

A Study on Educational Thoughts of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

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Abstract:

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was an Indian Nationalist, a freedom fighter, a philosopher, a yogi and a poet. He can be viewed as a 20th century renaissance person. He emphasized that Education should be in accordance with the need of our Modern life. He agrees to believe that man is the maker of his own destiny and education is a big tool to achieve the target. The present paper highlights the philosophical contribution of Aurobindo in education. He believed that chief aim of education is awakening of divinity in the individual. He believed that the best thing in man is his spirituality. He was an intellectual who intensely analyzed human and social evolution. According to Sri Aurobindo, the education must emphasis on the whole aspects of human life such as physical, psychic, mental, beauty, power, knowledge and love etc. Integral Education is basically the cultivation of these aspects in human being.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo , Integral Education ,Thoughts , Teaching, Philosophy

Introduction:

The Indian culture is rich in heritage and tradition. It has a lifelong history of great men who were born, had walked, and breathed their last breath in this country. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is one of them. Sri Aurobindo was one of the most eminent and learned gurus of his times; he was a spiritualist. He is one of India's most respected and renowned jewels.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), the great educationist of India, has set forth his philosophy in the life Divine. He bases his philosophy on the original Vedanta of the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo believes that earlier Vedanta represent an integral or balanced view of life. It implies healthy integration of God and the man or world, renunciation and enjoyment, freedom of the soul and action of nature, being and becoming, the one and many, Vidya and Avidya, knowledge and works, and birth and release.¹“ True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are, it is what you become.” – Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

Aurobindo Ghosh, the great educationist of India, is known by the name Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo has set forth his philosophy in the life Divine. He bases his philosophy on the original Vedanta of the Upanishadas. He holds that intuition must be corrected by a more perfect intuition and never by a logical reasoning. Realization of the sublime truth is the sum mum bonum of his philosophy, which can be achieved through intuition, spirituality, creativity, intellectuality, integral view of life being a superman and Gnostic individual. Sri Aurobindo believes that earlier Vedanta represent an integral or balanced view of life. It implies healthy integration of God and the man or world, renunciation and enjoyment, freedom of the soul and action of nature, being and becoming, the one and many, Vidya and Avidya, knowledge and works, and birth and release. He says that fellowship between God and man generates in 'man' an idea of new birth and a new ideal of work.² According to Aurobindo, real education is that which provides a free

and creative environment to the child and by developing his interest, creativity, mental, moral and aesthetic sense finally leads to the development of his spiritual powers.

Sri Aurobindo believes that man is the maker of his own destiny and education is a big tool to achieve the target. He believed that the best thing in man is his spirituality. He was an intellectual who intensely analyzed human and social evolution. According to Sri Aurobindo, the education must emphasize on the whole aspects of human life such as physical, psychic, mental, beauty, power, knowledge and love etc. Integral Education is basically the cultivation of these aspects in human being. The present paper focuses the philosophical contributions of Shri Aurobindo Ghosh towards Education. It relates the importance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education with different components of education: principles of teaching, aims of education, curriculum, transaction, school, relationship of teacher and pupil, discipline etc. Shri Aurobindo always thought about the education matter in India. He received quite good knowledge from Cambridge, and he also works as a professor in the Bengal National College from 1897 to 1906. So, he came to know the need in the education field and its depth. And he had hopes in the young who can bring great changes in this area. He trusted that youth can give their good contribution to rebuilding the nation. He gave his brief definition for it:³ His philosophy is based on an Integralism. It is the synthesis of idealism realism pragmatism and spiritualism. His philosophical thoughts and principals of teaching are almost important if a human being wants to live in peace and harmony.

Sri Aurobindo emphasized on integral education which is the manifestation of Beauty, Power, Knowledge and Love. "Beauty" involves a programme of physical education to build a body that is beautiful in form, harmonious in posture and powerful in functions. "Power" involves control of sensations. "Knowledge" involves development of an active and alert mind. "Love" involves creation of desirable feelings and emotions, which should aim at selfless good to others and communion with the Divine. Moral education is very significant to cultivate right emotions. Sadhana (spiritual meditation) is necessary for religious living. Imagination is an important instrument for the training of senses, other mental faculties, memory, judgment, observation, comparing and contrasting and analogy. He also suggested psychic education and supra-mental education. His integral education concerns. It with five principal activities of the human being physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of life was an outcome of his own life experiences, education and insight. He blended eastern and western cultures and matter and spirit. In his opinion, there is an evolution of consciousness called Truth Consciousness, Super Mind, Super Consciousness or Dynamic Divine. He strongly held that reason and intellect are inadequate to acquire knowledge, it requires something more like intuition or super consciousness. As cosmic energy is evolutionary, so is human mind which has dynamic relationship, with higher levels of consciousness.⁴

Aurobindo's philosophy emphasizes on the integral experience of 'Satchidanand'. He suggested that in devising a true and living education, three things are to be taken into account:

- Man.
- The individual in his consciousness and his uniqueness.
- The nation or universal humanity.

