciplining effect, teaching the dignity of manual work, simplicity and the limitation of wants. He thereby saw spinning as an important milestone in the path to non-violence, and believed that 'no other path but that of non-violence will suit India. The symbol of that dharma for India is the spinning-wheel as it alone is the friend of the distressed and the giver of plenty for the poor.'[312] Spinning, for him, was the 'sun' of the 'solar system' of traditional Indian crafts, a system that had been damaged by the British EIC.[313] Its revival, therefore, also meant the 'reconstruction' of India's self-sufficient economic order, free from dependence on unfair colonial economic relations.

3.3 Clash of Representations and the Power of Gandhi's Symbolism

Before turning to the effects of Gandhi's self-presentation as the ideal rural manual worker, I first want to point to reactions to his spread of the symbols – namely, their rejection or, in case of acceptance, the means by which the elite

[310] *Young India*, 17.9.1925, in: CWMG Vol. 32, p. 413.
[311] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, p. 100.
[312] Presidential Address at Kathiawar Political Conference, 8.1.1925, in: CWMG Vol. 30, p. 67.
[313] Ibid., vol. 70, p. 234

maintained their distinct position. There is evidence that his attempts at the 'performative resignification' in terms of the gender division of spinning did not work out as intended. Most of the images of collective spinning of the 1930s and 1940s depict groups or masses of women, not men,[314] and it was difficult to convince men and upper-class people to spin.[315] Even though it was Gandhi's proclaimed goal that *khadi* would create a non-hierarchical community of people following his ideas, and that *khadi* should be worn by all people, the handmade cloth also reproduced mechanisms of elite distinction within the nationalist movement. *Khadi* material was quite expensive when bought in shops and therefore not everyone could easily afford it. Also, different groups expressed their opposition to wearing *khadi* clothing, since the material was not as comfortable as fine, industrially manufactured cloth.[316] The INC was divided with regard to Gandhi's programmes, the prescription of wearing *khadi* clothing and practising daily spinning as part of Congress membership. Although following the official Congress policies, representatives Sarojini Naidu and Jawaharlal Nehru,[317] for example, criticized the whole cult concerning spinning and *khadi* clothing (see also 4.2.4). While Nehru also practised spinning himself, in an act of elite distinction he decided to wear only very fine *khadi* materials that were quite expensive. As Trivedi argues, this reinforced his privileged position among the nationalist elite:

> Nehru reached an important compromise in his use of khadi that became a trademark of the Indian political elite for generations to come. While expressing a shared past through homespun, Nehru also marked himself as exceptional. In doing so, he made sure that his sympathy for the plight of his fellow-countrymen was visible, but that he could not be mistaken for a common person.[318]

Despite these criticisms, and rejection of his ideas, Gandhi was quite successful in using symbolism for mass mobilization and political activism. The symbols of spinning and *khadi* became central, especially during the *Non-Cooperation Movement*, as visible in the photograph below. Similar to its use in the *Swadeshi*

[314] Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, p. 81.
[315] Ibid., p. 76
[316] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, pp. 97–8.
[317] Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949) was a poet and social activist. She was president of the INC in 1925.
[318] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, p. 94.

Movement, the spinning wheel was used to criticize colonial economic relations and India's forced dependence on industrially manufactured cloth made in England.

Figure 10: *Foreign Cloth Boycott, 26 July 1922*[319]

In 1920, the INC had adopted a programme for the promotion of *khadi* production. It consisted of the following elements: the boycott of foreign cloth, the requirement for INC officers and workers to spin cotton and wear *khadi* dress, and the adoption of a flag made of *khadi* material with the spinning wheel at the centre.

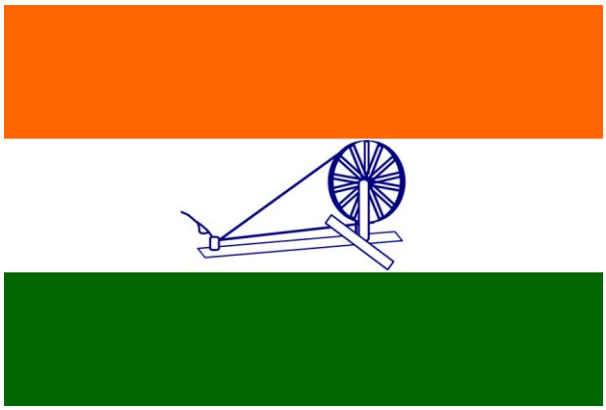

Figure 11: *Flag adopted by the INC, with a spinning wheel at the centre*[320]

[319] Rühe, *Gandhi*, p. 60.

Congress workers adopted a uniform clothing style, consisting of shirt and *dhoti* and the Gandhi cap (*topi*), visible in the first photograph below, and invented by Gandhi (he wore it as part of his dress between 1916 and 1919). It is believed that the cap has its origins in South African prison clothing and, at the same time, resembled Muslim caps. Gandhi also wore it as a sign of Hindu–Muslim unity.[321] He later stopped wearing it, but as visible on the second photograph, Gandhi's followers copied his clothing style, and thus a new nationalist style worn by 'the Gandhians' developed.[322]

Figure 12: *Gandhi wearing a topi with Tagore in 1920*[323]

[320] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_India#/media/File:1931_Flag_of_India.svg (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[321] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 367.
[322] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, p. 67.
[323] Rühe, *Gandhi*, p. 58 (cropped version of the original)

Figure 13: *Satyagrahis during the Salt Satyagraha, May 1930*[324]

With the rise of photojournalism and movies, Gandhi soon became a kind of 'star' of the Indian nationalist movement. With his public appearance in the *mahatma* dress, and often practising spinning himself, he managed to present himself as the living example of his envisioned new social order and subtly displayed a whole range of anti-colonial critique. As Hyslop points out: 'his physical self-presentation was one with which the Indian poor could identify and which made repression of his movement by the authorities appear as bullying of the humble and vulnerable'.[325] His *mahatma* dress was especially powerful in situations where he appeared side by side with English officials. As the picture below illustrates, the contrast in clothing between the *mahatma* dress and the English gentlemen's suit visually represents the clash between very different conceptions of social orders.

[324] Ibid., p. 90
[325] Hyslop, "Gandhi 1869–1915", p. 49.

Figure 14: *Gandhi leaving Number 10 Downing Street, London, 1931*[326]

This provocation, by means of wearing the symbolically loaded *khadi* dress, not only worked in the case of Gandhi. Ordinary people wanting to take part in the movement under Gandhi's leadership sought confrontation with the colonial regime by dressing in *khadi*. For example, during the 1930s the Gandhi *topi*, which by then had become a central symbol of the Gandhian movement, was banned by the British from Indian official institutions, such as courtrooms.[327] Trivedi describes several incidents where the public display of *topi*, *khadi* clothing or flags led to conflicts with the colonial administration. This gave *khadi* an even higher significance: 'As local officials responded to the sight of this cloth in public by restricting its display or destroying it altogether, the imperial regime itself played an important role in defining the significance of khadi.'[328] Trivedi concludes that, by 1930: 'khadi had been transformed from a country cloth worn

[326] Full title of the photograph: "Gandhi leaving Number 10 Downing Street, London, 1931 after visiting British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald". Source: http://www.bridgemanimages.com/en-GB/asset/241185/Indian-Photographer-20th-century/Mahatma-Gandhi-1869-1948-leaving-Number-10-Downi (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[327] Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*, p. 73.
[328] Trivedi, Clothing Gandhi's Nation, p. 133?

by some of India's rural population and the symbol of a specific form of nationalist politics into a general symbol used publicly by a wide variety of people across British India to visually proclaim injustice'.[329]

As I have shown, Gandhi used his body and clothing style to represent his vision of a new social order based on simplicity and self-sufficient village life. He thereby used the symbols of *khadi* clothing and the spinning wheel according to his ideas and visions, and presented himself as the ideal manual worker and a model member of his envisioned social order. It is thus interesting to note that his lifestyle was quite difficult to maintain, and its staged nature was even criticized by his followers. After his death, a co-worker remarked: 'If Bapuji only knew how much it costs to keep him in poverty.'[330] But Gandhi was conversant with the 'communicative power of costume' and 'deliberately used costume not only to express his sociopolitical identity, but to manipulate social occasions to elicit acceptance of, if not agreement with, his position'.[331] In order to successfully communicate his ideas to the masses, Gandhi needed easily understandable messages. In most places where he held speeches in front of mass gatherings, there was no technology to make his speeches audible. Additionally, due to the broad variety of languages, Gandhi's messages could not be understood all over India. Also, during that time, three-quarters of the people in India were illiterate. He therefore developed a means of communication that worked well in this situation:

> He used his appearance to communicate his most important messages in a form comprehensible to all Indians. Engaged in the simple labor of spinning, dressed as one of the poor in loincloth and *chadar* (shawl), this important and powerful man communicated the dignity of poverty, the dignity of labor, the equality of all Indians, and the greatness of the Indian civilization, as well as his own saintliness.[332]

[329] Ibid., p. 2
[330] Nehru Memorial Library and Archives, Papers of *Hindusthani Talimi Sangh*, Reel 2/Section 22. Letter of S. Alexander to E.W. Aryanayakam, 10.11.1958, refers to words spoken by Amrit Kaur.
[331] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 366.
[332] Ibid., p. 368

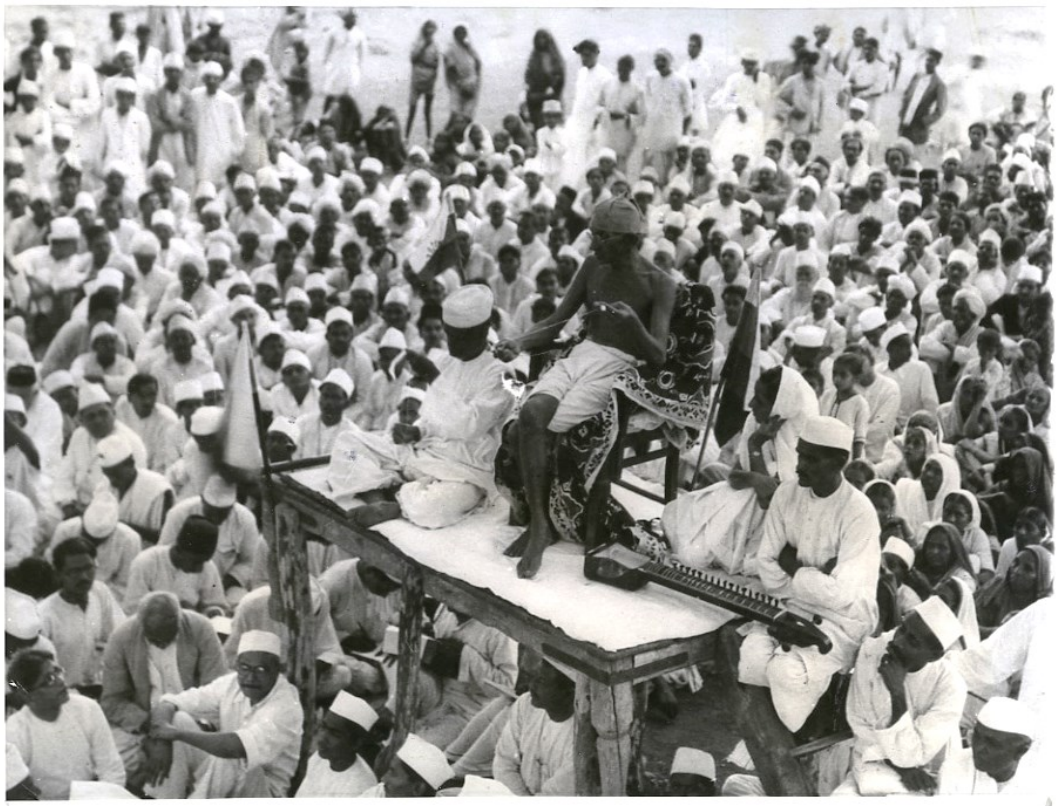

Figure 15: *Gandhi spinning on a stage amidst a crowd*[333]

This picture, taken in 1930, perfectly illustrates Bean's argument. Gandhi is sitting on an improvised small stage in the middle of a group of people. He is dressed in his *mahatma* dress, exposing his bare torso and legs. The people sitting around the stage are all dressed in the nationalist style, with white *khadi* clothing, and most of the men wear a *topi*. There is no technology visible, which would make Gandhi audible to the audience (no microphone etc.). It even looks as if Gandhi is not giving a speech at all. He is just sitting on a chair, silently engaged in some kind of spinning. There is a thread visible between his hands, and since he is obviously not spinning with a wheel he is probably spinning by hand with a *takli* (hand-spindle). This powerful photograph thereby exemplifies the perfection with which Gandhi mastered the task of non-verbal communication. He himself *is* the message with his appearance, his body and his clothing, and there is no need to give a speech. This 'communicative power of costume' – and I would add to Bean's point here also the communicative power of his body and his manual work

333 http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1900_1999/gandhi/spinning/spinning1930.jpg (retrieved 20.10.2014)

– also worked well in the Indian context because it was connected to the tradition of *darshan* in the Hindu religion:[334] 'The sight of the eminent or holy blesses and purifies the viewer … People came, literally, to *see* Gandhi.'[335]

[334] See also Christopher Pinney's elaboration on the concept of *darshan*: Pinney, *Photos of the Gods*, p. 9.
[335] Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi", p. 368.

4 From Ideas and Metaphors to Reality: Educational Experiments in Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm and Satyagraha Ashram 1904-34

After highlighting key themes in Gandhi's thinking on education and the role of symbolism and communication strategies, I now turn to the question of how Gandhi tried to turn his ideas on education into reality. The 'experiment' was an important concept for him, and he reiterated the importance of approaching life as a kind of experiment. This is especially visible in the title to the English edition of his autobiography, which he called *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.[336] The history of experimenting with education began in South Africa with his attempt to educate his own children himself, and the establishment of two schools in his rural communities, Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm. After coming back to India, he established Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad, and especially during the Non-Cooperation Movement in the early 1920s, his engagement in the field of education grew. As I will show in this chapter, the actual implementation of Gandhi's ideas was quite disappointing at times. However, his increasingly important role within the nationalist movement and his ability to collect funds for the Constructive Programme[337] opened up opportunities to execute his ideas on a larger scale. At the same time, the connection between the expansion of the activities to introduce hand-spinning and the activities in education foreshadowed one of the major criticisms that were later raised against Basic Education: that the schools would become mere *charkha* schools, exploiting the labour of the children.

[336] M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927).

[337] The Constructive Programme was, for Gandhi, an important means to win *swaraj*. It entailed the active reorganization of society along the lines of Gandhi's vision, such as the practicing of hand-spinning and other village crafts, the removal of untouchability and the spread of his education ideas. See also: M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme. Its Meaning and Place* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1941).

4.1 Gandhi's Activities in Education in South Africa (1904-14)

4.1.1 Gandhi, the Father

When his family arrived in South Africa in 1897 Gandhi had to decide how to educate his own children. By that time, he and his wife Kasturba had two sons, then 9 and 5 years old, and they also brought up his sister's son, who was then 10 years old. Gandhi's ideas on the importance of moral self-improvement had direct implications for his approach to the education of his children. He was convinced that, most importantly, education had to be character-building and should therefore be done by the parents, that children should be educated in their mother tongue rather than in a foreign language, and that it was important that children learned the importance of 'bread labour'. As he reflected in his autobiography, addressing these convictions turned out to be quite difficult. He became convinced that teaching the children himself was the only possibility, since he was opposed to sending them abroad and did not like the kind of education imparted in the schools for European children or Christian missionary schools, albeit without further specifying his reasons.[338] But acting as a teacher himself was quite difficult as well, as he was occupied with his law practice and his political activism and therefore did not have much spare time. He nevertheless stood by his decision, and took the children on his walks to the office and home and, while walking, 'tried to instruct them by conversation'.[339] However, the efforts to educate his children, primarily by himself, turned out to be quite complicated. It was difficult for Gandhi to reconcile his life as a successful lawyer-politician in an urban setting with his principles on alternative living.[340] As he recalled in his autobiography:

> I could not devote to the children all the time I had wanted to give them. My inability to give them enough attention and other unavoidable causes prevented me from providing them with the literary education I had desired, and all my sons had complaints to make against this matter.

[338] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1994), p. 296.
[339] Ibid., p. 464
[340] Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, p. 26.

> Whenever they come across an M.A. or a B.A. or even a matriculate, they seem to feel the handicap of a want of school education.[341]

The issue of the education of the Gandhi children was widely discussed among their friends and co-workers, and Henry Polak was one who argued that Gandhi should not deprive his children of the kind of education that he himself enjoyed. In a conversation with Millie Polak, Gandhi's eldest son Harilal, argued: '… my father could not do the work he is doing if he had not been educated, and I want to be, too'.[342] When his family moved to Phoenix Settlement, the children became part of the community there and were educated in the Phoenix School by different settlers.[343] Gandhi defended his decisions in his autobiography, justifying them on the basis that all other options would have had worse results: '… the artificial education that they could have had in England or South Africa, torn from me, would never have taught them the simplicity and the spirit of service that they show in their lives today …'[344] Therefore, it seems that he saw the education of his children as an important model for his own political ideals, because he recalled that he was afraid that '… their artificial ways of living might have been a serious handicap in my public work'.[345]

Gandhi did not only see himself as a father to his own children, but as a father figure for his communities and settlements. As he mentions in his autobiography, referring to Tolstoy Farm, the second settlement he founded in South Africa, in 1910: 'Tolstoy Farm was a family, in which I occupied the place of the father, and (…) should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young'.[346] He was, thereby, quite strict, and for example fasted as a penance if people in the communities broke the rules. With this, he argued that he would expiate the failures of others by taking the responsibility on himself.[347]

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[341] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. I. An Autobiography*, p. 297.
[342] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 80.
[343] After 1905, Millie Polak, the wife of Gandhi's close companion Henry Polak, educated the Gandhi children. Gandhi found Henry Polak's ideas on leading a self-sufficient life very inspiring. See also Chapter 3 on Henry Polak in: Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*, p. 61.
[344] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol.I. An Autobiography*, p. 298.
[345] Ibid.
[346] *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 496.
[347] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 74.

4.1.2 Education at Phoenix Settlement (1904-10)

The place where Gandhi first experimented with his early education ideas in a more institutionalized form was Phoenix Settlement, north of Durban. In 1904, just before the founding of the settlement, Gandhi had started to publish the weekly journal *Indian Opinion* with a group of co-workers.[348] The publishing of the journal turned out to be an expensive undertaking, and in his search for a way to cut costs he was inspired by Ruskin's book to experiment with the idea of operating a hand-printing press, rather than machine printing. Fascinated by the idea that a life of manual work in a rural setting would lead to moral improvement he saw hand-printing, apart from saving money on the production costs of *Indian Opinion*, as a useful exercise in practising these values. Not all of his co-workers were convinced by the idea to move to a remote place and practice self-sufficiency, but Gandhi was eager to create a rural settlement.[349] Phoenix Settlement was the first in a series of communities, or, as he later called them, *ashrams*, founded by Gandhi. Gandhi saw these rural settlements as laboratories in which to experiment with his ideas on social transformation. In his study on these communities, Mark Thomson concluded that '… in each of the communities Gandhi established, the life-style was rural-oriented on a non-exploitative basis and the members were enjoined to exemplify the dignity of "bread-labour"'.[350] In line with his ideas on moral improvement and self-transformation, Gandhi envisioned his followers leading a certain lifestyle, based on economic self-sufficiency through manual work. Furthermore, people living in the ashrams should, he believed, develop the qualities for 'moral leadership', which the historian Bhikhu Parekh describes as:

> self-disciplined, deeply rooted in Indian civilization, familiar with the vernacular mode of moral discourse, capable of conversing in Indian languages, devoted to the service of ordinary people, willing to live and work in the villages and (…) leading a life of brahmacharya.[351]

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[348] For more detailed information on Gandhi's journalistic work see also: Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press. Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[349] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 448.
[350] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 72.
[351] Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, p. 90.

The primary aim of the Phoenix Settlement was to serve the needs of the Indian community. From the income earned with the journal and the sales of produce the settlers received a fixed amount of money to sustain themselves and, after these deductions, the rest of the money was spent on welfare work for the Indian community.[352] Several years later in India, Gandhi's ashrams were central as a moral and economic support for those taking part in the *satyagraha* campaigns, and also served as a refuge for the children of imprisoned activists. However, as already pointed out in the discussion of Gandhi's understanding of trusteeship (see 2.1.2), the ideal of economic self-sufficiency was difficult to implement, and these communities quite often needed financial assistance from Gandhi's wealthy admirers.

Figure 16: *Gandhi amidst the residents in Phoenix Settlement*[353]

Also in Phoenix Settlement, practising economic self-sufficiency proved to be difficult. The settlers did not have much time to spend on their agricultural work since they were also occupied in building and maintaining the settlement, and working on the *satyagraha* campaigns.[354] Furthermore, the idea of hand-printing turned out to be complicated, and the various problems that arose with the

[352] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 61.
[353] http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5d/Phoenix_settlement.jpg (retrieved 20.10.2014)
[354] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 63.

tiresome task were, ironically, solved by using an engine. Despite this, Gandhi continued to stress the pedagogical dimension of manual work, and used this as an exercise of his ideas on moral improvement: 'There came a time when we deliberately gave up the use of the engine and worked with hand-power only. Those were, to my mind, the days of the highest moral uplift for Phoenix.'[355] There are also reports that Zulu women were employed to handle the hand-printing and, at times, donkeys were used.[356] With regard to Zulu women, there is a controversial debate surrounding Gandhi's relationship with the black South African population. Joseph Lelyveld, in his biography of Gandhi, also pointed to overt racism in some of his statements.[357] I cannot go deeper into these issues here, but it is certainly important to keep such questions in mind when dealing with Gandhi's time in South Africa.

