



International Journal of Advanced Academic Studies

E-ISSN: 2706-8927

P-ISSN: 2706-8919

www.allstudyjournal.com

IJAAS 2019; 1(1): 247-249

Received: 13-05-2019

Accepted: 18-16-2019

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Aurobindo's philosophy of education

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Abstract

Aurobindo writes a number of essays in which he depicts Indian culture and civilization very vividly. He advocates spiritual development. He tries to sum up the distinctive features of Indian Civilization. To Sri Aurobindo, 'the notion of progress' in India is spiritual. It is this that makes India 'special and distinctive'. He says that 'if our Ideal is worth preserving, we must be bold and take the battle into the enemy's camp'. He advocates the philosophy of Brahman (the Universal Soul) that is imperishable, Atman (Individual Soul) will be reunited after conquering, 'Maya' (illusion of time and space) with ultimate soul (Brahman) and 'Nirvana' that is a release from rebirth according to Buddhist philosophy.

Keywords: culture, civilization, Brahman, atman, Maya, soul and Nirvana

Introductions

The word 'Philosophy' is derived from the composite Greek term Philo + Sophia, the Greek nouns '*philosophia*' which stands for the love or pursuit of wisdom. The Greeks used the term in a general way to signify the pursuit of intellectual excellence.

Branches of Philosophy includes-Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Political Philosophy, Esthetics, Logic, Philosophy of Mind, and Philosophy of language.

Brahman (the Universal Soul) is imperishable. Atman (Individual Soul) will be reunited after conquering 'Maya' (Illusion of time and space) with ultimate soul (Brahman). 'Nirvana' is a release from rebirth according to Buddhist philosophy.

For the work of the present, and still more, for the work of the future, it is imperatively necessary to create of thought and knowledge which will revolutionize the brain of the nation.

A new centre of thought implies a new centre education that had some regulation, "No tuition fee is charged, but the student or his guardian has to pay Rs. 100/- per month for board and lodging. Expenses towards clothing etc will be extra. Student don't have to buy text books and stationary as they are supplied to them by the centre of education. Centre of Education opens every year on the 16th December and closes for its annual recess at the end of the 1st week of November. All application for admission should therefore reach the mother not later than the 30th November..."(International Centre of Education, 17-18).

The educational Ideas and ideals of Sri Aurobindo are based on internal educational, aims at all round development of personality and realization of self through the development of physical, vital, mental and psychic faculties. Since he envisages all round development of personality and at the same time gives equal importance to the individual, to the community and to humanity. According to him, "Education is nothing, but bringing out and nurturing the latent potentialities, integrate oneself with self, harmonious living of individual with society, country and humanity to make oneself a complete being or integral human being." He presents a national system of education, which may be adopted for educational melioration. His philosophy of education emerges from his philosophy of life based on spiritual penance, practice of Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo recommends perfection, harmony, evolution, building the innate powers and cultivation of values in his educational philosophy. He advises the students to practice Brahmacharya as the source of life and energy is not material, but spiritual. The foundation on which life and energy stand and work is physical. He wants brahmacharya to be the main foundation of education. He says, "The practice of brahmacharya is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force within and turning it to such uses as may benefit the possessor or mankind."

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Sri Aurobindo admits that the teacher is not an instructor or 'task-master', but is a helper and guide. He believes that the teacher's job is to suggest and not to impose. Teacher, according to him, does not impart knowledge, but shows the way to acquire it. He suggests that moral education should be imparted to the students through personal example. He advises teachers not to be arbitrary, despotic, impatient and ill tempered.

He believes that the best teachers must have the capacity and knowledge of different fields of evolution. He emphasizes that the teachers must be sincere in discipline and experience, but not be propagandists. He advocates integral teaching that involves training of senses, training of memory and training of judgment. He points out that the teacher must firstly arouse the curiosity, imagination and natural interest of the students so that they may spontaneously enquire, understand and learn. He further says that teacher should introduce different subjects to the students through practical experience

Shri Aurobindo develops spirituality known as 'Integral Yoga'- 'Evolution of Human Life in Divine Life in Divine Body'. According to him, "Spiritual realization liberates, transforms, human nature and enables a Divine Life on the earth- 'The outer Being', 'The Inner Being', and 'The Psyche Being'."

His main literary works are- 'The Life Divine' that deals with the philosophical aspect of Integral Yoga. 'Savitri'- A Legend and a Symbol, an epic poem

Aurobindo believes that the world can evolve and become a new world with a new special far above the human aspects. End goal of spiritual practice is not only a libertarian from the world into 'Samadhi', but essence of the Devine into world in order to transform it into a divine existence. He says, "This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to form and matter so that it may inform and illuminate them in the seed of redemption him this world in conscience. and ignorance."

