



Pioneer of integral Educational : SRI AURBINDO: A Critical View

Literature

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ABSTRACT

“Education, proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming-self creation, to her eternal spirit.”

Sri Aurobindo's (1956) concept of 'education'

Sri Aurobindo Ghose advocated about the education which not only to meet the need of an individual but in accordance to the need of society, to the need of Nation and to the need of Humanity, which make one a cosmopolitan citizen. The real Aim of Education is to bring out the real man in oneself, to build the power of the human mind and spirit i.e. evoking of knowledge, character and culture, to enable the individual to establish a clear continuity between the past, present and future and to enable the individual to establish right relationship within him and outside-world. He is not a fusion of philosophical- religious types, but an appearance of a new kind of thinker whose methods are of spiritual inquiry derived from the Indian tradition with a completely new frame of intellectual reference to modern science and the challenge of transcending through the conflict between religion and materialism, tradition and modernization. He shouldn't be considered as a 'Hindu thinker' for; Hinduism sought only 'eternal law,' 'SANATAN DHARMA,' which is indeed not an Indian monopoly but a universal theology. His spiritual inquiry was aimed at clearing the weaknesses of current thinking about conflicts between the spiritual quest and functional materialism which established a harmonious relationship between these two. His philosophy about the education summarised as Integral Education which indeed not only a system of Traditional Education amalgamated with western science, But which aims to empower an individual for the Journey of Divinity. Sri Aurobindo Coined the idea of Integral Education into two spheres Where first one aims to inculcate all the five aspects of the individual being, and Other aims an education not only for the evolution of the individual alone, but also of the nation and finally of the humanity. The ultimate aim of education is the evolution of total humanity.

KEYWORDS:

Aurobindo, Integral Education, Sanatan Dharama , Total Humanity.

1. Introduction

Aurobindo Ghosh was an Idealistic to the core. His Idealistic philosophy of life was based upon Vedantic philosophy of Upanishad. He maintains that the kind of education, we need in our country, is an education *“Education, proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming-self creation, to her eternal spirit.”*

Sri Aurobindo's (1956) concept of 'education' is not only acquiring information, but *“the acquiring of various kinds of information”, he points out, “is only one and not the chief of the means and necessities of education: its central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit.”*

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the philosophical views on education of Sri Aurobindo
2. To understand the concept of integral education.
3. To understand his views on aims of education, curriculum, role of teacher and methods of teaching.
4. Critical Study and analysis of integral education
5. To discuss the cotemporary relevance of integral education.

ABRIEF LIFE HISTORY

Aurobindo was born in an educated middle class family in Calcutta on 15th Aug. 1972. He went to England at the age of 7 and lived there for 14 years. He received his education at Cambridge At the age of 18, he passed the entrance examination of the Indian Civil Service. Besides English, he mastered Latin and Greek and learnt French, German and Spanish.

In 1893, on his return from England, he joined as professor of English at Baroda College in Gujarat. Here, besides devoting himself to cultural and literary activities, learnt Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Sanskrit.

He joined the Indian National Congress and became an active freedom fighter. He was a revolutionary and was disappointed with the Moderates of the Indian National Congress. He started the Bengali daily 'Yugantar' and English daily 'Bande Mataram' to promote his revolutionary ideas. He was considered one of the most dangerous leaders by the British government.

From a revolutionary freedom fighter, he became a philosopher and seer. In 1908, he was sent to jail for the Alipore Bomb case. During this time, he turned to yoga, meditation and study of religious, philosophical and spiritual literature. This changed him a lot. He went to Pondicherry and spent his remaining 40 years in his Ashram there. He changed himself and involved in several educational and social activities. He proposed theories of education which catered to Indian needs. He set up an International Ashram and International Centre of education and social activities. He also started a new experiment known as 'Aurowill' as a city of human unity.

2.1 SRI AUROBINDO AS A PHILOSOPHER:

Sri. Aurobindo cannot be considered a philosopher in the strict western sense though he had acquired the western philosophical traditions through his British education and later readings. It is also wrong to think of him as a traditional Indian 'holy man' though many in India recognized him not only as an accomplished 'yogi' but also as an avatar of new age. What we find in him is not a fusion of philosophical- religious types, but an appearance of a new kind of thinker whose methods are of spiritual inquiry derived from the Indian tradition with a completely new frame of intellectual reference to modern science and the challenge of transcending through the conflict between religion and materialism, tradition and modernization. It is also wrong to consider him as a 'Hindu thinker' for; Hinduism sought only 'eternal law,' 'sanatana dharma,' which is not an Indian monopoly.