For Gandhi, life in the settlement, according to ideas of simplicity and self-sufficiency, was not only an economic gain, but also a pedagogical undertaking aiming at moral improvement. Explaining the benefits of Phoenix Settlement to the readership of *Indian Opinion* he argued:

> the workers could live a more simple and natural life, and the ideas of Ruskin and Tolstoy [be] combined with strict business principles. (…) One could hope that the spirit of the scheme and the surroundings would have an educative influence on them. There would be a closer brotherly combination between the European and the Indian workers. (…) Each could become his own agriculturist. The English workers could belie the taunt that the Englishman in South Africa would not cultivate the soil and work with his own hands. (…) The Indian worker could copy his European brother, and learn the dignity and utility of healthy recreation as distinguished from constant, slaving toil for miserable gains.[358]

Several interesting ideas are included in this quote. First of all, Gandhi argued that the settlement itself has an important educative value, an argument also raised later in the debates on whether institutions of *Nai Talim* should be residential. Secondly, Gandhi argued that the community had the effect of levelling colonial power relations. While Europeans, who generally owned the land and were not directly involved in manual labour, would learn to work as 'agriculturists',

[355] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 452.
[356] Tidrick, *Gandhi. A Political and Spiritual Life*, p. 67. Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 50.
[357] Lelyveld, *Great Soul*.
[358] *Indian Opinion*, 24.12.1904, in: CWMG Vol. 4, p. 145.

Indians, of whom many were exploited in the system of indentured labour,[359] would learn the dignity of manual work. But Gandhi not also saw the life in the rural community as educative in itself, he also understood education to be a social service given by the Phoenix community:

> But we cannot be content with merely bringing out a paper. Those who have chosen to settle in Phoenix wish to educate themselves and to extend the benefits of their education to the entire Indian people. With this end in view, those members of the journal's staff who can teach devote a part of their time to the education of the children living in Phoenix.[360]

At the same time there was also a need for a school for the children of the settlers. In the beginning, this school had no separate building and the teaching took place in the house of John Cordes, a German theosophist, who acted as the head of the school.[361] To Gandhi, it was very important that his ideas on moral improvement were practised in the school and for him, 'the school is a means to achieve our end'.[362] It is interesting to note here that, although Gandhi was, at that time, inspired by Ruskin's ideas on rural self-sufficient life, he did not directly refer to Ruskin's ideas on education in his writings. In the preface of *Unto this Last*, Ruskin argued for the establishment of a strong connection between education and manual work, and that the government should open 'training schools' for youth, where they should be taught: '(a) The laws of health, and the exercises adjoined by them; (b) Habits of gentleness and justice; and (c) The calling by which he is to live.' Additionally, 'in connection with these training schools, there should be established, also entirely under Government regulation, manufactories and workshops for the production and sale of every necessary of life, and for the exercise of every useful art'.[363] Although in parts a connection is visible to Gandhi's ideas on practical elements in education, it is surprising that he did not refer to or discuss Ruskin's ideas.

In Phoenix Settlement emphasis was laid on the moral development, discipline and involvement of the children in the ongoing manual work. As Gandhi wrote in

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[359] The indenture system was a form of debt bondage, which saw millions of Indians working in colonies, primarily on plantations.
[360] *Indian Opinion*, 3.10.1908, in: CWMG Vol. 9, p. 189.
[361] Letter to Chhaganlal Gandhi, 25.8.1908, see: CWMG Vol. 9, p. 92. Cordes later also lived in *Sevagram Ashram*.
[362] Letter to his son Manilal, 24.11.1909, see: CWMG Vol. 10, p. 317.
[363] Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 7.

Indian Opinion in 1908, 'teaching is done through both Gujarati and English. Attention is paid to the simultaneous development of mind and body. Special emphasis is laid on strengthening the moral character of pupils.'[364] The school thereby followed a disciplined routine: 'The children were required to spend three hours at school, two hours on agriculture, two hours in the printing press, and, time allowing, to read their lessons at night.'[365] In 1909, during the *satyagraha* campaign, the first children from outside the Phoenix community were admitted to the school, and parents were promised that they would achieve matriculation standard.[366] The regulations laid out for the admission of the children stated that they would not be given tea, coffee or cocoa, as these were produced under conditions of slave labour or indentured labour; this is an interesting example of how the school tried to practise their ideas of equality by the boycott of certain food products.[367]

4.1.3 Education at Tolstoy Farm (1910-13)

Tolstoy Farm, the second settlement Gandhi and his co-workers founded, was established in 1910. As already discussed in Chapter 2, Tolstoy was an important source of inspiration for Gandhi. Apart from his ideas on non-violence and civil disobedience, Tolstoy had also undertaken work in the area of education, and Gandhi was aware of this. According to the *Collected Works*, he only, however, referred to his awareness of Tolstoy's educational work in the 1930s. He recommended, for example, the book *Tolstoy as a Teacher*,[368] in a letter to a co-worker,[369] and referred in a speech to Tolstoy's stories, which teach 'that without the use of our hands and feet our brain would be atrophied'.[370] Tolstoy had opened a school for the children of his serfs on his family estate, Yasnaya

[364] *Indian Opinion*, 3.10.1908, in: CWMG Vol. 9, p. 189.
[365] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 83.
[366] *Indian Opinion*, 9.1.1909, in: CWMG Vol. 9, p. 189: 'Boys will be taught the history of ancient and modern India so as to inculcate in them love of India and help them grow patriotic. (…) Boys will be taught their own language, that is, Gujarati or Hindi and, if possible, Tamil, as also English, arithmetic, history, geography, botany and zoology. Advanced pupils will also be taught algebra and geometry. It is expected that they can be brought up to the matriculation level.'
[367] Ibid.
[368] The full title is: Ernest Crosby, *Tolstoy as Schoolmaster* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1904).
[369] Letter to Premabehn Kantak, 30.11.1931, see: CWMG Vol. 50, p. 281.
[370] Speech at the *Wardha Conference*, 22.10.1937, see: Ibid. Vol. 72, p. 361.

Polyana, and fourteen more schools in the area in the 1860s.[371] His pedagogical ideas were to create schools not based on the obedience of children and drill, but on learning through experience; however, his educational experiments were repeatedly hindered by harassment by the Tsarist secret police.[372]

As a sign of their admiration, Gandhi and his co-workers named the settlement located outside Johannesburg after Tolstoy. There was a need to support the families of those taking part in the second *satyagraha* campaign against the Asiatic Registration Bill,[373] so his friend, Hermann Kallenbach,[374] had bought a farm near Johannesburg, where the families could lead a self-sufficient life.

Figure 17: *Gandhi (middle) and other residents of Tolstoy Farm in 1910*[375]

As in Phoenix Settlement, life there followed strict rules: all the work was to be done by the settlers, settlers had to agree to be celibate, journeys to the city were

[371] He had already started a school, at the age of 21 in 1849, for his serfs in Yasnaja Polyana, but this was short-lived.
[372] Skiera, *Reformpädagogik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, p. 340.
[373] The bill demanded the special registration of Asians; those who failed to register were faced with deportation without the right to appeal.
[374] The relationship of Gandhi and Kallenbach is further laid out in Chapter 4 of Weber, "Hermann Kallenbach and the Move to Tolstoy Farm", in: *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*.
[375] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi#mediaviewer/File:Gandhi_Tolstoy_Farm.jpg (retrieved 20.10.2014)

limited and restricted to travelling third class or walking, food was simple and eaten with handmade wooden spoons.[376]

At Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi continued with his educational activities. As it was difficult to find other sources during my research process, the following presentation of the educational activities in Tolstoy Farm is only based on Gandhi's own writings, and therefore has to be evaluated with this in mind, and in the light of Gandhi's perspective. Here again, he saw himself as the father of the settlement and, following his idea that children should be educated by their parents, believed their education was his responsibility.[377] Based on his argument that 'literary training' or 'book learning' (reading, writing and arithmetic) was less important than 'productive work', Gandhi limited the time for the former to one hour per day, mostly at a time when everybody was tired. As he recalled: 'Instead (…) of my being fresh for the class, I could with the greatest difficulty keep myself awake.'[378] During this short period, the children were expected to undertake quite an ambitious programme:

> Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Urdu were all taught, and tuition was given through the vernaculars of the boys. English was taught as well. It was also necessary to acquaint the Gujarati Hindu children with a little Sanskrit, and to teach all the children elementary history, geography and arithmetic.[379]

In order to achieve this, Gandhi had very high expectations of the other teachers and also of himself. Rather than using books, he argued that teachers had to be skilled in teaching through conversing with the children.[380] Interestingly, Gandhi thereby tried to reverse the trend towards a 'textbook culture' that was also criticized in nationalist education debates as one outcome of colonial education policy.[381] Gandhi thereby argued that the teacher had to be a living example in good moral conduct and be able to teach the children by his own example rather than only using books. Therefore, he emphasized that 'the training of the spirit

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[376] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 75.
[377] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 496.
[378] Ibid., p. 500
[379] Ibid.
[380] 'I did not find it at all necessary to load the boys with quantities of books. I have always felt that the true textbook for the pupil is his teacher.' in: Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 502.
[381] See also the work of Krishna Kumar on 'textbook culture': Krishna Kumar, "Origins of India's 'Textbook Culture'", in: *Comparative Education Review* 32 (1988) 4, pp. 452–64; Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education. A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*. (New Delhi: Sage, 1991).

was possible only through the exercise of the spirit entirely dependent in the life and character of the teacher'.[382] The largest part of the educational process (Gandhi refers to eight hours per day) was made up of 'vocational training', even though it remains unclear what exactly he meant by that term. As Gandhi later recalled:

> I had no difficulty in giving at the Tolstoy Farm (Transvaal) all-round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was directly responsible. The central fact there was vocational training for nearly eight hours. They had one or, at the most, two hours of book learning. The vocations were digging, cooking, scavenging, sandal-making, simple carpentry, and messenger work. The ages of the children ranged from six to sixteen.[383]

Kallenbach and Gandhi became self-taught teachers for the 'vocations', and Kallenbach:

> went to a Trappist monastery and returned having learnt shoe-making. I learnt it from him and taught the art to such as were ready to take it up. Mr. Kallenbach had some experience of carpentry, and there was another inmate who knew it; so we had a small class in carpentry.[384]

It seems that some of the 'vocations' were also chores that needed to be done in order to maintain the farm, as Gandhi also lists digging, latrine cleaning and messenger work as 'vocations'.[385] But it seems that, according to Gandhi's logic, all practical work was good as it fulfilled his pedagogical ideas about moral improvement, 'character-building' and health.

Whether the children, however, were happy with their workload was another matter. In his autobiography, Gandhi recalled the difficulty of disciplining the children while keeping to his principles of non-violence: '… sometimes all of them malingered and shirked. (…) often I was strict with them. (…) Whenever I was strict, I would, by argument, convince them that it was not right to play with one's work.'[386] On the other hand, he also argued that the children 'should not be asked to do what the teachers did not do, and therefore, when they were asked to do any work, there was always a teacher cooperating and actually working with

[382] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 505.
[383] CWMG Vol. 72, p. 233.
[384] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. II. An Autobiography*, p. 498.
[385] *Harijan*, 18.9.1937, in: CWMG Vol. 72, p. 233.
[386] Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. Ii an Autobiography*, p. 498.

them. Hence, whatever the children learnt, they learnt cheerfully.'[387] Once he hit a student on the arm, whom he saw as 'wild, given to lying, and quarrelsome'. In a lengthy analysis of the situation, he later stated that he was opposed to corporal punishment and shocked at the fact that his reaction 'exhibited before him not the spirit, but the brute, in me'.[388]

4.2 Satyagraha Ashram, National Schools and Non-Cooperation (1915-34)

4.2.1 Gujarat National School

The next step in the history of institutional developments based on Gandhi's ideas began with the founding of Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad in May 1915.[389] Gandhi had long planned to come back to India and take an active role in the nationalist movement, and he finally arrived in early 1915. By then, he was already known for his political activism on behalf of the rights of Indians in South Africa. However, he first had to find a place in the ongoing nationalist movement, and his political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale,[390] urged him to refrain from political activities for one year and go on a study tour throughout India. Gokhale had wanted Gandhi to work at his Servants of India Society,[391] but after he died in early 1915 this plan did not come to fruition. Consequently, Gandhi spent some time in Shantiniketan, together with some of his co-workers from South Africa, working in the educational programmes that had been set up there. Before long, it became clear that his vision was not compatible with that of the programmes in Shantiniketan, so he decided to establish his own community.

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[387] Ibid., p. 499
[388] Ibid., p. 506
[389] Also called Sabarmati Ashram or Harijan Ashram. For a detailed description of the *ashram* see, for example, Chapter 5 on Maganlal Gandhi in: Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor* and Chapter 3 in Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*.
[390] On the relationship between Gandhi and Gokhale see Gandhi's account in: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Gokhale, My Political Guru* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955).
[391] For more information on the Servants of India Society see: Carey Anthony Watt, *Serving the Nation. Cultures of Service, Association and Cititzenship in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

In line with his ideas on trusteeship, Gandhi's first Indian *ashram* was funded by donations from wealthy merchants and industrialists. The purpose of the *ashram* was to recruit co-workers for *satyagraha* campaigns and for practising his ideas in many different fields, such as agriculture, crafts, and health and education, what he later called the Constructive Programme. *Ashram* life was based on a set of vows, developed by Gandhi and to be observed by the community members, including celibacy, control of the palate, and promoting truth and non-violence, as well as education through vernacular languages.[392] Undertaking manual work was also of central importance. According to the vows, a certain amount of the ashramites' time was to be dedicated to textile production and agricultural work.[393] During the 1920s, several followers of Gandhi established communities, based on the model of Satyagraha Ashram, in different rural locations in India.[394] Among them was the *ashram* in Wardha, established by Ramniklal Modi in 1921 and later taken over by Vinoba Bhave, which Gandhi saw as a model *ashram*.[395] In 1934 Gandhi decided to move to Wardha and, as later elaborated in Chapter 6, Sevagram became an important place for the further conceptualization and institutionalization of his education ideas.

In Gandhi's view, the newly established *ashram* was also an education project, and from the very beginning he wanted to open a school there. In Shantiniketan Gandhi had met Dattatreya Balkrushna ('Kaka') Kalelkar, who then decided to follow him and move to Satyagraha Ashram. He was his right hand in implementing the education programmes, and later also became vice chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith (see 4.2.3.).[396] The opening of a school in the *ashram* was so important to Gandhi that he even asked the future teachers: '(…) to be ready to turn yourselves into beggars for the sake of the school':[397] a move to ensure the school could go ahead, even if adequate funding was not forthcoming. The plan for the school was published in January 1917, by which time the school had begun to take shape.[398] The idea was that it taught a combination of 'physical,

[392] Speech on 'Ashram Vows' at Y.M.C.A. Madras, in: CWMG Vol. 15, pp. 165-75.
[393] The agricultural programme at the *ashram* ensured self-sufficiency in fruits and vegetables.
[394] The exact number is not known, see: Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 113.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Ibid., pp. 158-9.
[397] Talk with the teachers of the national school, 23.6.1917, in: CWMG Vol. 15, p. 443.
[398] National Gujarati School, 18.1.1917, in: Ibid., p.296-8.

intellectual and religious' subjects. Under the heading 'physical education', Gandhi included agriculture and hand-weaving, carpentry and blacksmithing. Here, it seems that Gandhi was using and reinterpreting pedagogical terms from contemporary debates according to his own ideas. 'Physical education' was an important concept for some nationalist education reformers: the goal was to strengthen and discipline the body by way of exercise and sports.[399] Gandhi seems to reinterpret this term according to his own ideas of what would develop a strong and disciplined body, namely different kinds of manual work. Furthermore, all education was to be imparted in Gujarati and special attention was to be given to the teaching of Indian languages. Also, mathematics, history, geography, elementary astronomics and chemistry, as well as religion, were further intended subjects. Rather than developing a fear of examinations, the plan was that students would be judged in reports by the knowledge they acquired during their education.[400]

During this time, Gandhi repeatedly emphasized the need for education reform in India; he saw his school as an example to be followed by others and argued that the government would not be a catalyst for the needed reform, because it was caught up in its own interests. He therefore wanted to create a model demonstrating how alternative ways of education could work: 'But the best petition to the Government will be an actual demonstration by us and this will also be the easiest way of cultivating public opinion. It has accordingly been decided, in consultation with some educated gentlemen, to start a national school.'[401] The school was opened in May 1917.[402] As the next section will show, the Gujarat National School soon became known outside of the region, and even served as an inspirational model, copied in other places.

[399] See, for example, the work on the Arya Samaj in: Fischer-Tiné, *Der Gurukul Kangri oder die Erziehung der Arya Nation*.
[400] National Gujarati School, 18.1.1917, in: CWMG Vol. 15, pp. 296–8.
[401] Ibid., p.296.
[402] In a speech in October 1917, Gandhi said that the school had been in operation for five months. Unfortunately, as I was unable to study any primary sources on the school, and thus only have Gandhi's statements on it, I have no further information regarding the educational work taking place there.

4.2.2 The Danish Connection: Anne Marie Petersen

As one example of the connected history of Gandhi's education ideas and how these appealed to a diverse spectrum of people involved in education work in India at that time, I include here the example of the Danish teacher and missionary Anne Marie Petersen (1878–1951). Petersen was not the only Danish connection in the history of *Nai Talim*. Gandhi had several friends from Denmark, who corresponded with him and came to visit him.[403] Denmark also appeared quite often as a reference for life in rural self-sufficient communities, as Gandhi referred to Denmark as a model of cooperative dairy farming several times throughout his writings.[404] Zakir Husain, a later close co-worker in the field of *Nai Talim*, was also interested in these models and visited Denmark and Sweden in 1924 (see 5.2).[405]

Anne Marie Petersen came to India in 1909, at the age of 31, through the Danish Missionary Society (DMS), in order to work at a DMS school in South India.[406] In her pedagogical work Petersen identified with the ideas of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872), a Danish theologian and education thinker. Petersen herself had studied in a school following the Grundtvig scheme. Grundtvig had developed his ideas on education and Christianity in the context of Danish nationalism, and was opposed to education in a foreign language. He became famous for his concept of folk high schools (*folkehoeskoler*), emphasizing the importance of creating 'schools for life'. The first of these residential institutions for adult education opened in 1844, and the idea was that the peasant population would receive education in their mother tongue as an alternative to elite higher education at universities.[407] Thereby, the aim of the *folkehoeskoler* was to enhance the education and personal development of the peasants through a combination of general education, manual work and sport. The ideas of Grundtvig also spread throughout the rest of Scandinavia and were, for example, used as

[403] For a complete overview, see: E.S. Reddy & Holger Terp, *Friends of Gandhi. Correspondence of Mahatma Gandhi with Esther Faering (Menon), Anne Marie Petersen and Ellen Hørup* (New Delhi, Berlin & Copenhagen: National Gandhi Museum, Gandhi-Informations-Zentrum, The Danish Peace Academy, 2006).
[404] An example can be found in: CWMG Vol. 38, p. 350.
[405] Ziaul Hasan Faruqui, *Dr. Zakir Hussain. Quest for Truth* (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 1999), p. 76.
[406] Reddy & Terp, *Friends of Gandhi*.
[407] See also: M.D. Lawson, "N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872)", in: *Prospects:The Quarterly Review of Comparative Educational Theory* XXIII (1993) 2/3, pp. 613–23.

source of inspiration for the foundation of girls' schools in other countries in the mid-nineteenth century.[408]

Not content with what she found in the DMS schools, Petersen soon developed the idea of establishing a girls' school outside the institutional framework of the DMS, along the lines of Grundtvig's ideas.[409] In 1916 she obtained the authorization of the DMS to visit several schools in India and work out a plan for her institution. Esther Faering, a missionary colleague, accompanied her. On their study tour they also stayed in Gandhi's Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad in 1917 to observe its small school.[410] Petersen saw many parallels between Gandhi's views on education and those of Grundtvig, and soon the two developed a close friendship and a lively correspondence. Petersen refined the plan to open a Christian girls' school combining academic and practical subjects, inspired by the ideas of Grundtvig and Gandhi, and found financial support during a trip to Denmark in 1919. In 1920 she resigned from the DMS because she could not accept the fact that the Society had rejected a proposal for equality between Danish and Indian missionaries. She experienced further political pressure when she refused to sign a pledge for loyalty to the colonial government, and responded that 'as a Christian she would collaborate with everything good and promote loyalty to God and not to kingdoms of the world'.[411] Inspired by the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s, Petersen started to spin, wore clothes made from the ensuing material, and, more generally, made a point of using products made in India. In 1920 she wrote to Gandhi: 'I have thrown myself at the feet of India.'[412] Gandhi published a letter from her in *Young India* in 1920, entitled 'A Missionary on Non-Cooperation'.[413] In it, she compared the development of the folk high schools in Denmark and the situation in India:

[408] Agneta Linné, "Lutheranism and Democracy: Scandinavia", in: *Girls' Secondary Education in the Western World. From the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. by James C. Albisetti, Joyce Goodman, & Rebecca Rogers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 138.
[409] Reddy & Terp, *Friends of Gandhi*, p. 228.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid., p. 230
[412] Ibid., p. 236
[413] As Gandhi emphasized in the article, he thereby wanted to prove that the Non-Cooperation Movement 'is neither anti-Christian nor anti-English nor anti-European', ibid.

