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AN INSIGHT INTO RISHI AUROBINDO'S THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION: ASSIMILATED VIEWS

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Abstract

Sri Aurobindo was an Indian saint, revolutionary, author and educationalist. There is always a need for someone to improve education so that people can learn more effectively. A number of Indian educators made contributions to it. Additionally, Sri Aurobindo made significant contributions to the reform of educational systems and concepts for the benefit of next generations. This paper has mentioned that it deals with his engagement and how his social psychology and philosophy of life influence spiritual education. The ideas of educational philosophy pertaining to mind, knowledge, intelligence and consciousness – all crucial components of education – have been discussed in this paper.

Keywords: *Aurobindo Ghosh, Education, Philosophy, Educational Philosophy, Aims of Education*

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo (15th August 1872- 5th December 1950) was an Indian saint, revolutionary, author and educationalist. His father, Doctor Krishnadhan Ghose, was a fervent supporter and practitioner of western civilization, despite the fact that his mother, Swarnalata Devi, was the daughter of visionary and great patriot Rajnarain Bose. When he was just five years old, Sri Aurobindo had to spend two years studying at the English-medium Loretto Convent in Darjeeling, West Bengal, away from his parents in order to be shaped by British culture.

Aims of Education

In a civic society, values must be accompanied with education (Ansary & Ansary, 2023; Gayen & Gayen, 2023; Gayen, 2023b). As per Sri Aurobindo, the primary objective of education is to assist the developing soul in extracting the best and perfecting it for noble purposes (Sri Aurobindo 2003a). He states that the new goal of education is to assist the kid in developing the impulses and qualities that come from their temperament and talents as well as their intellectual, artistic, emotional, moral, and spiritual selves. This is significantly different from the previous educational approach, which consisted of merely forcing a stereotyped code of conduct on the child's struggling and dominant impulses and stuffing an excessive amount of stereotyped knowledge into his or her resistant brain (Sri Aurobindo, 1997a). Obtaining diverse forms of knowledge is merely one, not the primary, means and requirement of education. Building the capacities of the human mind and spirit is its main goal. Education should strive to form or, ideally, evoke knowledge, will, and the capacity to apply character, culture, and knowledge (Sri Aurobindo 2003a). Sri Aurobindo thought that education should be based on the needs of the child. He

believes that the youngster has the capacity to learn.

Every infant has some level of intrinsic wisdom. The outdated practise of instilling stereotypical information in children was abandoned by Sri Aurobindo. A child's ability to store information is not very helpful for their intelligence to develop (Sheikh, 2020). Indoctrination is the traditional view of education. In general, all children are brainwashed about behaviour, habits, and even the educational process (Saha & Maji, 2013). Ineffective educators place a strong emphasis on knowledge acquisition. Public exams in inadequate educational systems emphasise memorization. These do not assess your ability to use knowledge in a variety of contexts. Not every youngster who goes through this process gains the ability to apply the knowledge they have learned (Sri Aurobindo 2003). As such, the actual and intrinsic qualities are frequently overlooked by the educational process. It causes the youngster to create a false layer, wasting a great deal of time and effort. It is important to pursue not just intellectual growth but also artistic, moral, and spiritual development. The growth of the human mind's capacities must be emphasised. The process differs from learner to student, just as the intrinsic powers do. Learning should be unrestricted and organic for the student.

True Education

Sri Aurobindo believed that all that is inherent in each unique man can be fully brought out and prepared for the whole purpose and scope of human life through a true and living education. The individual can also benefit from it by better understanding how to relate to the life, mind, and soul of the people to whom they belong as well as the vast overall life, mind, and soul of humanity, of which they themselves are a unit and of which their people or nation is a living, breathing, distinct, yet inseparable part (Sri Aurobindo 2003a). Every educationalist agrees that there are three main concerns in an educational system: the person, the country or people, and the common humanity (Adhikari & Saha, 2021b). The person learns for their own personal growth. People make up society. Every society has its own standards for behaviour (Adhikari & Saha, 2021e). Similar to what the early Indian reformers and educators promoted, some of these may be universal and some may be particular to a given civilization (Adhikari & Saha, 2021a; 2021c).