His spiritual inquiry was aimed at clearing the weaknesses of current thinking about conflicts between the spiritual quest and functional materialism. He showed the new ways of seeing the relationship of

man to the natural environment and to the material aspects of existence. He is undoubtedly more 'systematic' a thinker than Gandhi and Tagore.

Like Jiddu Krishnamurti, Sri Aurobindo also believed that what we call as religious is not primarily a matter of doctrines or dogmas, but of experience. He says what validates a religious intuition is the experience of its spiritual authenticity. It is not a point of view or collection of ideas given down through generations, but is entirely first hand personal experience. Aurobindo wondered if one could discover the means to connect the personal religious experience to the modern world's larger but inherently religious analytical rationality.

2.2. FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

The main functions of education can be summarized as follows.

- i. To bring out the real man in oneself.
- ii. To build the power of the human mind and spirit i.e. evoking of knowledge, character and culture.
- iii. To enable the individual to establish a clear continuity between the past, present and future.
- iv. To enable the individual to establish right relationship within himself and outside-world.

2.2.1 INTEGRAL EDUCATION

True education, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not only spiritual but also rational, vital and physical. In other words it is integral education. This integral education has been explained by Sri Aurobindo's closest collaborator, the Mother in these words. "Education to be complete must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. This education is complete, complementary to each other and continued till the end of life. Aurobindo's scheme of education is integral in two senses. Firstly, it is integral in the sense inculcating all the five aspects of the individual being. Secondly, it is integral in the sense of being an education not only for the evolution of the individual alone, but also of the nation and finally of the humanity. The ultimate aim of education is the evolution of total humanity. In this scheme of evolution, the principle of growth is unity in diversity. This unity again, maintains and helps the evolution of diversity.

2.2.2 The integral School

The ultimate aim of education is man-making. It prepares the educand to work first as a human being and then as a member of a nation and finally as an individual. The circles of moral responsibility and loyalties proceed from wider to narrower and vice-versa. The man has to develop first as a human being then as a citizen and finally as an individual. Most of the present confusion of values is due to an inversion of this order.

That education which comes naturally, easily, effectively and without strain is called integral education. Integral education is complete education. Important aspects that constitute integral education are:-

- i. Strengthening of mental and physical aspects.
- ii. Achievement of five principal aspects – the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. All the above five aspects have to be developed together.
- iii. Development of the four aspects of truth namely; love, knowledge, power, and beauty.
- iv. Development of the vehicles of truth namely psychic for love, mind for knowledge, vital for power and physical body for expression of physical beauty.

Shri Aurobindo believes in these ultimate principles of individuality, commonality and essentiality. These, in other words, are the educand, the society and the humanity. Integral education, according to him, must include evolution of all these three elements. These should develop together. This is the purpose of the school. In his lectures at Baroda college, Shri Aurobindo observed that the

colleges and universities should educate through their academic as well as social activities. The school cannot be isolated from society. It cannot give total education in isolation. Its teachings have to be practiced in the society outside it. In the integral school four types of rooms are required to carry on various activities: 1. Rooms of silence, 2. Rooms of collaboration, 3. Rooms of consultation, 4. Lecture room. Thus the school will develop different types of activities such as silence, collaboration, consultation and lectures. It will provide play, activity, discovery, innovation and finally development of the powers of the body, mind and spirit of the educand. In brief, the integral school will provide opportunities for integral development. In fact, the aims, curriculum and methods of teaching are in the light of these concepts of integral education.

2.3. AIMS OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO INTEGRAL EDUCATION

- i. Perfection of soul: The main aim of education is to "help the growing soul to draw out that is best and make it perfect for a noble cause"
- ii. Realization of inner self: Education should enable him to realize his inner self which is a part of the universal consciousness. He has to enter into right relationships not only within himself but also with the people of country and with the universal society to which he belongs
- iii. Physical development: Physical development of the child is another important aim of education. It will be misleading to say that those who are physically strong are mentally weak. Without physical development no other development is possible.
- iv. Development of morality: Without moral and emotional development mental developmental becomes harmful to human progress. The three essential factors for the moral development of a child are emotions, impressions or habits and nature. So it is necessary that the ideals of a teacher should be so high that the child by mere imitation is able to reach higher stages of development.
- v. The development of senses: Education should aim at the training of senses. According to him senses can be trained fully when manas, chitta and nerve are pure.
- vi. Development of consciousness: another important aim of education is to develop consciousness. According to him it has four levels.

