



SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH'S INTEGRAL EDUCATION: AN EDUCATION OF THE BODY, MIND AND THE INTELLECT

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

He recognized the shortcomings of our education system in India, the great Indian sage, educationist, philosopher, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh presented integral education in the Indian Society. So integrative education is meritorious where education of body, education of mind and education of intellect are integrated within the individual. The study mainly adopted purposes as to explain the seven principles of integral education and their implementation in the contemporary teaching-learning environment. The researchers employed qualitative approach for this research work. The study finds out that the principles of Integral education may immediately imply a difficulty in its implementation because of the apparently demanding nature of its principles. It is, however, imperative that we rely on and seek to implement the principles of integral education within our classes in the present socio-economic milieu. The principles, so formulated, can be useful and applicable at the local or real educational phenomena. While it is well known, and there is an overarching complaint that many of the principles are insufficiently clear to be of practical use in the classroom, it has been a common experience to this research that such principles have been employed successfully at Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education based on these principles.

Keywords: *Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Integral Education, Indian Education, Principles of Integral Education, Spiritual Education*

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, the great Indian philosopher, occupies a very significant position among the contemporary Indian philosophers (monks) of education after Swami Vivekananda (Roy & Saha, 2021). He is also known as a sage, poet, patriot, freedom fighter, philosopher and spiritualist who was born on 15th August, 1872, in Kolkata. During the time when Sri Aurobindo was a teacher, he started realizing the inadequacies present in the education systems of the Indian educational (Madhu, 2012). Sri Aurobindo was of the view that education should serve the mental and spiritual needs of the children and women (Adhikari & Saha, 2021a; 2021f), which in turn will cater to the need of the country (Adhikari & Saha, 2021c). It suggests that educational approaches should correspond to the ever changing and evolving requirements of our present as well as real life (Adhikari & Saha, 2021d). According to Sri Aurobindo, the Vedas already contain the highest truths, the truths of religion and science.

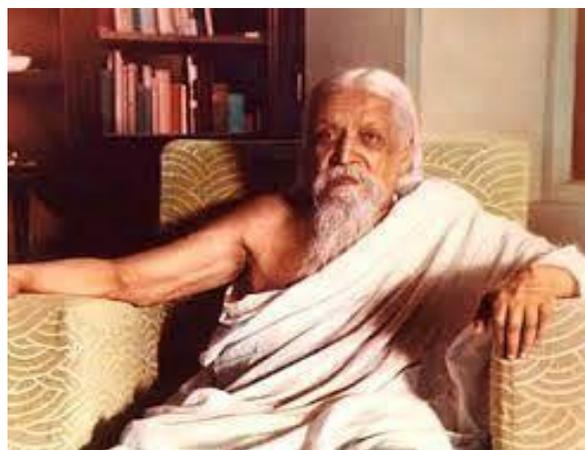


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Integral Education

Education that integrates the human body, mind, and intellect to create a marvellous machine is known as integral education (Sirswal, 2011). For lack of a better term, we can refer to it as a machine, and it is better than any other piece of man-made equipment. It is appropriate to refer to an education that embraces Sri Aurobindo’s objective and considers the full complexity of human nature as ‘integral education’ (Verma, 2008).

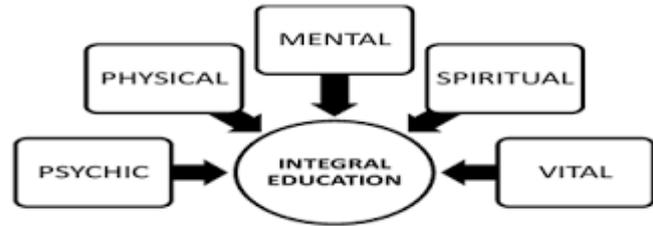


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Aurobindo divided people into five categories for integral education. The five developmental principles of human life are these fivefold, and integral education is the process by which these fivefold are developed holistically. The five basic activities of the human being – the physical, vital, cerebral, psychic, and spiritual – must be represented in education in order for it to be considered comprehensive. These educational stages often follow the development of the individual and come one after the other chronologically. However, this does not imply that one should take the place of another; rather, it means that everyone must continue, complementing one another, till the end of time. Every one of these components has its own fulfilment and law of progress. Since the spirit transcends time and space, it really does not change. However, as we strive for excellence. The Aurobindoean philosophy parallels to the western philosophies of Mary Wollstonecraft (Adhikari & Saha, 2022a; 2022b; Adhikari et al., 2023), Nel Noddings (Adhikari & Saha, 2021e), Maria Montessori (Adhikari & Saha, 2021b) and Paulo Freire (Freire, 2002).

