

Kumar, Ajay

## Swami Vivekananda and Paulo Freire as transformative world educators

*ZEP : Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* 48 (2025) 2, S. 10-14



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Kumar, Ajay: Swami Vivekananda and Paulo Freire as transformative world educators - In: ZEP : Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik 48 (2025) 2, S. 10-14 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-340149 - DOI: 10.25656/01:34014; 10.20377/zep-26

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-340149>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:34014>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:

# ZEP

Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung  
und Entwicklungspädagogik

"Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik e.V."

<https://www.uni-bamberg.de/allgpaed/zep/profil>

### Nutzungsbedingungen

Dieses Dokument steht unter folgender Creative Commons-Lizenz:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de> - Sie dürfen das Werk bzw. den Inhalt vervielfältigen, verbreiten und öffentlich zugänglich machen sowie Abwandlungen und Bearbeitungen des Werkes bzw. Inhaltes anfertigen, solange Sie den Namen des Autors/Rechteinhabers in der von ihm festgelegten Weise nennen. Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

### Terms of use

This document is published under following Creative Commons-License:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en> - You may copy, distribute and render this document accessible, make adaptations of this work or its contents accessible to the public as long as you attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor. By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.



### Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS  
DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation  
Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung  
E-Mail: [pedocs@dipf.de](mailto:pedocs@dipf.de)  
Internet: [www.pedocs.de](http://www.pedocs.de)

Mitglied der

  
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Ajay Kumar

## Swami Vivekananda and Paulo Freire as Transformative World Educators

### Abstract

This paper critically examines the educational thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and Paulo Freire as transformative forces in global education, exploring their relevance and limitations within their ideas for contemporary educational systems. Both thinkers can be seen as counter-hegemonic intellectuals, who challenged colonial and capitalist epistemologies, e.g. Vivekananda's Vedantic universalism and Freire's critical pedagogy. While the first is known for his enchantment with Vedantic philosophy, his thoughts are less explicit in terms of an educational theory. However, his ideas on moral, spiritual, and character development offer rich insights into transformative education for the downtrodden masses. Freire, on the other hand, is internationally well-known for his work on 'critical pedagogy', which highlights liberation of the oppressed masses through education. Despite their shared goal of emancipation of the masses, both thinkers' reliance on universalist assumptions and foundationalist tendencies unwittingly may maintain the very power structures they seek to deconstruct. This paper proposes an innovative, additional (supplementary) pedagogical framework, called as 'border pedagogy', which, tries to synthesize the insights of Vivekananda and Freire to offer a transformative theoretical model for education for relevance in the contemporary global context.

Schlüsselworte: *Freire, Critical pedagogy, Vivekananda, Spiritual Education (Inner Development), Border Pedagogy, Transformative Education, Reform and Emancipative Education*

### Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag werden die pädagogischen Gedanken von Swami Vivekananda und Paulo Freire als transformative Kräfte einer globalen Bildung kritisch untersucht und ihre Relevanz und Grenzen innerhalb ihrer Ideen für heutige Bildungssysteme erforscht. Beide Denker können als gegenhegemoniale Intellektuelle betrachtet werden, die koloniale und kapitalistische Epistemologien herausforderten, z. B. Vivekanandas vedantischen Universalismus und Freires kritische Pädagogik. Während Vivekananda für seine Begeisterung der vedantischen Philosophie bekannt ist, sind seine Gedanken im Hinblick auf eine Bildungstheorie weniger explizit. Seine Ideen zur moralischen, spirituellen und charakterlichen Entwicklung bieten jedoch reichhaltige Einblicke in eine trans-

formative Bildung für die unterdrückten Massen. Freire hingegen ist international bekannt für seine Arbeit an der „kritischen Pädagogik“, die die Befreiung der unterdrückten Massen durch Bildung in den Mittelpunkt stellt. Trotz ihres gemeinsamen Ziels, die Massen zu emanzipieren, können beide Denker, die sich auf universalistische Annahmen und fundamentalistische Tendenzen stützen, unwissentlich genau die Machtstrukturen aufrechterhalten, die sie zu dekonstruieren versuchen. In diesem Beitrag wird ein innovativer, zusätzlicher (ergänzender) pädagogischer Rahmen vorgeschlagen, der als „Grenzpädagogik“ bezeichnet werden kann und der versucht, die Einsichten von Vivekananda und Freire zu synthetisieren, um ein transformatives theoretisches Modell für Bildung anzubieten, das im zeitgenössischen globalen Kontext relevant ist.