> India and we who love her have come to the conclusion that the education the foreign Government has given you is not healthy for India and can certainly never make for her real growth … Only by indigenous education can India be truly uplifted. Why this appeals so much to me is perhaps because I belong to the part of the Danish people who just started their own independent, indigenous national schools. The Danish Free Schools and Folk-High Schools, of which you may have heard, were started against the opposition and persecution of the State. The organisers won and thus have regenerated the nation.[414]

In 1921 Petersen founded the charity Seva Mandir and the National Christian Girls' School at Porto Novo, south of Madras, based on donations from Denmark. She adopted the Wardha Scheme curriculum (see 5.2) in 1937, and implemented spinning as part of the school's programme. Petersen seems to have been quite actively involved in the movement to spread Gandhi's education ideas, and participated in the first Conference on Basic National Education 1939 in Poona.[415] During the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, she also gave refuge to families of imprisoned activists. After independence, her school was recognized by the state and she was granted the right of residence in India.

4.2.3 Education, Khadi *and the Non-Cooperation Movement*

Educational efforts in Satyagraha Ashram were closely connected to what became known as the *Khadi* Movement or *Swadeshi* Movement – Gandhi's efforts to revive hand-spinning and weaving. While he had had his epiphany on the importance of spinning for the redemption of India from colonial rule in 1909 (see 3.2), he only started to experiment with the production of *khadi* in Satyagraha Ashram. In his autobiography, Gandhi described at great length the attempts to find spinning wheels, and people who could teach him and his co-workers hand-spinning.[416] In these efforts, Gandhi not only saw an economic value related to self-sufficiency and the alleviation of poverty, but also a pedagogical value related to the practice of spinning. He argued that spinning:

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[414] Ibid., p. 239
[415] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *One Step Forward. The Report of the First Conference of Basic National Education, Poona, October 1939* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1948), p. 292.
[416] CWMG Vol. 44, p. 458.

> develops in the spinner patience, persistence, concentration, self- control, calmness, realization of importance and value of detail, ability to do more than one thing at a time, making one of them so habitual that its control and operation are almost unconscious, sensitiveness, sureness and delicacy of touch and of muscular control and co-ordination, realization of value of cumulative and sustained individual effort even though separate efforts be of short duration; thus a realization of the value of co-operative work, self-respect and self-reliance arising from recognition of one's ability to create something of economic value useful to oneself, to one's family, to the school and to the village, province or nation.[417]

Gandhi's nephew Maganlal improved the mechanics of the spinning wheel over the following years. Manufacturing of spinning wheels was started in the *ashram* and the sale of *khadi* on a larger scale started in 1919. However, it turned out to be quite difficult to convince the general public of the material's importance. Even though Gandhi called on the middle classes to change their aesthetic values and use *khadi* as a service to the poor, sales remained low. This only changed during the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920–22. *Khadi* became the unifying element in the movement, and the boycott of foreign cloth an important part of activism. As a step beyond a mere boycott, Gandhi also encouraged the protestors to produce their own clothing:

> Those who advocate boycott of British goods do so with the intention of ruining Lancashire, but personally I think it is better that we should talk of saving ourselves from being ruined by anyone than of ruining others. If we wish to stop the opening to Japanese, British and American goods, we should produce all our requirements of cloth. Until we produce the yarn, we cannot get the required quantity of cloth woven.[418]

Another important element of activism during the Non-Cooperation Movement was the boycott of schools and universities (see 1.1 for similarities to the *Swadeshi* Movement). The resolution adopted at the Congress session in Calcutta in September 1920 foresaw that parents would 'withdraw their children from Government-controlled schools and make some arrangements for them in their homes or through a national school'. Furthermore, 'any student over sixteen years who is convinced that it is a sin to learn under the shadow of a Government which the people have decided either to reform or to end should occupy himself in some

[417] *Young India*, 15.4.1926, in: Ibid. Vol. 35, p. 67.
[418] Speech to the students of Gujarat Mahavidyalaya, 13.1.1921, in: CWMG Vol. 22, p. 207.

other way'.[419] Gandhi mobilized students in the boycott of government educational institutions, and presented his vision to create 'national' schools and universities, financed and controlled by Indians. In Ahmedabad, he initiated the founding of a 'national university', the Gujarat Vidyapith and Mahavidyalaya,[420] inaugurated on 18 October 1920. In the opening speech Gandhi promoted the fact that his concept of the university would provide 'vocational training':

> The spirit of independence will be fostered not only through Religion, Politics and History but through vocational training also, which alone can give the youths of the country economic independence and a backbone that comes out of a sense of self-respect.[421]

Over the following years, different colleges and schools became affiliated with the Vidyapith, and, by 1923, 30,000 students had been enrolled in this network of educational institutions. In total, during the Non-Cooperation Movement, 1,389 'national' educational institutions or vidyapiths,[422] with a total number of 96,628 students, were founded.[423] Among them was a 'national university', established by students in Aligarh, which later became the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi (see 5.2 on role of Zakir Husain). While Gujarat Vidyapith and Jamia Millia Islamia are still functioning today, many of the initiatives of this time did not survive for long after 1922, as government opposition meant it was difficult to maintain funding. This activism in the field of national education did, however, leave permanent traces: there was more awareness of problems in the official education system, more practical experience of establishing non-state schools, as well as greater demand for 'Indian culture' and practical and vocational courses in curriculums.[424]

Due to the expansion of the *khadi* activities during and after the Non-Cooperation Movement, in the mid-1920s Satyagraha Ashram also became an important hub for training related to handmade cloth production.[425] Several institutions were set

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[419] *Navajivan*, 9.1.1921, in: Ibid. p. 191.
[420] The Vidyapith stopped functioning temporarily during the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and 1932, and the Quit India Movement of 1942, and started functioning afresh from 1945.
[421] Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, p. 86.
[422] Hindi *vidya pith* = national university.
[423] Dikshit, *Nationalism and Indian Education*, p. 153.
[424] See also the analysis by Krishna Kumar of the activities of the nationalist movement in education: Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education*.
[425] For a detailed discussion of the *Khadi Programme*, see: Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation*; Ramagundam, *Gandhi's Khadi*.

up in order to help the spread of the *khadi* activities. For example, the All-India Spinner's Association (AISA) was established in 1925 as a branch of the Congress; by the end of 1926 more than 40,000 spinners and 3,400 weavers were associated with it.[426] Since there was a growing demand for teacher training in cloth production, Gujarat Vidyapith and AISA offered training programmes for teachers of national schools [427] Also, in 1928, the Khadi Seva Sangh – an institution providing services and education to villages – was founded. Candidates selected for working at the institution were trained at Satyagraha Ashram and also learned about the cultivation of cotton as part of their training.[428]

4.2.4 Problems and Criticisms

As already mentioned, Gandhi's focus on *khadi* production was not shared by all of his co-workers. Jawaharlal Nehru, later the first president after independence, joined Gandhi during the Non-Cooperation Movement. He was quite opposed to some of Gandhi's views and, for example, in a letter in 1928, argued that his methods did not address the root cause of poverty: 'You do not say a word against the semi-feudal zamindari system which prevails in a great part of India or against the capitalist exploitation of both the workers and the consumers.'[429] He also criticized the fact that a focus on *khadi* production would not really be helpful with regard to the political work to be done, and argued that:

> our khadi work is almost wholly divorced from politics and our khadi workers are developing a mentality which does not concern itself with anything outside their limited sphere of work. This may be good for the work they do, but little can be expected from them in the political field.[430]

Concerns about the centrality and usefulness of the *khadi* activities as implemented in the educational institutions was also a controversial issue. Gandhi

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[426] Arnold, *Gandhi*, p. 129.
[427] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 150.
[428] Ibid., p. 155. The cultivation of cotton in the late 1920s was undertaken by students of the Gujarat Vidyapith and Khadi Vidyalaya.
[429] Letter of Jawaharlal Nehru to Gandhi, 11.1.1928, in: CWMG Vol. 41, p. 491. The full quote is: 'You have advocated very eloquently and forcefully the claims of the Daridranarayana – the poor in India. I do believe that the remedy you have suggested is very helpful to them and if adopted by them in large number will relieve to some extent their misery. But I doubt very much if the fundamental cause of poverty are touched by it. You do not say a word against the semi-feudal zamindari system which prevails in a great part of India or against the capitalist exploitation of both the workers and the consumers.'
[430] Letter of Jawaharlal Nehru to Gandhi, 11.1.1928, in: Ibid., p. 490.

saw the production of *khadi* as central for educational institutions. During the Non-Cooperation Movement, he introduced a minimum of one hour of spinning per day in the Mahavidyalaya.[431] However, many parents seemed not to share Gandhi's enthusiasm for this, and withdrew their children once they learned the amount of manual work done in the schools.[432] Another problem was that the work of Satyagraha Ashram was mainly based on Gandhi's charismatic authority and organizational ability. Due to his multiple activities, he was continuously absent and the day-to-day running of the ashram was mainly left to his nephew Maganlal, and others recruited to assist him. They were overburdened with tasks, leading to rule violations and conflicts among the community.[433] Also, as it became more and more complicated to maintain the ashram, rather than being an example of the ideas of self-sufficiency put forward by Gandhi, 'to run the ashram became an end in itself, and it appears that this more than anything else convinced Gandhi that Sabarmati had outlived its usefulness'.[434] As the historian David Arnold concludes about this phase, Gandhi was:

> playing at being the artisan and peasant, a kind of Ruskinian rustic, from the relative comfort and security of his ashram, rather than engaging with the real lives of the industrial worker and the impoverished villager, and being able to do so by virtue of the substantial sums of money he received from friends and philanthropists (mill-owning magnates among them).[435]

[431] Speech to Students of Gujarat Mahavidyalaya, 13.1.1921, in: Ibid. Vol. 22, p. 207.
[432] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 162. Attendance at the Mahavidyalaya declined during the 1920s.
[433] Ibid., p. 164.
[434] Ibid., p. 165.
[435] Arnold, *Gandhi*, p. 130.

5 Institutional Developments after 1937: From the 'Pedagogy of Manual Work' to its 'Pedagogization'

In what can also be called a 'watershed in the modern history of India',[436] the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 introduced a new system of government called 'dyarchy', making a concession to the call for more self-government by the Indians. Thereby, the functions of government were split into two sections. The British-controlled central government was responsible for the 'reserved subjects', such as law and order. The newly established provincial governments elected by the Indian population became responsible for the 'transferred subjects', such as agriculture and education.[437] As mandated by the Government of India Act 1935, the first provincial elections were held in winter 1936–37, and the Congress won in eight out of eleven provinces. Consequently, a window of opportunity opened up, with regard to decision-making power in education policy, and the question of which direction education policy should take arose. Gandhi's ideas now took centre stage in education policy debates. At the Wardha Conference of 1937 it was decided to follow Gandhi's ideas but, as will be further explored in this chapter, his central idea, namely the economic self-sufficiency of the schools, was more and more lost in the process. In the following, I trace the history of Gandhi's education ideas after 1937, and show how his original concept – spelled out in a series of articles in 1937 – was diluted in the process of its acceptance as Congress education policy. Thereby, the consensus achieved at the Wardha Conference, and guiding further implementation, was to understand the practising of crafts merely as a pedagogical advantage, what I call 'the pedagogization of manual work'. In this process Gandhi's pedagogical ideas related to manual work, strongly connected to his vision of a new social and economic order, were more and more transformed into a pedagogical idea with no connection to an economic

[436] Barbara D. Metcalf & Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 165.
[437] See also: Ibid., p. 165-6.

outcome. Gandhi envisioned economically independent schools where the children would produce products and, with their sale, cover the cost of running the school, including the teacher's salary. As will be further examined in this chapter, this idea was highly contested by different actors, and the proponents, most prominently Gandhi himself, were accused of exploiting children and even of contributing to the problem of child labour. While tracing these debates and developments I will also refer to different actors and organizations that were central to the further development of *Nai Talim* and the formation of what was also being called the Basic Education Movement: Zakir Hussain, E. W. and Asha Devi Aryanayakam, and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

5.1 Gandhi's *Harijan* Articles on Education in 1937

The years 1937 and 1938 are of pivotal importance with regard to Gandhi's activities in the realm of education. At no other time did he write and talk more about this topic.[438] As he wrote in October 1937: 'what I have seen through the glass darkly for the past 40 years I have begun to see now quite clearly under the stress of circumstances'.[439] In a series of articles, beginning in May 1937 in his journal *Harijan*, he presented his ideas on education and a debate about his suggestions among those who were involved in the search for 'nationalist' education concepts. In various articles, Gandhi presented his ideas on an education concept geared towards the needs of the villages and based on manual work, thereby drawing on his personal experiences with the education institutions he had founded. He argued that if education took place in the vernacular languages, the time taken to teach the current curriculum for primary and secondary education could be cut from eleven to seven years, thus limiting the 'wastage' of time spent learning a new language.[440] This seven-year model of education should, in his view, be made available to everyone, and 'education should be so revolutionized as to answer the wants of the poorest villager instead

[438] This is the result of my own analysis of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, according to the keyword 'education'.
[439] CWMG Vol. 72, pp. 285-6.
[440] Ibid., p. 205.

of answering those of an imperial exploiter'.[441] When asked about the role of the urban population and whether this kind of education should also be implemented in cities, he argued that it was important to first concentrate on rural India, since it had been neglected for so long, and said that 'if we take up the question of the cities along with that of the villages, we will fritter away our energies'.[442]

The most important aspect, for him, was that education should be centred on manual work. He thereby pointed to the importance of 'holistic' education, echoing the ideas of the Progressive Education Movement – of educating the 'head, heart and hand':

> I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g., hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect.[443]

The production of crafts as part of the education process was, for Gandhi, the most important element in his concept. This was believed to serve multiple purposes. On the one hand, he argued that because education introduced under British rule did not provide practical knowledge and was merely based on 'book learning', the younger generation had difficulty finding employment: 'talents are being wasted and the fact that thousands of young people who leave schools are good for nothing except clerkships is indicative not of intellectual development but of intellectual waste'.[444] Thereby, Gandhi also saw his ideas supported by the Wood–Abbott Report on the restructuring of education in India, published in 1937, which lamented the low standard of vocational education.[445] Referring to the report, Gandhi argued that it 'recognize[d] the value of manual work as important part of rural education' and that he was glad that his ideas were 'supported by reputed educationists'.[446] His 'new' idea thereby was that:

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[441] Ibid., p. 148.
[442] Ibid., Vol. 75, p. 50.
[443] *Harijan*, 8.5.1937, in: CWMG Vol. 71, p. 122.
[444] Ibid., Vol. 72, p. 116.
[445] See also an abbreviated version of the report in: Bhatt & Aggarwal, *Educational Documents in India, 1813-1968*.
[446] CWMG Vol. 72, p. 206.

> not vocation cum literary training, but literary training through vocational training was the thing. Then vocational training would cease to be a drudgery and literary training would have a new content and new usefulness.[447]

The production of crafts and education in different subjects should not happen in isolation from each other, but manual work should be the primary means of imparting knowledge in other subjects – as Gandhi called it: 'making the handicraft the principal means of imparting literary training'.[448] He also called it the 'scientific teaching of crafts'.[449] The keyword for this idea of using crafts as a 'vehicle of education',[450] common after 1937, was 'correlation'. As Gandhi outlined:

> The principle idea is to impart the whole education of the body and the mind and the soul through the handicraft that is taught to the children. You have to draw out all that is in the child through teaching all the processes of the handicraft, and all your lessons in history, geography, arithmetic will be related to the craft.[451]

One example of this 'correlated' teaching that Gandhi gave in 1937 was teaching about Indian history, British colonization and India's economic dependence on foreign-made cloth while children used a hand-spindle (*takli*).[452] He was convinced that 'one imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing'.[453] Another important effect for Gandhi was achieving economic self-

[447] Ibid., Vol. 73, p. 232.
[448] Ibid., Vol. 72, p. 456.
[449] 'Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e., the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process.' See: CWMG Vol. 72, p. 79.
[450] Ibid., Vol. 76, p. 394.
[451] Ibid., Vol. 73, p. 233.
[452] 'Look at takli (spindle) itself, for instance. The lesson of this takli will be the first lesson of our students through which they would be able to learn a substantial part of the history of cotton, Lancashire and the British empire. How does this takli work? What is its utility? And what are the strengths that lie within it? Thus the child learns all this in the midst of play. Through this he also acquires some knowledge of mathematics. When he is asked to count the number of cotton threads on takli and he is asked to report how many did he spin, it becomes possible to acquaint him step by step with good deal of mathematical knowledge through this process. And the beauty is that none of this becomes even a slight burden on his mind. The learner does not even become aware that he is learning. While playing around and singing, he keeps on turning his takli and from this itself he learns a great deal.' Excerpt from the address by Mahatma Gandhi at the Wardha Education Conference, 22 October 1937 [translated from Hindi, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1957, pp. vii–viii], quoted in: NCERT, "Position Paper National Focus Group on Work and Education", (2007), http://ncert.nic.in/html/pdf/schoolcurriculum/position_papers/work&education.pdf. (retrieved 10.10.2014).
[453] CWMG Vol. 72, p. 79.

sufficiency in schools when imparting education through the medium of rural crafts:

> But as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfil our obligations to the nation in this respect in a given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money. I have therefore made bold, even at the risk of losing all reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting.[454]

Against a background of enormous financial constraints, Gandhi saw this as the only feasible way to provide at least seven years of education to all children in India. Also, there had been an ongoing debate, especially among supporters of the Temperance Movement, about using the income from alcohol taxation on public services such as education, and this was seen as dependence on an 'immoral state'.[455] Gandhi, as a convinced proponent of this movement, argued that this became a moral dilemma, as the more alcohol consumed the better for public finances. In his view, therefore, education should be self-sufficient instead of being financed by alcohol taxation revenue.[456]

The most controversial issue criticized even before the Wardha Conference was the danger of exploiting children in connection to the goal that schools should be self-sufficient.[457] Gandhi reacted to this criticism with the argument that, as long as education was 'well done' and the teachers 'good', it was absolutely impossible for such exploitation to happen: 'Well done education cannot lead to exploitation. In fact I would reject a teacher who would promise to make it self-supporting under any circumstances.'[458] However, these doubts about the proposed concept remained, already foreshadowing the controversial debate that was to follow regarding the practicability of his ideas. Gandhi tried to reassure critics by saying: 'the children will not do this as children used to do under the whip in the early days of the factories. They will do it because it entertains them and stimulates

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[454] Ibid.

[455] On the Temperance Movement in India see also: Robert Eric Colvard, "'Drunkards Beware!': Prohibition and Nationalist Politics in the 1930s", in: *A History of Alcohol and Drugs in South Asia*, ed. by Harald Fischer-Tiné & Jana Tschurenev (London; New York: Routledge, 2013). On Gandhi's role see: David M. Fahey & Padma Manian, "Poverty and Purification: The Politics of Gandhi's Campaign for Prohibition", in: *The Historian* 76 (2005) 3, pp. 489–506.

[456] *Harijan*, 17.7.1937, in: CWMG Vol. 72, p. 35.

[457] See, for example, the critique of 'a professor' (not further specified) in *Harijan*, 18.9.1937, in: Ibid., p. 231.

[458] Ibid.

their intellect.'[459] For him, the swift realization of his envisioned concept was of pivotal importance, and he argued that the achievement of independence from Britain would be accelerated 'if we could educate millions of our people through an intelligent exercise of their respective vocations like this and teach them that they live for the common good of all'.[460]

5.2 The Wardha Conference of 1937 and the Role of Zakir Husain

From 1934 onwards Gandhi lived in the village of Sevagram,[461] close to the town of Wardha.[462] In connection to the Salt March in 1930, Gandhi had pledged not to return to Satyagraha Ashram and also, as already outlined, the *ashram* did not develop in the desired direction. Jamnalal Bajaj, a prosperous admirer, had given land to Gandhi in Sevagram in order for him to establish a new *ashram*, and, as the place developed into the centre of Gandhi's political activism, his co-workers called the village the 'unofficial capital of India'.[463] Even before Gandhi arrived, different associates had been active in implementing parts of the Constructive Programme in the area. Until Gandhi's assassination in 1948, Sevagram was the place where he spent most of his time. In the aforementioned *Harijan* articles of 1937 Gandhi had made a proposal for the total reorganization of education, focusing on the needs of the rural population:

> 1. Primary education, extending over a period of 7 years or longer, and covering all the subjects up to the matriculation standard, except English, plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name of Primary, Middle and High School Education. 2. Such education, taken as a whole, can, and must be, self-supporting; in fact self-support is the acid test of its reality.[464]

[459] *Harijan*, 11.9.1937. Ibid., p. 206.
[460] *Harijan*, 8.5.1937. Ibid., Vol. 71, p. 124
[461] The village name was originally Segaon; it was renamed by Gandhi as Sevagram, meaning 'village of service'.
[462] Located in what today is the state of Maharashtra.
[463] R.V. Rao, *The Gandhian Institutions of Wardha* (Bombay: Thacker, 1947), p. 1.
[464] *Harijan*, 2.10.1937, in: CWMG Vol. 72, p. 286.