(i) Chitta (ii) Manas (iii) Intelligence (iv) Knowledge.

A teacher should develop all these four levels harmoniously. This will promote the development of conscience.

vii. Harmony of the individual and collectively. Most of the socio-political thinkers have either laid emphasis upon the individual or collectively. But Aurobindo aims at realization of harmony between individuals and also between nations. His scheme of education therefore is truly international. Explaining this ideal of Sri Aurobindo's scheme. The Mother said "For all world organizations, to be real and to be able to live, must be based on mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. It is only in the collective order and organization, in a collaboration based upon mutual goodwill that lies the possibility of man being lifted of the painful chaos where he is now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied at the university centre, and their solution will be given in the light of the supra-mental knowledge which Aurobindo has revealed."

viii. Cultivation of values: The present crisis of man is due to the chaos of values. Old values have been challenged while new values have not firmly taken their place. Character formation very much depends on value. The supreme value in Sri Aurobindo's thought is harmony. Other values are spirituality, divinity, evolution, ascent, transformation etc. the most important value for required for all growth is sincerity. Once that is developed, the rest follows.

2.3.1 INTEGRAL CURRICULUM

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh prescribed a free environment for the children to develop all the latent faculties to the full and suggested all those subjects and activities of child's interest to be included in the principles of curriculum.

All life is education. So curriculum is not confined to a limited syllabus and a few text books. ii It should include all those subjects which promote mental and spiritual development. iii It is a means towards an end, not an end in itself, the end being the development of integral personality. iv It should provide for leisure pursuits. v There should be flexibility to meet individual needs. vi Subjects of curriculum should be able to motivate children. vii Curriculum should involve creativity of life and constructive activities viii Curriculum should be interesting

On the basis of the above principles, Aurobindo has prescribed the following subjects in the curriculum I. For primary stage: Mother Tongue, English, National History, Art, Painting, General Science, Social Studies, and Arithmetic.

2. Secondary stage: Mother tongue, English, French, Arithmetic, Art, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Social Studies, Physiology, Health Education.
3. University Stage: Indian and western philosophy, History of Civilization, English, Literature, French, Sociology, Psychology, History of Science, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, International relations and integration.
4. Vocational Education: Arts, painting, photography, sewing, sculptural, drawing, type, shorthand, collage industries, carpentry, nursing, mechanical and electrical engineering, Indian and European music, and dramatization.

2.3.2 THE TEACHER

Thus, a translation of this model to settings other than that of a residential community committed exclusively to a change of consciousness and seeing education as part of the means to this end, poses serious difficulties which only implementation can measure in terms of success or failure. Again, though the factors mentioned above make the ashram habits ideal for the social practice of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Integral Education, the insular and insulated nature of such a setting tends to distance the faculty from contemporary currents in thinking, having an effect of making the courses anachronistic and a historical, thus diluting the potential for students emerging from such a system to become creative agents for civilisation change in the contemporary world. An informed critique of modernity and its discontents, of neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism, technology and culture, globalization or post-national capitalism, patriarchies, superpower politics and ecological imbalance in the light of the revolutionary vision and teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the power to offer and shape solutions to the critical evolutionary crisis of our times is not much in evidence among the alumni of this institute.

2.3.3 Method of teaching

The following principles of methods of teaching have been stressed by Sri. Aurobindo.

1. Love and sympathy for the child
2. Education through mother tongue
3. Education according to the interests of the child
4. Education through self experience
5. Emphasis on learning by doing
6. Education through co-operation of teacher and students in the education process
7. Education according to the nature of child considering the divinity in the child and latent gifts of mind and spirit
8. Freedom of child- free environment to gain more knowledge through his own efforts.

2.4 Critical Study and analysis of integral education:

With very few exceptions, parents are not aware of the disastrous

influence that their own defects, impulses, weaknesses and lack of self-control have on their children. If you wish to be respected by a child, have respect for yourself and be worthy of respect at every moment. Never be authoritarian, despotic, impatient or ill-tempered. When your child asks you a question, do not give him a stupid or silly answer under the pretext that he cannot understand you. You can always make yourself understood if you take enough trouble; and in spite of the popular saying that it is not always good to tell the truth, I affirm that it is always good to tell the truth, but that the art consists in telling it in such a way as to make it accessible to the mind of the hearer. In early life, until he is twelve or fourteen, the child's mind is hardly open to abstract notions and general ideas. And yet you can train it to understand these things by using concrete images, symbols or parables. Up to quite an advanced age and for some who mentally always remain children, a narrative, a story, a tale well told teaches much more than any number of theoretical explanations.