Aim of Education:

According to Sri Aurobindo,” Indeed if the education is to have its maximum result, it must begin even before birth Sri Aurobindo emphasized that education should be in accordance with the needs of our real modern life. In other words, education should create dynamic citizens, so that they are able to meet the needs of modern complex life. He was against the prevalent education system. He strongly believed that our education should be best suited the need of modern life. He himself writes , "Education to be true must not be a machine made fabric but a true building or living evocation of the power of mind and spirit of human being.”⁵

Any nation that uses simple previous experiences and makes use of the present has a better nation. If any nation does not use the past knowledge has no friend for the national development. By forgetting the present, we can win the present battle of life. So it is necessary to save for India that it has kept knowledge, noble thought and good character in its immemorial past. We must acquire for her best knowledge and should have better teaching methodology to develop humanity. All these should have integrated with the good self-reliance spirit to make up a human and not a lifeless machine. He likes the British education system a bit in India that he used to call it a mercenary and soulless system which is sufficient for making incapable the Indian brain. All Indian students have so much potentiality which is not cared due to lack of an appropriate system of education. He wanted to courageously make a good path in India.⁶ By birth maximum, rich Indians can have better knowledge and mankind is waiting with the previous knowledge and extending their present and the potentiality of the future which can be accomplished by the National Education system. It can be accomplished by the lifeless routine and its narrow and sightless spirit and mechanical methods. It can only be developed by the light and hop of its resurgence.

“Man cannot rest permanently until he reaches some highest good.”

“To fulfil god in life is man’s manhood” – Shri Aurobindo

The guiding principle of Sri Aurobindo’s Educational Philosophy was the awakening of the individual as a spiritual being. It should be related to life truth and self-mastery by the child.

Sri Aurobindo made a five-fold classification of human nature i.e., the physical, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual, corresponding to five aspects of education – physical education, vital education, mental education, psychic education and spiritual or super mental education.

Physical education includes control over physical functions, harmonious development of physical movements, over powering physical limitations and the awareness of body

consciousness. Sri Aurobindo lays stress upon games and sports because he felt that these were essential for renewing energy.

Vital education was the most important point in integral education. Sri Aurobindo called the vital being of man – the life nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, reaction of the desire – soul in man and of all that play a possessive and other related instinct, anger, fear, speed etc. that belong to this field of nature.

Mental education included cognition, ideas and intelligence. The unique contribution of Sri Aurobindo regarding mental education was that ideas should be continually organized around a central thought.

Psychic education was the special contribution of Sri Aurobindo to education systems. The key to an integral personality was the discovery of man's psychic nature. The educational theory of Sri Aurobindo aimed at the development of the latent powers of the child, training of six senses, training of logical faculties, physical education, principle of freedom, moral and religious education and above all, training for the spiritualization of the individual.⁷

Different subjects and activities for various development are given below :

(1) Physical Development and Purity- One of the important aims of education is to achieve the complete physical and pure development of a child. To Sri Aurobindo, it is the body that performs all religious obligations. He not only emphasizes mere physical development but physical purity also. Without physical development and physical purity, no spiritual development is possible. This physical development and physical purification are the two bases on which the edifice of spiritual development is built.

(2) Development of Senses- Development of senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sound or listening) is the second aim of education according to Sri Aurobindo. These senses can be completely trained when Nerves, Chitta and Manas (mind) are pure. Hence purity of senses is to be achieved through education before any development is possible. Yoga with the exercise of Pranama brings about purification and helps sensitivity and intuition.

(3) Mental Development- Another aim of education is to achieve the mental development of the pupil. Mental development means the development of all mental faculties like memory, imagination, thinking, reasoning, creativity, discrimination, observation, comprehension, comparison, classification, generalization, judgment etc. Education is to develop them fully and harmoniously.

(4) Development of Conscience- Development of conscience is another important aim of education according to Sri Aurobindo. Conscience has four levels namely Chitta, Manas, Intellect and Intuition. A teacher should develop all these four levels harmoniously. It will promote the development of conscience.