Consequently, in October 1937, he was invited by the organizers of a conference on national education, initiated by a group of educationists under the leadership of Jamnalal Bajaj, founder of the Marwari Educational Society in Wardha,[465] to preside over the conference and to present his thoughts. Among the ninety participants were newly elected Congress provincial education ministers, reputed nationalist education thinkers, such as K.T. Shah, Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Vinoba Bhave and K.G. Saiyidain, and representatives of nationalist educational institutions, including, for example, former teachers from Tagore's Shantiniketan, E.W. Aryanayakam and his wife Asha Devi, who, after the conference, became key figures in the implementation processes of Gandhi's ideas. The conference passed a resolution of four demands for the reorganization of education, based on Gandhi's proposed concept:

1. That in the opinion of the conference, free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale
2. That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue
3. That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should center round some form of manual and productive work, and all the abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child
4. That the conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of teachers.[466]

However, compared with Gandhi's core idea, namely the self-sufficiency of the schools, these demands were rather weak. The wording of the fourth point is particularly vague – proof of the controversial debates surrounding the issue. K.T. Shah, a critic of Gandhi's idea of self-sufficiency, argued at the conference that 'you will create in the boys from the very beginning a feeling of exchange-motive which is, by no means, desirable. (…) if you involve the students in this economic muddle at the age of 7, a kind of slavery would creep in'.[467]

But before going deeper into what happened in the aftermath of the conference, I now turn to one important actor, called by one of his biographers the 'architect of

[465] Located in the Central Provinces and Berar, today the state of Maharashtra.
[466] *Harijan*, 30.10.1937, in: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Basic Education* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), p. 26.
[467] Quoted in: C.J. Varkey, *Wardha Scheme of Education* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 92.

a new educational policy, known as the Wardha Scheme, which for nearly ten years engaged his full attention'.[468] Zakir Husain (1897–1969) was asked by Gandhi to chair the commission, in order to compile a report of the conference and include a syllabus in the report. Husain was not a surprising choice for this task. He was an active member of the nationalist movement and had already been involved in work inspired by ideas on progressive education. From 1922 to 1926, Husain had pursued a PhD in economics in Berlin. His thesis on agricultural economy was supervised by the economist Werner Sombart. There is much to be said about the motives behind Indian nationalists going to study in Germany. One motive was certainly the fact that, like India, Germany was opposed to England's hegemony, and there were hopes of winning her as an ally in the Indian cause.[469] Quite apart from this, Husain's reasons for going to Berlin were certainly diverse. As well as working on his doctorate, he also published a book about Gandhi's ideas in German, entitled *Die Botschaft des Mahatma Gandhi*, in 1924.[470] Also, he was interested in dairy farming and went on a study trip to Denmark and Sweden. Most importantly, Husain was highly interested in education and used his stay in Germany to study the developments there.[471] Before coming to Berlin he had already been involved in education work. During the Non-Cooperation Movement of the early 1920s (he was then 23 years old) he followed Gandhi's call to boycott educational institutions run by the colonial government, and was active in the founding of a 'national university' following Gandhi's education ideas. Its name was Jamia Millia Islamia, and it opened in Aligarh (United Provinces) in 1920. In 1926, after returning to India with two friends who had also studied in Germany, Abid Husain and Mohammad Mujeeb,[472] Husain took an active role in the further

[468] B. Sheikh Ali, *Zakir Husain: Life and Time* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1991), p. 329.
[469] See also the argument in: Ibid.
[470] Zakir Husain, *Die Botschaft des Mahatma Gandhi* (Berlin Schlachtensee: Volkserzieher Verlag, 1924). (The book was translated into German by a friend, Alfred Ehrenteich.)
[471] For a detailed account, see: Joachim Oesterheld, "Teilprojekt 1998–2000: Bildung nach der Kolonialzeit. Zakir Husain und nationale Bildung für ein freies Indien, 1920-1947", in: *Akteure des Wandels. Lebensläufe und Gruppenbilder an Schnittstellen von Kulturen*, ed. by Petra Heidrich & Heike Liebau (Berlin: ZMO, Verlag Das Arabische Buch, 2001), pp. 131-40; Joachim Oesterheld, "Zakir Husain, Begegnungen und Erfahrungen bei der Suche nach moderner Bildung für ein freies Indien", in: *Abgrenzung und Aneignung in der Globalisierung: Asien, Afrika und Europa seit dem 18. Jahrhundert. Ein Arbeitsbericht* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2001), pp. 105-30.
[472] In Germany, Abid Husain earned a PhD in Education; he was supervised by Eduard Spranger and inspired by the education ideas of Herbert Spencer. Mohammad Mujeeb was an Oxford scholar in History and studied printing in Germany.

development of Jamia Millia Islamia after the institution was moved to Delhi and, only 29 years old at the time, became its vice chancellor. While still in Germany, he had wanted to learn more about different concepts of mass education, and had taken courses on German education philosophy at Berlin University, met people active in the realm of Progressive Education (*Reformpädagogik*) and visited alternative schools, for example, the *Odenwaldschule*, meeting its founders, Edith and Paul Geheeb. His friend Gerda Philipsborn, a Jewish intellectual from Berlin who later came to teach at Jamia Millia Islamia from 1933 to 1943, was an important contact for him in this regard.[473] Especially fascinating for Husain were the education ideas of Georg Kerschensteiner (1852–1932).[474] Kerschensteiner, supervisor of public schools in Munich and, from 1895 onwards, a professor of education, was the founding father of the German system of vocational training and developed the concept of the work-school (*Arbeitsschule*).[475] He stressed the importance of combining manual work and theoretical knowledge, and argued that schools have to teach practical knowledge applicable to children's everyday life. This would cultivate individual independence and responsibility in the students, while – very similar to Gandhi's later statements – Kerschensteiner also argued that children have a natural aptitude for manual work:

> For all our concentration on book-learning in school, 90 per cent of all boys and girls far prefer any kind of practical activity to quiet, abstract thought and reflection … They are always ready to work in workshop and kitchen, garden and field, stable and fishing boat. This is their richest learning field.[476]

It is possible that Kerschensteiner and Husain met in person, but there is no evidence of this.[477] However, Husain shared very similar ideas, as he, for example, argued in 1941 that as children are 'bursting with active energy and almost invariably insist on doing things with their hands we cannot hope to "educate" them by making them sit silent and grim brooding over books …'[478]

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[473] See: Oesterheld, "Zakir Husain".
[474] Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, *Zakir Husain: Teacher Who Became President* (Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Har-Anand Publications, 2000), p. 296.
[475] Hermann Röhrs, "Georg Kerschensteiner", in: *PROSPECTS* XXIII (1993) 3/4, pp. 807–22.
[476] Georg Kerschensteiner, *Begriff der Arbeitsschule* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1912), p. 3.
[477] Oesterheld, "Zakir Husain", p. 111.
[478] Zakir Husain, "Presidential Address", in *Report of the 20th United Provinces Secondary Education Conference, 27.12.1941* (1941), p. 6.

Also, in the later debates about Basic Education, Husain used the term 'work-schools', echoing Kerschensteiner's term *Arbeitsschule*.

5.3 Wardha Conference Report and the Pedagogization of Manual Work

As mentioned, Gandhi asked Zakir Husain to chair a committee to sum up the results of the conference in a report, which included a syllabus.[479] The report reiterated the high expectations placed on the new education concept to fundamentally change the social order, as exemplified by the following quote:

> The introduction of such practical productive work in education to be participated in by all children of the nation will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual workers, harmful alike for both. It will also cultivate in the only possible way a true sense of the dignity of labour and of human solidarity – an ethical and moral gain of incalculable significance.[480]

The report also stated the importance of radically changing the existing values in education, and criticized the fact that the current education system 'has no conception of the new co-operative social order which education must help to bring into existence, to replace the present competitive and inhuman regime based on exploitation and violent force'.[481] Also, it stated that 'the intelligent citizen must be an active member of society, able to repay in the form of some useful service what he owes to it (…). An education which produces drags and parasites – whether rich or poor – stands condemned.'[482] In opposition to this negative view of the current education system, the committee promoted its idea of an 'activity curriculum', meaning that 'our schools must be places of work, experimentation and discovery, not of passive absorption of information imparted at second-hand'.[483]

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[479] The report was completed, after three months, in December. It later came to be known as the Zakir Husain Report: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic National Education. Report of the Zakir Husain Committee and Detailed Syllabus with a Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi* (Segaon, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1939).
[480] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[481] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic National Education*, p. 7.
[482] Ibid., p. 12
[483] Ibid., p. 50

However, despite such strong arguments with regard to the importance of a radical change of the existing social order's fundamental principles, the report was quite weak when it came to Gandhi's key idea of the schools' economic self-sufficiency. The vague formulations in the report regarding this issue point to the critique that was reiterated at the conference: that a strict focus on craftwork could exploit the children.[484] Also, Zakir Husain himself was not completely convinced of Gandhi's economic ideas in this regard; he had accused Gandhi at the conference of overemphasizing the productive aspect of schools and the teaching of spinning, and he feared an expansion of mere 'charkha schools'.[485] It is therefore not surprising that, under his leadership, the committee altered Gandhi's ideas to ensure less focus on craftwork. The result was a broadened curriculum concentrating not only on one (craftwork) but on three foci: physical environment, social environment and craftwork. The syllabus included in the report for grades 1–7 listed three crafts that should be taught in the schools: 1. agriculture, 2. spinning and weaving and 3. cardboard work, woodwork and metalwork. In 'correlation' to these crafts, the following subjects should be taught: mother tongue and *Hindustani*, mathematics, social studies, general science and drawing. With this broadened basis of the curriculum, the report claimed to eliminate the danger that the scheme would contribute to the exploitation of children and stated that 'the object of this new educational scheme is NOT primarily the production of craftsmen able to practise some craft mechanically but rather the exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craft work'.[486]

Another interesting aspect of the report is its presentation of Gandhi's idea of 'correlated teaching'. As already pointed out, in the *Harijan* articles of 1937 Gandhi presented this idea of 'correlating' academic knowledge to the practising of crafts, as the new pedagogical method to be practised as part of his concept. According to his argument, this was the missing part that would make his education concept complete and universally applicable. The report took up this idea and assigned such importance to it that a scheme to explain it was designed and printed in the back of the report. Although very difficult to decipher, on a

[484] See also the argument in: Fagg, *Back to the Sources*.
[485] Ali, *Zakir Husain: Life and Time*, p. 330.
[486] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic National Education*, p. 11.

visual level this scheme is interesting, symbolizing the idea of child-centred pedagogy and the interconnectedness of different elements of the curriculum:

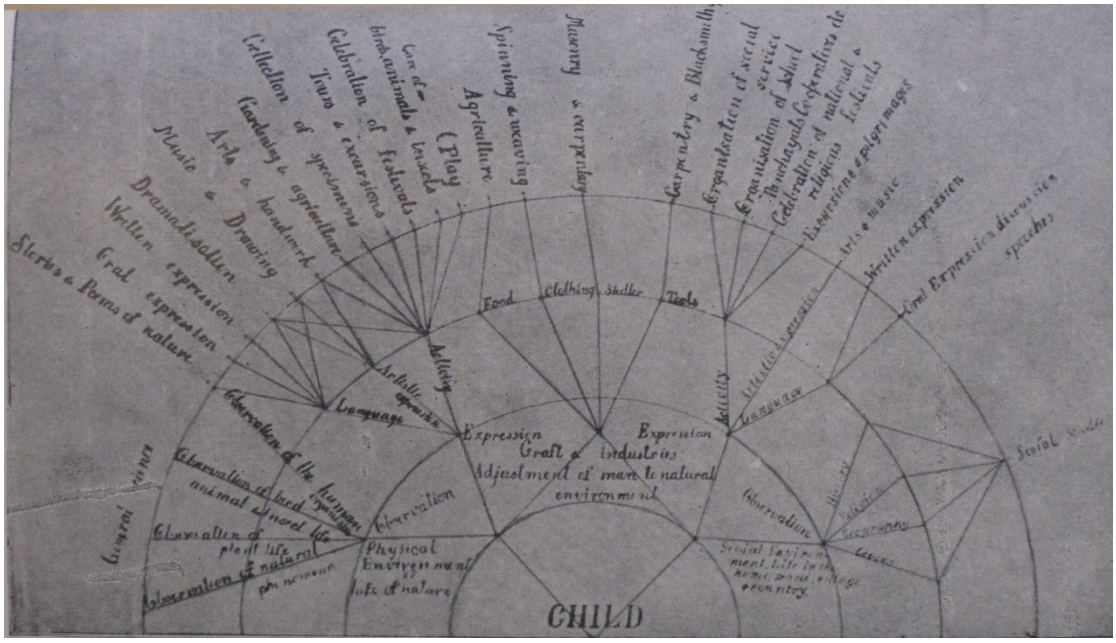

Figure 18: *Scheme of correlated teaching*[487]

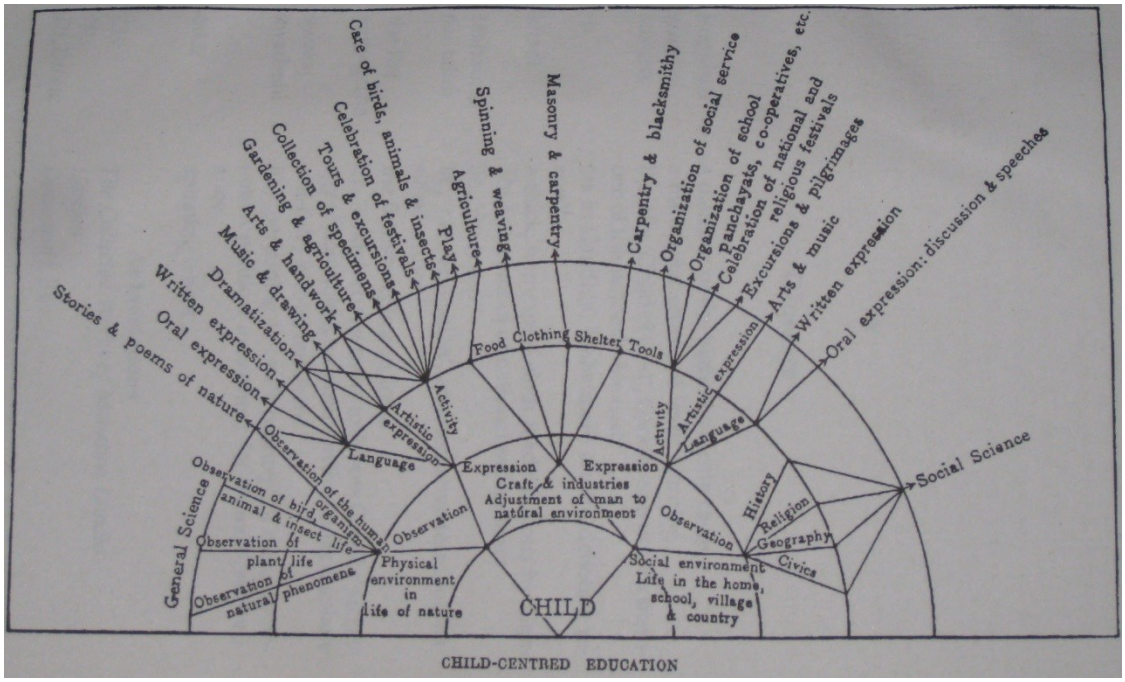

Figure 19: *Deciphered version of the scheme on correlated teaching*[488]

[487] This is the original version of the scheme as printed in the very back of the Zakir Husain Report, see: Hindustani Talimi Sangh. *Basic National Education. Report of the Zakir Husain Committee and Detailed Syllabus with a Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi* (Segaon, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1939).

5.4 Recognition of the Wardha Scheme as an Official Education Experiment

The next step in the further implementation of the scheme was its approval by the Central Advisory Board for Education (CABE). Following the reforms of the Government of India Act 1919 the role of the central government was limited primarily to an advisory and no longer to an executive role. Consequently CABE was set up in 1920 under the chairmanship of the education commissioner to the central government. It was, and still is today, a forum in which education scholars and administrators give advice on education.[489] CABE dealt with the suggestions made by the Zakir Husain Report in two subcommittees chaired by B. G. Kher, Prime Minister of the Government of Bombay. The idea was that the committee would examine the proposed education scheme 'in the light of the Wood–Abbott Report on General and Vocational Education and other relevant documents and to make recommendations'.[490] At a CABE meeting in December 1938, the first recommendations were discussed and decisions on the further process taken. First of all, it was suggested that the scheme be implemented only on an experimental basis and, 'as the proposed curriculum was designed mainly for rural schools, it was generally felt that the most suitable place for its introduction was the rural area'.[491] Secondly, there was a debate about the age at which compulsory education should end, as it was felt that it was difficult to maintain children of the 'labouring classes' in school 'after they became really productive' at the age of 11. Therefore, it was decided to introduce compulsory education between the ages of 6 and 11, to gradually increase until the age of 14 in the next phase of implementation. Another important issue was the transfer to other types of schools after the age of 11, and it was decided that there should be the possibility of such transfer after year 5. CABE also recommended setting up a Wardha Scheme Committee of nine experts to further elaborate on all the open issues, such as the

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[488] Appendix III in Henry Fagg, *Back to the Sources*.
[489] For a detailed account of the history of CABE see: Sushil Prasad, "Advising Indian Education. Central Advisory Board of Education, 1920-1947", in: *Education in Colonial India: Historical Insights*, ed. by Deepak Kumar, et al. (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013).
[490] Ministry of Education, *Central Advisory Board of Education (1935-1960). Silver Jubilee Souvenir* (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Education, 1960), p. 38.
[491] *Central Advisory Board of Education (1935-1960). Silver Jubilee Souvenir* (New Delhi: Government of India. Ministry of Education, 1960), p. 40.

role of *Hindustani* and the question of finding good teachers; Zakir Husain became a member of this.

In May 1940, in another board meeting of CABE, it was decided that the scheme should comprise of an eight-year course for children between the ages of 6 to 14, and consist of two stages: 'junior' Basic Education for a five-year period and 'senior' Basic Education for a three-year period. The idea behind this was to enable a transfer to different types of schools after five years. With regard to the 'vocational' character of Basic Education, it was further decided to introduce courses that would 'prepare pupils for entry to industrial and commercial occupations as well as to universities' in the other types of schools to which Basic Education students might possibly transfer after the 'junior' stage.[492] Interestingly, with regard to gender, it was recommended that special girls' courses in senior Basic Education schools be introduced, in 'subjects such as cookery, laundry work, needle work, homecrafts, the care of children and first aid'.[493] The committee further decided that a central agency should be established for the disposal of the craft products produced in the schools, but that no commitments could be made at the time with regard to financial support for the education scheme.

Following the approval of the Wardha Scheme or, as it was then called, Basic Education, as an education experiment by CABE, the scheme was accepted by the INC in its Haripura Session in 1938 as its national education policy. As Rajendra Prasad, who later became education minister in 1947, and the first president of independent India from 1950 to 1962, remarked at the second All-India Basic Education Conference in 1941, with the approval of CABE the scheme 'passed out of the region of suspicion and prejudice and became a scheme approved and authenticated by the experts of India'.[494] In its resolution the INC stated:

[492] Ibid., p. 55
[493] Ibid.
[494] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, "Two Years of Work", p. 16.

> The existing system of education in India is admitted to have failed. Its objectives have been anti-national and anti-social, its methods have been antiquated, it has been confined to a small number of people and has left the vast majority of our people illiterate. It is essential therefore to build up national education on a new foundation and on a nation-wide scale.[495]

Therefore, the INC saw the need to provide education 'through the medium of some productive trade or handicraft and, to the extent possible, all other activities be built around this central craft, the latter being chosen in accordance with the conditions in which the child is placed'.[496] The Congress resolution also suggested the creation of an All-India Education Board called the Hindustani Talimi Sangh (HTS), an institution that will be further described in the next section of the chapter. With regard to the contested issue of the self-sufficiency of the schools, the INC was even stronger than the Zakir Husain Report and strictly rejected the idea that education should be self-sufficient.[497] The resolution therefore only included the following points:

> 1. Free and compulsory education should be provided for seven years.
> 2. The medium of instruction must be the mother tongue
> 3. Throughout this period education should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and all other activities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.[498]

5.5 Hindustani Talimi Sangh: The All-India Education Board in Sevagram

After the decision at the Congress Haripura Session in 1938 to set up an institution to overlook the implementation of Basic Education, the HTS was formed and located – not very surprisingly – at Sevagram Ashram. According to the mandate of the Indian National Congress, its aim was 'to work out in a

[495] From the resolution passed by the Indian National Congress at its 1938 Haripura Session, see also: *Basic National Education. Syllabus for the Training of Pre-Basic Teachers* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1945).
[496] NCERT, "Position Paper National Focus Group on Work and Education", p. 5.
[497] J.C. Aggarwal, *Documents on Primary Education in India 1792-1992* (Delhi: Doaba House, 1992), p. 58.
[498] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1946), p. 6.

consolidated manner a programme of Basic national education and to recommend it for acceptance to those who are in control of State or private education'.[499] The HTS constitution specified that further aims were to work out syllabi, conduct, aid and supervise institutions and training centres for teachers and workers, publish literature and carry out research work, and 'take necessary steps for the acceptance of its programme of National Education'.[500] The Sangh was to meet at least twice a year and to work under the guidance of Gandhi. The organizational structure of HTS was divided into a president, a treasurer, a secretary and a managing committee of five to seven members.[501] In 1938, HTS had twenty-six members. In the beginning the president of HTS was Zakir Husain (and he remained in this position for ten years, until 1948), secretary was E.W. Aryanayakam and Shrikrishnadas Jaju was treasurer. They understood that their most important task at that time was to facilitate the 'practical application of the new scheme of education and the development of a technique of co-ordinated teaching centred round a basic craft'.[502]

As far as strategy was concerned, after commencing its work HTS recommended the new scheme be implemented in so-called 'compact areas'. These were to be selected due to the fact that they were lacking educational infrastructure altogether, in order to avoid competition between the new and the old schools.[503] HTS also operated a central library in the *ashram*.[504] After 1945 and the decision to move towards a broader understanding of *Nai Talim* beyond the stage of Basic Education (see also next section), HTS was accordingly extended into five departments: 1. Pre-Basic Education, 2. Basic Education, 3. Post-Basic Education, 4. Training of Teachers, 5. Adult Education.[505] Consequently, its objective changed in 1945, according to the broader vision of *Nai Talim*: 'The object of the

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[499] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Sixth Annual Report 1938–1944* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1944), p. 1.
[500] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Constitution* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1945), p. 2.
[501] In 1938 these members were: E. W. Aryanayakam, Asha Devi, Zakir Husain, Saiydain and Vinoba Bhave.
[502] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Third Annual Report 1940–41* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1941), p. 1.
[503] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Sixth Annual Report 1938–1944*, p. 11.
[504] Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education*, p. 42.
[505] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim at Sevagram. An Account of the Institutions of 'Nai Talim' or 'Work-Centred Education' Conducted by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh at Sevagram* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1948).