Every society is in favour of the operation of educational institutions. A country is made up of several societies (Roy et al., 2023; Ansary et al, 2023). The growth of a society as a whole is influenced by the development of its individual members. National development is a result of the growth of many groups and societies as well as individuals. The nation is essential in providing for education, just as societies are essential to education. Depending on the pace of national growth, the rate of individual development accelerates. Once more, the planet is made up of different countries. National growth is influenced by global development and vice versa. International development must therefore be taken into consideration by educational systems. A perfect education will enable the person to make the development of their soul and all of its potential become their primary goal. It will force the country to prioritise preserving, bolstering, and enhancing the nation's soul and its Dharma, and it will elevate both into powers of life and the ascent of humanity's mind and spirit (Sri Aurobindo 2003a, 427). It never loses sight of the ultimate goal of humanity, which is the spiritual growth and enlightenment of the individual.

Scientific Education vs Liberal and Spiritual Education

All that is greatest, strongest, most personal, and human-like is brought out by true education. His or her inherent quality and power should serve as the mould that his or her actions and development should follow. Information-only education was not something Sri Aurobindo supported. Knowledge is only ever the beginning. The goal of education should be to foster the development of the many cognitive abilities that support knowledge and cognition in the knower, such as memory, judgement, imagination, perception, and reasoning. These elements must not only be properly fitted, have an adequate supply of

equipment and materials, but also be trained to bring in new supplies and make better use of the ones they already have (Sri Aurobindo 2003a).

Three things happen in a logical education. It facilitates the development of (a) observational skills and fact-finding strategies that serve as the basis for decisions; (b) sound and productive thinking training; and (c) the ability to apply information and reasoning for the benefit of both the individual and the group (Sri Aurobindo 1997a). The goal of an ideal education is to give students the ability to act and good moral character. Sri Aurobindo asserts that there are two main categories of human thinking activity: left-hand and right-hand functions. The right hand is associated with contemplation, creativity, imagination, and truth-seeing centres. Criticism, reasoning, discrimination, investigation, and the centres that assess the truth as it is observed are the tasks of the left hand. Science places a strong emphasis on left-hand functions and trains the mind to be narrow, hard, and cold, but also sharp and clear-sighted within specified bounds. Herein lies the role of right-hand functions that are emphasised by liberal education, which expands the boundaries of science or the base of human civilization (Sri Aurobindo 2003a). As per Sri Aurobindo, the subject is a manifestation of the divine. Matter contains life. It was able to speak. A successful education synthesizes spirit and matter. Spirit is usually overlooked in the west. The issues have been disregarded by the east, particularly by India and certain other nations. An effective education's foundation should be built on both of these pillars.

Yoga Education

The foundation of yoga is a psychological approach that was effectively used in ancient India. Regrettably, it has become less popular in its home nation. It is currently returning from the West. Yoga is incredibly beneficial to mental development. It quiets the mind so that it can directly receive pure knowledge. The person benefits from having control over his senses as well. It is beneficial for both Nadi and Chitta sudhi. Typical yoga benefits include clairvoyance, clairaudience, presentiment, and so forth. The task of education is made much easier by these accomplishments. A real yogi learns a subject without the use of textbooks, dictionaries, teachers, or any outside resources (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). Sri Aurobindo believed that yoga was the ideal form of instruction. The International Day of Yoga was declared to be observed by the United Nations on December 11, 2014. It has been observed on June 21 every year since 2015 (Mohanty 2016).

Regional Variations in Education System and National Education

Sri Aurobindo believed that there could not be a global education system. Regional differences must exist. Every region has unique qualities of its own. This means that the specifics of the programmes must vary. For example, educational programmes intended for Asians should have distinct details than programmes targeted for Europeans. For example, Sri Aurobindo claims that the idea of Dharma as the foundation of democracy is appropriate for Asia. It incorporates both the western conception of duty and right (Sri Aurobindo 2002, 932). Different countries in a certain part of the world should adjust the educational system for that region. The broad regional and worldwide guidelines should be followed by the national education systems.

