



Remembering the Ancient Master of Education : Twentieth First Century Reception of Sri Aurobindo

KEYWORDS

Pioneer of Educational Philosophy, Experimentation with Educational Methods, Aurobindo as Education, 21st Reception of Aurobindo

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ABSTRACT India is a country with a long cultural heritage. Many great educationists came with their individual philosophical bent of mind to place education and educational methods in a perfect frame. In his life span of 78 years Sri Aurobindo dedicated his major part of his life in elevating the tradition of experimentation for the best education and educating methods. This research article will conceptualize Sri Aurobindo's concept of ideal education. This paper will also concentrate Aurobindo's idea of just educational methods. Finally, this will be our endeavour to locate Aurobindo in the 21st century and understand his relevance in the ultra modern civilization.

INTRODUCTION:

The best is often achieved through endless experimentation. It was in the leadership of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh the great Indian tradition of experimentation with education and educational methods crossed a long distance. Sri Aurobindo was a committed soul to the knowledge of life. While propounding the knowledge of life he came to the realization that if India wants to have a better place in the world, Indian education and educating method are to be enriched. This enrichment will be achieved through endless experimentation. Sri Aurobindo is an educationist not by chance but by choice. Like Tagore and Swami Vivekananda he dedicated his whole life in achieving the perfect goal of human life. He knew well that without a successful and fruitful education system India can never achieved the desired goal. This article will make a searching analysis about the concept of education and its distribution method as it was promulgated by Sri Aurobindo.

BIOGRAPHY IN OUTLINE:

Born in Kolkata in the year 1872 Sri Aurobindo was sent to England at the age of six. He reached to his manhood under the active influence of European culture. He had the mastery in the foreign languages like Greek, Latin, French, German and Italian etc. After his return to India Sri Aurobindo started devoting himself in Sanskrit language. He even went jail for the sake of Indian Freedom. Sri Aurobindo was equally a spiritualist and used to share dream vision. After 1915 he started living a retire life. For this purpose, he set up an Ashram known as Aurobindo Ashram. Later he dedicated himself to sadhana and philosophical preaching. His preaching includes Education, Philosophy, Dharma and Brahmacharya.

AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF EDUCATION:

Sri Aurobindo had crystal clear idea of education. He was habituated not to talk about academic education. His idea of education revolves around all round education. In his idea of education Aurobindo was not obsessed with one dimensional education. His believed in integrated education which includes spiritual, moral, physical, philosophical and social. Aurobindo's idea of education does not remain static in one time. He directed the idea of education that will be fit and just for all ages to come. He was iconoclast in his idea of education. Ideal education must be befitting with the changing demands of the world. N.C. Dowsetti has rightly commented on Aurobindo's idea of education "the meaning of the word education is to bring forth the inner, hidden, latent, dormant, potential secret within every human being, secret because, it is not of senses but of the inner truth of being and because it is that most unknown pan of the being which has yet to evolve to its full stature". Education, says Aurobindo, will be 'true building or living of evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of living being'. The prime motive of education is

produce more determined people who will be able to face the challenges of the changing world. He also defined education as a kind of assistance to the growing of the soul and the development of the mind.

UNDERSTANDING AUROBINDO'S PRINCIPLES OF ELEMENTAL EDUCATION:

Sri Aurobindo was almost parent like figure for all the people of the world. His idea of child education simply deserves our observation. Aurobindo believed that good education or elemental education should be child-centred. For the better effects in child education liberty is the first condition. Fruitful education methods must be formed keeping the proper aptitudes of the learners in mind. Good educationist must follow the ups and downs of the psychological workings of the learners mind. He also believed that education must be given through mother tongue. Education through mother tongue can extract the best in men. Good education must purify the physic through the development of consciousness. The growth of consciousness can best be achieved through brahmacharya. This well development consciousness through brahmacharya will protect the country from any sort of contamination. Aurobindo viewed child education as the most formative and constructive part of education that keeps the threshold of the heart of the learners, where one relates himself with the knowledge of Brahma.