Sangh shall be to work out a programme of National Education *for life* through manual activity and handicrafts.'[506] Branches of HTS were also in established, but there is no further information available on their operation.

E.W. Aryanayakam (1889–1967) and his wife, Asha Devi, were key figures in the educational activities in Sevagram, and also in the work of HTS, spreading the model throughout India. Aryanayakam was a Christian of Tamil origin from Jaffna (Ceylon, today Sri Lanka) and had studied theology in Serampore, as well as education at Edinburgh University. He had also worked in England for a few years for the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). After returning to India he worked as a teacher in Shantiniketan between 1924 and 1934, and also accompanied Tagore on his tours in South-East Asia, Europe and the USA. Asha Devi was an educated Bengali from Shantiniketan. In 1934, after their marriage and Gandhi's invitation to work with him, they moved to Sevagram and started their work there.[507] A contemporary of the couple wrote about them:

> He and his wife led a simple life on a grand monthly allowance of Rs 75 each. It was a pleasure to watch him handle a teachers' training class or a class of small boys and girls. Like his Master, he would go on spinning while talking to visitors or giving directions to his staff. The couple brought to the austere atmosphere of Sevagram a touch of the aesthetic sense of Santiniketan.[508]

After coming to Sevagram, E.W. Aryanayakam first worked as the principal of the high school Nava Bharat Vidyalaya, operated by the Marwari Educational Society of Wardha and founded by Jamnalal Bajaj. This Society also organized the Wardha Conference in 1937. After 1938, E.W. Aryanayakam also became secretary of the National Planning Committee (NPC) and it later took over many central ideas of Basic Education. Asha Devi published a book on Gandhi's education ideas in 1966.[509]

The most important events organized by the HTS were the All-India Basic Education Conferences, which were probably held on an annual basis. Documentation on the conferences in form of reports is available for 1939, 1941,

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[506] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 28, emphasis added.

[507] Unfortunately, I could find only very limited biographical information on the couple in: N. Krishnaswamy: "Education: For Life, Through Life", http://www.mkgandhi.org/short/ev38.htm (retrieved 19.9.2014).

[508] Ibid.

[509] Asha Devi Aryanayakam, *Gandhi the Teacher* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966).

1949, 1950 and 1951. Some of the conferences also organized an exhibition for the general public. During these advertising events, teachers and students from *Nai Talim* institutions presented their craft products and teaching materials.[510] Apart from the organization of such events, HTS was very active in publication. The materials produced by HTS that I could find during my research total about thirty publications. These are syllabi for the different stages of *Nai Talim*, annual reports and conference reports, and texts on the concept of *Nai Talim*, as well as advertising material about the implementation. From 1952 onwards, HTS also published the journal *Nayee Talim* for workers and teachers concerned with the implementation of Basic Education.[511]

5.6 Expansion of Basic Education/*Nai Talim* after 1938

There is diverse statistical information about the expansion of Basic Education/*Nai Talim* after 1938.[512] However, a thorough, detailed examination of the implementation processes after 1938 is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In the following, I can therefore only roughly sketch some of the developments following the recognition of Basic Education as an official experiment by CABE. To begin with, an interesting term used in primary sources after 1937 was Basic Education Movement, pointing to the understanding of those taking part in the implementation work that they were part of a movement.[513] While the scheme was first worked out by Gandhi and experimented with in Sevagram Ashram, it was, after 1938, taken over by Congress education ministers of different provinces, who introduced the scheme on an experimental level in certain areas of their provinces. On the role of Gandhi in this 'movement', it is also important to note that, as already clear from the aftermath of the Wardha Conference and the preparation of the report by the Zakir Husain Committee, Gandhi presented his ideas and therewith gave the impulse for the development of an education scheme.

[510] See also: National Institute of Basic Education. *Exhibitions in Basic Education*. (New Delhi: Government of India, 1957).
[511] Unfortunately, I was unable to access a copy of the journal during my archival research.
[512] All the annual reports and conference reports published by HTS contain such information. A good source for more detailed statistics is J.C. Aggarwal, *Progress of Education in Free India (Current Problems of Indian Education)* (New Delhi: Arya Book Depot, 1966).
[513] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *One Step Forward*, p. 189.

He was not, however, deeply personally involved in the developments following the Wardha Conference, and more had the role of an observer or consultant in any further developments.

Taking a closer look of the developments following the Wardha Conference and the publication of the Zakir Husain Report, there are various references to a wave of enthusiasm, and the numbers of newly established Basic Education institutions certainly expanded quite rapidly. By the end of 1939 there were, in total, 247 schools that had adopted the Basic Education curriculum (so-called 'basic schools') and 14 teacher training institutions (called 'training schools') spread over Kashmir, United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces, Bombay Presidency, Madras Presidency and the State of Mysore.[514] Also, institutions of national education such as Jamia Millia Islamia, Andhra Jatiya Kalasala, Gujarat Vidyapith and Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith began to implement the new scheme.[515] Central Provinces, the province where Sevagram was located, started its programme for the spread of the Vidya Mandir Scheme (see also 6.1), and, by April 1939, ninety-eight such Vidya Mandirs were in operation, with a hundred newly trained teachers. Further, United Provinces adopted BE as its official education policy and, by 1939, the scheme had been introduced in 1,750 district board and municipal schools.[516] In the same year, the Bombay government introduced Basic Education in fifty-nine District Board Schools.[517] Bihar introduced it on an experimental basis and in Champaran District, thirty-five new 'basic schools' were opened in 1939, staffed by sixty newly trained teachers. Orissa, Madras and Kashmir, meanwhile, undertook the first steps towards the introduction of the scheme.[518]

After 1940, however, the enthusiasm for further experimentation with Basic Education dipped due to political developments. In 1939, Congress governments in the provinces resigned from their offices in order to protest against India's involvement in the Second World War. The Cripps Mission of March 1942 had

[514] Aryanayakam, *The Story of Twelve Years*, p. 3.
[515] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Sixth Annual Report 1938-1944*, p. 1.
[516] These were not included in the 247 schools, probably because they followed only a weak interpretation of the scheme.
[517] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 246.
[518] See overview in the speech by E.W. Aryanayakam on "Progress of Basic Education" in: Hindustani Talimi Sangh*, One Step Forward*, p. viii ff.

aimed negotiating a deal with leaders of the nationalist movement, offering them a greater degree of self-government in return for India's total support of the Second World War. This led to a new outbreak of protests against British rule. The Individual Civil Disobedience and Quit India Campaigns, led by Gandhi, resulted in the imprisonment of Gandhi himself and masses of his supporters, and, consequently, to the closure of institutions inspired by his ideas.[519] The colonial government became suspicious of the education experiments and feared the new institutions were, in actuality, centres of anti-colonial thought. The Hindustani Talimi Sangh particularly was under suspicion, and by 1942 fifteen of its twenty-six members had been imprisoned.[520] The experiments were interrupted in most places, with teachers arrested and schools closed down. As a consequence, the Government of Orissa decided to close down their fifteen 'basic schools' and the teacher training institution only half a year after they had been set up. Apparently, the government also argued that the danger existed that the schools would become mere spinning schools.[521] But even though government structures eroded, there were networks of dedicated individuals that continued to run the schools on a private basis during this time of political upheaval, such as happened, for example, in Orissa.[522]

After this phase of political upheaval and setback in the enthusiasm for the spread of Basic Education, in 1944, after his release from imprisonment, Gandhi presented a new vision of an expansion of the educational activities: 'we must not rest content with our present achievements. We must penetrate the homes of the children. We must educate their parents. Basic Education must become literally the education for life.'[523] The idea behind this was to start with the education of parents and to provide education for young children, adolescents and adults:

[519] See also chapter 6 in Metcalf & Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*.
[520] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 40.
[521] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Two Years of Work*, p. 261.
[522] See the autobiographical descriptions in: Ramadevi Choudhuri, *Into the Sun. An Autobiography* (New Delhi: National Gandhi Museum, 1998).
[523] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 24.

> The usually accepted educational procedure is that the educational process begins with the earliest years of childhood and in the case of the majority of children, ends with the primary stage. (…) In *Nai Talim*, however, the educational process is approached from a different angle. It seems clear that if this New Education is to be effective, its foundation must go deeper; it must begin not with the children but with the parents and the community.[524]

At the Seventh All-India Basic Education Conference, the ideal of *Nai Talim*, as this extended vision of Gandhi's education ideas was consequently termed, was presented as 'making education co-extensive with life itself and causing the spirit of intellectual inquiry and experiment to permeate every stage of living from babyhood to old age and death'. Thereby, the argument was that it was important that children were exposed to the ideas of the new social order, not only during the six hours per day they were in school, but all the time.[525] Following Gandhi's ideas, a set of educational stages was worked out by HTS, consisting of five stages: Social Education (adults), Pre-Basic Education (under age 7), Basic Education (ages 7–14), Post-Basic Education (ages 15–18) and Rural Universities.[526]

Stage	**Age**
Social Education	adult
Pre-Basic Education	3–6 years
Basic Education	7–14 years
Post-Basic Education	15–18 years
Rural University	

The stages of *Nai Talim*

The goal of Basic Education was that, after completion, the children would have:

[524] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic National Education. Syllabus for a Complete Basic School Grades I to VIII* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1950), p. 11.
[525] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Seventh All India Basic Education Conference* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1951), pp. 10-11.
[526] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic National Education. Syllabus for a Complete Basic School Grades I to VIII*, pp. 11-13.

> achieved a reasonable competence and self-reliance in their management of their individual lives, including their health, their daily food, their clothing, and the maintenance in good order and repair of the equipment, furniture and tools in daily use. They should also have been trained in habits of co-operation, and have gained some understanding of their physical, social and economic environment, and of their own place and duty as citizens in local and national society.[527]

Therefore, after finishing the seven-year course of Basic Education, 'a boy ought to possess the skill and knowledge to support himself; at the post-basic stage he has to use that skill and knowledge to earn his own keep and so continue his education without being any burden on his parents or on society'.[528] The ideas behind Post-Basic Education were discussed at the All-India Basic Education Conference in 1945.[529] It was envisioned that 80 per cent of the students ended their education after Basic Education and 20 per cent would go on to the next step.[530] Also, according to the memorandum of 1945 on Post-Basic Education, fourteen types of work in which the adolescents could specialize were envisioned.[531] I will also further examine the implementation of Post-Basic Education in 6.1.1.

5.7 Marjorie Sykes

Marjorie Sykes (1905–1993) constitutes another piece in the puzzle of a connected history of Basic Education / *Nai Talim*. She was an English teacher from Yorkshire, and came to India at the age of 23, through a volunteer programme, to teach at the Bentinck School for Girls run by the London Missionary Society in Madras in 1928. She lived in India for most of her life and taught first in Shantiniketan and later in Sevagram. She documented her work in several writings.[532] In order to find out more about her relationship with Gandhi

[527] Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education*, p. 6.
[528] Ibid., p. 7
[529] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 56.
[530] Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education*, p. 18.
[531] These were 'agriculture, medicine, engineering, mechanical arts, commerce, artisanship, electricity, teaching, journalism, printing, fine arts, home economics, metallurgy, industries', see also: ibid.
[532] *Basic Education. Its Principles and Practice* (Madras: Department of Public Instruction, 1950); Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education*; Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*; Shanta

and her education work I drew on her biography and interviews.[533] After her arrival in Madras in 1928, Sykes became interested in the nationalist movement and the education ideas of Gandhi and Tagore, and met Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the key figure of the Gandhian movement in South India. She also joined the Quaker community in Madras.[534] After the implementation of the communal electoral system in 1935, when the suspicion that religious institutions were striving for conversion in order to increase their voting strength arose, Sykes became more and more unhappy with the atmosphere at the Bentinck School. While searching for new opportunities for work she was told by H.G. Wood, an English Quaker who had recently visited Tagore, that there was an opening for an English teacher in Shantiniketan and she took the job. On her way there, in 1938, she visited Gandhi's *ashram* in Sevagram for three days to see the experimental school, which had just started. In Shantiniketan, Sykes taught at the school and university level, and became increasingly interested in village teacher training.

From the moment she first learned about Gandhi's education ideas in 1937, Sykes became a strong supporter of them. She was convinced that education was a tool by which to teach children how to live in rural self-sufficiency. By 1949 she had decided to move to Sevagram, and worked there, between 1949 and 1959, at the education institutions. By 1949 these institutions had already been running for about ten years, and Gandhi had died just before she arrived. This did not, however, stop her working towards the further development of his education ideas. She directed the teacher training section, supported experiments in adult education, organized conferences and advised experimental schools throughout India. In interviews and writings Sykes also reported on the close connection between Sevagram and Shantiniketan, especially regarding the exchange of teachers. Sykes herself had undertaken several visits to Sevagram while she was still working in Shantiniketan. Also, the art teacher Nandalal Bose had come from Shantiniketan as well as Deviprasad, a student from the arts faculty in

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Narulkar & Marjorie Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Adult Education* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1951).

[533] Martha Dart, *Marjorie Sykes, Quaker Gandhian* (Leeds: Sessions Book Trust, in association with Woodbroke College, 1993); Arun Gandhi, 'Interview: Mrs M. Sykes', http://karachi.s-asian.cam.ac.uk/archive/audio/sykes.html (retrieved 10.02.2011); Peter Rühe, "Marjorie Sykes: On My Life I& II, Talk with Peter Rühe, Sutton Courtney, Oxfordshire/UK", http://streams.gandhiserve.org/audio_library.html (retrieved 30.06.2014).

[534] Dart, *Marjorie Sykes, Quaker Gandhian*, p. 27.

Shantiniketan, who was appointed to help with artwork at Sevagram.[535] Together with Sykes, he was, later, editor of the journal *Nayee Talim*, published by the HTS.[536]

Sykes herself was fully engaged in her work in Sevagram, and her enthusiasm is for example visible in a letter to friends, where she wrote about the pedagogical approach of *Nai Talim* and how the teachers would address their students:

> Grow your food, pick your cotton, spin yarn and weave your clothes, cook your meals, plan and care for your own sanitary system, keep your surroundings clean and hygienic and your buildings in repair. Tackle each of these jobs as intelligently and scientifically as you can; find out what sort of knowledge and skill you need to do it efficiently, and find out how you can get it. When you have re-educated yourself in real knowledge by these means, you will be ready to do your bit in the education of the nation.[537]

This quote demonstrates Sykes' strong belief in Gandhi's ideas on economic self-sufficiency, and she even called this approach to education 'real education'. She characterized teachers as helpers and students as active agents who took the lead in solving problems in the education process. In the same letter, she wrote that, through this kind of education, students 'do learn perhaps to measure worth and knowledge by a new, realistic standard'.[538] At the same time, she also acknowledged that the work in Sevagram to establish self-sufficient educational institutions was very hard, and that there were never enough helpers. She did, however, retain a firm belief in Gandhi's ideas, and even saw *Nai Talim* as a first step to creating world peace: 'the fundamentals of a peaceful world can only be reached by living in accordance with true human values and basing society on cooperative and creative work instead of on artificial money values – i.e. by something of which "*Nai Talim*" in India is one form of expression'.[539] Despite her positive attitude towards Gandhi's ideas, Sykes was also aware of the problems. With regard to the question why, in the end, the educational ideas practised in Sevagram did not develop in the desired direction and spread all over

[535] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 32. Another art teacher who came from Shantiniketan to Sevagram was Devi Prasad. See: http://kafila.org/2010/05/16/%E2%80%98the-making-of-a-modern-indian-artist-craftsman-devi-prasad%E2%80%99-naman-ahuja/ (retrieved 14.11.14).
[536] A reference to the journal can be also found at: CWMG Vol. 85, p. 448. Unfortunately, I was unable to find the journal during my research.
[537] Dart, *Marjorie Sykes, Quaker Gandhian*, p. 54.
[538] Ibid., p. 55.
[539] Ibid., p. 57.

India, Sykes replied: 'We did not take village handicrafts as our pole-star or make any serious attempt to feed and clothe ourselves, as the villager must, by our own "bread labour". And so we failed to make *Nai Talim* the spear-head of a silent social revolution, as Gandhiji believed it could be.'[540]

5.8 Controversial Debates on the Issue of Economic Self-Sufficiency

Against the background of the gradual expansion of Basic Education and the other stages of the broader concept of *Nai Talim*, the debates about the role and scope of economic self-sufficiency continued. The first Conference of Basic National Education, which took place in 1939 in Poona, marked the beginning of a series of conferences bringing together teachers, experts, researchers and members of the HTS to discuss the progress and problems of the scheme, since it was felt that 'it would be useful for the workers in basic education to meet together for a collective consideration of the practical problems of basic education at work, and for the assessment of work already done'. [541] At the conference, different experts involved in the implementation process presented their views on the issue of self-sufficiency. Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kripalani for example, a strong proponent of Gandhi and president of the INC in 1947 during the transfer of power, referring to the Dalton Plan and the Montessori System, pointed to the fact that the ideas of Progressive Education, as they were implemented in Europe, were too expensive for the situation in India, and, therefore, in order to stick to these 'new systems of education based on reality, labour and craft work', it was important to think of alternative ways of financing the institutions.[542] K.G. Saiyidain, however, warned that although '… there is a need in life for developing a capacity for hard, strenuous and earnest work',[543] it should not be used as an instrument of exploitation, but for 'the development of the human mind and the human personality'.[544] The conference report also pointed out that the versions of Basic

[540] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 44.
[541] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 10.
[542] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *One Step Forward*, p. 210.
[543] Ibid., p. 203
[544] Ibid., p. 198

Education that were implemented differed across different locations, which made it difficult to compare the implementation process and evaluate the effects of the new education scheme.

The spirit of euphoria reported on in the report of the Poona conference is also visible in the documentation about the second Basic Education Conference in Delhi in 1941. More than a hundred delegates were present, and one of the findings proudly presented was that 'the children in basic schools are more active, cheerful and self-reliant and their power of self-expression is well developed, they are acquiring habits of co-operative work, and social prejudices are breaking down'.[545] As Sykes recalled in her history of *Nai Talim*, at that time there were diverse reports of its positive effects:

> There are reports of play-centres for younger children run by the Basic School children themselves, of school gardens started on their own initiative, of school 'shops' and 'savings banks', and in some cases of how crafts learned at school had been practised at home to increase the family income.[546]

Gandhi was not personally present but sent a message to the 1941 conference, reiterating the importance of economic self-sufficiency, especially under the circumstances, as the government was withdrawing more and more support for the implementation process:

> I hope that the Conference will realize that success of the effort is dependent more upon self-help than upon Government, which must necessarily be cautious even when it is well-disposed. Our experiment to be thorough has to be at least somewhere made without alloy and without outside interference.[547]

In his presidential address, however, Zakir Husain again restated his fear that, implemented too radically, the idea of economic self-sufficiency would have negative effects. The Zakir Husain Report had already warned that there was 'an obvious danger that in the working of this scheme the economic aspect may be stressed at the sacrifice of the cultural and educational objectives. Teachers may devote most of their attention and energy to extracting the maximum amount of

[545] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 18.
[546] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 37.
[547] CWMG Vol. 80, p. 158.

labour from their children.'[548] For Husain, 'not all activity but only that which is planned can be educative. Work executed mechanically, which could have been done by a mere machine, cannot educate.'[549] Echoing Kerschensteiner's understanding of the positive impact of manual work on moral development, he argued that the criterion for the selection of the type of work must be that it is 'really educative, for the body as well as the mind, work such as makes men better men'. He warned that '… children are not labourers, their activity is creative'.[550] However, at the same event, Rajendra Prasad sounded a note of caution, saying that 'one cannot help feeling that to the extent the earning part of the scheme has been thrown into the background, the chances of its universal adoption have also been reduced'.[551]

Gandhi's radicalism with regard to the question of the schools' economic self-sufficiency experienced a major setback after a CABE report – the so-called Sargent Report – was published in 1944, dealing with questions of post-war 'educational reconstruction' in India. It stated that 'the Board, however, are unable to endorse the view that education at any stage, and particularly in the lowest stage, can or should be expected to pay for itself through the sales of articles produced by the pupils'.[552] This points to the fact that the Basic Education Movement had to make compromises in order to win the cooperation of critical actors, and, since for them the idea of economic self-sufficiency seemed to be like a red rag to a bull, the idea was weakened more and more. At the same time, the proponents of *Nai Talim*, although divided on the question of economic self-sufficiency, kept their positive spirit, and in the sixth HTS Annual Report of 1944, six years after the official start of the *Nai Talim* experiments, HTS presented results of a report on the achievements of children in Basic Schools as compared with children in other primary schools. The report came to the conclusion that a child in a Basic School 'is not behind the pupils of the old primary schools in his attainment in what are known as "academic" subjects, and is superior in

[548] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic National Education*, p. 15.
[549] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Two Years of Work*, p. 31.
[550] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Two Years of Work*, p. 31.
[551] Ibid., p. 16
[552] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 33. See also: Government of India, *Post-War Education Development in India: Report by the Central Advisory Board of Education* (New Delhi: Bureau of Education, India, 1944).

knowledge relating to his life and environment including scientific knowledge and training in a productive craft'.[553] Evaluations by HTS based on data from Sevagram were used to prove that, at a practical level, the remuneration of teachers through the earnings of the children would work.[554]