INTEGRAL EDUCATION

5 ELEMENTS IN THE CONTOURS OF YOUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS

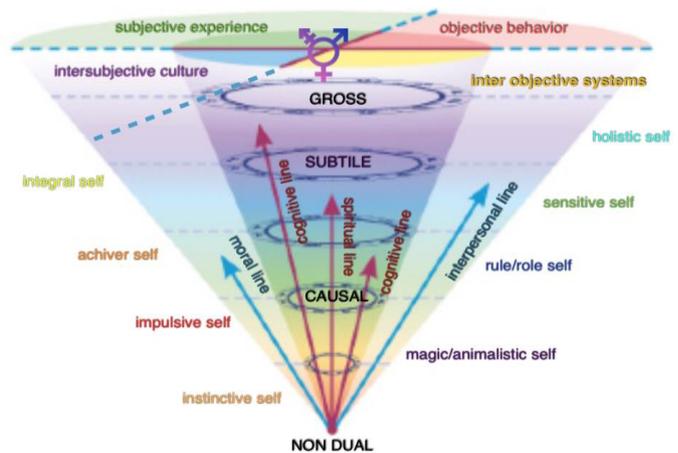
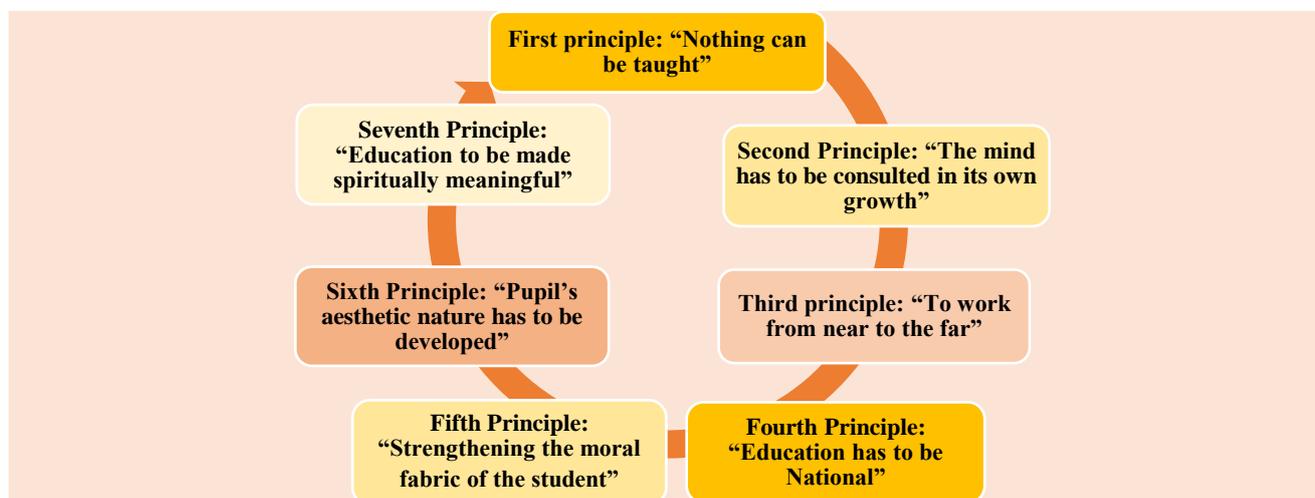


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Seven Principles of Integral Education

A form of education known as integral education combines the spiritual and material facets of human existence into a cohesive whole. Given that Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is based on the spiritual progress of humanity, an Aurobindonean approach to education would suggest adhering to specific principles as a means of achieving the intended goals more easily. The following is an explanation and diagrammatical representation of the principles:



First principle: “Nothing can be taught”

According to Nalini Kanta Gupta, the nature of education is, *“All knowledge is within you. Information you get from outside, but the understanding of it? It is from within. The information from outside gives you dead matter. What puts life into it, light into it is your own inner light. All education, all culture means drawing this inner light to the front. Indeed the word ‘education’ literally means, ‘to bring out’.”* When judged in this context, a teacher is a facilitator rather than a teacher in the traditional sense of the word. By considering the innate potentialities of a student's intellect, he helps them develop. He just demonstrates to the student how to acquire knowledge for himself; he does not impart knowledge directly to the student. Crucially, Sri Aurobindo asserts that students of all ages, even teenagers, can benefit equally from this idea. Crucially, the physical mind, vital mind, and thinking mind are the three main divisions into which Sri Aurobindo divides the human mind. This is where the first principle of integral education comes into play. Given that the majority of people fall into one or more of the three groups mentioned above as they navigate life, the idea of the first integral education principle – that is, *“nothing can be taught”* – becomes significant. Since a student may be able to use all three categories of the mind at the same time, it is essential for an integrative education teacher to explain the nature of each category to the student so that the student can understand how to use each type of mind in different situations (APEID, 1976).

Second Principle: “The mind has to be consulted in its own growth”

According to Sri Aurobindo, the second principle holds, *“the mind has to be consulted in its own growth... The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use”* (Sri Aurobindo, 1956). Sri Aurobindo's very forceful formulation of the second principle of education is clear proof of his faith in the innate powers of the human intellect. The second principle's main idea is that any educational plan for a child must take into account their *Swabhava* and *Swadharma* as essential elements. This assertion has two significant corollaries. The first is that since each child is unique, this idea makes education more adaptable to fit each child's needs (Astin, 2004). This approach makes education psychologically sound and tenable, which raises the second crucial issue. In this situation, the teacher's position becomes extremely important.

