



EXPLORING SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: A FOCUS ON FIVE KEY ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper delves into the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, a prominent Indian philosopher, poet, and nationalist leader. The paper focuses on five key aspects of his philosophy: physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual education. Through an analysis of his writings and teachings, this paper seeks to highlight the holistic approach to education advocated by Sri Aurobindo, which emphasizes the development of all aspects of the individual.

Keyword: Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, educational philosophy, holistic education, physical education, mental education, vital education, psychic education, spiritual education.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, a multifaceted personality, was not only a revolutionary leader and a spiritual guru but also a profound thinker in the field of education. His educational philosophy is deeply rooted in the belief that education should aim at the holistic development of an individual, encompassing physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual aspects. This paper explores these five key aspects of Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy and their implications for contemporary education.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was a profound idealist whose philosophy of life was deeply rooted in the Vedantic teachings of the Upanishads. He believed that the education needed in India

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should be tailored to the Indian soul, its needs, temperament, and culture. This education should not simply be a reflection of the past but should align with the evolving soul of India, its future requirements, and the greatness of its forthcoming self-creation. According to Sri Aurobindo, education is not just about acquiring information; its central aim is the development of the human mind and spirit.

His philosophy implies a harmonious integration of God and humanity, renunciation and enjoyment, freedom of the soul and the workings of nature, being and becoming, the unity and diversity of knowledge and action, and birth and liberation. He believed that fellowship with God leads to a new birth and a new ideal of work in individuals. This fellowship can be attained through selfless action in society, continuous meditation, self-forgetting devotion, and a sense of unity with all things in God.

Sri Aurobindo rejected fatalism, asserting that individuals shape their own destinies. He believed that heredity and environment are influenced by a person's present and past actions. Individuals not only experience the consequences of their own actions but may also be affected by the actions of others, and vice versa, due to the interconnectedness of all existence. He upheld the doctrine of karma, stating that thoughts and feelings also have consequences, though actions carry the most significant impact, as life is primarily composed of actions.

For Sri Aurobindo, the education of values was paramount. He regarded spirituality as the highest quality in humans. He believed that guidance should begin from birth and continue seamlessly throughout an individual's life, encompassing five principal aspects: physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual. These aspects should complement each other throughout an individual's life, ensuring holistic development from birth to death, or even from womb to tomb.

1.1 SRI AUROBINDO'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is grounded in the belief that education is not merely a process of acquiring knowledge but a means of self-discovery and self-transformation. According to Sri Aurobindo, education should aim at the development of all aspects of the individual – physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual.

The fundamental tenet of Sri Aurobindo's Educational Philosophy was to awaken the individual as a spiritual being, emphasizing the importance of aligning education with life truths and self-mastery for the child. Sri Aurobindo categorized human nature into five aspects - physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual - each corresponding to a specific aspect of education: physical education, vital education, mental education, psychic education, and spiritual or super mental education.

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Physical education, according to Sri Aurobindo, involves mastery over physical functions, the harmonious development of physical movements, overcoming physical limitations, and cultivating awareness of body consciousness. He emphasized the significance of games and sports for renewing energy. Vital education was deemed the most crucial aspect of integral education by Sri Aurobindo. He described the vital being of man as the life nature comprising desires, sensations, feelings, passions, and instincts such as possessiveness, anger, fear, and speed. Mental education, on the other hand, encompasses cognition, ideas, and intelligence. Sri Aurobindo's unique contribution to mental education was the continuous organization of ideas around a central thought. Psychic education, a distinctive element in Sri Aurobindo's educational theory, focused on discovering man's psychic nature. This integral approach aimed to develop the latent powers of the child, train the six senses, foster logical faculties, emphasize physical education, uphold the principle of freedom, and provide moral, religious, and spiritual education to facilitate the individual's spiritualization.

2.FIVE PRINCIPLE ASPECTS

2.1 Physical Education:

Sri Aurobindo emphasized the importance of physical education in his educational philosophy. He believed that a healthy body is essential for a healthy mind and emphasized the need for physical exercise, sports, and outdoor activities as integral parts of the educational curriculum. In traditional education, the focus has predominantly been on cognitive and intellectual aspects of learning, neglecting the integral role of the physical body. This approach, termed 'cognicentrism,' assumes that cognitive abilities should dominate learning. In higher education, the physical body is often seen as secondary, with activities like sports considered separate from academic learning. However, there is a crucial relationship between the mind and body in acquiring knowledge. Integral education recognizes the importance of the body and its potential, emphasizing a holistic approach. The Mother advocates for rigorous physical education, including control of bodily functions, harmonious development, and correction of deformities. A personalized pedagogical approach is advised to adapt to the body's habit-forming nature, promoting adaptability and growth. Physical practices like martial arts, dance, and athletics are integral to developing physical intelligence, contributing to student health, well-being, and creativity, which in turn affects self-confidence.

