

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education: A Contemporary Need



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Abstract

An aimless life is always a miserable life. Quality of one's aim depends on the quality of one's life. To achieve the perfection the prime most steps is the Self Awareness. The present Article is on the concept of integral education by Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) who was the great philosopher, political activist, a mystic, a spiritual leader, a poet, a yogi, a teacher and nationalist. He proposed a method of education, that is, integral education, for achieving higher level of consciousness. In modern times; Integral educations are immensely applicable in our system of education which can radically and favourably change the social, economic and political spheres of life.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo, Integral Education

Introduction

"Education which will offer the tools whereby one can live for the divine, for the country, for oneself, and for others and this must be the ideal of every school which calls itself national".

Sri Aurobindo

The purpose of education is not merely to create a literate individual, or a highly informed person crammed with information and facts, or to create an individual to find a job but to develop his potentialities to the maximum, to integrate him with himself, his surroundings, his society, his country and humanity to make him the 'complete man', the 'integral man'. The development of an integral man who is full of contentment, whose life is filled with love, comfort, faith in God & with inner peace, who is physically fit and full of positive energy and who can take care of his needs, his family's needs and who is useful for the society and for the country. The development of values like patience, non-violence, truth, respect to all religions and humanity etc. The most important aspects of an individual are his character, his personality and his values. The process of education must be integral aiming at the total and complete development of the individual and the subtler spiritual qualities that can channelize, harmonise and direct all the different parts of an individual into a life that is beneficial to the individual and to his fellow men.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to analyse the concept of integral education as given by Sri Aurobindo and relates it to the contemporary education system and transmits the philosophy of our great leaders to the next generation.

Brief Life Sketch of Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo Gosh was an idealistic born in an educated middle class family in Calcutta on 15th Aug. 1872. 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 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.

Integral Education

The supreme truths are neither the rigid conclusions of logical reasoning nor the affirmations of creedal statement, but fruits of the soul's inner experience.

Sri Aurobindo

According to Sri Aurobindo, integral education is complete which comes naturally, easily, effectively and without any strain. It aspires to encompass all the parts of the being from the physical to the supramental and would continue throughout the life of the individual. A divine life in a divine body will be its ultimate aim. The process of this education will be an effort to be guided by the soul and not by any fixed habits, conventions or ideas. Integral education helps the individual as

1. To develop an integrate personality of both the pupil & the teacher.
2. To manifest supreme divine consciousness in the physical life.

Aurobindo's Scheme of Education is Integral in two Senses

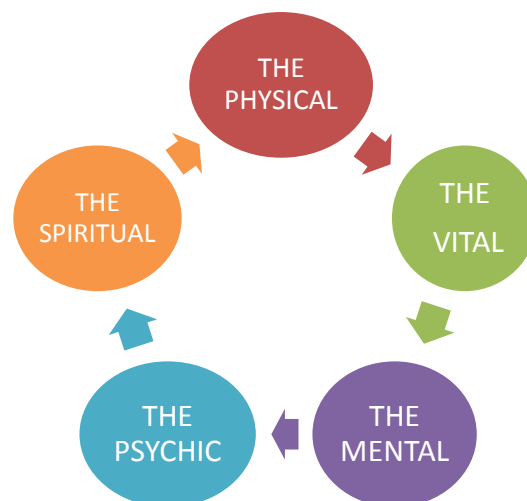
Firstly, it is integral in the sense inculcating all the five aspects of the individual being. Secondly, it is integral in the sense of being an education not only for the evolution of the individual alone, but also of the nation and and finally of the humanity. The ultimate aim of education is the evolution of total humanity at the global level. In modern times, Yoga education is stressed alot which includes all aspects from physical fitness and wellness to up liftment of human beings through spirituality.

An important characteristic of integral education is its insistence on simultaneous development of Knowledge, Will, Harmony, and Skill as also various parts of the being to the extent possible from the earliest stages of education. And since each individual child is unique in the composition of its qualities and characteristics, its capacities and propensities, integral education in its practice tends to become increasingly individualised. Again, for this very reason, the methods of education become increasingly dynamic, involving active participation of the child in its own growth.