Schlüsselworte: *Freire, Grenzpädagogik, Vivekananda, transformative Bildung, Reform und emanzipative Bildung*

### Introduction

In the era of neoliberal globalization, re-emerging nationalisms, and persistent epistemic violence, the legacies of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and Paulo Freire (1921–1997) as transformative educators call for a critical reassessment. Vivekananda, a Vedantic philosopher and founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, saw education as a dual force for spiritual and social emancipation of the masses, interweaving personal transformation with societal progress. Similarly, Freire, the Brazilian theorist of critical pedagogy, envisaged education as a dialogic praxis to liberate the oppressed masses from systemic injustices. Though revolutionary in their respective historical and cultural contexts, both thinkers' frameworks are marked by Universalist tendencies and modernist assumptions that need re-evaluation in light of the complexities of contemporary global education and reform of global practices in education. To address these limitations, this paper introduces a theoretical model of "border pedagogy" widely used by Henry Giroux, drawing on Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space" and Michel Foucault's power-knowledge nexus, highlights 'multiplicity', 'contingency', and 'agency' in educational provisioning. This pedagogical approach would help in transcending static identities and ethnocentric knowledge systems, by blending Vivekananda's spiritual vision with Freire's critique of oppression to construct a more dynamic, inclusive model for a more universalized, global education.

### Swami Vivekananda: Spiritual Education and Global Education

Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) occupies a critical position within the intellectual and spiritual revival in 19th-century India. A staunch advocate of both human divinity and dignity, Vivekananda reimagined education as a transformative process rather than a mere act of accumulation of information and dry (soulless) knowledge. His vision of education extended beyond the utilitarian, instrumental construct, positioning it as a means of awakening of the infinite, that is, the divine potential inherent within each and every individual. Rooted deeply in Advaita Vedanta, Vivekananda's pedagogical approach transcended limitations and boundaries of conventional education. He did not merely view education as a process of cognitive or intellectual growth but as a medium for spiritual awakening and self-realization. By integrating Vedantic non-dualism and universal humanism with ethical rigor, he proposed a holistic educational framework that aimed to cultivate and maximize the spiritual, intellectual, and moral qualities of human beings. For Vivekananda, the purpose of education is not fixed but should evolve according to the values and needs of individuals and specific society.

#### *Perfection As Education*

In his most widely known statement that, “education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man” (CW<sup>1</sup>, Vol. 4, p. 358), Vivekananda concretized his belief that knowledge is divinely present within each individual. The concept of “manifestation” in Vivekananda's thoughts indicates spontaneous growth in individuals, when all obstacles and ignorance are removed. It implies that knowledge does not need to be constructed externally; rather it needs to be only uncovered and/or discovered from within. Learning is the process, which makes the hidden ability of the learner's manifest. The phrase ‘already in man’ refers to human beings' potential, the range of abilities and talents (known or unknown) that human beings are born with. Vivekananda stated that “knowledge is inherent in man; no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside... What a man ‘learns’ is really what he ‘discovers’ by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge” (CW, Vol. 1, p. 28). Here, Vivekananda draws upon the example of Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation, highlighting how external suggestions, such as the falling of an apple, trigger the unveiling of knowledge already latent within the individual (CW, Vol. 1, p. 28). According to Vivekananda, all knowledge, whether secular or spiritual, is inherent in the human mind. Education, in his view, is both an uncovering and discovering process (vidya), where ignorance (avidya) serves as the primary obstacle in finding this inner knowledge. This view aligns with the Vedantic philosophy, where knowledge is intrinsic to human beings, and the educator's role is to eliminate ignorance and ignite the individual agency in order to recognize and realize their own divine potential. Vivekananda's notion of ‘perfection’ in education unfolds in two distinct layers: metaphysical and empirical. Metaphysically, perfection signifies the realization of the soul's divine nature, the transcendence from ignorance, and liberation from fear, inferiority and suffering. On a practical level, perfection involves the development of the individual's ability and skills to navigate and address real-world challenges with a cultivated self-discipline akin to religious and meditative practices. This dual conceptualization of perfection

