



RE-CONSTRUING SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH FROM EDUCATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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ABSTRACT

Sri Aurobindo, within his life span, wandered into many fields of human life. Whenever he is stationed in the field of life, he has devoted his heart and soul to it. Education, teaching, national liberation movement, Sadhana, wherever he involved himself, he maintained his uniqueness. But these different aspects of his working life seem in many ways contradictory and mutually exclusive, but in reality, they are not. The main formulas of his thought in different fields took a coherent individual form in his mind. Sri Aurobindo can therefore be considered the embodiment of the modern age of Integral thought. This Integral tendency can also be observed in his thinking about education that is Integral Education. Sri Aurobindo's educational thought was born from his deep spiritual consciousness and sharp scientific analysis. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo has made a meaningful combination of Western and Eastern perspectives in his concept of Integral Education. Aurobindo's philosophy is not recommended by any religious denomination. On the basis of basic human religion, he proposed this doctrine, which is applicable to the people of any religion, in any country. Thus, Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of education can be applied to building a universal education infrastructure for the modern world.

KEYWORDS: Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, educational viewpoint, integral education, philosophy of life, educational philosophy and goals of education.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo Ghose was born on August 15, 1872, in Kolkata, West Bengal, India (Saha & Maji, 2013). He was a great philosopher and thinker. His creation greatly affects the Indians. After all his contribution, he went to the afterlife on December 5, 1950. Aurobindo's formal education was spent in England (Rani, 2017). So, he was well aware of European thought. Returning home after graduation, he acquired knowledge on Indian languages and philosophy while teaching at Baroda College, entirely through personal effort. During this time he also started practising yoga. For some time he was directly associated with the freedom movement. He also had to spend a year in jail in the 'Maniktala Bomb' case. During this time he studied Gita, Upanishad etc. with deep attention. After his release from jail, he abandoned his political activities and settled first in French-occupied Chandannagar and later in Pondicherry. In his later life, he devoted himself searching for the welfare of mankind through *sadhana*. He later developed his educational philosophy based on the experience he gained as the Principal of the National Education Council during the National Education Movement.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE OF SRI AUROBINDO

Philosophy of Life of Sri Aurobindo is based on Vedanta Philosophy. He said that every human being has some auspicious present. This auspicious power is the Almighty *Paramatma* or the supreme soul or *Brahma* (Giri, 2022). The main objective of all endeavours in personal life is to find and

develop that auspicious power. He considered all the small objects in the universe as many cells of that single *Brahma* consciousness. He says that it is through yoga that he can be seen by coordinating these tiny parts. When this harmony takes place, the person realizes that universal consciousness or the Supreme *Brahma*, and he can see the harmony of that Supreme *Brahma* in others. Sri Aurobindo says that humans are the only animals in the animal kingdom who have the ability to perceive this harmonious form of the Supreme *Brahma*. He said, there is a spiritual aspect of human life and it is this spiritual life that has given him superiority among the animals. Other non-human beings do not have this feature. Sri Aurobindo also says that the Almighty Universal Spirit manifests in two forms. One is His ultimate form of existence, and the other is His manifested evolving form. The Being is the fundamental reality, and the Becoming is the actual reality. It is the dynamic power and result of creative energy and working out of being a constantly persistent yet mutable form, the processed outcome of its immutable formless essence. His manifest aspect can be witnessed only when the man is able to perceive his existence properly. In the gross sense, the ultimate truth is life and its subdivisions are the way of life. The purpose of human life is to achieve a meaningful harmony between this life and the customs of living. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is possible through *Yoga Sadhana*.



EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is part of his philosophy of life. In his philosophy of life, he pointed out the realization of the Universal Spirit as the ultimate goal of human life. As a means of achieving this objective, he adopted education. He believed that the developmental process helps people realize the existence of omnipotent world consciousness, hence education. Sri Aurobindo elaborates on this basic concept of education in the context of explanation. He said that alone will be a true education that helps to bring out to the full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life. In this respect, we can call up Kalam and his inspirational philosophy of life to inspire the young adult minds of the nation (Gayen et al. 2021). Relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of the humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation of living a separate and yet inseparable member. In short, the true meaning of Sri Aurobindo's statement is that education is a process that enables the individual to fulfil all his inherent potential. The process is capable of making the individual aware of the universal, omnipotent world soul. In this sense, education is an integrating process that brings harmony between the three aspects of the individual life or soul. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo's concept of education is called integral education. Some educationists have expressed the opinion that no contemporary concept of education, so deeply embedded in the human mind, contemplates integration. Hence there is a subtle difference between this idea of Sri Aurobindo's education and that of ancient traditions and even many educational ideas. In his harmonious educational concept, one can see the attempt to bind the individual with society, the material world with the inner world and the creator with his creation in the same harmony. According to this concept, the development of individual life will reach its culmination only when the individual is able to realize the Supreme in his own heart. In Sri Aurobindo's concept of education, the aim of education is implicitly mentioned. He especially emphasized the coordination of pedagogy and philosophy of education in his educational philosophy. Imposed that is, the basic aim of education is to reconcile a number of apparently contradictory tendencies. Sri Aurobindo believed that if these adjustments can be made in the development of one's life, one will be able to reach the ultimate goal of one's life. Analysing these areas of coordination, the aims of education laid down by Sri Aurobindo can be properly understood.

Integral Education

Sri Aurobindo said that Integral education aims at integrating the material and spiritual dimensions of personality. That is, one of the aims of education is to reconcile the objectivity and spirituality of the individual (Islam, 2017). Like the ancient Indian sages, Sri Aurobindo did not distinguish between *Paravidya* and *Aparavidya*. *Paravidya* is knowledge of *Brahma*. Enlightenment can be achieved through self-realization. *Aparavidya*, on the other hand, is the knowledge of the material world. This *Aparavidya* can be acquired through

the practice of so-called subjects like literature, science etc. But without *Paravidya*, this *Aparavidya* is completely meaningless in individual life. The knowledge of the material world gives man the satisfaction of living temporarily but confuses his life. Sri Aurobindo termed this *Aparavidya* devoid of *Paravidya* as *Avidya*. He says, in modern times, this ignorance is responsible for all the calamities of man. But at once he admits that superstition is not entirely excluded. Because the religion of life is living. And to live a righteous life, materialism is also necessary. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo thinks that if *Aparavidya* can manifest in the light of *Paravidya*, it will become beneficial. Real education will help to achieve this goal. Thus, the aim of education will be to help the learner to grasp material knowledge in the light of *Paravidya*. According to Sri Aurobindo, one of the main aims of education is to serve before the learner, giving significance to material knowledge in terms of both life and living.

GOALS OF EDUCATION

There has long been a conflict among educational philosophers about deciding what the goals of education should be. Some educational philosophers expressed the opinion that the individual should be the goal of education. The sole aim of education shall be to facilitate the full development of the personality traits of the individual or student. Another group of educational philosophers, on the other hand, fixed the welfare and development of society as the sole aim of education. At the theoretical level of philosophy, this conflict is thought to have ended in modern education, but in reality, it has not. People of the modern world are divided by the influence of two social philosophies. In those states where people believe in democratic social philosophy, emphasis is placed on developing individualism in education. As a result, the goal of individualized education is pursued in democratic states. Thus, it can also be incorporated that values and morals are also important aspects in human life (Gayen, 2023).

On the other hand, the opposite view can be observed in those countries where the people believe in socialist ideology. That is, in socialist states the welfare and development of society as a whole is pursued as the sole ultimate goal of education (Kaur, 2013). Sri Aurobindo, in his educational thought, did not consider the individual and the state or the people as separate entities. He did not even think of the mutual conflict between them. He thinks that individuals and society are complementary to each other and both are manifestations of universal manhood. An individual is a small unit of the whole human spirit. So there is no room to consider him separately from the public or the state. For this reason, Sri Aurobindo described the individual as a separate and yet inseparable member of his philosophy.

The aim of Sri Aurobindo's Education is to awaken this feeling in people's minds. Thus, according to his concept, one of the aims of education is to establish the unity of the individual with society. But the attempt to establish this relationship through education will not be based on logic but will be completely based on feelings. Sri Aurobindo said about man, man is the divine incarnate with a mission to be fulfilled. A person is a



symbol of God or an incarnation of God and he has to perform a good deed. This good deed is to realize God. In traditional education, the field of human knowledge is divided into various branches such as science, arts, commerce, technology etc. Sri Aurobindo felt that this division of the knowledge of the universe as a whole, and the practice of those small parts, narrow the process of mental development of the individual. To think of the individual as a writer, scientist, or engineer means that his ego is divided into smaller parts. To be bound up in bonds. One must be accustomed to thinking as a human being. The aim of education will be to form this habit in the student. Culminating in his life, that is, materially speaking, one of the aims of Aurobindo's teaching is to open up to the student all fields of knowledge and help them to realize their complete unity.