At the Basic Education Conference of January 1945 in Sevagram, the issue of economic self-sufficiency was again a central topic in the discussions.[555] In his opening speech Gandhi stood fast by his conviction that 'the only true education is that which is self-supporting'.[556] In the end, the issue was again left open, and a resolution that 'New Education should be so organized that a normal adult pupil in villages earns enough wages during his period of training to defray his costs of education' was passed.[557] This resolution did not, however, address any specific means by which economic self-sufficiency could be realized, let alone how to achieve this goal when educating young children. Selling the products produced in the schools was not very easy,[558] and the problem of disposing of the yarn spun in the institutions is often referred to in the reports. Gandhi's idea was that the government should purchase the products produced by the Basic Schools. However, as Sykes stated: 'the yarn was not in itself a marketable commodity and governments, faced with what officialdom was an unheard-of demand, were very unwilling to cope with it'.[559] But Gandhi remained convinced of his idea and continued to present it to the Basic Education Movement; the last time was shortly before his death, in a journal article in November 1947, in which he reiterated his conviction that 'all education to be true must be self-supporting'.[560]

5.9 Prospects after 1947 and the Clash of Visions

A thorough examination of what happened to Gandhi's education ideas after India's official independence in 1947 and Gandhi's assassination in 1948 is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I will, however, point to some interesting

[553] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Sixth Annual Report 1938-1944*, p. 46.
[554] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 40.
[555] Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain the full conference report during my research.
[556] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Eighth Annual Report 1938-46*, p. 25.
[557] Ibid., p. 26.
[558] Sykes, for example, referred to this problem several times.
[559] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 37.
[560] CWMG Vol. 97, p. 155.

developments in this regard in the following. After 1946, when the Congress governments resumed their work, a second phase of expansion of Basic Education/*Nai Talim* began. The NPC, an advisory board of experts set up by the INC dealing with questions of national reconstruction and social planning, accepted Basic Education as the key concept for national education.[561] Consequently, implementation continued, with the support of different government schemes. New schools were built or existing primary schools converted to adapt the scheme of Basic Education as well as other stages of *Nai Talim*. According to official statistics, between 1949 and 1956 the number of 'basic schools' increased from 32,182 to 47,814, while the number of students in these schools nearly doubled (from 2,535,710 to 5,060,207).[562] However, the implementation remained a project parallel to the colonial-inherited education system, and the net addition to primary schools following the old system outnumbered the new and converted schools following the Basic Education curriculum.[563]

Gandhi's vision and the programmes he initiated were the subjects of controversial debates, and criticisms were raised by very diverse societal groups.[564] Above, I highlighted the debates about Gandhi's ideas on the self-sufficiency of educational institutions and the negotiations that went on in this regard during the implementation processes after 1937. But it was not those who were afraid that the children would be exploited, who were opposed to the scheme. As early as 1938, a group of Muslims had published a pamphlet giving voice to their concern that the Vidya Mandir Scheme clearly favoured Hindu culture, and they feared the loss of their religious identity in education.[565] Not convinced by Gandhi's reiterated statements that the scheme of Basic Education

[561] See also: National Planning Committee, *Report of the Sub-Committee on General Education and Technical Education & Developmental Research* (Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers Ltd., 1948).
[562] National Institute of Basic Education, *Progress of Basic Education (1949-50 – 1955-56)* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1958).
[563] M.E. Sinclair & Kevin Lillis, *School and Community in the Third World* (London: Croom Helm in Association with the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, 1980), p. 54.
[564] For an early overview of this criticism see: Varkey, *Wardha Scheme of Education*, pp. 88–119.
[565] Abdul Haq, *Vidya Mandir Schema. An Open Letter Addressed to Mahatma Gandhi* (1938). For a detailed analysis of the criticism by Muslim communities see: Joachim Oesterheld, "Muslim Response to the Educational Policy of the Central Provinces and Berar Government (1937–1939)", in: *südasien.info* 11. (2006) November; "National Education as a Community Issue: The Muslim Repsonse to the Wardha Scheme", in: *Education and Social Change in South Asia*, ed. by Krishna Kumar & Joachim Oesterheld (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007).

was not favouring one community over another and that it was able to bring about harmony between Hindus and Muslims,[566] the Working Committee of the Muslim League also rejected the Wardha Scheme, in a resolution filed in July 1939.[567] People convinced of the colonial-inherited education system (in the context of the proponents of *Nai Talim* this was also referred to as the 'over-academic bookish traditions of education'[568]) remained suspicious of the vision of education geared towards a life in self-sufficient villages. Gandhi's ideas on education 'challenged the wisdom of the nation's ruling elite, whose interest for scientific progress and material advancement was far removed from the lives of the poor'.[569] Therefore, although seen as an inclusive concept of national education by its supporters, Basic Education remained a project for rural India. Statistics for the year 1955/56 show that, while there were 42,353 Basic Schools in rural areas, only 5,652 of these schools were to be found in urban settings.[570] Most interestingly, there are also references to a rejection of *Nai Talim* from those groups towards which the concept was mainly geared: the rural population. A mother from Sevagram, for example, made the following statement:

> We do not send our children to the ashram school beyond the fourth class (i.e. primary), because those who pass out of '*Nai Talim*' cannot get jobs. So our boys go to Wardha town; they walk the four miles to study in a conventional school … We do not want to remain tillers of the soil for ever. We also want to become lawyers and doctors. '*Nai Talim*' is no good for that.[571]

This shows how Gandhi's romanticized perspective on village life was not necessarily shared by those he was claiming to help. In a similar vein, B.R. Ambedkar, the main figure of the Dalit Movement fighting against caste-based oppression, was highly critical of an education system that would not help Dalit children get access to conventional higher education, and criticized Gandhi's paternalistic approach towards Dalits.[572]

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[566] See, for example, his statement in: CWMG Vol. 78, p. 58.
[567] *Ibid.,* Vol. 76, p. 39
[568] Saiyidain, "Basic Education", p. 55.
[569] Balagopalan, "Constructing Indigenous Childhoods", p. 32.
[570] National Institute of Basic Education, *Progress of Basic Education (1949-50 – 1955-56)*.
[571] Kusum Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1962), p. 187, quoted in Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 249.
[572] His views are further outlined in Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables*.

Gandhi's ideas were, and are still today, the subject of controversial debates. During the 1930s especially, they began to lose their strength, and alternative visions, such as socialist planning, found increasing support among the nationalist leadership.[573] The development model followed by the first government after independence, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, was based on socialist ideas of central planning, urbanization and import-substituting industrialization, which had very limited potential for the incorporation of Gandhi's ideas of a self-sufficient village life.[574] The different programmes following the stages of *Nai Talim* never, therefore, extended beyond an experimental level. But Gandhi and his ideas remained an important symbol in the post-independence political landscape, and continued to function as a pattern for legitimizing, for example, concepts of 'work experience',[575] and of village welfare and adult education schemes.[576] Although not part of official education policies today, remnants of Gandhi's ideas on education are still present and continue to re-emerge in debates about education reform.[577] Also, various NGOs refer to Gandhi and claim to put his ideas into practice.[578]

[573] For a detailed analysis of the debates surrounding the various development ideas see: Zachariah, *Developing India. An Intellectual and Social History*.
[574] For a detailed analysis of the debates about models of 'development' for independent India see also: ibid.
[575] For example, with the introduction in 1978 of a concept called Socially Useful and Productive Work (SUPW), see: Satya Pal Ruhela, *Work Experience Education* (New Delhi: Diamond Publishers, 2006).
[576] Government of India. Committee on Plan Projects (Study Team for Selected Educational Schemes), *Report on Social Education* (New Delhi: Government of India. Committee on Plan Projects (Study Team for Selected Educational Schemes), 1963); Awadh Sharma (ed.), *Social Education and the Second Five Year Plan (a Symposium)* (New Delhi: Indian Adult Education Association, 1959).
[577] As a prominent example, see: NCERT, "Position Paper National Focus Group on Work and Education" and Anil Sadgopal's discussion paper therein (Annex I).
[578] A prominent example is Barefoot College in Rajasthan (www.barefootcollege.org, retrieved 8.01.2015)

6 Photographs from Sevagram: Documenting the Success of *Nai Talim*?

In Chapter 4 and 5 I have taken a closer look at the realization of Gandhi's education ideas first in the context of his rural settlements in South Africa and India and then after 1937 as official concept of 'national education'. In this final chapter, I first continue this story of realization or implementation and expose my results of an analysis of materials on Sevagram Ashram as the model of Gandhi's envisioned new social order. In the second part of the chapter I then present a collection of photographs from Sevagram that I find very interesting with regard to the potentials of visual sources in historical research on *Nai Talim*. In Chapter 3, I outlined Gandhi's world of symbolic meaning, especially the role of the symbols of *charkha* (the spinning wheel) and *khadi* (handmade cloth) in his attempts at mass mobilization. While there is a recent body of literature on Gandhi's symbolism, pointing to its importance in historical research, to my knowledge visual sources such as photographs have hitherto not been included in research on Gandhi's education ideas and their implementation. However, spinning and the production of *khadi* cloth, carrying with them all these symbolic meanings, were of key importance in the educational processes of *Nai Talim*. In the course of the spread of the education model, thousands of children were involved in spinning and cloth production as part of their daily schooling experiences. I therefore felt that an analysis of visual sources on *Nai Talim* could be an important addition to the recent research trend of visual studies on Gandhi and the nationalist movement more generally. Therefore, I was particularly happy to find two booklets with a total of seventy different black-and-white photographs during my archival research, depicting scenes of educational activities in Sevagram Ashram between 1948 and 1951. From the first moment I saw them, I was fascinated. This was, first of all, due to the fact that the booklets provide information beyond text sources about the organization and set-up of the educational institutions in Sevagram, as well as pedagogical settings and educational spaces. Secondly, as becomes clear from the prefaces of the booklets,

they were published as advertisements for *Nai Talim*, and their aim was to present the envisioned ideal by using photographs and accompanying text. I was therefore interested, firstly, in how far the photographs provide information about 'the reality' of *Nai Talim*, that is, what it looked like when the ideas were implemented. Secondly, I wanted to find out what the photographs might tell the viewer about the envisioned characteristics of the 'new generation' for a new social order as envisioned and represented by HTS. I was also curious to find out if and how elements of Gandhi's symbolism were part of the body of photographs. And, finally, I was curious to see whether there was a disconnect between the proclaimed ideal and the 'real life' visible in the photographs.

Thus, I decided to engage with these sources and experiment with their analysis and interpretation. This chapter is, thereby, in a sense, a continuation of Chapter 3, in that it deals with Gandhi's use of symbolism. The first set of the photograph series printed in the first booklet was taken just before Gandhi's assassination, the second set three years after his death. In a sense, these photographs can therefore be regarded as being part of his legacy, that is, how his ideas and his symbolism survived his lifetime. In order to deal with all these different aspects, the method I found most useful is serial-iconographic photograph analysis, further outlined in 6.2. But before I turn to the analysis of the photographs, I first give some insights into the functioning of the model institutions in Sevagram, focusing on the Basic and Post-Basic institutions, and using some of the aforementioned photographs for illustration.

6.1 Sevagram as the Model for the New Social Order

Sevagram Ashram, outside the town of Wardha, was the place where Gandhi lived and worked after leaving the *ashram* in Ahmedabad in 1934. After his arrival, he reported how he was shocked by the situation in the Segaon village school,[579] which was run by the District Board. This certainly contributed to his further engagement in education work and, later on, the school was run by the *ashram*. As he wrote after first seeing the school: 'We are stuffing children's minds with

[579] Segaon was the earlier name of the village; Gandhi renamed it Sevagram, meaning 'village of service'.

all kinds of information without ever thinking of stimulating or developing them.'[580] As already pointed out in Chapter 5, Sevagram became a kind of hot spot for educational activities based on Gandhi's ideas, especially after the Wardha Conference in 1937. It was also advantageous that Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla, minister of education of Central Provinces, and, from July 1938, onwards prime minister, strongly supported Gandhi's ideas, and, earlier, had initiated the implementation of his own rural education experiment: the Vidya Mandir Scheme.[581] Its aim was to provide low-cost schooling in villages. The schools were to accommodate sixty pupils in four classes, taught by a total of two teachers (each teacher responsible for two classes). To cut costs, the idea was to find landowners who were willing to donate the income of one part of their land to finance the annual salary of one teacher. The other teacher should be funded through the income generated by the marketing of craft products produced by the children as part of their schooling. Local education committees should be created to manage the cultivation of the land and the school administration.[582]

After the Wardha Conference, Shukla took over the Wardha Scheme for the Vidya Mandir schools, and the Central Provinces government opened a teacher training institution, the Vidya Mandir Training School, in Wardha in April 1938, in cooperation with HTS. After April 1939, the institution was called the Wardha Training School, and it was run under the leadership of E.W. and Asha Devi Aryanayakam, a teacher couple who had previously worked with Tagore in Shantiniketan (see 5.5). Congress governments experimenting with the scheme sent personnel and teacher trainees to Wardha to undergo training at the institution. It initially offered six-month retraining courses for District Board teachers of Central Provinces who were to be employed by the provincial government in Vidya Mandir schools. That there was strong interest in the new scheme was made clear by the fact that there were 5,000 applicants for only 160 spaces.[583] In April 1939, ninety-eight Vidya Mandirs were opened in different

[580] Quoted in Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 19.
[581] *Vidya mandir* means 'temple of learning'.
[582] For more detailed information on the Vidya Mandir Scheme see: Thomson, *Gandhi and his Ashrams*, p. 244; Oesterheld, "Muslim Response".
[583] Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, p. 245; Varkey, *Wardha Scheme of Education*. As Varkey points out, the 160 teachers were divided in 6 classes for training. The plan was that they return for more training after two years.

districts of the Central Provinces.[584] After 1939, the institution offered retraining courses for District Board teachers on a regular basis, as well as short courses for government officers. It also started three-year courses for training new teachers.[585] In the first year, the Wardha Training School was the only such teacher training institution throughout India.

Craft training was an integral part of the teacher training courses, and the trainees learned about cloth production and the production of cardboard items. One example of the self-sufficiency aspect of the institution was that, through the cardboard work undertaken by the teacher trainees, it was hoped all the stationery for the Central Provinces government offices would eventually be provided.[586]

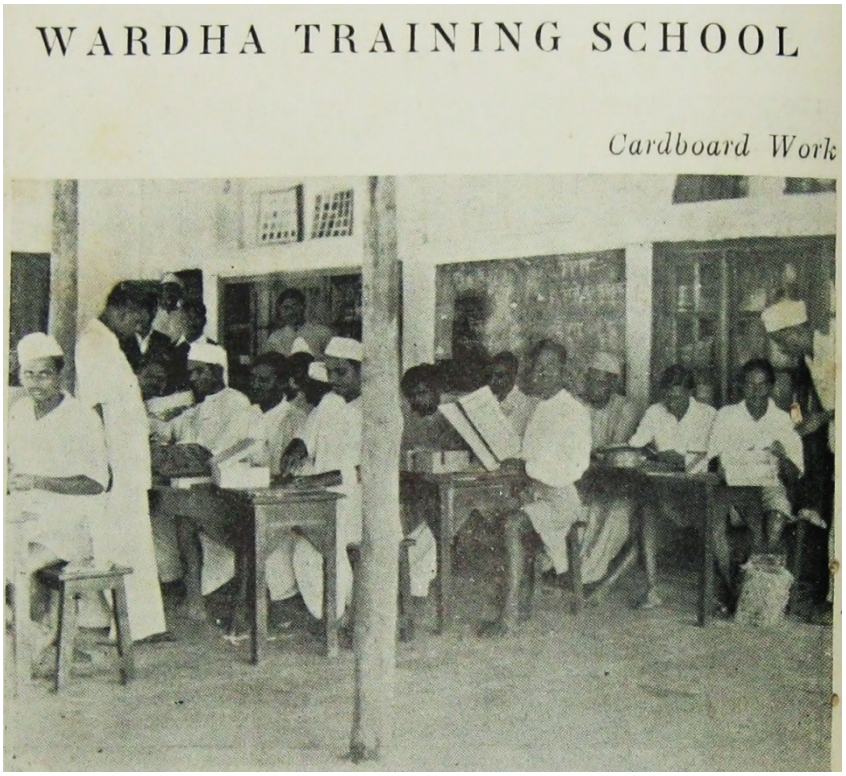


Figure 20: *Teacher trainees working with cardboard at the Wardha Training School*[587]

In 1942 the institution was closed due to the Quit India Movement and, after reopening some months later, it was moved to the rural surroundings of Sevagram

[584] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *One Step Forward*, p. ix.
[585] Varkey also depicts a complete timetable for the different teacher training courses on one of the photograph pages in his book (the page is not numbered): Varkey, *Wardha Scheme of Education*.
[586] Ibid., p. 153
[587] Varkey, *Wardha Scheme of Education*, page number not mentioned.

and renamed Nai Talim Bhavan.[588] However, soon after the move the work was again disrupted due to the political situation and arrests of key figures in the field of *Nai Talim*.

Before this, however, in 1938, a school that followed the tenets of *Nai Talim* had already been attached to the Wardha Training School. This was a residential institution, and also accommodated the children of teachers who underwent training courses of longer duration. As already mentioned, the *ashram* also took over the running of the village school. The documentation about these 'basic schools' is quite limited and statistical information is lacking. However, the previously mentioned photograph booklets, published in 1948 and 1951, present the educational work in Sevagram Ashram and provide interesting information about the workings of the educational institutions.[589] In the following, I use the photographs to illustrate some aspects of the educational work in Sevagram and shed some light on how the concepts of Basic Education and Post-Basic Education were practised there. Also, I draw on an autobiographical publication by Marjorie Sykes, a Quaker from England who worked at the *Nai Talim* institutions in Sevagram for ten years, from 1949 to 1959 (see also 5.7).[590]

The photographs, first of all, illustrate the 'basic craft' of cloth-making that was chosen for the school. From class I onwards, the children learned 'every aspect of the work from growing, ginning and carding the cotton to the dyeing of yarn and the designing of the finished cloth'.[591]

[588] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Sixth Annual Report 1938-1944*, p. 5.
[589] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram*, (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1948); Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic Education Sevagram*, (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1951).
[590] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*.
[591] Ibid., pp. 31–2

Figure 21: *Classes I & II at craft work*[592]

In class I they initially learned spinning with a hand spindle (*takli*) and, later, moved on to using different spinning devices. The photographs also depict the children involved in growing and cleaning cotton. As Sykes recalls in her book, in the beginning there was a lot of experimentation with different crafts, but finally they found that those best suited were 'the production and preparation of food and of clothing, the use of clay and wood to provide both shelter and the tools and utensils of daily living'.[593] The booklets also claim, in various headings related to the photographs, that the pedagogical technique of 'correlated teaching' was practised in the school, and that the children were involved in spinning yarn while the teacher gave talks on different subjects. This is one of the photographs that is used in the booklet to represent the idea of 'correlated teaching':

[592] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).
[593] Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 33.

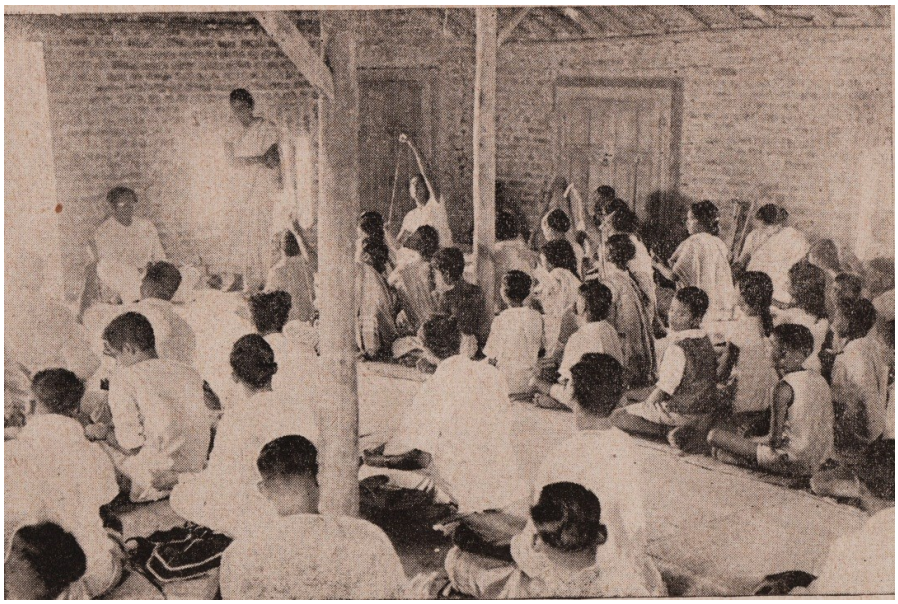


Figure 22: *Developing keen senses. Pupils spin while listening to a talk*[594]

However, it is quite difficult to see more than one student involved in spinning here while listening to the teacher. As this was a residential school, school life not only encompassed craftwork and the subjects 'correlated' to it, but also community work. According to the booklets, community work included chores such as cleaning and cooking in the community kitchen

BOYS OF CLASS VII ARE MAKING BREAD : Cooking in the community kitchen is done by the staff and students.