Third principle: “To work from near to the far”

“To work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be” is the third educational concept. The foundation of a man's character is nearly always his background, his genetics, his environment, his ethnicity, his nation, the dirt he eats, the air he breathes, the sights, sounds, and behaviors he is used to. Any successful implementation of the Integral education system must adhere to the principle of working from the *“near to the far.”* This principle's validity is supported by common academic practices, such as routinely sequencing classes based on the nature of the various subjects to be taught, physical education, curriculum development from the most basic to the more advanced levels, etc. (Datta, 2011).

Fourth Principle: “Education has to be National”

Integral education's fourth tenet is that it must be national. On the surface, the idea of a *‘national’* educational system could conflict with Sri Aurobindo's global man vision (Maji & Saha, 2013). However, a closer look at the principle dispels this myth. According to the Integral system, *‘national’* education does not refer to education that is isolated from external advancements or achievements. Instead, it suggests fostering a student's capacity to analyze international viewpoints from an Indian perspective. Indian history and culture provide strong evidence that we are among the few nations in the world with a natural way of life that integrates individuals from many civilizations. An Indian educational system would therefore never be exclusive or localized. It would never exist at the expense of international viewpoints. The main goal of the idea of creating a national educational system is to nurture and grow a soul that will absorb Indian traditions of tolerance and universal humanism (Abdulhussain, 2007).

Fifth Principle: “Strengthening the moral fabric of the student”

The fifth principle would be to enhance students' moral character and expand their knowledge base. There are two main approaches to achieving this goal. The first would be by directly introducing moral values from the outside. The second would involve changing the student's own mentality in order to strengthen his ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Integral education claims that this is the second method with the highest validity. It is difficult to overlook the significance of bolstering the student's moral foundation. His significance stems mostly from the fact that humans are free individuals with the ability to do anything they want. He can reverse any progress he has made in life if his actions lack moral justification. It is a well-known fact that morally reprehensible actions hurt not just the person but also society as a whole. Therefore, it is in the best

interests of all people for man to have a solid moral foundation. To put it another way, moral education is essential since it would allow the student to utilize his freedom responsibly. According to Sri Aurobindo's essay *The Moral Nature*, the first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not to command or impose.

Sixth Principle: "Pupil's aesthetic nature has to be developed"

The development of a student's ethical and artistic nature is the sixth educational principle. According to an essay on mental education, a true education of the mind, that which will prepare man for a higher life, has five principal phases. This idea is what gives rise to the idea of mental education. These stages often occur one after the other, but in extraordinary people, they may occur simultaneously or alternately. In short, the five stages are:

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| 1. Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention |
| 2. Development of the capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness |
| 3. Organization of ideas around a central idea or a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life |
| 4. Thought control, rejection of undesirable thoughts, so that one may, in the end, think only what one wants and when one wants it |
| 5. Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coming from the higher regions of the being |

In order to cultivate a student's aesthetic preferences, a teacher must first make sure that he has received enough mental training. This will allow him to control the freedom that aesthetic instincts and desires provide in the best way possible, making efforts in the aesthetic direction purposeful and meaningful. Aesthetic endeavors can quickly fade and lose their strength and focus in the absence of mental training and discipline (Ghosh, 2024).

Seventh Principle: "Education to be made spiritually meaningful"

The seventh tenet of integral education is that education must be liberated from the constraints of politics, commercialism, sensationalism, and rationalism in order to become spiritually meaningful. Today, it is well known that commercialism is the root cause of our educational system, its growth, and its conclusion. In addition to destroying a child's innate and natural tendencies, this widespread commercialism frequently produces psychological setbacks for children who are at the lower end of the economic spectrum. Extreme commercialism has frequently led to dramatic reversals in the promotion of talent and the termination of many children's academic endeavors (Ghosh & Roy, 2023). There is nothing more detrimental to society than this. Additionally, many parts of education that were once essential to traditional Indian education have been replaced by the current system due to its characteristic commercial orientation.

Conclusion

Because of the seemingly demanding nature of its tenets, the above-mentioned concepts of integral education may seem difficult to implement. But given the socioeconomic climate of today, we have no choice but to embrace and implement the Integral Education tenets in our classrooms. The current educational system is not only flawed, but also detrimental. Since it would create the ideal environment and conditions for each person's soul to blossom and develop, an integral education system is urgently needed. In the end, it would turn out to be the greatest advancement for any person's future position in society. This would hold true even for students who might not grow spiritually to the point of becoming a celestial soul. Integral education will help these students become valuable members of society and improve the environment for the development of the universal man. An integral education would turn out to be vitally important for those students who would eventually achieve such a level of elevated divine awareness. Therefore, preparing man to receive the Integral manifestation of the Divine on earth would be the ultimate goal of Integral education. The aforementioned concepts can function as a beacon of guidance in real-world educational scenarios. This researcher has observed that many of the principles have been successfully implemented at Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education and some other institutions that operate on these principles, despite the widespread accusation that they are too nebulous to be used in classrooms.

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