EDUCATION AND ITS OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of education is to acquire knowledge. This gathering of knowledge becomes possible through the understanding of literature, culture, nation and its history. Mortification is the way of purification of the soul through the torture of the body. Like this mortification, Aurobindo believed that good education should purify physical body. This purification of the corporal body becomes possible through the training of the each sense. Francis Bacon once declared: "Discretion is more than eloquence". Like Bacon, Sri Aurobindo viewed that good education must develop the logical faculty in the learners. Memory, reasoning, s learners to develop the mental growth in them. Matthew Arnold is the most admired educationist of Victorian England. According to him, people will learn the lessons of morality from art. Arnold believed that good literature instructs the lessons of good and bad. Like Arnold, Sri Aurobindo viewed education as the best medium that can teach people morality and the sense of good and bad. He thought that human beings contain in their physical self some elemental goodness and divinity. Fruitful education must drive human beings towards divinity through the development of manas and chitra. Education will bring consciousness through lessons. Consciousness brings self realization. Self realization fathers the potentiality in the mind of the learners.

EDUCATING METHOD AND SRI AUROBINDO:

Sri Aurobindo was equally vigilant about the educating method. He laid prime importance on the condition of freedom. Education can best be given in the perfect air of freedom. Children should be given liberty of behaving freely. During this free department they should be treated with love and sympathy. The interest of the child will remain at the centre of all good education. Children should be given the chance of self experience and this the best way to learn in perfect manner. Co-operation is another principle during this self realization. Nature has a pivotal role to play in building this self realization. Age, ability and aptitude are last three conditions laid by Sri Aurobindo. Like Francis Bacon, Aurobindo believed in the method of practice and observation. Any learner can learn best by engaging himself in action. Doings teach us best. This is how Sri Aurobindo laid his principle foundation of teaching and educating.

POSTMODERN RECEPTION OF SRI AUROBINDO:

The world has come across a rapid change in the last three decades. Mankind has seen the two huge massacres like First World War and the Second World War. Technology in the last two decades has entered into the fields of education. Educational learning methods are digitized. Text is replaced by hypertext. Apart from book, electronic media has come with the enormous supply of data and communication. Our age is the age of 'Zero Tolerance'. This section of the discussion will try to locate Aurobindo in postmodern context. How much is Aurobindo relevant to our postmodern context? Is his educating method still fruitful? Is his basic principle of education still applicable?

In the educating method the teacher will be an icon figure in terms of virtue and quality. The teacher will not be task master or instructor. A good teacher should be a good helper. Sri Aurobindo rightly commented: "one must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher. One must become a great 'yogi' to be a good teacher." A successful teacher will not inter-

vene the learning of the learners. Teacher will encourage and stimulate. He will not shape the mind of the learners. He justly remarked, "Teacher is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a light kindling other lights, and awakened soul awaking other souls, at the highest a power of presence of the divine calling to him other powers of the divine." In this postmodern age of meta narrative there is nothing which is ideal or icon-like. Digital teaching encourages the learners and at the same time channelizes the thought process with its audio-visual learning medium.

A child comes into this world with variegated capacities and potentialities. Good education should identify this exact forte of the learner. But in the age commercialization, professionalism and globalization hyper sensitive parents are bestowing their desires and dreams on the shoulders of their children without least realizing their own dreams. Sri Aurobindo viewed that a child is a part of the Greater Existence. It is duty of the child to look for this Greater Existence. The true religion of education is communication. A group of Western dramatists like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter came with the belief that after the Second World War the world is terribly cut off from God. God has locked his grace for mankind. Mankind is treated as fallen. Our existence is deprived existence. When mankind is awfully cut off from the grace of God, how can we communicate with this Greater Existence?

CONCLUSION:

The rapid growth of technology has an ambivalent influence on the existing education system. Modern technology has created one aura where the concept of Yoga and moral will seem ineffective. The century which is always suffering from the threat of Cold War, Cyber crime and Cyber sex cannot expect to implement such dream educating method of Aurobindo. The growing threat of media and culture may diminish all prospects. But Sri Aurobindo has thought one such education system where the teacher will say: vos es amo mihi, vos es meus amicus ("You are like me, you are my friend").

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