



SRI AUROBINDO ON EDUCATION

M. Geetha

Asst. Professor of History ,
BG.C.W.Puducherry.



ABSTRACT

Sri Aurobindo has been widely acclaimed as a modern seer and a scholar. Sri Aurobindo was involved in early stages of his career in the education system as part of his work as a teacher and also as a principal during his stay at Baroda. Later he was involved in the system as a principal of the National College, at Calcutta which had been established to provide education to Indian youth. Sri Aurobindo's views on education were published for the first time in 1894 in the journal Indu Prakash of Bombay. His last article was published in 1949 in the Bulletin of Physical Education of the Ashram. As per available records, on January 15, 1908, Sri Aurobindo had delivered a speech on National Education at Bombay. On February 12-April 2, 1910, his manuscript "A System of National Education" appeared in the Karma Yogin, a weekly review directed and mostly written by him. Sri Aurobindo, during his stay at Pondicherry was not involved in direct formal teaching. But he continued to give his views on various aspects of education through his writings. He started writing at an early age, even during his stay at Manchester.

KEY WORDS: Sri Aurobindo , A System of National Education , Physical Education.

INTRODUCTION

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". His entire conception of education is something revolutionary.' The meaning of the word education is —to lead, to bring forth, to educe, what? One must ask. To educe that inner, hidden, latent, dormant, potential secret within every human being.

He maintains that the kind of education, we need in our country, is an 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."

According to Sri Aurobindo the chief aim of education is concerned with helping the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use. According to him, the new aim of education is to help the child to develop his/her intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his/her communal life and impulses out of his/her own temperament and capacities. Education should aim at formation or, preferably, the evoking of knowledge and will and of the power to use knowledge, character, culture - that at least if no more. A recent document of UNESCO states that "The teaching tensions

are, in turn, associated with the fact that knowledge is obviously important, but at the same time quickly becomes obsolescent. At the end of the twentieth century, information was already being renewed at a much greater speed than is necessary for acquiring what is already available. However, there is no possible knowledge without rigorous management of updated information.

According to Sri Aurobindo, a true and living education helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man. It also helps the individual to enter into her/ his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which s/he belongs and with the great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which she/he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the three points of concern in an education system are: the individual, the nation or people and the universal humanity. The individual learns for his/her own development. The society consists of individuals. Each society has its own norms of behaviour. Some of these may be universal and some may be specific to the particular society. Each society supports educational institutions and their functioning. Nation consists of various societies. Development of individuals who are members of a society leads to the development of society as a group. Development of individuals and various groups/societies lead to national development. Just as societies play vital role in education, similarly nation plays vital role in making provision for education. The rate of individual development gets accelerated depending on the rate of national development. Again, the world consists of various nations. Development of the world leads to development of individual nations and, "vice versa. Hence, an education system needs to be concerned with international development. An ideal education will allow the individual to make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities. It shall make the nation to keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its Dharma and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity.

Aurobindo's philosophy of education includes the following different components of education: aims of education, curriculum, school, relationship of teacher and pupil; discipline; and finally the implication of Aurobindo's philosophy of education on globalization.

AIMS OF EDUCATION

Sri Aurobindo emphasized that education should be in accordance with the needs of our real modern life. In other words, education should create dynamic citizen so that they are able to meet the needs of modern complex life. According to him, physical development and holiness are the chief aims of education. As such, he not only emphasized mere physical development, but physical purity also without which no spiritual development is possible. In this sense physical development and purification are the two bases on which the spiritual development is built. The second important aim of education is to train all the senses hearing, speaking, listening, touching, smelling and tasting. The third aim of education is to achieve mental development of the child. This mental development means the enhancement of all mental faculties' namely-memory, thinking, reasoning, imagination, and discrimination etc.

education should develop them fully and harmoniously. Another important aim of education is the development of morality. Sri Aurobindo has emphasized that without moral and emotional development only, mental development becomes harmful to human process. Heart of a child should be so developed as to show extreme love, sympathy and consideration for all living beings. This is real moral development. Development of conscience is another important' aim of education that needs to develop by the help of teacher. Aurobindo emphasized that the main aim of education is to promote spiritual development. According to him every human being has some fragment of divine existence within himself and education can scan it from each individual with its full extent. Not only intellectual but also aesthetic, moral and spiritual development should be achieved.

