

**SRI AUROBINDA'S VISION ABOUT INTEGRAL EDUCATION: AN
ASSESSMENT**

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ABSTRACT

India is the land of sannyasin, sages, philosophers and social reformers. One among them was Sri Aurobinda who was initially nationalist revolutionary, gradually turned into moralist educationist and spiritualist. He believed that education is such a useful tool which helps one to realize oneself, to discover the aim of one's life and to find out the specific role in the society. He was the pioneer of integral education. All round development and expression of body, mind, and spirit is called integral education which inspires one to construct the five essential aspects of personality such as the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Sri Aurobinda suggests three teaching principles which are very competent and valuable in modern era. According to him the teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, the teacher is one who helps, guides accordingly but never commands nor imposes anything. Nowadays, it is very essential to fuse the existing concept of education with the concept of integral education for developing innate values, spirituality and divinity.

Key words- Revolutionary, Moralist, Integral, Innate values, Spirituality, Divinity.

Introduction

India is the holy land of culture and values. India has such an inherent power which helps her to assimilate the different forms of culture and results 'unity in diversity'. Now we are passing

through such a crisis period which threatens 'the unity' of the country. In this context, the idea of integral education of Sri Aurobinda is too relevant. Modern education system provides hardly any cultural temperament as well as values to an individual. But the proper blending of these two i.e, the existing system with integral education will help one to become a person of values.

The present paper attempts to discuss concisely covering the life history of Sri Aurobinda and his educational philosophy including the concept of integral education and teaching principles. The whole paper is divided into major three parts. Excluding the introductory portion, Part –I describes the objectives and materials as well as methods of the study. Analysis and discussion appear in Part-II, where as conclusion comes into view in Part-III of the study.

Part - I

1.1 Objectives

The following objectives are laid down to validate the present discussion:

1. To discuss the life history of Sri Aurobinda.
2. To know the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobinda.
3. To assess the concept of integral education.
4. To realize the teaching principles of integral education and its utility.

1.2 Materials and Methods

The study is mainly analytical in nature. The discussion is prepared based on the collective review of literature and studies undertaken by various researches as well as selected books. The whole discussion is divided into the following two parts:

1. Sri Aurobinda's life
2. Integral education : Sri Aurobinda's vision

Part – II

2. Analysis and Discussion

2.1. Sri Aurobinda's Life

Sri Aurobindo was one of the greatest modern seers and Vedic scholars in 19th century. He was born on 15th August, 1872 in Calcutta. His father was Dr. Krishnadhan Ghosh and mother was Swarnalata Devi. His father wanted him to accept modern English education and for the sake of that he was send to England where he studied several languages like Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian etc. He returned to India in 1893 after completion his education and he joined the educational service in the state of Baroda. In 1905, when Banga-Vanga started, he felt innate love for his poor, freedom less motherland. He resigned his post and went to Calcutta where he studied Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi and so many Indian languages and familiarized himself with the profound socio-cultural heritage of India.

He joined the freedom struggle and was imprisoned several times. When he was imprisoned in Alipore jail, he had a divine vision which changed his life into spiritual path (Babu, 2013).

2.2 Integral Education: Sri Aurobindo's vision

All principles regarding education have certain aims. They may satisfy the bare needs of an individual providing the skills and academic knowledge needed for entering a lucrative profession. They may acute focus on physical, cognitive, emotional and artistic development of the individual differently. Present education system ignores the child's individuality, creativity and his logical and independent thinking which is not in accordance with the running concept (Banerjee, 2009).

Now, it is needed to integrate all these principles into a unique principle which is the key theme of value-based and holistic education, popularly known as integral education. Integral education is the education of body, mind and spirit i.e, the education for all round development of an individual and it was propounded by Sri Aurobinda in his so many writings on education. According to him, "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic cultural machinery and organized collective means for his intellectual,

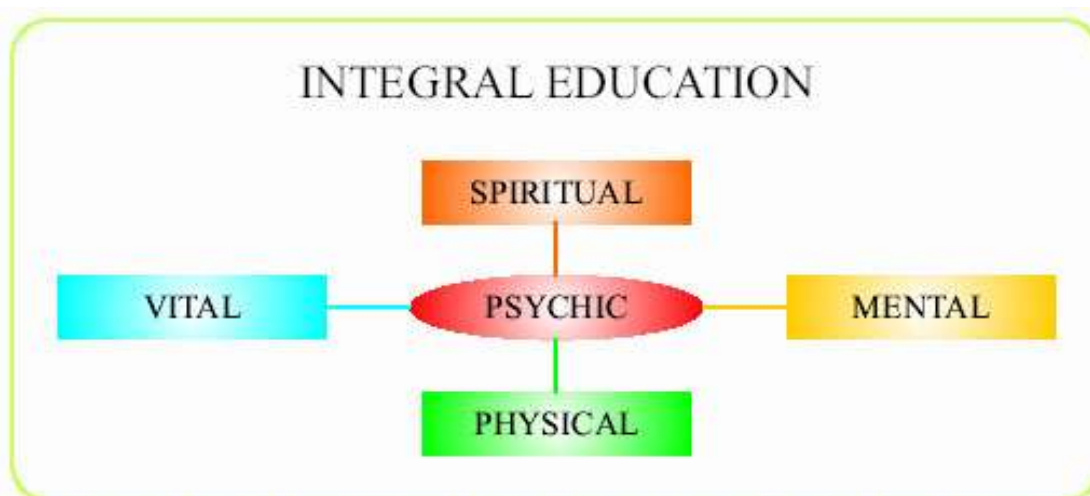
sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilization which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole life”(Aurobinda, 2010).

