

## **AUROBINDO'S IDEA ON SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

**Arnab Kumar Roy\***

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### **Abstract**

The future of mankind depends on the education. It is also said that the development of a nation is influenced by education. Education is of various types-physical, mental, psychic, spiritual etc. The general aim of all types of education is to make the man worthy of living.

The specific aim of spiritual education is to help a person to realise the divine consciousness and become a perfect instrument of its manifestation. Now- a-days spiritual education has become the most neglected aspect of life. But it is so much necessary at present for mental improvement of human beings that the valuable thoughts of the visionaries and educationalists regarding this type of education need to be followed at any cost to protect the human civilization from going astray.

Aurobindo Ghosh, the great philosopher and educationalist laid emphasis on spiritual education as the most important mean of education observing the drawback in the education system not only of India but also of the other countries of the world.

In the present paper an effort has been given to examine critically Aurobindo's spiritual education, its aim and relevance in today's context.

**Keywords:** Divine consciousness, education, manifestation, spiritual education etc.

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\* **M.A(Education), B.Ed, Asst. Teacher**

**Introduction:**

Aurobindo Ghosh was an Indian nationalist, philosopher, yogi, poet, educator, internationalist, psychologist, idealist thinker and above all a great spiritualist. He was born in former Calcutta on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1872. Krishna Dhun Ghosh was his father and his mother was Swarnalata Devi. At the age of seven he went to England and stayed there for 14 years. He was educated at Cambridge university. During his stay in England, he was profoundly influenced by the western thoughts like empirical positivism, rationalism and romantic idealism. Evolution theory of Charles Darwin, philosophy of cognitive evolution of Henry Bergson etc. made a significant impression on his intellectual development and view of the world. He was a scholar. Besides English he mastered Latin and Greek and learnt French, German, Italian, Spanish etc. At the age of 18, he passed the entrance examination of the Indian Civil Service (ICS). But for the protest against the British oppression, he did not sit for the practical examination of ICS. He returned to India in 1893 and joined Baroda college as a part time French teacher. He gave up Baroda college in 1905 and joined Bengal National college as a principal. In the same year he also joined Anti-partition movement against the British. He started the Journal 'Bandemataram' to propagate his revolutionary ideas. In 1908, he was arrested in connection with Alipore Bomb case and put into Alipore jail where he remained for one year. In this time of his life the concept of spirituality grew in him due to his extensive reading of the Gita, Upanishad, Ramayana, Vedas, Ancient Indian philosophy etc. He also started to spend his time in jail in practising yoga and meditation rigorously. Being acquitted, he came out of the jail after a year. In 1910, he went to Pondicherry leaving his political activities. He established Sri Aurobindo Ashram - The International Centre of Education at Pondicherry with the help of his disciple, Mirra Alfassa - a French lady who came to be known as The Mother later. This great person breathed his last on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1950 at Pondicherry.

**Objectives:** Objectives of the study are the followings:

- (i) To examine critically the spiritual education of Aurobindo Ghosh.
- (ii) To comprehend the importance of Aurobindo's spiritual education in today's education system.

**Spiritual education in Aurobindo's philosophy:**

Aurobindo's idea of education is broadly called 'integral education'. He felt the need of true kind of education for not only India but also for the world. He himself commented about 'integral education' that this kind of education helps one to enter into the right relation with life, mind, soul of people to which he belongs. According to him there are five stages of Integral education. They are-physical education, vital education, mental education, psychic education and spiritual education.

Among those stages, Aurobindo gave more emphasis on spiritual education. He felt that it was the most neglected aspect of life. He understood that Indians needed an education proper to the Indian soul temperament and culture. He also added that India was in need of such education system which would be faithful to her developing soul, to her future need and even to her eternal spirit.

He also opined that education must not be machine made fabric, but a true building or living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of human being.

According to him 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. He also said that another aim of education is to prepare man for divine life. He had the view that education enlightens the inner soul of the man and then all round development flourishes in the man. From this realisation he felt the need of spiritual education to 'arrive at our own absolute'.

He proposed that the spiritual education should be initiated from the very childhood. He expressed his valuable thoughts in this regard also. Every child is a spark of the divinity meant to progress, evolve and develop through experiences. This development on the basis of child's own choice needs to be nourished and not forced to be moulded in accordance with the parent's ambitions or pre-ordained expectation of the society. For initiation of the spiritual education in childhood a teacher has the big responsibility to play. He must know the inner aptitude and aspiration of the child.