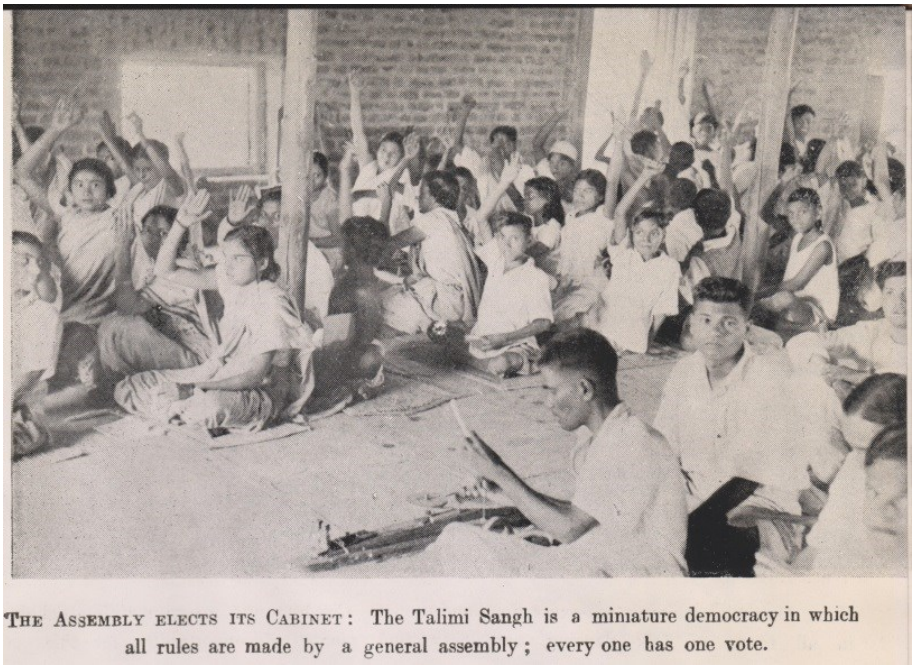
Figure 23: *Boys of class VII are making bread*[595]

[594] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic Education Sevagram* (1951).

As the timetable shows, such community work made up about four hours or more of the daily routine:

Time	**Activity**
4.45	Rising bell
5.15	Community work or exercises
6.00	Morning prayer and breakfast
6.30	Community cleaning
7.30	Schoolwork
11.00	Community work and meal
12.30	Rest
2.00	Schoolwork, including silent spinning
4.30	Free time for games, reading, recreational programmes
6.00	Meal and community work
7.30	Evening prayer

Another interesting aspect of school life, as presented in the photographs, was the 'assembly', a democratic decision-making body of all children and staff, whereby everyone had one vote.



THE ASSEMBLY ELECTS ITS CABINET: The Talimi Sangh is a miniature democracy in which all rules are made by a general assembly; every one has one vote.

Figure 24*: The assembly elects its cabinet*[596]

[595] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic Education Sevagram* (1951).
[596] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).

Although, as already pointed out, Tagore and Gandhi's opinions on education diverged widely with respect to their ideas on the importance of aesthetic education, various photographs in the booklets depict scenes of education in the arts, such as music-making, drawing and drama. This is probably based on the many personal connections between Shantiniketan and Sevagram.

6.1.1 Post-Basic Education and Uttara Buniyadi Bhavan

By 1947, the first group of students in Sevagram and Bihar had completed seven years of Basic Education and there was a need to implement further education opportunities.[597] Hence, provisions were made to offer this next stage: Post-Basic Education (PBE). While 'basic schools' were usually non-residential, it was intended that 'post-basic schools', with students starting at the age of 14 to 15 years, were residential so the students could experience community living in a kind of miniature ideal village:

> This is a continuation of basic education at a higher level and corresponds to secondary education in the existing system. It is visualized that post-basic education will be organized as a model village with agriculture as its basic industry and a wide variety of productive and creative activities and programmes of social service essential for a balanced and healthy rural community.[598]

The idea was that, within the school community, there was a balance between 'social service' (cleaning, cooking, caring for the sick etc.) and production.[599] The students should, further, concentrate on specializing in one occupation or craft, with the goal of being capable of living an economically self-sufficient life after completing PBE. The 'post-basic school' in Sevagram was called Uttara Buniyadi Bhavan, and offered a three- to four-year course. Training was offered in agriculture, fruit and vegetable production, dairying, oil pressing, woodwork and metalwork, rural engineering and building, weaving, tailoring, domestic work, and teaching, which included adult education.[600]

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[597] Aryanayakam, *The Story of Twelve Years*, p. 11.
[598] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *The Idea of a Rural University. A Discussion of the Basis and Methods of Rural Higher Education in the Light of Nai Talim* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1954), pp. 86–7.
[599] Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education*, p. 12.
[600] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim at Sevagram. An Account of the Institutions of 'Nai Talim' or 'Work-Centred Education' Conducted by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh at Sevagram*, p. 7.

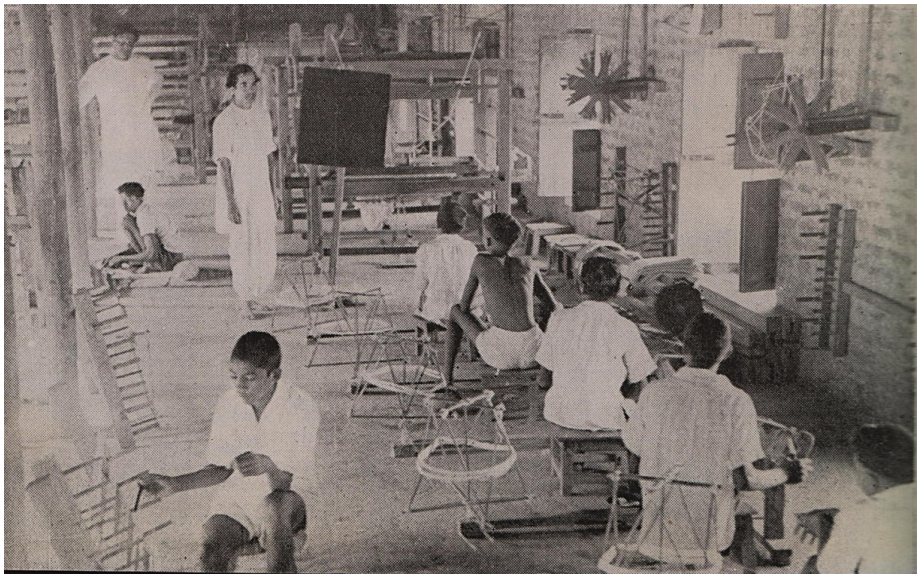

Figure 25: Just before weaving[601]

The documents on the plans of PBE reveal a clear gender bias with regard to the different types of training given.[602] Girls were to be trained in domestic sciences, early childhood education and nursing, while boys were steered towards other fields. The photograph booklets on the implementation of PBE in Sevagram contain various images that confirm this gender division, as, for example, the following photograph of a health worker:

[601] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).
[602] A clear distinction between 'male' and 'female' subjects to be taught in PBE is also made in: Central Advisory Board of Education, *Report of the Second Wardha Education Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education, 1939, Together with the Decisions of the Board Thereon. Appendix IV to the Proceedings of the 5th Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education in India held in May 1940* (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1940).

Figure 26: *Health worker checking the weight of a baby in Sevagram village*[603]

According to the curriculum of PBE, the educational process was divided in three parts: 1. vocational work, 2. community work, and 3. arts and sports. In correlation with the selected vocation, four subjects were taught: languages (mother tongue and *Hindustani*, working knowledge of English, acquaintance with one other Indian language), science and mathematics, sociology and economics, and social studies (history, geography and civics).[604]

6.2 Analysing Photographs from Sevagram

I now turn to the second layer of analysis of the photographs printed in the booklets published by HTS. In order to engage with the photographs in a deeper way, rather than simply use them as an illustration of the educational institutions in Sevagram, I applied serial-iconographic photograph analysis, developed by the German educationalists Ulrike Pilarczyk and Ulrike Mietzner.[605] There are diverse

[603] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic Education Sevagram* (1951).
[604] Sykes, *A Picture and Programme of Post Basic Education*.
[605] Ulrike Mietzner & Ulrike Pilarczyk, "Methods of Image Analysis in Research in Educational and Social Sciences", in: *Visual History. Images of Education*, ed. by Ulrike Mietzner, Kevin

layers of meaning in photographs and, as the educationalists point out, 'the value of a photograph as a source for research derives from its complexity'.[606] As Pilarczyk and Mietzner stress, while, on the one hand, photographs are a documentation of reality in a sense, on the other hand, they are also produced arrangements, a 'reduction of reality, a selection', and 'the photographer can play with the possibility of producing an apparent reality'.[607] Thereby, unlike paintings, photographs are also partly a result of coincidence. The educationalists therefore suggest attention is paid to the 'unintended, unpredictable details' in the analysis of photographs.[608] Furthermore, 'photographs preserve not only the photographed event, but also the familiar, unnoticed details, ritualized normalities, and unrecalled bodily postures'.[609] Taking all this into account, Pilarczyk and Mietzner conclude that the photograph as an aesthetic product is determined by the following factors: indexicality, arrangement, coincidence, zeitgeist and multi-perspectivity.

Based on Erwin Panofsky's iconographic/iconological image analysis,[610] Pilarczyk and Mietzner suggest an analytical process in order to develop an interpretation of a series of photographs, as well as the individual photographs within this. Thereby, it is important that the method is applied to a qualified corpus of sources, depending on the research question. In my case, the corpus of sources is determined by the fact that all the photographs used for the analysis were published together in two booklets on the topic of *Nai Talim*/Basic Education. According to Pilarczyk and Mietzner's method of analysis, the series

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Myers, & Nick Peim (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2005); Ulrike Pilarczyk & Ulrike Mietzner, *Das Reflektierte Bild. Die seriell-ikonografische Fotoanalyse in den Erziehungs- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 2005); Ulrike Pilarczyk, „Fotografie als Quelle erziehungswissenschaftlicher Forschung", in: *Bild und Text. Methoden und Methodologien visueller Sozialforschung in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, ed. by Barbara Friebertshäuser, Heide von Felden, & Burkhard Schäffer (Opladen & Farmington Hills: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2007).

[606] Mietzner & Pilarczyk, "Methods of Image Analysis", p. 117.

[607] Ibid., p. 113.

[608] Ibid., p. 115.

[609] Ibid., p. 116.

[610] Thereby, it is important to keep in mind Panofsky's interpretation of the difference between 'iconographic' and 'iconologic': "Die Entdeckung und die Interpretation dieser 'symbolischen' Werte (die dem Künstler selber häufig unbekannt sind und die sogar entschieden von dem abweichen können, was er bewusst auszudrücken suchte) ist der Gegenstand dessen, was wir, im Gegensatz zur 'Ikonografie', 'Ikonologie' nennen können." Erwin Panofsky, "Ikonografie Und Ikonologie. Eine Einführung in Die Kunst Der Renaissance", in: *Sinn Und Deutung in Der Bildenden Kunst*, ed. by Erwin Panofsky (Cologne: DuMont, 1978), p. 41.

of photographs is then classified according to external criteria such as time and place, authorship, publication and so on, and internal factors such as motifs, topics and arrangements.

In addition to the analysis of the series, the analysis and interpretation of individual photographs is of key importance for serial-iconographic photograph analysis. The idea is that, through the analysis of individual photographs, hypotheses can be generated that can then be validated or dismissed when applied to the whole series of images. Criteria for the selection of individual photographs are that the photograph exemplifies the series and is rich in information and meaning. Pilarczyk and Mietzner suggest four consecutive steps for the analysis of individual photographs. In the first step, the pre-iconographic description, the picture is described in minute detail, including illumination and spatial arrangement. After this, the second step of the analysis is the iconographic description. This means bringing together the results from step one with external knowledge about the photograph regarding its production, setting, function, use, accompanying text and symbolic elements. In step three – the iconographic interpretation – the question is what the author of the photograph wants to tell the viewer; that is, what is a first interpretation of the intended meaning of the photograph. In the last step, the iconological interpretation, 'aspects such as knowledge about context, arrangement, contradictions and unique features of the photograph, the role of the photographer and the photographed, the form and contents, are related to each other'.[611] In this step, an attempt is being made to develop an understanding of the image's 'deep meaning'. This means that all the information hitherto collected helps to uncover possible unintended meanings in the photograph.

For me, this set of methods provided the ideal starting point to engage with the photographs and also link them to my analysis of Gandhi's use of symbolism in Chapter 3. From the beginning, it was clear to me that the booklets contained a lot of information, and did not simply show 'the reality' of the Sevagram educational institutions. Unfortunately, the scope of a dissertation chapter is very limited and I am aware that I cannot fully do justice to the methodological challenges

[611] Mietzner & Pilarczyk, "Methods of Image Analysis", p. 124.

formulated by Pilarczyk and Mietzner.[612] However, inspired by their set of methods I can at least delve into some of the diverse layers of meaning and find some answers to the questions I have posed on the material.

6.2.1 The Sources: Photograph Booklets Published by HTS

As mentioned, the photographs that are the basis for my analysis are printed in two booklets published by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh in 1948 and in 1951. The first booklet, entitled *Nai Talim Sevagram*, contains forty photographs, first taken in 1947 by a professional photographer affiliated to the newspaper *Times of India*. These images were first published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* under the heading 'Better living for India'.[613] This means that they were used as part of a documentation about the educational activities in Sevagram produced by a journalist. In 1948, HTS published these pictures, with the permission of the *Times of India*, in a booklet, which included an introduction and short pieces of text below the photographs.[614] The photographs depict scenes of educational as well as agricultural activities, community life in the *ashram*, housing, health and hygiene, cooking and eating, sports, arts and music. The front cover of this first booklet looks like this:

[612] For a very interesting dissertation based on their methodology see: Jane Schuch, *Mosambik im pädagogischen Raum der DDR. Eine bildanalytische Studie zur 'Schule Der Freundschaft' in Staßfurt* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013).
[613] Written in the foreword of the booklet by Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).
[614] There is no evidence, but I assume that the authorship of the text in the booklets lies in the hands of HTS.

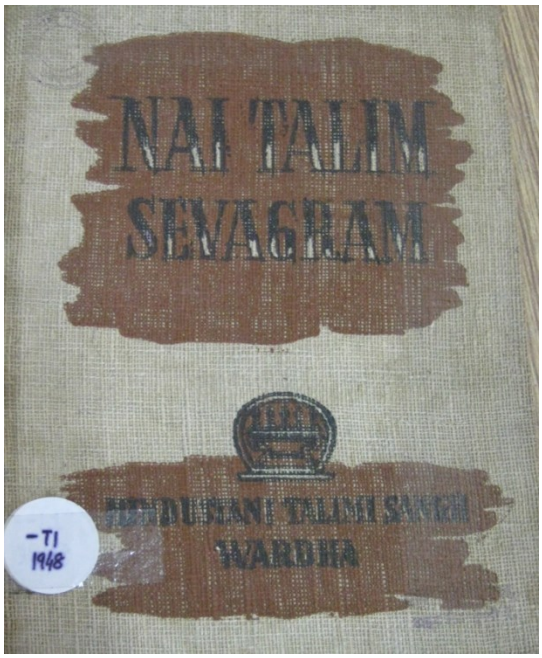

Figure 27: *Cover of the 1948 photograph booklet*[615]

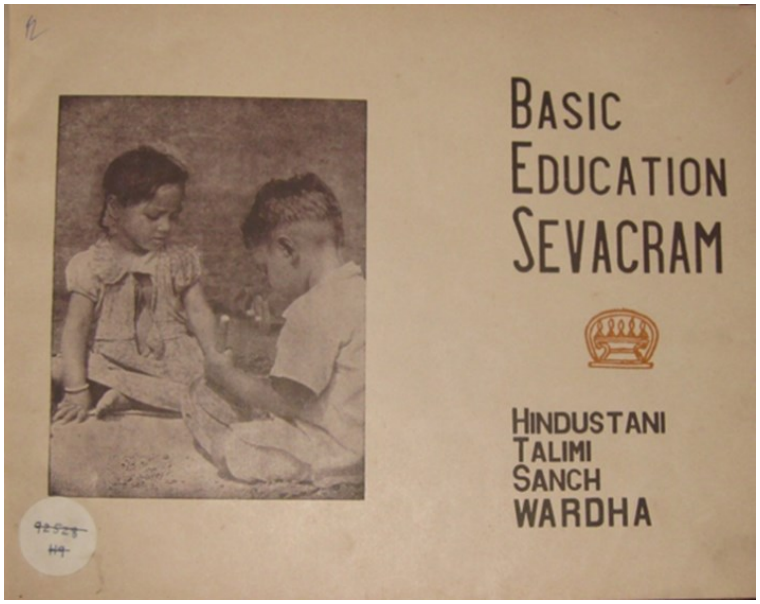

Figure 28: *Cover of the revised edition of the photograph booklet published in 1951*

As the photograph above shows, three years after the first publication of the booklet, HTS published a second version entitled *Basic Education Sevagram*[616],

[615] It is also interesting to note here that the booklet is covered in coarse *khadi* material

[616] I assume that the impression that the title actually is *Basic Education Sevacram* is due to the font selected for the booklet, in which the letter G appears to be a C. The word *Sangh* on the title page also appears to be *Sanch*.

containing fifty-one black-and-white photographs. [617] Twenty-one photographs are identical with the first booklet, which means that thirty additional photographs had been included. In total, the booklets contain seventy different photographs.[618] Both booklets include a preface and a short line of text below each photograph. While the text is intended to explain what is depicted in the photographs, it also, at times, reveals interesting elements of justification and argumentation, as will be further elaborated below. Unfortunately, there is no information about the authorship of the additional photographs in the second booklet. It is also not clear how many of the booklets were printed and how they were distributed, and so there can only be speculation about their intended use.

6.2.2 Visual Representation of the New Social Order and the Characteristics of the New Generation

One of my central questions for the analysis was how the photographs represented the ideas of the new social order and the new character to be formed through the educational processes of *Nai Talim*. As a first step, I therefore generated different series of photographs according to internal criteria such as motifs, topics and arrangements, in order to compile information related to these questions. In the following, I will give a brief overview of my findings and illustrate them with example photographs.

The new generation to be formed through the educational processes of *Nai Talim* is, first of all, represented as active, hard-working and cooperative in the photographs. In most of the images the people are *doing* something themselves rather than just sitting and listening, and they are also working *together*, representing the idea of cooperative work. Even in photographs depicting scenes of people listening to a teacher, they are involved in some kind of manual work, mainly textile production and agriculture, according to the ideas of the pedagogy of correlation (see explanation in 5.1). The facial expression in many pictures is not clearly visible. If visible, it is mostly concentrated and focused on the person's

[617] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim at Sevagram. An Account of the Institutions of 'Nai Talim' or 'Work-Centred Education' Conducted by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh at Sevagram*; *Basic Education Sevagram*.

[618] The booklet published in 1948 includes forty photographs, while the one published in 1951 has fifty-one, of which twenty-one are reprints from the 1948 booklet.

work. The following photograph is a good example of this and will be further analysed below.

Figure 29*: Healthy, congenial play-work*[619]

The value of discipline is represented through groups of people queuing or sitting in an orderly fashion. The people in the photographs are also represented as being concerned about health, hygiene and cleanliness. In the image below, for example, a group builds latrines.

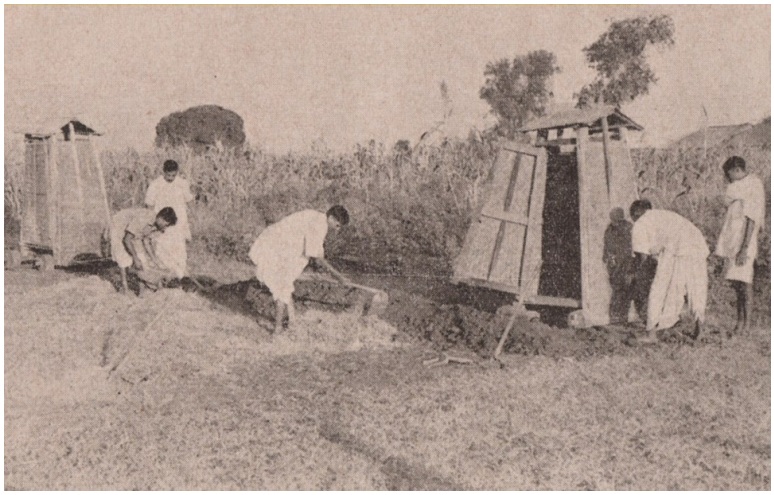

Figure 30: *Shifting of a movable trench latrine*[620]

[619] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).

As these photographs also show, the new social order represented in the booklets is based on Gandhi's vision of rural self-sufficient communities and simplicity. People depicted in the photographs mainly work in the open air. They wear simple clothing made of white *khadi* material. The educational spaces depicted are fields, floors inside or outside of simple buildings, and workshops with craft equipment. The image below, for example, shows a teaching situation in the weaving shed; and the heading states that the students of Post-Basic Education are learning to calculate the prices of cloth according to the amount of yarn needed.