2.2.1 Educational philosophy of Sri Aurobinda

According to Sri Aurobinda, education means one that will offer the most influential medium where by one can live for the divine, for the country, for one self and for others’ The ultimate goal of the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobinda was developing the innate spiritual feelings/realization of man (Das, 1972).

According to Sri Aurobinda, neither education nor religion in the past had changed man. Now it is the time to give a total spiritual orientation to the whole education and the life of the nation. This he called it an integral education. All aspects i.e. physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual related to an individual should be blended through the system of integral education and it should be given according to their swabhaba (inner disposition) and swadharma (inner nature). Integral education will help an individual not only for his own evolution but also development of the nation and finally of the humanity and brotherhood (Rajput, 2006).

2.2.2 Different parts of Integral education



2.2.2.1 Physical education

Everyone wants to see oneself as a beautiful personality. One of the essential demands for good personality is physical beauty. According to Sri Aurobinda beauty is the ideal physical life.

The physical education will provide the individuals the extensive knowledge about the human body, its different organs and their functioning. It will provide them

- i) How to control the physical functions/movements external organs
- ii) How to overcome the physical limitations.

Asana (physical exercise) and pranayama (breathing techniques) are the important tools to get good physical health and beauty and it will provide the acute concentration.

The knowledge in physical education will aware them how to control the physical demands of the body. Sports and games will provide them new forms of energy to control that in a healthy way. Dhyana, yoga and bhakti are the essential parts of the physical education which will help an individual to transform into spiritual beings (Kundu, 2009).

2.2.2.2 Virtual Education

The vital is the fountainhead of life, the source of all our emotions, feelings, desires and impulses. According to Sri Aurobinda, vital education should begin as early as an individual is able to use his sense organs. This is done through variety of activities, games and puzzles. Vital

education will provide the knowledge about the development and proper utilization of sense organ and will aware them how to develop their aesthetic personality (Singh, 2008).

2.2.2.3 Mental Education

Mental education is very important in early childhood because at this stage one can gather knowledge about his/her surroundings through observation which demands silence and acute concentration. The other faculties of mind i.e. the power of memory, the power of imagination, the power of thinking also develop thorough mental education. Mental education has the following functions 1) to accumulate the old knowledge about the existing one in relation to own culture. 2) to discover the new knowledge and 3) to develop the capability for using acquired knowledge.

It helps one to develop the power of concentration, the capacities of acute attention, expansion, wideness, complexity, richness thought control, mental silence and calm and ultimately it develops the luminous concept about humanity and universal brotherhood which will guide one to survive whole life.

2.2.2.4 Psychic Education

The above three categories of education i.e. physical education, vital education and mental education are responsible to make healthy personality but the knowledge in psychic education helps an individual to realize one's own existence, to feel the expression of soul according to one's innate nature and lastly to listen the divine voice arise from the heart.

2.2.2.5 Spiritual Education

It is the last and final step of integral education. When an individual go through the earlier steps of integral education, one realizes a certain transformation that one can enter into spiritual education. Spiritual education involves an earthly escape from all realistic manifestations. Psychic and spiritual educations are blended to form 'Supra-mental education' which will provide one a level of self-realization of love, humanity and divinity (Ranade, 2007)

2.2.3 Principles of Teaching Integral Education

Sri Aurobinda gives three fundamental principles of teaching. According to him, “The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task master, he is a helper and guide. His business is to suggest and not impose....The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. 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 use..... The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development (Srinivasan, 2012).

Part-III

Conclusion

The present education system ignores the child’s individuality, suppresses creativity and independent thinking rather it concentrates on producing certified professionals. The children, who adjust with the present education system, can satisfy the demands of modern society. But who cannot, they are gradually involved in wrong activities. As a result we are the members of society without values. Modern gadgets which make our life-process easier can’t ignore them. Again we also have to implement the values through integral education. In this context, fusion of present education system with the idea of integral education is necessary and relevant. If it is, we can get such a society which will provide love, peace, humanity and divinity.

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