aligns with Vivekananda's broader educational vision, which stresses the development of intellectual, moral and spiritual faculties. He once stated that “real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs” (CW, Vol. 8, pp. 147–148), emphasizing education's role in fostering self-reliance and moral integrity. Education, according to Vivekananda, must be holistic and integrative, refining the intellect, cultivating emotional depth, and strengthening moral values. This vision embraces both para vidya (spiritual knowledge) and apara vidya (secular knowledge), creating a continuum where secular learning nurtures the material well-being of individuals, while spiritual wisdom guides them toward ultimate liberation. Vivekananda's non-dualistic perspective challenges the binary oppositions that have dominated Western thought, such as the separation between ‘individual’ and ‘society,’ ‘reason’ and ‘nature,’ and ‘self’ and ‘other.’ His vision seeks the unity of the ‘individual’ with the ‘collective,’ and the ‘material’ with the ‘spiritual,’ questioning colonial epistemologies that privilege empirical knowledge and everyday science at the expense of spiritual insight. In Vivekananda's philosophy, according to the author of this paper, spiritualism appears to have two interconnected connotations: first, the pure, meditative connection with the divine self, and second, a passionate, practical yet contemplative discipline that resembles meditative practice, dedicated to the cultivation of knowledge and mastery in one's chosen vocation.

#### *Philosophical and Spiritual Basis*

At the core of Vivekananda's educational philosophy lies his non-dualistic worldview, drawn from Advaita Vedanta, which underscores the unity between the individual (Atman) and universal consciousness (Brahman). As he stated, “The Atman is pure knowledge itself ... You are already that; the only thing is to realize it” (CW, Vol. 2, p. 296), where he affirmed the inherent divinity of every human being. Vivekananda posited that human beings are composed of five sheaths: the physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual, and the blissful. While modern education typically addresses the first four, it largely neglects the fifth, i.e. the sheath of bliss, which consists of inner, spiritual strength and wisdom. The fifth sheath is the reservoir of bliss, knowledge and strength (something more than ‘self-actualization’ in terms of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs), where the fifth sheath activates all other sheaths. The fifth sheath remains largely untapped by modern, contemporary education. True education, for Vivekananda, requires igniting this fifth sheath through spiritual knowledge and wisdom, enabling the individual to transcend material limitations and realize their higher potential. This realization, he argued, transforms a mere sensuous being into a truly human being, imbued with virtues such as unselfishness, empathy, spiritual peace, and inner strength. Vivekananda viewed religion as the “innermost core of education” (CW, Vol. 3, p. 182; Vol. 5, p. 231). However, by ‘religion,’ he did not refer to any specific religious tradition or practice. Instead, he emphasized the significance of eternal principles that transcend individual religions; principles that resonate with people's heart (not fear) and have the potential to bring about meaningful change in both individuals and society. Vivekananda rejected dogmatic forms of religion. Instead he advocated a form of true religion that cultivates mental strength and broadens one's perspective. On a global scale, for Vivekananda, religion was synonymous with the science of spirituality.

### *Education as Self-directed Inner Development*

Further, Vivekananda saw the educator not as a mere dispenser of knowledge but as a facilitator of self-discovery among the students. He provocatively stated: “No one can teach anybody... The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching” (CW, Vol. 1, p. 124). Vivekananda, with remarkable foresight, anticipated modern constructivist approaches, enriching them with a profound spiritual ethos. For him, the teacher’s role is not to impart external knowledge but to guide the learner towards self-discovery and self-awareness, helping them to unlock the divine potential already present within them. To illustrate this, Vivekananda wrote, “No one was ever really taught by another. Each of us has to teach himself. The external teacher offers only the suggestion” (CW, Vol. 1, p. 93). This fundamentally alters the teacher-student dynamic, where learning is seen as an internal, self-directed and active process. Vivekananda’s pedagogical praxis is further illustrated through his insights on individual development. “You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. The plant develops its own nature” (CW, Vol. 5, p. 410), he remarked, emphasizing the organic nature of human growth. His assertion that “the child educates itself” (CW, Vol. 4, p. 55), highlights the importance of self-directed learning in his educational model. Teachers, according to Vivekananda, must adapt their methods to meet the individual needs of students, guiding them where they stand and pushing them forward. “Take everyone where he stands and push him forward” (CW, Vol. 7, pp. 170–171), he instructed, emphasizing individualized and responsive teaching methods. Vivekananda’s educational vision also emphasizes the necessity of personal freedom as a precursor to growth. In one of his statements, he declared, “Liberty is the first condition of growth... Who are you to assume that you know everything? How dare you think that you have the right over God?” (CW, Vol. 3, p. 246). For him, the individual must be free to solve their own problems, guided not by external intervention, but by their own divine wisdom. This resonates deeply with his broader vision of education as lifelong learning, as a life-building, character-making process that goes beyond mere absorption of information. As he famously stated, “Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas” (CW, Vol. 3, p. 302).