2.2 Mental Education:

In the realm of mental education, Sri Aurobindo advocated for a broad and comprehensive curriculum that includes not only academic subjects but also arts, literature, and philosophy. He believed that education should cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and a love for learning. Integral education emphasizes various cognitive faculties essential for mental

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development, including memory, abstract thinking, gestalt, contemplation, inspiration, intuition, and imagination. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the importance of engaging students in life, work, and knowledge, simplifying instruction while examining the tools of knowledge. He stresses the early development of memory and the gradual transition from concrete to abstract concepts. Sri Aurobindo views imagination as crucial, encompassing the creation of mental images, thoughts, and the appreciation of spiritual aspects in existence. He outlines five phases for refining the mind, including concentration, expansion, organization of ideas, thought control, and mental silence, leading to a comprehensive approach for mental development. He advocates understanding over rote learning, transcending reason through concentration, and gaining insights from history to prepare for the future.

2.3 Vital Education:

Sri Aurobindo's concept of vital education focuses on the development of the vital or emotional aspect of the individual. He emphasized the importance of cultivating positive emotions such as love, empathy, and compassion, while also learning to manage negative emotions such as anger and jealousy. The vital aspect of integral education shares similarities with emotional, instinctual, and libidinal processes. He describes the vital being as a combination of impulses, desires, enthusiasm, violence, energy, depression, passions, and revolts. It is divided into two main categories: developing and using the sense organs, and becoming aware of and mastering one's character for its transformation. The first category involves using sense organs to perceive the environment, while the second entails reflecting on one's reactions, thoughts, and experiences internally. These categories provide learners with a range of sensory, perceptual, and contemplative information, enriching their understanding and engagement with life.

2.4 Psychic Education:

Sri Aurobindo introduced the concept of psychic education, which is centered around the development of the innermost core of the individual, known as the psychic being. He believed that true education should help individuals connect with their inner self and discover their true purpose in life. His insights on psychic education has offer profound considerations for educators. He discusses the Psychic Being, related aspects of the Self, and the path. He emphasizes that psychic education involves understanding the true motive of life and the reason for our existence, which is the consecration of the individual to their eternal principle. Integral education focuses on recognizing and nurturing the unique contribution inherent in each individual, known as svadharma. He also discusses svabhāva, stating that the psychic presence connects an individual with the truth of their being and life circumstances. To embody the psychic in life, one must eliminate selfishness and strive for true selflessness, which is the essence of a spiritual way of life and a key principle of integral education.

2.5 Spiritual Education:

Finally, Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy includes spiritual education, which is aimed at helping individuals transcend their ego and realize their true spiritual nature. He believed that true education should lead to self-realization and ultimately, union with the divine. The spiritual aspect in integral education is paramount. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes awakening and developing one's spiritual being as the highest goal. This awakening is nurtured through education, which aims to facilitate the full expression of one's mature and multi-faceted self. He distinguishes spiritual education as prioritizing the growth of the spirit over religious, moral, or material knowledge. He sees education's highest aim as the manifestation of Truth, making matter ready to manifest the Spirit. Integral education involves developing the learner's material embodiment to invite the spirit's full participation, leading to their integration into society. The role of educators is to help students connect with their inner guidance, not through mere conceptual teaching but through personal example, daily conversations, and readings. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes that each person has their own unique path and purpose, and education's role is to help individuals discover, develop, and use their inner potential for a noble purpose. Teachers should guide students to know themselves, choose their destiny, and master self-discipline, honesty, and methodical action in pursuing their life's purpose. This approach to education aligns with the spiritual dimension of human life, which is one of the primary principles of integral education.

3.CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's educational philosophy offers a holistic approach to education that emphasizes the development of all aspects of the individual – physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual. His teachings continue to inspire educators around the world to adopt a more comprehensive and holistic approach to education, one that seeks to nurture not just the mind but the entire being. Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is student-centered, emphasizing the integral development of students in all aspects of education: psychic, mental, spiritual, physical, and vital. He advocates for creating a free environment that allows students to express their hidden talents and innovations. According to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, every individual possesses divinity to some extent, manifesting as unique abilities that should be identified and nurtured by teachers. Sri Aurobindo envisions an education system that enables students to develop their minds in their own way, leading to their transformation into healthy, knowledgeable, spiritual, and wise individuals capable of creating a harmonious world. This study provides guidance to teachers on selecting appropriate teaching methods and offering inspiration and resources for the holistic development of students' minds.



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