Another pitfall to avoid: do not scold your child without good reason and only when it is quite indispensable. A child who is too often scolded gets hardened to rebuke and no longer attaches much importance to words or severity of tone. And above all, take good care never to scold him for a fault which you yourself commit. Children are very keen and clear-sighted observers; they soon find out your weaknesses and note them without pity.

When a child has done something wrong, see that he confesses it to you spontaneously and frankly; and when he has confessed, with kindness and affection make him understand what was wrong in his movement so that he will not repeat it, but never scold him; a fault confessed must always be forgiven. You should not allow any fear to come between you and your child; fear is a pernicious means of education : it invariably gives birth to deceit and lying. Only a discerning affection that is firm yet gentle and an adequate practical knowledge will create the bonds of trust that are indispensable for you to be able to educate your child effectively. And do not forget that you have to control yourself constantly in order to be equal to your task and truly fulfil the duty which you owe your child by the mere fact of having brought him into the world.

- (a) After a certain stage the functioning of the instruments of knowledge shall be much more efficient in an IE system; it should then be possible to handle a far greater load with ease.
- (b) In an IE, there will be little stress on the memorizing of a store of facts. Instead, the stress shall be on the capacity to acquire and use knowledge. This should considerably reduce the burden on the students.
- (c) A systematic rigorous physical education included in the IE will certainly require much extra time and effort, but this can be expected to be more than compensated by the salutary positive effect it shall have on the functioning and efficiency of all other parts of the being.
- (d) In an atmosphere proper to IE and with the necessary enabling and enlightening discipline and doctrine supplied at appropriate junctures, the education of all other (other than the physical) aspects of IE is quite capable of being carried out and, in fact, invariably does carried out along with the usual academic education.

2.5 Contemporary Relevance of Integral Education:

Doctrine of IE, as propounded by Sri Aurobindo, do emphasis over the factors responsible for complete Individual Development from very early age. The mental and spiritual aspect is the key to this system of education where spirituality negate the sense of competition among the students and advocate the learning by practice, connection of individual with supreme soul and Oneness of All , The mental part emphasize over chronological developments and Interest Building. Every One, Individually, is free to choose any thing, any subject, to get a complete knowledge of it which subsequently generate self confidence, reliance and Pride which are necessary not only to attain the complete development of an individual but also to make an

amicable and progressive society and Hence may instrument in Nation-building.

But as per our contemporary educational system, all students are forced to run in a rat race where all have to study all subjects necessarily but no such true with Physical education as all students are not encouraged to participate actively in it. No true spiritual abstract at all to students but rather religious education on its name, at very early stage, is tried to impart which subsequently fuel the Communal sentiments and Compromise with the basic Character and objective of Education.

Whereas the mental education also remain same for all but as all students do have a unique traits and interests, hence it flourish a minority and impede the interests of others and reduces them to mere mediocre. As per RTE act 2010, all students are to be provided with nutritious food for physical development under Mid-day meal, SABLA Scheme for adolescent Girl child, USTAD scheme for Vocational Training and Skill India is giving much needed impetus to extend education to marginal section of society, but the rampant corruption in such initiatives have damaged such plans. Today education is only for those who may pay for it, it's obvious, hence It totally against the very objective of IE.

If we look at today's education system, it is having a lot of lacunas in it which makes it difficult to educate an individual on national lines with overall development of personality, hence it' time to look back and get much needed inspiration, Motivation, objective of education to correct education system and blend it with growing social and national need to evolve A new Modern, rational and progressive education system which would have the learning from the past as complimentary to it not as a alien and some times against to it. Hence it may be infer that Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is more relevant in contemporary age, it would provide a firm base to check and correct the perturbations prevailing in educational system and compliment it's flourishing

3 Conclusions:

In conclusion, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's principles and implementations of Integral Education belong to a post secular social consciousness which embraces a universal spirituality based on an integral model of reality and personality and openness to a transformation in the source and instrumentation of human knowledge. It also envisages a transformed society with new ideals and goals leading towards an optimistic and holistic vision of the future based in experiences of relational and cosmic identity. This is fundamentally an optimistic vision, and in a time of global crisis, sectarian fundamentalism, techno-capitalistic conditioning and spiritual bankruptcy, an epic hopefulness in the human capacity to rise to its full potential of the stewardship of the earth and the ushering of an era of peace and harmony based in consciousness and creativity.

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