### *Transformative Paths to GCED*

Vivekananda placed particular emphasis on ‘concentration’ as the essence of education, prioritizing mental and moral discipline over the accumulation of facts. “The very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts” (CW, Vol. 6, p. 38), he asserted. In Vivekananda’s view, ‘concentration’ is not just focus but a transformative practice, akin to meditation, that enables access to higher consciousness. This mental and moral discipline fosters deeper understanding, creativity, and self-realization, providing a counterpoint to contemporary education models that prioritize rote memorization over cognitive and spiritual development. Vivekananda’s approach to education was holistic, engaging the full spectrum of human potential, including physical, intellectual, and spiritual. Once he said: “You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita” (CW, Vol. 3, p. 242), underscoring the importance of personal aptitude and need-

based education for a chosen vocation as part of fulfilling growth. His educational philosophy integrates body, mind, and spirit into a transformative, embodied learning process that emphasizes self-development through both intellectual rigor and discipline akin to religious and meditative practices. Moreover, Vivekananda’s call for the convergence of science and spirituality resonates with contemporary interdisciplinary frameworks. He predicted that “science and religion will meet and shake hands” (CW, Vol. 2, p. 140), envisioning a future where both these domains would complement each other rather than compete. His insistence on the interplay between empirical knowledge and spiritual wisdom challenges modern educational models that often separate these realms, advocating instead for a more holistic and integrated approach to learning. In the context of the 21st century, Vivekananda’s educational philosophy remains highly relevant, particularly in addressing global challenges such as sustainability, social justice for masses, and the promotion of global citizenship and global education. His emphasis on ethical responsibility, compassion, and environmental stewardship aligns with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, which calls for education that fosters global citizenship and intercultural respect. At the same time, his insistence on a comprehensive educational paradigm that merges Eastern spirituality with Western rationalism provides a decolonial stance that seeks to reclaim cultural autonomy. However, some critics, such as Gayatri Spivak, have questioned Vivekananda’s universalism, suggesting that it may obscure the specificities of colonized identities and experiences. Nonetheless, his vision of education as a transformative force remains an enduring legacy, capable of shaping the future of global education and the interconnected world we navigate today.

### **Paulo Freire’s Critical Pedagogy – Education as Praxis of Freedom**

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) stands as a monumental figure in global educational thought, reshaping the very role of education in societies plagued by systemic oppression, inequality, and dehumanization. His groundbreaking work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) extends beyond a critique of traditional educational systems; his is a call to action, for an education that dismantles oppressive structures and challenges the roots of inequality in society. For Freire, education transcends the passive transmission of knowledge. It is, instead, an active, transformative praxis, a dialogue and trust-based co-creative relationship between the teacher and the student aimed at liberation. He envisioned a dialogical relationship between the teacher and the student that could confront entrenched hierarchical and dehumanizing social relations, establishing a collaborative space for reflection, dialogue and change, both at individual and societal levels.

### *Beyond Banking Education: Dialogue and Dialogical Education*

At the core of Paulo Freire’s pedagogy lies his rejection of the “banking model” of education, where students are seen as ‘empty vessels’ for impersonal knowledge, passively receiving information. According to him, the banking model of education strips individuals of their ‘agency’ and hinders their capacity for critical engagement with the world. In sharp contrast, he



proposed “problem-posing” education consisting of a dialogical process that empowers students to question, critique, and actively engage with the realities surrounding them. Knowledge, within the problem-posing education, is not a static commodity but a shared, evolving creation. Education, thus, becomes a liberating act in which the oppressed recognize their everyday condition and begin to confront and transform it through collective, conscious action. This dynamic process of critical engagement allows learners to transcend mere knowledge accumulation and embrace a transformative understanding of themselves and the world. Freire’s pedagogical vision is grounded in a profound ontological understanding of human beings, a perspective that resonates with Vivekananda’s ideas on human potential. Both Vivekananda and Freire view humans as inherently incomplete, and that only through education, they come to realize their potential for self-actualization. The Freirean dialectical process mirrors Hegelian notions of “becoming”, where identity is continually shaped through interaction with the world. Education, for Freire, is not merely about acquiring information but about humanization, which transforms individuals from passive ‘objects of history’ into active ‘subjects’ capable of shaping their own destinies. At its core, Freire’s pedagogy fosters critical consciousness, enabling individuals to reshape their reality and actively participate in the collective struggle for liberation.