Important aspects that constitute integral education are achievement of five principal aspects – the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. All the above five aspects have to be developed together

The Five Principle Aspects of Integral Education "Education to be complete must have five principal aspects corresponding to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Usually, these phases of education follow chronologically the growth of the individual; this, however, does not mean that one of them should replace another, but that all must continue, completing one another until the end of his life."

The Mother



Physical Education

Physical education includes control on the physical functions and development of physical movements. For this games and sports are stressed.

Vital Education

It is the vital which holds power, energy, enthusiasm, effective dynamism etc.

Mental Education

It includes intelligence and cognition. A true mental education, which will prepare man for a higher life.

The Psychic and Spiritual Education

Aurobindo also speaks of mental and psychic education. The spiritual stage transcends the mental and the psychic stage. To meet the crisis of modern time periods development of psychic and spiritual consciousness should be fostered.

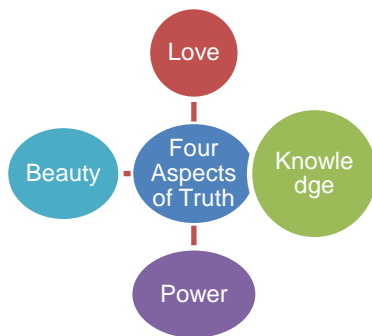
In Modern education system the children are taught physical education right from the early stage - the right positions, postures and movements. A similar training is with regard to the choice of food. The child is taught the taste for cleanliness and hygienic habits.

For Mental education Stress is not only on understanding of the concepts, comprehension, synthesis, creativity, judgement, imagination, memory and observation, but also on criticism and control of ideas; critical functions of comparison, reasoning, inference and conclusion.

Vital education is needed to guide the desires, passions, ambitions, lusts, their risings, revolts and contradictions etc.

Similarly the psychic and spiritual education is the need of present time to promote the balanced development of child. Spirituality helps an individual to meet the stresses and crisis of present time. Aurobindo's principal aspects are needs of modern system of education.

Development of the four aspects of truth namely; love, knowledge, power, and beauty.



An Individual needs these aspects of truth for balanced growth. The right knowledge, appreciation of surroundings having positive attitude, right use of power and energies, and love for the humanity at global level is what an individual is required to learn.

Three Principles of Integral Education

Sri Aurobindo outlined three fundamental principles of integral education.

1. The first is that "nothing can be taught." He indicated that the proper role of the educator is not to instruct or to impart knowledge to the pupil, but rather to help and guide the student in acquiring knowledge for him or herself. The educator's role is to suggest and to encourage the pupil in the quest for knowledge, and to assist the learner in finding it. The true knowledge comes from within; it is not supplied in the form of information from outside. The provision of outside resources and a stimulating and enriching environment is useful in that they may help to awaken the individual to potentialities that are hidden within, while at the same time providing materials and a field of experience with which to manifest these latent possibilities.
2. The second principle is related to the first. It is that "the mind has to be consulted in its own growth." This means, again, not to impose knowledge on the pupil, nor to arrange for the student to develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, or a prearranged career. Each individual has a unique dharma, a particular Divine-given talent and duty, and it is the educator's responsibility to help the student identify these innate interests, predispositions, and abilities and to develop and perfect them. To externally impose some arbitrary set of ideas, capacities, or qualities determined by others is to deflect the individual from his or her natural developmental trajectory, to separate and estrange the person from their own soul, and to lead the individual in wrong directions and hamper and cut short the potentialities of the life.
3. The third principle is "to work from the near to the far." This principle pertains to the basic observation that in addition to the importance of the soul and its past development in shaping the individual nature, other factors such as heredity, the immediate surroundings in which one lives and breathes, one's

nationality and ethnic customs, the country in which one lives, all play important roles in the development of the outer nature. Educationists should use these materials, work in the individual's own context, allow the individual's roots in this native soil to grow strong and develop. When this basis is securely established, it is easier and safer for the individual to reach out and expand the circle of these first established moorings. But this principle may be applied to various levels of development, not only the physical and cultural milieu. In general, the individual must be guided from what is known, what is accomplished and secure, to further extensions of knowledge and ability that lie within reach but are as yet unrealized or undeveloped.

