

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN SRI-AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The paper deals with the spiritual education with special reference to the Aurovindo's Philosophy in which his life philosophy and social psychology influence spiritual education. The paper also deals with the Principles of his educational philosophy based on Consciousness, Mind, Intelligence, and Knowledge which are the integral part of spiritual education. In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, comprehend, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurovindo's philosophy. The paper concludes 'Spiritual Education' as "it is highest level of education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through Universal Brotherhood, Freedom, Service, Co-operation, Knowledge, Power, Beauty, Love, Sympathy, Wisdom, Peace and Harmony, Truth, Tolerance, Self-control, Self-determination, Self-Confidence, self-expression, and Self-Realization and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest values and ideas of education, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals in the free and creative environment, - this is spiritual education."

Keywords: Spiritual Education, Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy.

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Introduction

Why does the journey start from Aurobindo's life philosophy to spiritual practice necessary?

Sri-Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), was one of the greatest cultural and literary figures of India. He was a poet, a writer, a prophet, a teacher, a freedom fighter, a philosopher, an educator, a great nationalist, a great internationalist, a psychologist, an idealist, a realist and a naturalist, a social reformer, an experimentalist, a thinker, an eminent educationist, a saint, a rishi, a mastermind of educational renaissance, a karma yogi, a humanitarian, a leader of thought and action and above all, also a great spiritualist.

Aurobindo Ghose, popularly known as Sri-Aurobindo, was born on August 15, 1872 in Calcutta, Bengal Presidency British India, now Kolkata, in West Bengal, India. His father's name was Krishna Dhun Ghose a former member of Brahma Samaj and his mother's name Swarnalata Devi. He went to England for receiving education at Cambridge for 14 years at the age of seven. He passed the Indian Civil Service during British India. After returned back to India in 1893, he joined Baroda College as a Professor of English in the Princely State of Baroda. He knew many languages such as Bengali, English, Latin, German, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Gujarati, Marathi, Sanskrit and Hindi. In 1905, he gave up Baroda College and joined as a Principal of Bengal National College at Calcutta. He also joined the Indian National Congress for independence from British rule and became an active freedom fighter. He started the Journal 'Bandematram' to publish revolutionary views. In 1908, he was arrested and put into Alipore Jail as a prisoner for a year. He was influenced by the study of Vedas, Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Gita, the Ancient Indian Philosophy, religious and the spiritual literature and engaged most of his time in practicing yoga and meditation during jail. This led to a transformation from his political activities to spiritual visions. In 1910, he went to Pondicherry, French India now in Puducherry who sought to convey his ideas 40 years from 1910 to 1950 of his writings, which he carried out spiritual practice at his Ashram with idea that man would evolve spirituality into a superamental being. In 1926, he established 'Sri-Aurobindo Ashram' - The International Centre of Education at Pondicherry with experiments on education with the help of his disciple, Mirra Alfassa, a French lady, also came to known as 'The Mother'. He passed away on December 5, 1950 at Pondicherry. After his

death, she continued to supervise the 'Sri –Aurobindo Asharam' with her spiritual work and guidance.

Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy of life is mainly based on 'Veda', 'Upanishad', Mahabharata of Ved Vyas, and 'Patanjali's Yogasutra', and last but not least the teachings of 'Bhagwad Gita' as well saturated with idealistic and spiritualistic doctrines and powers.

He was initially an idealist. His idealistic philosophy is based on Vedantic Philosophy of Upanishads. The foundation of Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy evolved his own interpretation of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy which he called 'Poornaadvaita'. His philosophy of education is based on idealism, realism, naturalism, spiritualism, humanism, nationalism, supernaturalism and internationalism.

Sri-Aurobindo's publications on education are 'Bases of Yoga', 'Bhagavad Gita and Its Message', 'Dictionary of Sri-Aurobindo's Yoga', 'Essays on the Gita', 'The Future Evolution of Man', 'The Future Poetry', 'The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development', 'Hymn to the Mystic Fire', 'The Ideal of Human Unity', 'The Integral Yoga: Sri-Aurobindo's Teachings and Method of Practice', 'The Mind of Light', 'The Mother', 'Rebirth and Karma', 'Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol'. 'Secret of the Veda', 'The Life Divine', 'Sri-Aurobindo Primary Works Set 12 Vol.', 'The Synthesis of Yoga', 'The Upanishads', 'Vedic Symbolism', 'The Essential Aurobindo- Writings of Sri-Aurobindo', 'The Powers Within', 'Human Cycle, Ideal of Human Unity War and Self-Determination by Aurobindo', 'Hour of God by Sri-Aurobindo', and 'The Foundations of Indian Culture'. He started to publish 'Yugantar' in Bengali and 'Bande Matram' in English daily to enrich revolutionary views as well as a weekly newspaper 'Karmayogin' to enrich national's thought and action. He also started a monthly philosophical magazine named 'Arya'.