#### *Transformative Education: Beyond Eurocentric Enlightenment*

Freire’s concept of freedom, deeply rooted in existentialist philosophy, draws on thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, who argue that true freedom is realized when individuals transcend external, empirical limitations. For Freire, existential freedom arises when individuals recognize their incompleteness and embrace the possibility of transformation, both at the personal and collective levels. Education, in this context, becomes a continuous process of reflection and action, where critical awareness empowers individuals, particularly the oppressed, to challenge the forces (hindrances) that limit their humanity. This vision of education as an active force for transformation parallels Vivekananda’s emphasis on self-realization and the liberation of the human spirit from societal and epistemic constraints. Freire’s critique of traditional education extends to a broader analysis of hegemonic power structures that dehumanize individuals, reducing them to mere commodities within capitalist and colonial systems. He challenges Western educational models, which, shaped by Eurocentric and Enlightenment ideals, treat knowledge as a static, universal truth imposed from the ‘above’. These models marginalize indigenous knowledge and dismiss the lived experiences of the oppressed masses. In sharp contrast, Freire’s pedagogy centers on dialogue, people’s lived experiences, and cultural identity. Knowledge, within Freire’s framework, is not a commodity to be transferred, but a collaborative process constructed through and built upon shared experiences of learners, particularly those from the marginalized communities. Education, in this way, becomes both a process and platform for reclaiming cultural identity and resisting cultural erasure. Both Vivekananda and Freire see education as a means not only for individual empowerment but also for broader societal transformation, wherein

the oppressed can reclaim agency and challenge their limiting, oppressive systems.

#### *Praxis: Reflection and Action as Transformative Paths to GCED*

Central to Freire’s vision is the notion of ‘praxis’, the dialectical interplay between ‘reflection’ and ‘action’. Praxis, for Freire, is the process through which individuals and societies transform themselves and the world. It is a continuous, recursive cycle where critical reflection leads to transformative action, and action in turn deepens the process of reflection. In this sense, Freire’s pedagogy extends beyond theory into practical, real-world transformation. His ideas resonate powerfully with contemporary global educational frameworks, particularly the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, which advocates for education that promotes global education and citizenship, intercultural understanding, and sustainable development. Freire’s pedagogical approach is not just an abstract theoretical model but also a call for education to become a tool of justice, human flourishing, and the reclamation of human dignity through its own ‘agency’.

Freire’s impact continues to be alive and kicking in contemporary educational discourse. Scholars such as Antonia Darder (2017) continue to champion his pedagogical approach, highlighting its relevance in resisting the commodification of education under neoliberal regimes that seek to transform students into passive consumers. However, Freire’s pedagogy is not without its critiques, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Scholars like Henry Giroux (2009) argue that while Freire’s ideas challenge traditional power structures, they do not fully account for the complexities of postcolonial realities, especially the lingering effects of colonialism within global educational systems. Although Freire critiques Western educational hegemony, the applicability of his pedagogy in postcolonial contexts remains contested, particularly in its engagement with non-Western epistemologies and indigenous knowledge systems. Thus, the challenge persists to adapt his ideas to the multiplicity of global experiences, ensuring his pedagogy remains responsive to the diverse cultural and historical realities of contemporary learners.

#### **Commonalities and Limitations**

Swami Vivekananda and Paulo Freire, though emerging from distinct cultural and historical contexts, i.e. Vivekananda from colonial India in the late 19th century and Freire from postcolonial Brazil in the mid-20th century, shared a deep commitment to transformative education rooted in resistance to systemic injustice and a deep respect for human nature and dignity. Despite the temporal and geographical divide, both thinkers developed educational frameworks that aim to empower the marginalized, foster social justice, and promote an education that nurtures holistic human flourishing. Their pedagogies converge around several critical themes: opposition to colonialism, Western materialism, and capitalist individualism and consumerism, alongside an advocacy for education that cultivates moral consciousness, collective liberation, and spiritual growth. At the heart of both Vivekananda’s and Freire’s educational visions is a recognition of the interconnectedness of the human experience. Both reject the dualities that traditionally

