

Sri Aurobindo's Vision for Education

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ABSTRACT

To speak about Sri Aurobindo's vision, one can begin by acknowledging the role of this great personality in the world's history. Sri Aurobindo was Indian in origin and was educated in the West. He lived and acted in the period of the beginning of twentieth century. A deep and sacrificing love for the country was the foundation of the great patriotism expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his writings. In his essay 'The morality of Boycott' he described his feelings towards India, his great adoration which made him act as a dedicated and caring son of his Motherland. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted and under a Divine Adesh he departed to Pondicherry. There he immersed himself intensely in yoga-sadhana. Deeply studying the sacred texts of Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita and Vedas, and based on his own spiritual experiences Sri Aurobindo developed a new synthesis that he called Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo writes about spiritual guidance on the path of the Integral Yoga in The Synthesis of Yoga. As the Shastra of the Integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every man, so its Supreme Guide and Teacher is the inner Guide, the World-Teacher, jagad-guru, secret within us. It is he who destroys our darkness by the resplendent light of his knowledge, that light becomes within us the increasing glory of his own self-revelation. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is far from being religion in spite of ignorant human nature which always intends to worship a deity. Only this way the world can become more beautiful and free from ignorance, poverty and suffering. "That alone would be true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage all that is in individual man." – Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

Key Words- Vision, Education, Integral Yoga, Personality

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INTRODUCTION

“Aurobindo’s philosophy of education is based on the principle of evocation of potentialities of the individual in all its entirety and full of development of as many sided as possible. His vision for education reveal that Sri Aurobindo was one of the most eminent and distinguished educationists of our country.”

To speak about Sri Aurobindo’s vision, one can begin by acknowledging the role of this great personality in the world’s history. Sri Aurobindo was Indian in origin and was educated in the West. He lived and acted in the period of the beginning of twentieth century.

A deep and sacrificing love for the country was the foundation of the great patriotism expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his writings. In his essay ‘The morality of Boycott’ he described his feelings towards India, his great adoration which made him act as a dedicated and caring son of his Motherland:

“The feelings of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother soil, of the winds that flow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of this love. The prides in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great sacrifice, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And sap which keeps it alive is the realization of the Mother-hood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother.”

Sri Aurobindo was acquitted and under a Divine Adesh he departed to Pondicherry. There he immersed himself intensely in yoga-sadhana. Deeply studying the sacred texts of Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita and Vedas, and based on his own spiritual experiences Sri Aurobindo developed a new synthesis that he called Integral Yoga. He understood that Rishis in ancient India had discovered the Truth of existence; they had found the answers to the questions of very life, but had hidden their revelations in the symbols of mantric-poetry which preserved the knowledge for the future. This was essential because the humanity was neither ready nor had the sufficiently developed intellect to comprehend the Truth. The power of the spiritual discovery was so profound and strong that it deeply influenced even the collective life in Indian society. This influence manifested itself in the form of Chaturvarna system, the system of four Ashramas and even in the concept of Rasa. It helped to build strong and quite rigid structure of life

with complete religious freedom to all members of the society. Sri Aurobindo writes about spiritual guidance on the path of the Integral Yoga in The Synthesis of Yoga.

As the Shastra of the Integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every man, so its Supreme Guide and Teacher is the inner Guide, the World-Teacher, jagad-guru, secret within us. It is he who destroys our darkness by the resplendent light of his knowledge, that light becomes within us the increasing glory of his own self-revelation. He discloses progressively in us his own nature of freedom, bliss, love, power, immortal being. He sets above us his divine example as our ideal and transforms the lower existence into a reflection of that which it contemplates. By the in pouring of his own influence and presence into us he enables the individual being to attain to identity with the universal and transcendent.

Sri Aurobindo developed an education system which is popularly known as integral education. Integral Education aims at bringing about change not merely in the society but primarily in the human behaviour or nature itself. Therefore it seeks to help the individual as follows:

1. To develop an integrate personality of both the pupil & the teacher.
2. To realize self-perfection in physical, mental, vital, psychic and spiritual aspects.
3. To manifest supreme divine consciousness in the physical life.

Integral Education is the all-round development of the individual and the collective being. Integral education refers to the lifelong process and to the teaching-learning outcomes which take place in a learning environment, in and out of the classroom, formal and non-formal. This concept of education aims to discover and develop the innate potentials of the individual to bring about the full blossoming of his multi-faceted personality, the all-round development of the human person. It also encourages the formation of the future citizen of the nation and of the world who will be of service to others for the improvement and development of society. Integral education is holistic and integrative, expansive and inclusive, liberating and empowering, flexible and dynamic. In brief -

- ❖ It entails a discovery of the many talents that lie hidden within each and every learner.
- ❖ It provides for an environment and opportunities to develop the manifold aspects of personality.
- ❖ It educates the whole person: physique and psyche, all the powers of the intellect, emotions and will.

- ❖ It expands learning outcomes to include not only knowledge and skills but also understanding and insight, values and attitudes, and responsible behaviour.
- ❖ It cultivates a spiritual education which is the culmination of the entire education process.

Sri Aurobindo has presented to us three principles of true teaching:

1. Nothing can be taught:

The pupil has to acquire new knowledge by his own attempt and the teacher is to work as helper or guide to the pupil. The pupil is allowed to study by his own capacity and interest.

2. Self-pace learning:

The teacher should not impose on the child from above if the child is not prepared to receive the knowledge. We should not pressurize the child for learning. The child will be allowed to learn according to his interest.

3. Teaching from near to far:

According to Sri Aurobindo, the child should be led from near to far. That is all education should be built upon the day-to-day experience of the learners. We may teach the child through the use of audio-visual aids, but if the application of this principles is felt essential.