Need and Significance of the Study

Very few researches have been developed to study spiritual education with respect to Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy in India and its contribution to the field of education, spiritual education is less explored. The study is philosophical in its nature because it indicates normative aspect of education as for examples- what should be the process, aims of education, curriculum, and method of teaching in spiritual education? Where to educate spiritual doctrines? This study has sociological bases of education because of being related to society. This study covers

psychological aspect of education for instance growth and development of the students, learning, motivation, personality development and adjustment, etc. Spiritual education plays a vital role in Indian society. It is well known to all that Indian society is a spiritual based society. Sri-Aurobindo feels that ‘The true basis of education is the study of the human mind.’ Some of the scholars felt that after independence the spirituality gradually disappear and it will have no impact on Indian educational system. India is a developing country where development is required in each and every sphere of human life. Spiritual education and its implications are increasing day by day. For the appearance of the spirituality in the development of the educational system, in this connection, Kothari Commission (1966) points out, “In the development that we envisage in the future, we hope that the pursuit of men, material affluence and power would be subordinated to that of higher values and the fulfillment of the individual. This concept of the mingling of ‘Science and Spirituality’ is of special significance for Indian Education.”

The article indicates that the relationship between Sri-Aurobindo’s Philosophy and spiritual education may be accepted by the researchers and practitioners of spiritual studies for carrying out research on what is required is that the people internalize the understanding of the Spiritual Education and bring about a dynamic change in their living patterns. In a nutshell there is need and significance that we subscribe to the emerging spiritual culture. It is clear that Sri-Aurobindo’s philosophy is playing a significant role in determining the process of spiritual powers and wealth within the framework of modern spiritual society.

In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, comprehend, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo’s philosophy. This study may help the students to understand and to solve the problem of education more efficiently. They may flower into excellent of our nation. Hence the investigator has decided to conduct the present study. On this background, the problem may be stated as: “*Spiritual Education in Sri-Aurobindo’s Philosophy*”

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To recognize factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo’s philosophy

2. To critically examine factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy
3. To analyze factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy
4. To comprehend factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy
5. To synthesize factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy
6. To evaluate factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy

Review of Related Literature

Spiritual Education Regarding Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy

(Spiritual _ Evolution) Spiritual Evolution is the philosophical theological esoteric or spiritual idea that nature and human being and or human culture evolve, extending from the established cosmological pattern or ascent or in accordance with certain pre-established potentials. It is synonymous with "higher education" a term used to differentiate psychological mental or spiritual evolution from the lower or biological evolution of physical form. The concept of spiritual evolution is also complemented by the idea of a creative impulse in human beings, known as epigenesis (en.wikipedia.org).

Mc Dermott (1994) says, "During his stay in Pondicherry, Aurobindo developed a method of spiritual practice he called Integral Yoga. The central theme of his vision was the evolution of human life into a life divine. He believed in a spiritual realization that not only liberated man but transformed his nature, enabling a divine life on earth. In 1926, with the help of his spiritual collaborator, Mirra Alfassa (The Mother), he founded the Sri-Aurobindo Ashram. He died on 5 December, 1950 in Pondicherry. His main literary works are The Life Divine which deals with theoretical aspects of Integral Yoga, "Synthesis of Yoga" which deals with practical guidance to Integral Yoga and 'Savitri'- A Legend and a Symbol, and an epic poem which refers to a passage in the Mahabharata where its characters actualize Integral Yoga in their lives. His works also include philosophy, poetry, translations and commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita."