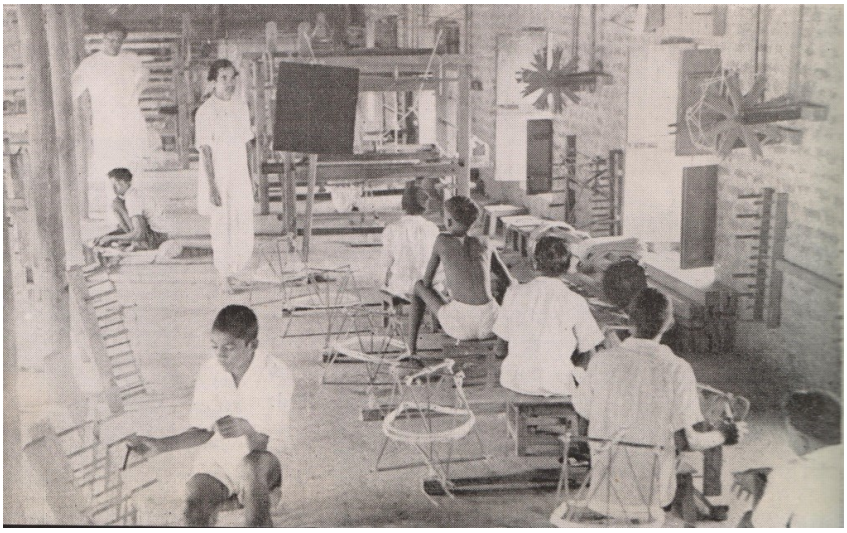

Figure 25: *Just before weaving*

In my analysis of the series of photographs, I was also interested in the representation of the student–teacher interaction. I found that quite different scenes of educational interaction are depicted. In some photographs, such as the one of the girls in the fields (Figure 29), or Figure 21 of the spinning children, the teacher is in the background and the students are the active ones. Then there are scenes where the teachers are giving a talk or showing the class something and the children are listening. However, as already mentioned, the idea of the pedagogy of correlation is represented in several photographs: while listening to the teacher, the students are active in manual work such as spinning or harvesting. Another point I was interested in was the representation of books as a symbol of the 'old type of education' in the booklets. The proclaimed goal of Basic Education was to

[620] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Basic Education Sevagram* (1951).

provide a combination of academic subjects and learn a 'productive trade' (village crafts, agriculture etc.). In fact, there is no book directly visible in any of the seventy photographs apart from two, which depict educational scenes involving books for writing in, not for reading.

6.2.3 Happy Cooperative Manual Work? Analysis of an Individual Photograph

Generating information from the corpus of photographs through the forming of series according to research questions is one important step in the analysis, according to Pilarczyk and Mietzner. Another key step of the serial-iconographic photograph analysis is the detailed analysis of individual photographs, in order to generate hypotheses that can then be examined and eventually proven by the corpus of sources. In the following, I present the results of the analysis of one photograph that I selected because I was fascinated by it from the first moment I saw it. It contains many different elements of *Nai Talim* and therefore provides a rich basis for interpretation.

Description of the Photograph

Figure 29: *Healthy, congenial play-work*[621]

[621] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).

The photograph shows ten children and a man in a field. They are all dressed in white *khadi* clothing. In the background on the right-hand side we can see some trees and simple buildings. The field, with its plants and the children with the adult, is the central element in the photograph. Six children in the centre of the picture have a concentrated look, with their bodies bent down towards the plants in the field. The girl at the right side has a basket in her arm and it appears that she is ready start harvesting. One girl of this group of children in the front looks as if she is smiling. The facial expression of the other children is not clearly visible, because they are not looking directly at the camera. Four children are not part of the group in the front. One boy looks as if he has just turned away to examine the plants on the left side in the picture. A girl behind him seems to be running away from the scene. On the right side of the teacher, further back and detached from the central group stand two children, who are also looking at the plants. All the children form a half circle around the man who stands erect in the centre. He is watching the largest group of children and it somehow looks as if he is hovering above them. This impression is further intensified due to the fact the picture is taken from above, looking down at the front group of children.

Iconographic Description: Authorship, Use, Topic, Symbolism and Associated Text

The photograph depicts a typical pedagogical scene of Basic Education: the cooperative agricultural work of harvesting cotton that is then used to manufacture textiles worn by the students. Regarding authorship and use of the photograph, it is important to note that the image was taken by the *Times of India* photographer in 1947, since it is printed in both booklets. The photograph contains one major symbolic element, namely *khadi* clothing. I have already presented several aspects of Gandhi's symbolism in Chapter 3 and discussed the fact he presented himself publicly as the ideal, rural self-sufficient worker, dressed in *khadi* and spinning his own cloth. I thereby laid out some of the meaning and functions of *charkha* (the spinning wheel) and *khadi* material/dress as central symbols in his political activism. Also, spinning and the production of *khadi* material were central elements in the educational processes of *Nai Talim*. Therefore, as the education model spread, thousands of children experienced

spinning and cloth production as part of their daily schooling experiences. As also becomes clear in the booklets, children's bodies were thereby utilized as a site for the construction of a new identity, aimed at fulfilling the claims of the envisioned new social order. This photograph is a key representation of the new generation intended to be part of this new social order. Through wearing *khadi* dress and performing the 'productive work' of cotton harvesting, and ultimately spinning and weaving, the children personify Gandhi's messages of the feasibility of his envisioned social order. The display of *khadi* dress as a symbol thereby includes a complex web of meanings, related to the symbolism constructed by Gandhi.

Of particular importance in the analysis of the photograph is the relationship to its accompanying text. In the 1948 booklet, the text below the photograph reads as follows:

> Healthy, Congenial Play-Work: Eleven-year-olds and twelve-year-olds picking cotton in the compound of the *Hindustani Talimi Sangh*. The Sangh claims that bright, clean, healthy youngsters like these, turned out after seven years of basic education, are not behind the pupils of the old primary schools in what are known as academic subjects, and are superior in knowledge relating to their lives and environment, including scientific knowledge and training in a productive craft. Seven years are considered to be the irreducible minimum essential from the point of view of self-sufficiency.[622]

In the 1951 booklet the text appears in an abbreviated form:

> Healthy, Congenial Play-Work: Eleven-year-olds and twelve-year-olds picking cotton in the compound of the *Hindustani Talimi Sangh*. This same cotton is cleaned, carded, spun and woven by these same youngsters; they not only know the processes, but learn the economics of clothing; they apply their arithmetic and their lessons in geography and history – and they clothe themselves.

Both texts present the idea of self-sufficiency and education through productive work (in this case the production of cotton clothing). The first text, however, sounds as if the authors want to justify the pedagogical concept and demonstrate its superiority. This is underlined by the statement that, compared with the 'old primary schools', the students of Basic Education learn 'academic subjects', but also acquire 'knowledge relating to their lives and environment', 'scientific knowledge' and 'training in a productive craft'. It also appears that the authors

[622] Hindustani Talimi Sangh, *Nai Talim Sevagram* (1948).

want to make a strong statement in favour of the seven years duration of Basic Education. The text in the 1951 booklet is shorter and does not sound as strong. It also refers to the pedagogical idea of 'correlated teaching'.

With keywords such as 'healthy', 'bright' and 'clean', the text suggests that the children depicted in the photograph are proof of the superiority of Basic Education. The text claims that children educated in the model school would become 'superior in knowledge relating to their lives and environment'. The connection between this text and the photograph is created through the group of children standing in the middle of the field and examining the plants. This represents the idea that the children are involved in the complete production process of *khadi*, starting with the agricultural activities of growing cotton. Also, the title, 'Healthy, Congenial Play-Work', creates a positive message. First of all, work is associated with health, that is, it is healthy to work. In interaction with the photograph, the relationship is made between work in the open air and health, that is, it is healthy to be outside and practise manual work. Secondly, the word 'congenial' implies that the children in the photograph find it pleasant to work. A relationship is created with regard to the girl in the middle, who is smiling while examining the plants. Thirdly, the word 'play-work' implies a relationship between play and work that can often be found in documents about BE, giving the impression that work is as pleasant and creative as play.

Interpretation of the Photographer's Intention

On the basis of the detailed examination of the photograph, I now present my interpretation of the photographer's intention. In my view, in its function to advertise the new education concept, the intended meaning of the photograph is to show that the concept actually works in reality. Several elements of the photograph 'prove' that Basic Education functions. First of all, judging from the facial expressions, at least one child is happy and the others look intent on their task. Secondly, the children work together and thereby represent the idea of a cooperative rural community. Also, the field is covered with a productive crop and the basket in the arm of one child implies that the children are harvesting cotton. Finally, the children wear *khadi* clothes, indicating that the concept is fully operable and that, after harvesting, they will spin the yarn for producing their own

clothing. Another intended meaning of the photograph is the presentation of the pedagogical idea of learning through activity and self-help. This is expressed in the photograph by the teacher standing behind the group of children. He is not depicted in a classic teaching situation, whereby the teacher would stand in front of the class and explain something. Rather than an omniscient figure, the concept of Basic Education envisioned the teacher as a helper of the children in their learning process.[623] The teacher is wearing the same type of clothing as the children, further strengthening the image of community and the idea that there should be no hierarchy, but that all should be on the same level. Also, the photograph displays the new type of personality envisioned for the formation of the new social order: hard-working, content with a simple life based on self-sufficiency, community-oriented, eager to learn and active.

Interpretation of the Implicit Meaning of the Photograph

Stepping away from this interpretation of the intended meaning and going back to the structure of the photograph helps to uncover its unintended and implicit meanings. The central element of the photograph is the triangle formed between the teacher standing in the background, and his focus on the group of six children in the foreground who are looking intently at the plants. The head of the teacher is thereby the highest elevated point of all persons in the photograph and he seems to hover above the children. Through this structure, the photograph creates an atmosphere of supervision and control. This is further strengthened by the impression that only the children within the focus of the teacher are actively fulfilling the intended goal of the pedagogical scene depicted here, namely the picking of the cotton. This is further strengthened by an element that the photographer could not control: the children running away from the scene or standing in the background. Contrary to the underlying assumption of the pedagogical concept of Basic Education, namely that children have a natural urge

[623] See the quote of Marjorie Sykes, mentioned earlier, where she described the pedagogical approach of *Nai Talim* and what the teachers would say to their students: 'Grow your food, pick your cotton, spin yarn and weave your clothes, cook your meals, plan and care for your own sanitary system, keep your surroundings clean and hygienic and your buildings in repair. Tackle each of these jobs as intelligently and scientifically as you can; find out what sort of knowledge and skill you need to do it efficiently, and find out how you can get it. When you have re-educated yourself in real knowledge by these means, you will be ready to do your bit in the education of the nation.' Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim*, p. 44.

to work and enjoy it, the photograph transmits a quite different message. Here, the impression is that the concept only worked under a regime of supervision and control. As one accompanying text to another photograph of children working in a field in the 1951 booklet reveals, this control was also wielded on the more subtle level of group pressure: '… the children know that they are working for the community and if they do not, they and the community will have to go without necessities'.[624] Furthermore, there is a contradiction between the text and the photograph. The text claims that the children are picking cotton in the field. However, the children are only looking at the plants. It only *seems* as if they want to harvest the crop. In fact, the basket is empty and the question arises: Is there anything to harvest at all? In this perspective, the empty basket transmits an atmosphere of scantiness and points to the difficulties in putting the pedagogical ideas of self-sufficiency into practice.

According to the methodological steps in the serial-iconographic photograph analysis, these results, gained from an analysis of an individual photograph and the subsequent hypotheses generated (such as 'the pedagogy of *Nai Talim* was strongly connected to supervision and control by the teachers' or 'the idea of self-sufficiency of the educational institutions was difficult to practise'), would then be taken back to the corpus of photographs and tested. As I have pointed out earlier, this is beyond the scope of this chapter and therefore I only mention the potential of applying this set of methods to photograph sources of *Nai Talim*.

To conclude, I found that visual sources on the implementation of the pedagogical ideas of *Nai Talim* are a very rich source of information and have not hitherto, to my knowledge, been included in research. Due to the limited scope of this dissertation I could only scratch at the surface of the possibilities of a detailed analysis of the photographs. However, as this chapter shows, there is a lot of potential in such sources to gain insights on two levels: first, the photographs contain information about pedagogical programmes and spaces in Sevagram that go far beyond information that can be derived from text sources. Secondly, on a representational level the booklets give insights into the intended presentation of the education concept by HTS. The institution produced the booklets in order to

[624] This can be found on the same page as the photograph entitled "Healthy Congenial Play-Work" in the 1951 booklet.

show that the envisioned new education worked, and that the ideas of the formation of a new generation prepared to bring about a radical transformation of society could be a reality. Thereby, the photographs display elements of Gandhi's rich symbolism such as *charkha* or *khadi*, presented in Chapter 3. That this symbolism was used also in the realm of education and years after his death is, for me, a sign of the strength of the symbolic world of meaning that he constructed. However, in my view, the analysis of the booklets brought to light not only to what extent 'happy' cooperative work was part of *Nai Talim*, but also critical aspects, such as disciplinary regimes, the utilization of children's bodies as a site of the construction of a new identity and a manifestation of gender roles, and, to a certain extent also, a kind of aestheticization of child labour.

Concluding Remarks

In this dissertation I have traced the historical development of Gandhi's educational ideas and analysed different aspects of the history of what later became known as Basic Education or *Nai Talim*. I have reconstructed Gandhi's vision primarily based on his own writings and reflections and was thereby interested in how his vision was embedded in his critique of British colonial rule and in the connection he made between education and social reconstruction. Furthermore, I have dealt with his understanding of manual labour in society and its relationship with the education process. Analysing key ideas and metaphors in his educational thought, I looked at his sources of inspiration, his use of symbolism and the visual in his self-presentation and mass mobilization and how elements of these symbolic worlds of meaning also became part of education programmes. Finally, I considered some of the diverse attempts of the institutionalization of *Nai Talim*, their inherent contradictions and the criticism they generated.

The analysis began with the debates on the destructive effects of colonial rule in the Indian independence movement and, based on this critique, the search for ideas for social and economic development models for an independent India. I pointed to the fact that issues addressed by Gandhi had been already discussed before he entered the political arena in India. With regard to the economic situation for example, the earlier debates emphasized that the unequal colonial trade relations caused a 'drain of wealth' from colony to metropole and hence led to impoverishment, especially of rural India. Furthermore, before Gandhi's 'epiphany' about the revival of *khadi* and *charkha*, the decline of Indian textile production due to a massive influx of industrially manufactured British textiles was critically debated, and here I also pointed to connections between Gandhi's suggestions for overcoming the effects of colonization and political activism connected to the *Swadeshi* Movement in Bengal. Additionally, and partly related to the debates about economic issues, lively controversies were also taking place in the independence movement on the future of education. Foreshadowing Gandhi later on, critical voices were raised by different actors and groups regarding the

over-emphasis on rote-learning and an education that was primarily oriented towards university entrance examinations, with vernacular languages neglected and a lack or even denial by the colonial government of 'practical' elements such as technical and vocational education.

After sketching the context in which Gandhi's ideas on economic and educational reform were developed and received, I then turned to an examination of major ideas, metaphors and imaginations that were central to his thought on social development, the new social order he envisioned and called *sarvodaya*, and the role of education therein. Of special importance here was Gandhi's emphasis on national self-determination, connected to his ideas of *swaraj* (self-rule) and economic self-sufficiency and his idea of the superiority of rural self-sufficient life over urbanization and industrialization. I showed how Gandhi demarcated his ideas as 'Indian' in an attempt at emancipation from 'Western' frameworks of thought. Connected to this, he recognized the importance of individual spiritual and moral transformation towards simplicity, charity and self-discipline, which were also important elements in the formation of his 'pedagogy of manual work'. He thereby criticized the perceived inferiority of manual work, including rural crafts, and argued that 'dignified' manual work would contribute to individual transformation as well as social reform, based on the idea of welfare of all. He also saw the advantage that education in combination with production – and thereby the economic self-sufficiency of schools – would contribute to independence from outside financing, which he saw as an important solution when educational funding was lacking. During my analysis of these processes in the formation of important elements of his educational thought, I also pointed to diverse sources of inspiration and international connections, such as, for example, the Progressive Education Movement with its key idea of holistic education based on 'the head, heart and hand'. Furthermore, I hinted at fields of critique, such as the accusation of paternalism in Dalit politics.

Moving on to the analysis of Gandhi's symbolism, I found that a study of the realm of the visual and symbolic is key to understanding his success in becoming an (or even *the*) icon of the Indian independence movement. As detailed, Gandhi used different elements of symbolism as well as his public self-representation as embodiment of his vision of the perfect and disciplined rural self-sufficient

manual worker and the ideal member of his envisioned social order based on decentralized village communities. I traced Gandhi's own metamorphosis regarding his clothing style and delved into aspects of deciphering the symbolism of *charkha* and *khadi*, such as, for example, their connection to earlier tropes on the 'salvaging' of the lost craft of manual textile production. The analysis of how Gandhi connected to such imaginations and also created new meaning for these symbols revealed his mastering of 'public relations', of communication strategies and mass mobilization for his cause. This culminated in the fact that on some occasions he appeared in silence before a crowd, simply spinning, and people came to see him, to get his *darshan*.

Institutional developments based on Gandhi's education ideas were at the heart of Chapters 4 and 5. Gandhi himself was committed to put his ideas into practice. But his attempt to educate his own children and running the schools in his two rural settlements in South Africa proved to be challenging undertakings, also with respect to his proclaimed ideal of self-sufficiency, the balance between the 'practical' and 'academic' elements, and the disciplining of the children in line with his ideas on non-violence. However, he continued his efforts after his return to India and expanded his educational activities, especially during the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s, when the boycott of official education institutions became a sign of opposition to colonial rule, with the opening of the Gujarat National School and Gujarat Vidyapith. At that time spinning and *khadi* production had become a central part of his Constructive Programme and his vision of social reform was contested, as the example of Nehru showed.

Nevertheless, at a political level Gandhi's continuous educational efforts finally proved to be successful by 1937, when the Wardha Scheme based on his ideas was acknowledged by the INC as their model of 'national education' to be followed in their education policy at a provincial level. In tracing the historical developments around these political decisions, I paid particular attention to the controversy over Gandhi's proclaimed goal that the schools should be economically self-sufficient (what he in 1937 called the 'acid test' of the reality of his education concept) and the danger seen by the critics that this would lead to the exploitation of children. During the further institutionalization processes, this gradually led to compromises regarding Gandhi's rather radical ideas. His

'pedagogy of manual work' was thereby increasingly transformed into a 'pedagogization of manual work': craft work was thus more and more seen as a pedagogical tool which was beneficial to the development of children's minds and bodies and not so much as a means to finance the schools. I showed, however, that despite the strong criticism and the factual dilution of his original ideas, Gandhi remained convinced by his ideas and continued until his death to try to convince those working in the field of *Nai Talim* to practise economic self-sufficiency in the institutions. With regard to the institutionalization processes and the practical functioning of the schools, I also presented the results of my analysis of the available materials on the Hindustani Talimi Sangh (HTS), the body to coordinate the further development and spread of Basic Education / *Nai Talim*, and an institution that has so far not been a particular focus in research on the history of *Nai Talim*.

Finally, in the final chapter I portrayed Sevagram Ashram and its education institutions as *the* model community designed to represent how Gandhi's ideas could be practised in everyday life. Based partly on a collection of photographs, I described the model institutions in operation there after 1937 and also highlighted the expansion of the education schemes, following Gandhi's vision of 1944, and the establishment of a 'post-basic' school, specializing in rural craft training and geared towards economic self-sufficiency. In the last part of the dissertation I also delved into detailed photograph analysis and pointed to the potentials of such analysis for research in the history of education.

It now remains to draw some more general conclusions from my research and to point to interesting possible fields of further study. This dissertation is based only on English-speaking materials primarily centred on Gandhi's perspective and on those of institutions, conferences and so on. For a deeper understanding of the history of *Nai Talim*, however, it would be important to include other perspectives as well, such as by those primarily targeted by Gandhi's programmes, namely the rural poor and landless population, and how they perceived the new education institutions. The quotation I found by a village mother from Sevagram, claiming that she did not want to send their children to *Nai Talim* institutions because she did not want them to remain agricultural labourers, points to such diverging

perspectives in this regard, and to my knowledge there is a lack of social history research around *Nai Talim* institutions.

The scope of this dissertation is also limited to Gandhi's lifetime, although I have briefly pointed to some of the developments after Gandhi's death, which would certainly merit further attention. There is, to my knowledge, a serious lack of research concerning Gandhi's legacy in the realm of Indian education policy after the formal end of British colonization. It would therefore be very interesting to find out how elements of his concepts were or were not incorporated into the Nehruvian model of development, what role *Nai Talim* played in the decades after independence, whether the model was taken up in other areas such as, for example, international development organizations, and what is still left of it today. In my view such research could be a valuable contribution to the academic debate on the history of development.[625]

As already mentioned, in many of the available writings on Gandhi's *Nai Talim*, I encountered the problem of nationalist interpretation. In my research I therefore tried to widen my view beyond the Indian context and applied a 'connected history' perspective to the materials on the history of *Nai Talim*. This helped me to reveal some aspects of the interconnectedness of Gandhi's thought within a complex web of inter- and transnational flows of educational ideas. In this regard, I pointed to several actors who were involved in such flows of ideas that would be worth following up in future research, such as, for example, the Progressive Education Movement, Zakir Husain, E.W. and Asha Devi Aryanayakam, Anne Marie Petersen and Marjorie Sykes. With this wider perspective on the social context of *Nai Talim* in mind, and especially its institutionalization after 1937, I also tried to avoid the danger of hagiographic writing, a phenomenon that can be frequently seen in writings on Gandhi. For the historical developments after 1937 I therefore showed that Gandhi became less active on the 'practical stage' of the institutionalization processes, while a multiplicity of different actors, in what could also be called the Basic Education Movement, played very different roles in the spread of Gandhi's ideas and their implementation on the ground. Here, too, an analysis of relevant non-English speaking materials would be beneficial.

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[625] Rist, Gilbert. *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. (London: Zed Books, 2006).

Last but not least, in addition to studying the formation of Gandhi's education ideas and the related institutionalization processes based on written materials, I expanded my perspective to the level of the visual and symbolic, a perspective hitherto not included in research on *Nai Talim*. I thereby showed how Gandhi's public self-presentation was an important part in his mass mobilization and the communication of his messages to a wide audience. In my analysis of a photograph collection I pointed to the potentials of serial-iconographic photograph analysis for working with photographs in historical research on education, and I feel that extending this would be fruitful, especially in future research on *Nai Talim*.

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Versicherung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation selbständig verfasst und alle benutzten Hilfsmittel und Hilfen angegeben habe.

Berlin, den 1. April 2015

Simone Holzwarth