To understand the three principles of true teaching it is important that one understands the entire map of personality, the true person and the ranges of consciousness, the aim of creation that Sri Aurobindo has placed before us through his various writings. The three principles cannot be understood superficially, for then it becomes a dangerous exercise, often leading one into foolishnesses such as not teaching at all, letting children grow as wild animals, focusing only on the immediate and forgetting the wider perspective, and so on.

Based on the good work of various educational thinkers, many methods have come up: learning by doing, learning by discovery – the heuristic approach, playway method, and so on. All have a place in Integral Education, but in no way do they define what Integral Education is. What the three principles of education point towards is far greater than all these methods.

Though Sri Aurobindo uses the word ‘mind’ it is not this frontal mind that he is referring to. When he says, ‘the mind has to be consulted in its own growth’, it is not to say that just follow the whims and fancies, the changing moods and ideas of the child or the learner. He refers to the innate ‘*swabahva*’ – the mode, the innate nature of the ‘self’ (*swa*) – one’s own true nature – and he indicates the key by saying that everyone has a divine quality – something unique to his self-expression, to the unfoldment of his true self, his reason for taking birth and his contribution to the larger divine plan – cultivate this, help the child to be true to this. Follow this.

It’s not the teacher’s idea of right and wrong, good and bad, but the child’s own inner sense of these things that must be the guide. It’s the child’s true nature that will indicate his interests, his needs of learning, his path to progress – and this is what the teacher must be tuned to fully.

Therefore, the teaching becomes an unfolding – the inner self already knows. The teacher’s work is simply to create the conditions for this knowledge to come forth – whether through the right learning materials or environment or questions – but most of all through a silent influence that evokes the inner being of the student to shine forth.

Does it mean that Maths, Geography, History, Science and Language – nothing will be taught? That doesn’t seem to be the meaning at all. If we reflect on our own learning, learning that has left a deep impact on us, has been meaningful to us in our lives, we see that something else is behind it besides the act of teaching and sometimes even the teaching is not there, but it is through life, through experiences or significant times – either difficult or happy.

What is it that has truly made us learn? It might be an inner receptivity, a true need, a zeal to know, a desperation ... something independent of the teaching and the teacher. It is this that is the central thing and unless it is this that is the central thing and unless this comes into play, all that is taught will be lost, temporary and superficial. When this need is active, then anything can be learnt and retained. The true interest is awake and the consciousness of the learner completely engaged. This is the secret of true teaching. That’s why Sri Aurobindo says, ‘nothing can be taught’. So, evoke the knower, the learner within each student, and that will make the teaching alive, lasting and powerful.

And what is it that is meaningful for the learner? That which is near to it in consciousness. That which it needs to be ... the law of graduality in place which makes sure that one progresses little by little – integrating all that one is – into that one must be. Only that which evokes a response in my

consciousness, which is close to me, will make sense to me. But the idea is not to stay at this stage. 'From that which is, to that which shall be'. For the inner being carries the entire map of one's progress – not only inner progress, but progress in all domains – physical, emotional, social, intellectual. It is like the inner and unfailing *jyotishi*.

So all the three principles combine beautifully in unfolding the power of the true self – manifested in all the aspects of the being – through that unique quality, the unique possibility that each individual represents.

And the work is not only individual, but also collective. As Sri Aurobindo says... 'The past is our foundation, the present our raw material, the future our aim and summit.' And one must remember, this is a scheme he presents for a national system of education, a truly man-making and nation-building education.

The Teacher of the Integral Education will follow as far as he may the method of the Teacher within us. He will lead the disciple through the nature of the disciple. Teaching, example, influence,—these are the three instruments of the Guru. But the wise Teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is productive and sure as a seed which will grow under the divine fostering within. He will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will give a method as an aid, as a utilisable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine. And he will be on his guard against any turning of the means into a limitation, against the mechanising of process. His whole business is to awaken the divine light and set working the divine force of which he himself is only a means and an aid, a body or a channel.

CONCLUSION

The example is more powerful than the instruction; but it is not the example of the outward acts nor that of the personal character which is of most importance. These have their place and their utility; but what will most stimulate aspiration in others is the central fact of the divine realisation within him governing his whole life and inner state and all his activities. This is the universal and essential element; the rest belongs to individual person and circumstance. It is this dynamic realization that the sadhaka must feel and reproduce in himself according to his own nature; he need not strive after an imitation from outside which may well be sterilising rather than productive of right and natural fruits.

Influence is more important than example. Influence is not the outward authority of the Teacher over his disciple, but the power of his contact, of his presence, of the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into it, even though in silence, that which he himself is and possesses. This is the supreme sign of the Master. For the greatest Master is much less a Teacher than a Presence pouring the divine consciousness and its constituting light and power and purity and bliss into all who are receptive around him.

And it shall also be a sign of the teacher of the integral Yoga that he does not arrogate to himself Guruhood in a humanly vain and self-exalting spirit. His work, if he has one, is a trust from above, he himself a channel, a vessel or a representative. He is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a Light kindling other lights, an awakened Soul awakening souls, at highest a Power or Presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine.

According to Sri Aurobindo the duty of the teacher, "is to suggest not to impose". He does not actually train the pupil's mind; the only shows how to perfect his instrument of knowledge and helps & encourages him in the process. He does not call for knowledge that is written. He only shows the student where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. A teacher is a true Yogi who acts as a philosopher and guide to the students. He nourished the students as plants.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education is far from being religion in spite of ignorant human nature which always intends to worship a deity. Only this way the world can become more beautiful and free from ignorance, poverty and suffering.

"That alone would be true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage all that is in individual man." – Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

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