In the title 'Philosophy and Spiritual Vision' Mc Dermott (1994) describes, "Aurobindo's concept of the Integral Yoga system is described in his book 'The Synthesis of Yoga' and 'The Life Divine' Aurobindo believed that the current concept of evolution merely describes a phenomenon and does not explain the reason behind it While he finds that life to be already present in the matter. He argued that nature (which he interpreted as divine) has evolved life out of matter and then mind out of life, in other words that evolution had a purpose. He believed that matter has an impulse to become life; and that life has a similar impulse to become mind. He stated that he found the task of understanding the nature of reality arduous and difficult to justify by immediate tangible results."

Sri-Aurobindo's concept of Integral Personality is mainly based on the Upanishad, the Sankhya and Yoga Philosophies –"Man is essentially a spiritual being, and each individual's true identity lies outside the personality complex in the Jivatman, whereas western theories, lacking such a spiritual foundation, regard psychological self as the basic unit of personality. The western theories make no distinction between soul, self and mind." "In the structure of human personality Sri-Aurobindo distinguishes various planes of nature, and affirms that the total personality is not a single unit but composed of many entities: the surface being with its three aspects of body, life and mind, the subtle being, also manifesting these three levels, the inner psychic being; and the higher being-above in which is hidden the true source of individuality, the Jivatman." "The action and influence of the psychic being is seen as playing a crucial role of the development of an integral personality, and the concept of the psychic being is one of Sri-Aurobindo's main contributions to a dynamic and spiritual view of human personality."

Methodology

Methodology takes a significant role in any type of research as the reliability and validity of the findings depend upon the methods adopted and applied in the study. This paper is descriptive in nature. It is mainly based on secondary data and is largely collected from different sources like books, journals, articles, and periodicals. This study is conducted mainly by drawing upon the works of Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy by applying analytical cum descriptive method for the research. The investigator has made effort to express spiritual education in the light of Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy.

Analysis and Interpretation

Before we discuss the factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy, it is essential for us to know the meaning of spiritual education. The term 'spiritual education' has different meanings to different thinkers in different context. According to Sri-Aurobindo, "Education to be true not be a machine made fabric, but a true building or living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of human being." He says on the importance of the spiritual development, "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 encouraged the individual's spiritual worth on the basis of the 'Theory of Evolution' –into a superamental being was his own unique contribution which means before the evolution, an involution would take effect in the human being.

His philosophy aims at physical purification, senses, mental, moral, conscience and spiritual developments for the creation of spiritual powers, emphasized by scientific experimentation on the spiritual evolution for the betterment of the society as a whole.

Modern education lays great emphasis on moral and spiritual education. Perhaps, this is precisely the cause why the learner seeks only to learn and study in the free and creative environment. With this consideration of mind, the Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy is purely and surely to please the modern learner. It is, however, a spiritualized education in which there is emphasis on education is the making human life into a life divine. Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy helps a lot in curriculum development and transaction in modern education regarding spiritual gains of light, power and bliss to transform life.

Thus it may be said that Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy is a looking glass that reflects the ever-changing faces as well as the cerebral aspect of spiritual powers and its implication to the society as a whole. It not only encompasses all the ideas of spiritual essence in the field of knowing science, and doing science, but also equally concentrates on feeling sciences

Limitation of the Study

Keeping in view the limitation of time, resources and energy, the study is limited to one aspect of the subject which is spiritual education in Sri-Aurobindo's philosophy. It is entirely based on the secondary data as for examples-books, journals, periodicals, newspapers etc. this constitutes a major constraint of the study.

Major Findings

The study under consideration has been carried out with the recognizing, comprehending, examining critically, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating that the spiritual vision of Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy has great relevance to the present-day inside schools or outside schools and it can bring about a dynamic change in the educational system not only of the country, but also the world. Here, the impact of modifying patterns of the Indian educational system in the light of Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy in the terms of Theory of Evolution and Involution has been analyzed in depth and thus it can contribute in solving the everyday problems of individuals' life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for their wellbeing. The spiritual gains of light, bliss and power and its impact in the field of education- the concepts which have been identified based on the analysis of Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy are mainly based on the Consciousness, Mind, Intelligence and Knowledge as well as Mental aptitudes, Psychological needs, Physical purification, Sense, Self-control, Freedom, Creativity, Peace and Harmony, Love and Sympathy, nationalism and internationalism. Sri-Aurobindo recognized that 'to bring out the real man is the first business of education' and 'education is the discovery of the soul' under the influence of a free and creative environment; fulfill the individuals' mind with spiritual growths and powers. He also recognized the contribution of music, songs, paintings, drawings, dancing, dramatics, poetry, fine arts and other artistic activities in the curriculum towards the development of individuals' mind, heart, and spirit. It is from his understanding of the role of such activities in purifying the individuals' mind, heart and spirit and also essential part of the spiritual curriculum.