Each nation has its own soul, according to Sri Aurobindo. It has unique qualities of its own. It has particular prior encounters. As a result, its development path cannot precisely parallel another's. As a result, its educational programmes' specifics cannot be the same as those of another country. In a speech on "Commercial and educational Swarajya" given in Nagpur on February 1, 1908, Sri Aurobindo made the observation that true national education is concerned with both arousing the individual's mind and putting into practise the highest ideals of national activity that cause the individual to forget themselves and feel as though they are a part of their country (Sri Aurobindo 2002; Sri Aurobindo 2014). In the first ten years of the previous century, the idea of national education began to take shape. It should be mentioned that Sri Aurobindo left his position as a teacher in Baroda, Gujarat, during the British colonial

era in order to join the national college in Kolkata. However, Sri Aurobindo highlighted the shortcomings of national education, national culture, and national religion (Sri Aurobindo 1997a). According to him, they can still be beneficial things as long as they do not obstruct the development of individual freedom of conscience and thinking as well as the expansion of human solidarity. The establishment of the rules governing a national education system is something that the State can and should influence. However, the state frequently pursues conformity at the expense of creativity and innovation. For example, in many states across the nation today, all school courses use the same textbooks, obliging them to take into account the need for local or regional changes in the curriculum. Therefore, the country must delegate the specifics to certain institutions in order to maintain its role in quality control. Regardless of the setting and makeup of the student body, not every school should have the same curriculum.

Indian National Education – Past and Present

Sri Aurobindo claimed that the high caliber education of ancient India contributed to the development of superior individuals. In addition to offering comprehensive instruction in all relevant arts, sciences, and fields of study, it was founded on a spirituality insentient system with a foundation in the Vedic formula of spiritual knowledge (Sri Aurobindo, 1997c). But the institution was located largely in forested locations, distant from the bustle of the city. In addition, the instructor led spiritually. The number of institutions increased along with the population, and mass enrolment of instructors without consideration for their spiritual condition resulted. Education became less focused on the internal development of knowledge and character and more cerebral and routine (Sri Aurobindo, 1997b). Sri Aurobindo made reference to earlier accomplishments in the form of artistic perceptions, practical competence, and dexterity of hand and eye. The Taj Mahal, the Konark temple, and other projects were built as a result of this achievement. These abilities were eventually lost. The European education system was blatantly commercial, materialistic, and inadequate, which led to the degradation in education. The artistic senses, plastic skill, and dexterity of hand and eye that formerly bestowed upon Indian commodities the prominence, distinction, and mastery of the European marketplaces were obliterated. Its substance was lacking of the uniqueness, lofty aspirations, and compelling vitality that begged the nation of the spiritual and intellectual separation from the past (Sri Aurobindo, 1997d).

In addition to rebuilding the lost intellectual and spiritual legacy, a larger culture must be created. It is necessary to rebuild the shattered mould with more substance and broader contours. Education ought to dismantle the semi-theocratic, semi-aristocratic feudalism in order to unleash the democratic essence of Vedanta. It must maintain democracy while eschewing consumerism and individualism. It needs to address the issues of balancing and elevating its inclinations towards liberty, equality, and fraternity – the three main tenets of democracy. One of the achievements of the west has been democracy. India needs to absorb it (Sri Aurobindo, 1999). Sri Aurobindo was against the system that was in place at the universities at the time because it disregarded human psychology and laboriously packed the mind with a lot of little, precisely labelled packets of information. The techniques employed in this procedure harmed or malnourished the abilities and tools that the person uses to integrate, produce, and develop his or her intelligence, masculinity, and vitality (Sri Aurobindo 2003a). He was opposed to a return to Bhaskara's astronomy and mathematics as well as the Nalanda system's forms, which were akin to a return from railway and motor traction to the antiquated chariot and bullock cart (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). He did not dismiss the history. He proposed that while the present should supply the necessary materials while keeping an eye towards the future, the past should assist in establishing the groundwork. Although it is not appropriate to entirely reject the past, it is also not appropriate to limit oneself to its methods.

One must remember her illustrious background in terms of accomplishments, wisdom, morality, and lofty ideas. At the same time, one should not overlook the contributions made by other countries to the

advancement of humanity and the body of knowledge. The best teaching techniques that have been created, whether they are old or new, must be used. And we have to integrate all of these into a system that is infused with a sense of independence. Education should focus on developing men, not machines, who can use their intelligence and resourcefulness to forge their own path in life (Sri Aurobindo, 2002). Therefore, a really national education has as its starting point our being, our mind, and our spirit, while undoubtedly ignoring modern truth and knowledge (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). There is a necessity for studying the instruments of knowledge. There is also the necessity for finding a system of teaching that is natural, easy and effective (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). Therefore, it is imperative that the current educational system, which has largely stayed unchanged since the turn of the century, be reformed.