Curriculum

Aurobindo prescribed free environment for the child to develop all his latent faculties to the maximum and suggested all those subjects and activities should possess elements of creativity and educational expression. He wished to infuse a new life and spirit into each subject and activity through which the development of super human being could become possible. He laid down the following principle for curriculum- He defines the teaching that is to be followed in the Ashram.”

Curriculum should be in such a way which child find as interesting.

- It should include those entire subjects which promote mental and spiritual development.
- It should motivate children towards the attainment of knowledge of the whole world.
- It should contain creativity of life and constructive capacities
- 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.

Teacher-Taught Relationship

Aurobindo enunciates certain sound principles of good teaching, which have to be kept in mind when actually engaged in the process of learning. According to Sri Aurobindo, the first principle of true teaching is “that nothing can be taught.”? He explains that the knowledge is already dormant within the child and for this reason. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master; “he is a helper and a guide.” The role of the teacher “is to suggest and not to impose”. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind, he only shows him how to perfect the instruments of knowledge and helps him and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him; he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The Master is one who has risen to a higher Consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative.’

School

Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of education aims at modifying the school curriculum, maximizing the learning modalities, helping the child to achieve his potentiality at his own pace and level and devote his time to discover himself. This kind of schooling is seen as an anti-thesis of an imposed uniformity of prescribed courses and teaching which the traditional schools purport to do and can be linked to what was taught in schools under the colonial rule. The type of schooling visualised by Sri Aurobindo is seen as aiming to bridge the gap between the child’s life at school and that at home.

Discipline

Children should be provided with a free environment so that they are able to gain more and more knowledge by their own efforts. According to him any retrained and imposed environment stunt the growth and natural development. Aurobindo propagated the concept of self discipline which was the cure of impressionistic discipline.

Aurobindo’s Philosophy in Global Context

The 20th century saw the birth of a new social phenomenon termed as ‘globalization’. The idea is that the world is evolving into an interconnected social system producing a corresponding higher level of

collective consciousness on a planetary scale. Therefore, humankind now has a communal responsibility to facilitate evolutionary movement towards global social integration, the construction of a new social reality and to cultivate planetary collective consciousness. Due to the severity of present day international problems, the grand idea of globalization now holds minimal concern for the majority of educators.

Sri Aurobindo's thoughts are very much different from that of the old education fa, ' which was simply to pack so much stereotyped knowledge into his resisting brain of the child "and impose a stereotyped rule of conduct on his /her struggling and dominated impulses. He discarded this method. Storing information in a child does not help much in developing intelligence. Education is traditionally seen as indoctrination. Generally, every child is indoctrinated in the manners, habits and even in the process of learning. Poor teachers give stress on acquisition of information. Bad education systems have public examinations that give stress on memorization. These do not test the power to apply knowledge in varieties of situation. This process does not make every child to develop skills of applying the acquired knowledge. Thus, educational process often overlooks the true and innate abilities. It develops a false coating on the child resulting in huge wastage of time and energy.

In contrast to the educational ideas of Sri Aurobindo, the present day education system in India is purely an instruction-of-information enterprise, supported by a subject-time-bound curriculum, which neither relates to the needs or abilities of the learner nor takes into consideration the way children learn successfully. Instead of being child-oriented it is subject-oriented. The schools focus on competition with others, mastery of subject matter for getting better marks or grades than on learning in cooperation with and from one another for personal growth and for welfare of others. This is not exclusive to Indian phenomenon, rather all over the world education is largely reductionist, materialist, ego enforcing, and devoid of the joys of the spirit.

It is in this context that there is an urgent need to reevaluate today's educational principles, psychological understanding and goals. The four factors, right aim of education, full education, a large body of teachers and students must combine together to effectuate true revolution in education" based on his ideas.

Education is the highest cultural activity of life aiming at the fullest and harmonious growth, exercise and enjoyment of the varied capabilities of the human personality. "Sri Aurobindo believed in the importance of the child-centered education. Stress has to be laid on development of powers of the human mind. As the innate powers vary from learner to learner, so also the process varies. Education should ensure free and natural growth for the learner. According to him, the child is a potential learner. There is certain amount of innate knowledge in every child and the teacher should be a role model to his children that mere imitation can enable them to reach higher and higher stages of development. After all the real aim of education is to be enable one fo be and not to do."

Sri Aurobindo's Integral education covers five aspects- physical, mental vital, psychic and spiritual and these thoughts are being tried out at Sri Aurobindo International Center for Education at Pondicherry has been declared by the Government of India as one of the five institutions of higher learning of all India importance.

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