separate intellect from morality, individual from collective, and spirit from matter. Vivekananda's concept of "man-making education" embodies this holistic approach, emphasizing the integration of spiritual, intellectual, and moral development. Similarly, Freire's pedagogy focuses on developing critical consciousness, which empowers learners to analyze, critique and transform the world. For both educators, education is not just a method; it is a revolutionary force aimed at overcoming oppression and enabling societal change. However, Vivekananda's Universalist Vedantic philosophy appears to be problematic in modern, pluralistic societies where identities are shaped by complex, intersecting histories and lived experiences. Scholars such as Homi Bhabha (1994) argue that identities are fluid and situated within 'in-between' spaces, suggesting that universal spiritual principles must be adaptable to the diverse, lived realities of today's globalized world. Paulo Freire too, particularly his excessive reliance on a singular, unified oppressed 'subject' has been criticized by some scholars such as Torres (2019). These critics argue that Freire's pedagogy does not fully address the intersectional nature of contemporary identities, particularly the complexities of race, gender, and class. As bell hooks (1994) highlights in *Teaching to Transgress*, Freire's framework overlooks the multiplicities of oppression shaped by these overlapping systems, calling for a more nuanced understanding of learners' identities.

### Border Pedagogy: A Synthesis of Holism and Praxis

In response to these critiques, we propose a "border pedagogy" that synthesizes the spiritual holism of Vivekananda with Freire's critical praxis, along with insights from postcolonial hybridity and poststructuralist thought. This 'border pedagogy' rejects static, foundationalist truths, and instead embraces the concept of "third space" articulated by Homi Bhabha (1994), where according to him, culture is in constant negotiation and flux. Border pedagogy positions learning within liminal spaces that are neither strictly Eastern nor Western, secular nor spiritual. These spaces are dynamic, marked by continuous cultural exchange and transformation. In such a hybrid pedagogical model, learning becomes a mutual process of co-creation, not the imposition of a singular worldview. Education in this context becomes an ongoing process of contestation and negotiation of cultural identities, encouraging a fluid, inclusive, and collaborative learning process. The border pedagogy model, grounded in decolonial thought, advocates for an educational system that transcends rigid identities and universalized knowledge systems that often marginalize 'difference'. By incorporating Vivekananda's spiritual humanism and Freire's focus on critical pedagogy, this framework fosters an education that is both decolonial and inclusive. It calls for an educational approach that is sensitive to 'difference', i.e. the multiplicity of global experiences, an approach that is responsive to the local contexts in which learning occurs. This model fosters critical engagement, moral responsibility, and social transformation by encouraging learners to navigate their complex identities and worldviews. Education, then, becomes an embodied, collaborative process where learners develop both critical survival skills and spiritually embodied meditative skills necessary for not only challenging oppression but also to work towards justice and social transformation.

### Conclusion: A Vision for the Future of Education

Swami Vivekananda and Paulo Freire remain foundational thinkers in the history of educational thought. Their shared vision of education as a tool for liberation continues to inspire global struggles against epistemic, social, and political domination. However, for their ideas to remain relevant in the contemporary educational discourse, they must be reimagined through postcolonial and poststructuralist lenses. The 'border pedagogy' model offers a compelling approach that positions learning at the intersection of power, culture, and resistance. By embracing subtle and invisible spaces between cultures, this pedagogy offers a flexible, transformative educational experience that challenges and redefines existing power structures. As Vivekananda urged, "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached," (a verse from Katha Upanishad, Chapter 1.3.14 popularized by him) and as Freire believed, "To speak a true word is to transform the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 87). Their words continue to resonate as a call for radical, ongoing educational transformation.

### Notes

1 CW = Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.

### References

- Avinashilingam, T.S. (Ed.). (1957). *Education (Compilations from Vivekananda's Speeches and Writings)*. Belur Math: Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Darder, A. (2017). *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315560779>
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Giroux, H. A. (2009). Paulo Freire and the Politics of Postcolonialism. In A. Kempf (Ed.), *Breaching the Colonial Contract* (pp. 79–89). Heidelberg: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9944-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9944-1_5)
- Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.3366/para.1994.17.3.270>
- Prabhananda, S. (2003). Swami Vivekananda. *Prospects*, 33(2). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023603115703>
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In L. Grossberg & C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. London: Macmillan Education.
- Torres, C. A. (Ed.) (2019). *The Wiley Handbook of Paulo Freire*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119236788>
- Vivekananda, S. (1893–1897). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Vols. 1–9). Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama.
- Vivekananda, S. (2008). *My Idea of Education (Compiled by Kiran Walia)*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama.

### Dr. Ajay Kumar

born 1964, is an Associate Professor of Development Education and Adult Education at the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi (India). He is also a Member in the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning since 2008. His main area of interest include: Adult Education & Lifelong Learning; Development Education; Citizenship Education and Globalization; Education and Literacy Development in India; Projects related to Child Labour Elimination, Poverty Eradication and Community Development in India.