Education for National Integration

National integration requires national education. Although there have been moments when the nation's unity has been challenged, unity is a need given that this nation must rise to become the global leader. Its unanimity is a given. Sri Aurobindo believed that the force for national union increased with the length of foreign control (Sri Aurobindo, 1997a). Language, religious, regional, and community differences jeopardise a nation's integrity. This view is no doubt similar to the views of Raja Rammohan Roy (Rather, 2022), Vidyasagar, Savitribai Phule, Durgabai Deshmukh, Mary Wollstonecraft (Abbey, 1999; Adhikari & Saha, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c), Nel Noddings (Adhikari & Saha, 2021d; 2023; Saha et al., 2023), Maria Montessori (Adhikari & Saha, 2021f; Gayen, 2023; Saha & Adhikari, 2023) and Paulo Freire.

Development of Power of Observation

One of the core abilities required for mental development is the ability to observe (Sri Aurobindo 2003a). An individual must learn how to focus their attention as part of the training process. Sri Aurobindo proposes that several items can be used to provide this ability. A flower, for example, can be used as an observational tool. It is important to pay attention to all of its various features, including the perfect hue, unusual glow, intensity of aroma, curve's beauty, and form's design. To be confident of the texture and any quirks, the person can touch it. The flower should be cut into pieces for inspection in the following stage. In addition to offering suggestions for action, a teacher's job is to pose queries that can prompt a student to observe and do methodical research.

Development of Intellect

According to Sri Aurobindo, the passive memory of the Citta is a habit that circulates a restless flow of thought sensations that rise in momentum without the individual's will or control (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). The process of intellectual training involves developing the ability to dictate to the Citta whether associations or samskaras should be accepted or rejected. This procedure entails sorting, picking, selecting, and organising. In order to prevent the Citta from contributing to confusion in the thought channel through incorrect judgement, false imagination, false memory, false observation, false comparison, contrast, and analogy, as well as wrong deduction and inference, one must seek the purification of the Citta (Citta-siddhi). Whether or not one is conscious of it, this process is a yoga practise.

Development of the Power of Imagination

The ability to imagine is one of Sri Aurobindo's most valuable and essential tools (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). It can be broken down into three categories: mental image formation; the ability to generate new ideas, images, and imitations of preexisting ideas and images; and the recognition of the soul in objects, beauty, charm, greatness, hidden suggestiveness, emotion, and spiritual life that permeates the world.

These categories closely align with Kalam's (Pandit et al., 2016) and Tagore's beliefs (Saha & Maji, 2016).

Development of the Logical Faculty and Reasoning

Three components are required for sound reasoning, according to Sri Aurobindo. These are: (a) the truth of the facts or conclusions drawn from them; (b) the completeness and accuracy of the data drawn from them; and (c) the removal of any other conclusions that could be drawn from the same facts that are not feasible or plausible (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). Training the faculties that gather the data that the logical reason needs to operate on must inevitably come before training the logical reason itself. The ability to deal with words mentally should be cultivated in order to deal with concepts successfully. Sri Aurobindo asserts that if the exercise is done first with objects and subsequently with words and concepts, the logical capacity can be adequately developed (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). It is important to spark the students' interest in the process of determining cause and effect and generating conclusions from the data.

After that, students had to be guided to recognize their accomplishments and shortcomings, as well as the causes of both (Sri Aurobindo, 2003a). The teacher's job is to help the students see how incorrect the initial fact was, how quickly they concluded from incomplete information, how carelessly they accepted an unlikely conclusion that was not well-supported by the evidence and left room for doubt, and how lazy or biased they were to ignore other plausible explanations or conclusions. The ability to think and make mistakes should be ingrained in the mind. It ought to be instructed to watch how these function for it. Instead of starting from the formal science and working your way down to the rule and example, the method should be based on the idea that example should come first and then the rule should lead to the formal science of the subject.

Conclusion

All schools of educational thought have been taken into consideration in Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy, which was created by The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry and called "Integral education". The five facets of integral education are spiritual, mental, psychic, vital, and physical. To allow for psychological and spiritual education while placing a greater emphasis on physical and vital education, the government's new education strategy may need to be modified. It is important to keep in mind that Sri Aurobindo was a spiritual person whose ideas on spirituality transcended all religions when thinking about taking this step.

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