Analyzing the mentality of modern people, it can be seen that there are contradictions in it. There is no harmony between his desires, actions and thoughts. Sri Aurobindo commented modern man is completely fragmented at heart. Through education, he should harmonize his thoughts, actions and desires. He will be considered as a mature man, whose will, action and thought are in harmony with each other. He says, if the personality is brought close to the soul, the separation between it will be removed. The aim of true education will be to awaken the consciousness of man to this end. Every human being's consciousness is thunderous in its initial stage. At the next stage of the development of that material consciousness, it is transformed into the inner consciousness, and at the last stage, it merges with the world consciousness. A person who has been able to establish unity with this world consciousness has achieved complete harmony in his personality. When a person has advanced to this stage, there is no contradiction in his behaviour, thoughts or desires. Helping to develop such a personality should be the aim of education according to Sri Aurobindo.

From this discussion on the goal of education, Sri Aurobindo was able to perceive a form of harmony in the universe through his philosophical intuition. So, he chose as the main aim of education the task of harmonizing the apparently conflicting ideas and trends existing in knowledge and in life. He did not completely discard any conventional goal of education. Recognizing that each of those goals is significant and desirable in human life, he said that trying to achieve those goals in isolation is meaningless from the point of view of life. Attempting to achieve separate goals will create chaos in one's life. So, in various conventional goals of education, Sri Aurobindo attempted to interrelate by including a fundamental goal. This main aim is to inculcate world consciousness in the mind of the individual or student. He felt that within this world consciousness, there would be a combination of the traditional materialistic aims of education with spiritual aims, individualistic aims and social aims. Therefore, the ultimate goal of education is to realize universal consciousness or *Satchidananda Parambrahma* (Jha, 2013). This goal of education chosen by Sri Aurobindo is compatible with the concept of modern international brotherhood. Because the aim of this education is complete unity.

Sri Aurobindo said about man, Man is the divine incarnate with a mission to be fulfilled. A person is a symbol of God or an incarnation of God and he has to perform a work. This good work is to realize God. In traditional education, the field of human knowledge is divided into various branches such as science, arts, commerce, technology etc. Sri Aurobindo felt that this division of the knowledge of the universe as a whole, and the practice of those small parts, narrowed the process of the individual's mental development. To think of the individual as a writer, scientist or engineer meant that his ego or self was divided into smaller parts. To be confined in small knots. One must be accustomed to thinking as a human being. The aim of education is to form this habit in the student. Different branches of human knowledge are the only means by which one realizes the One Absolute. Through this, he will reach the culmination of his life. That is, materially judged, one of the aims of Aurobindo's teaching is to open up all fields of knowledge to the student and help him to realize their complete unity.

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CONCLUSION

From this discussion on the goal of education, Sri Aurobindo was able to perceive a form of harmony in the universe through his philosophical intuition. He, therefore, chose as the main aim of education the task of harmonizing the apparently contradictory ideas and tendencies which exist in the field of knowledge and in the field of life. He did not completely discard any conventional goal of education. Recognizing that each of those goals is significant and desirable in human life, he said that trying to achieve those goals in isolation is meaningless from the point of view of life. Attempting to achieve separate goals will create chaos in one's life. Sri



Aurobindo, therefore, attempted to interrelate the various conventional aims of education by subsuming them into one fundamental aim. This main aim is to inculcate world consciousness in the mind of the individual or student. He felt that within this world consciousness, there would be a combination of the traditional materialistic aims of education with spiritual aims, individualistic aims and social aims. Therefore, the ultimate goal of education is to realize universal consciousness or Satchidananda Parambrahma. Sri Aurobindo said if it is true that spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is sacred God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realization of God within and without are the highest and the most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth. This goal of education chosen by Sri Aurobindo is compatible with the concept of modern international brotherhood. Because the aim of this education is complete unity. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo has made a meaningful combination of Western and Eastern perspectives in his concept of Integral Education. One of the leading literary figure of India, Rabindranath Tagore has also made a tremendous contribution in the field of education (Mondal & Gayen, 2021).

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