He believes that nature which is inter divine has evolved life out of matter and the mind out of the life. Act of existence is attempting to manifest to the level of superamind.

He considers Superamind as 'Integral Yoga' that lives at the center of 'Aurobindo's metaphysical System'. an intermediary power between the un-manifested Brahman & the manifested world.

Integral Yoga- Superamind mean the free truth consciousness Divine Nature that has no place for ignorance.

By education Sri Aurobindo means that which will offer the tools where by one live for the divine, for the country, for oneself and for others, and this must be the ideal in every school, which call itself national. The guiding principles of the philosophy of education of Sri Aurobindo was the awakening of man as a spiritual being. According to him neither education nor religion in the past changed man. Now It is high time to give a total spiritual orientation, to the whole education and the life of the nation. Sri Aurobindo advocated, "There are three things which have to be taken into account in true and living education, the man, the nation...and universal humanity" (Chandra & Sharma, 163). Sri Aurobindo was in favour of the following education:

Integral Education

In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The true basis of education is the study of mind, infant, adolescent and adult". He says that the main aim of integral education is holistic

development of mind, body and soul. He believes education inculcates in a student moral values, humanity and character building. Integral Education transforms a man into a superman.

The human mind consists of four layers - 'Chitta': The Mental Substance (Chitta is always on- whether you are awake or asleep. your intellect comes on and goes off. Many times it fails, even when you are awake. If 'Chitta' or the intelligence within you was not always on, you could not stay alive), 'Manas': the Sense Mind (What is in the brain is intellect, not intelligence. Intelligence and memory are *right* across your body. But people have never been trained how to use this intelligence), 'Buddhi': the Intellect (In the yogic understanding, there are 16 dimensions to the human mind) and 'Ahankara' -The Sense of Identity (There are other ways to know life beyond the identities we have taken on for our survival in the world).

In the words of Aurobindo, 'the truth we seek is made of four major aspects- Love, knowledge, power and Beauty. These four attributes of the truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being.

Education of the Physical Being (tapasya of Beauty)

Physical Education had three aspects:

- (i) Control and discipline of the functioning of the body.
- (ii) An Integral methodical and harmonious development of all parts and movements of body
- (iii) Correction of any defects and deformities.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "beauty is the ideal of physical life." The mother, therefore says, "You must hold within yourself the living ideal of beauty that is to be recognized." It is a 'tapasya (yoga) of beauty'.

Physical education is also essential for controlling the sex drives. According to Aurobindo's, "Philosophy of education a seeker of truth should have control over the sex-impulses."

Education of the Vital Being (Tapasya of Power)

Vital Education was the most important point in integral education. Vital education emphasizes on the observation of impulses, energies and desires of the vital being of man. As a result, the student gets an opportunity to understand both the inner world and the world outside of him. Vital education according to Sri Aurobindo, "is also the training of the aesthetic personality. To get this training, one should give up bad habits."

Education of Mental Being- Mental education has three-fold functions:

Mental Education included cognition, ideas, and intelligence. It focuses on the ideas continuously organized around a central thought.

- (a) To gather old knowledge
- (b) To discover new knowledge
- (c) To develop the capacity to use and apply the knowledge acquired.
- (d) Through the application of knowledge the pupil develop cognition, ideas intelligence and mental perceptions. As a result of this man he becomes the source of knowledge.
- (e) Organization of ideas around a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "mind has four levels."

Education of the Psychic being (Tapasya of Love)

It focused on the discovery of man's psyche nature. The system of education should give an opportunity to the psychic being to grow, to express it and to exercise discovery of the psychic being is the beginning of this education. It will be possible through 'Yoga' or 'Tapasya of love'. As a result of this Yoga, one can attain liberation from suffering.

At the Center of Education, there is a spiritual atmosphere pervasively providing a new life power. Whether it is in art, literature, music and sport that one is interested, the stress is laid upon and attention repeatedly directed to the divine varieties sustaining their value"(International Centre of Education, 15).

Spiritual Education

Spiritual education is the highest level of education that helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through universal brotherhood, freedom, services, power, knowledge, love, sympathy, peace, truth and self-control. The external world does not determine spiritual education. Rather it is determined within the world. Spiritual transformation of man is the goal of this education.

Supramental Education

Thus education is an evolution of consciousness. This aim can be achieved through the development of the psychic being.

"There must first be the psychic change, the convention of our whole present nature into a sol-instrumentation; on that long with that there must be the spiritual change, the decent of a height light. Knowledge, power, force, bliss, purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of life and body, even into the darkness of our subconscious..." (Ruhela and Nayak, 369).

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