According to Aurobindo, one of the parts of spiritual education is self-discovery. To attain self discovery he suggested for the following of three steps process which is known as triple transformation. Triple transformation includes psychic, spiritual and supra mental transformation. In spiritual education mind retains a special position. Aurobindo called it the sixth sense. He asserted that the educationalists should develop the sixth sense in the child and they should 'train the child to the perfect accuracy and keen subtleness of which they are capable of. He explained further and told that mind is consisted of four layers which he defined as chitta, manas, intellect and intuition. Chitta is the first layer. It is called passive memory. Manas is the second layer. This receives the images and transforms those images into thought perceptions. Buddhi is the third layer. Fourth layer is called intuition which brings higher knowledge.

According to him there are some means of spiritual education. One is yoga. In spiritual education yoga plays a vital role. It helps in attaining spirituality. Another mean of spiritual education is sadhana. He practised yoga and sadhana to achieve spirituality. Aurobindo said that everyone has in him something divine. This divinity can be obtained by yoga only. His yoga is not that of sanyasi but of the ordinary man while performing worldly pursuits. According to him yoga transform the human mind, life and body to superman.

### **Methodology:**

Methodology plays an important role in any type of research as the validity and reliability of the findings depend on the adopted methods of the study. This paper is descriptive in nature and is based on the secondary data collected from the various sources like books, journals, articles and periodicals. This study has been conducted mainly applying analytical descriptive method. An effort has been made by the researcher to analyse the pros and cons of spiritual education in the light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

### **Analysis:**

Aurobindo's philosophy of life emerged out of his own life experience and thought. In fact his philosophy of life enriched his ideas on education. He believed that there is 'Brahma' in everybody. So everyone should know own self first. Then one can know the whole world and its mysteries. According to him the person who achieves this self-realization does not detach himself

from the society. Rather he continues to work for the better development of the society. Aurobindo explained the individual's spiritual worth on the basis of the 'Theory of Evolution'. According to him different stages of evolution are matter, life, psyche and mind. For evolution of mind to divine 'sachidananda', it is to pass through different levels- higher mind, illuminated mind, intuition, over mind and super mind. The core of Aurobindo's system of education is the transformation of human mind into the super mind. For the transformation of human mind spiritual education is necessary. Through spiritual education human mind may be transformed into the supermind having supra normal faculties.

Following the foot print of Aurobindo, modern educationalists have laid emphasis on the need of spiritual education.

### **Findings:**

Sri Aurobindo's concept on spiritual education has been critically examined, analysed and synthesized and found that his spiritual education is relevant to the present demand of not only of our country but also of the world. He gave emphasis on the mind which has a great role to play in spiritual education. Only through spiritual education a real man can be brought out. To discover the soul inside the man he understood the importance of music, songs, paintings, drawings, dancing, dramatics, poetry, fine arts and other artistic activities in the curriculum.

Actually Aurobindo followed the ancient Indian system of education in which guru provided spiritual education to his disciples for the purification of their mind and making them better individual in future life.

In the present context, Aurobindo's spiritual education is of great demand to maintain the permanent peace not only of India but also of the world. The human civilization has reached in this age of globalization with the scientific discoveries like artificial satellite, enrichment of communication facilities, genetic technology, space exploration, robotic and many other technologies. In spite of it present world is facing various alarming situations which can turn the world into a necropolis in a blink of an eye. Under the circumstances to maintain global peace, values and harmony and to promote international Brotherhood Aurobindo's idea of spiritual education is very much relevant.

**Conclusion:**

Aurobindo Ghosh was a versatile genius. His educational philosophy comes under the category of idealism. Like Vivekananda he believed that the innermost truth was the soul and the ultimate goal of education is the emancipation of the soul. His philosophy is not just a philosophy based on God and his manifestation. It is actually 'Purnna Advaita' or Integral Non-dualism. His noble mission was to bind all the people in the world in one thread with the feeling of universal brotherhood. He knew that he could only do that with the spiritual basis of education as well as the progressive basis of education. So in collaboration with the Mother he established Auroville—a city of universal culture on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1968. Now it has turned into an international university. At present the Govt. of India and UNESO both have already come forward to make it a centre of International Culture of Education. Hope that it will be an effective International University in the near future.

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