(5) Development of Morality- Another indispensable aim of education is to develop the pupil morally. According to Sri Aurobindo, only that education is true which helps the child to develop his intellectual and moral capacities to their highest limit. Without moral and emotional development, mental development becomes harmful to human progress. For the moral

development of a pupil, emotions, impressions or habits and nature or temperament are the three essential factors. He yearned to be educated in the true sense of the term by the purification and sublimation of these essential factors. The hearts of children should be so developed as to show extreme love, sympathy and consideration for all living beings. This is real moral development.

(6) Spiritual Development-Sri Aurobindo asserted that the main aim of education is to promote spiritual development. He believes that every human being has some element of divinity in him. The evocation of this conscious power of the divine within is the real aim of education and the education which does this is true. The fulfilment of the individual does not consist in the utmost growth of his egoistic intellect, vital force, physical welfare and the maximum satisfaction of his physical, emotional and mental cravings, but the developing of the divine in him to the maximum limit of power, love, wisdom and universality. It is through this developing of the divine that the individual will attain the maximum realization of all the possible beauty and delight. The education which helps one in this developing is true. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, “The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble cause”.

(7) Emphasis on Individual Aim- Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the individual aim of education. He considers the ultimate aim of education as the realization of the Self, in accordance with the teachings of Vedanta Philosophy. Only that education is true which helps one to realize one’s real self. Man has within him not only the physical soul or one’s real self but also a vital, mental, psychic, super mental and spiritual being. Only that education is true which helps one to become actively conscious of these powers and the development of personality. The development of personality means the development of all aspects- physical, emotional, intellectual, mental, supramental or intuitive, and leading to the Supreme Spiritual Being. Education should enable the integral growth and development of all the potential powers of the individual.⁸

Role of Teacher:

The Teacher should play a vital role in the process of education through inculcation of self-control, humanity and spiritual equality. According to Aurobindo, “One must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher.” “The teacher is not an instructor or task master, he should be a helper and guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not impart knowledge to him. He shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself.”⁹

According to Sri Aurobindo, the education must emphasize the following aspects in addition to the physical, psychic and mental aspects as denoted by the matter and spirit respectively. The cultivation of these aspects (a) beauty, (b) power, (c) knowledge and (d) love is what he called as integral education. Beauty is the realization through physical culture. Power is to be related to the control of sensations. Knowledge helps in developing the mental makeup of an alert mind. Love is the formation of desirable feelings and emotions, which should be directed towards others and the communion with the Divine.

Aurobindo describes curriculum for different stages of education:

- Mother tongue, English, French, literature, national history, art, painting, general science, social studies and arithmetic should be taught at **primary stage**.
- Mother tongue, English, French, literature, arithmetic, art, chemistry, physics, botany, physiology, health education, social studies at **secondary stage**.
- Indian and western philosophy, history of civilization, English literature, French, sociology, psychology, history, chemistry, physics, botany at **university level**.
- Art, painting, photography, sculptural, drawing, type, cottage-industries, mechanical and electrical engineering, nursing etc at **vocational level**

Integral Education:

According to Sri Aurobindo, it is one which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose of life and scope of all that is in the individual man, which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with life, mind and soul of the people which he belongs and with the great total life, mind soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation , a separate and yet inseparable member.

Sri Aurobindo says “If education is to bring out to full advantage all that is in the individual child, we should first guarantee a safe custody of all that is in individual. Nothing is to be lost or damaged, twisted or crushed. Everyone has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. That Divinity in man is not to be insulted, that chance of perfection is not to be lost that spark of strength is not to be extinguished. The task of a teacher is to help the child to feel that touch of divinity to find that ‘something’ to develop it, and use it. Education should help that growing soul to draw out the best that is within and make it perfect for a noble cause.” As per Shri Aurobindo, teachers should be respected and they have a very responsible job. The different tasks of the learners should be sincerely seen so that he could guide. He told that a teacher should show the learners the appropriate path, and show the ways to achieve that and find out the self-guidance. And also told not to impose any knowledge instead he shows them how to get different skills.

Conclusion:

Sri Aurobindo saw education as a tool for the real working of the spirit of the mind, a body of the nations and individual. His Integral education can combine human body, mind, intellect and soul together to full purpose of life. He was a great supporter of national system of education which is associated with his integral education. He criticized the modern education as it is inadequate to prepare the children for wholesome personality. He believed that only education which awakens the consciousness of individuals will transform the nation socially, economically and politically. Through such national system of education we can achieve national integrity, preserve and promote our culture and tradition. As a result national reconstruction will be achieved.

Note:

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