The most dominant factor of strengthening spiritual education is the introduction of a new idea the 'Super-mental Education' which is the highest level of education achieving after one develops physical, vital, mental, and psychic elements in the International Centre at Pondicherry which delivered message to the Man, the Nation, and Universal humanity to enrich Feeling Science to develop integrated and harmonious physic, sensitiveness of the soul, sensitiveness to metaphysical thought and action and allow freedom to the mind in the free and creative environment. In the respect of feeling science, the 'Mother' proclaims that 'One thing is absolutely indispensable, the will to discover.'

Conclusion

After reviewing the related literatures on Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy, it is felt that there is a great deal has been done by his lectures and writings to trace the development of philosophical and non-material thought and action with special reference to spiritual doctrines and assumptions, much has also been done to spiritualize education at Pondicherry Ashram (French India) and has now culminated in 'Auroville'-a city of Universal Culture to draw in broad an outline of spiritual gains of light, power and bliss to the students and much has so far been also done to investigate the spiritual intelligence of individuals' work for recreating and constructing a spiritual culture in our country. Sri-Aurobindo survived the Gurukul System of Education that nurturing spiritual education through simplicity, high thinking, truth, knowledge, power, beauty, love, sympathy, peace, harmony and freedom and attempted to introduce a new own idea of 'Theory of Evolution' with his vision was the evolution of human life into a life divine. Sri-Aurobindo's Experiment on his 'Integral Education' by developing a method of spiritual practice what he called 'Integral Yoga' as the centre of education, the co-ordination of curriculum based on the oriental and the occidental culture related to spiritual needs with everyday life, the methods of teaching such as activity method, non-cognitive outlooks viz- a sense of responsibility, freedom, initiative, love and sympathy, interest, self-experience, co-operation, social -justice and a great importance was given on scientific demonstration and experiment on education of the discovery of the soul in search of the truth. Greater emphasis is being paid to spiritual world and a great deal has also been done.

In his views on Spiritual Philosophy of Education, Sri-Aurobindo made a considerable contribution for attaining of the spiritual goal of education. Thus, his perceptions on Spiritual Philosophy are therefore, a knowledge-hub of spiritual education. All the books and writings of Sri-Aurobindo, of course, yield useful information regarding spiritual discipline, spiritual learning and training, and also give details of spiritual basis of education as well as help in progressive basis of education for the betterment of the man, the nation and the universal humanity of the spiritual society as a whole.

Although, the author has no much intelligence, competence and skill to evaluate the Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy with special respect to spiritual world and power and its subsequent doctrines and assumptions as well as its development, yet when he thinks of his life's philosophy and social psychology, the feeling science arises in his mind that Sri-Aurobindo's perceptions

based on virtues of love, beauty, knowledge, truth, sympathy, peace and harmony, high thinking, simplicity, wisdom, as well as patriotism significantly remarks, of course, he was a practical spiritualist.

To have an access to the realization of thought and action with respect to his Philosophy which serves as a foundation of nurturing spiritual education, Sri-Aurobindo strongly teaches us his own's new idea the theory of evolution which reflects spiritual education. Elaborating the views of Sri-Aurobindo, the author concludes the **'Spiritual Education'** as **" is the highest level of education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through the Universal Brotherhood, Freedom, Service, Co-operation, Knowledge, Power, Beauty, Love, Sympathy, Wisdom, Peace and Harmony, Truth, Tolerance, Self-control, Self-determination, Self-Confidence, self-expression and Self-Realization and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest ideas and values of education, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals in the free and creative environment, - this is spiritual education."**

Sri-Aurobindo emphasized much importance to spiritual development and believed that a spiritual revolution would take place in the country. He evolved a synthesis of the East and the West, a synthesis of spirit and matter, of the oriental and the occidental culture and of the Science and the Vedanta. There, of course, would be a revolution in the field of the spiritual education on the way of Sri-Aurobindo's Philosophy. That is why, therefore, it may be said that Sri-Aurobindo appears to have made a considerable progress and development of spiritual world and potentialities of individuals for their spiritual development. So, therefore, he was a great spiritually intelligent and competent personality not only in India, but also in the world.

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