To make these principles applicable in education, teachers can make the students learn in natural environment, use of mother tongue, self expression, giving freedom to students etc. In modern system of education there is great need of provision of free environment to the students to make it pupil centered, full of creativity and novelty. Stress is given on practical knowledge and learning by experiments.

Aims of Education According to Integral Education

Integral education aims at the Perfection of soul, Realization of inner self, Physical development, Development of morality, the development of senses, Development of consciousness, Cultivation of values etc. It is the need of present time to develop the child in all aspects. Today's child is not developing in balanced manner. His energies, potential, capabilities etc should be channelized in right direction. Spiritual development along with physical and mental development is equally important. In the stressful environment awakening of inner self by students is beneficial in coping with various situations. In this manner the aims of education given by Aurobindo are demands of present times.

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. Curriculum is not confined to a limited syllabus and a few text books. It should include all those subjects which promote mental and spiritual development. There should be flexibility to meet individual needs. Curriculum should involve creativity of life and constructive activities.

Aurobindo has prescribed the following subjects in the curriculum.

Primary Stage

Mother Tongue, English, National History, Art, Painting, General Science, Social Studies, and Arithmetic. In modern times, English being the international language is highly important in modern system of education. Aurobindo focussed on the learning of English along with vernacular languages and other general subjects.

Secondary Stage

Mother tongue, English, French, Arithmetic, Art, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Social Studies, Physiology, and Health Education. Aurobindo gave importance to foreign languages at this stage along with various sciences. Now in modern system of education, knowledge of more than 2-3 languages is extremely valued.

University Stage

Indian and western philosophy, History of Civilization, English, Literature, French, Sociology, Psychology, History of Science, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, International relations and integration. In modern times, it is believed that when an individual enters into world of work he must have an attitude and abilities of understanding and respecting human relationships and their view points. Focuss on the subjects like sociology, psychology, international relations, integration etc. Build right attitude and abilities at this stage.

Vocational Education

Arts, painting, photography, sewing, sculptural, drawing, type, shorthand, collage- industries, carpentry, nursing, mechanical and electrical engineering, Indian and European music, and dramatization. He had given importance to learning of skills, art and craft etc. So that an individual can run small scale industries and contribute to his nation's production. In modern times, there is lack of employment opportunities in our economy. The curriculum proposed by Aurobindo is highly applicable in present time period.

The Teacher

Sri Aurobindo compared the teacher to a gardener. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes an inner relationship between the educator and the educand. The teacher remains the philosopher and the guide. The Guru does not have absolute authority. He aims at turning the within the educand. He is the ultimate guide and yet the teacher plays a disciple's eye towards the beacon light of his own Godhead. He has not to impose his opinions or demand passive surrender from the educand.

School

The type of schooling visualized by Sri Aurobindo is seen as aiming to bridge the gap between the child's life at school and that at home. 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. In modern times when education is to be child centered, the concept of school given by Aurobindo is highly applicable to make the learning process more fruitful. The school should provide sufficient number of opportunities in curricular and co-curricular activities to make full use of his potentials, energies and capacities.

Conclusion

Aurobindo's Teaching and Philosophy is utmost important if Human being wants to live in peace and harmony. Integral education is very much relevant in this Twenty first century where Science and Spirituality should go side by side. Sri Aurobindo

proposed an education system which aims at bringing about change not merely in the society but primarily in the human behaviour or nature itself. To make the education complete, divine aspect of education can't be ignored which is important for the inner enrichment of human beings. Most of human being is now engaged in Search of Happiness but "True happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body" as the saint Sri Aurobindo said. To save the mother earth and humanity, we must follow the Philosophy and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo.

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