

‘Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and His ideals of Education’

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

Dr. R.S. Mani

Sri Aurobindo was born on August 15, 1872, at Konnagar near Calcutta. At the age of 5 years he was sent to a Darjeeling convent and, at the age of 7 years, he was sent to England for education. He studied at St.Paul’s School in London and at Cambridge University, concentrating on the culture of ancient, medieval and modern Europe, and on languages. He mastered as many as ten languages like English, French, Latin, Greek, German, Italian, Spanish, Marathi and Sanskrit. He passed ICS examination theoretical in 1890 and stood in second position but he did not appear for the practical examination of horse-riding consciously, for which he was declared as unsuccessful. He left for India in February 1893 and joined Baroda College as a professor of English. Here he devoted himself to self-culture and reading philosophy and cultural heritage of India. He was influenced by the revolutionary ideas of Thakur Saheb and Bal Gangadhar Tikak. When the Bengal Partition Movement started in 1905 he gave up his job at Baroda, came back to Bengal and actively joined the political movement by joining as extremist against moderates. In favour of independence ,he started public propaganda through press and to propagate revolutionary ideas he edited Vande Mataram and Jugantar. He was imprisoned in 1908 on the charges of Alipore Bombing and treason. He moved to Pondicherry in 1910, there he set up a divine centre in order to give a practical form of his ideas, which became famous by the name Aurobindo Ashram. He lived in this Ashram all his remaining life and invested his whole time in spiritual meditation and yoga. He wrote The Life Divine, the Savitri, the synthesis of Yoga and the Essays on the Gita. On 5th December 1950 Sri Aurobindo left for his heavenly abode.

To Sri Aurobindo only acquisition of information is not education. The true aim and principle of national education according to him is to take our culture as its foundation while not ignoring modern truth and knowledge. Education provides conditions for all human beings towards their divine perfection

and to achieve the power, the harmony, the beauty and joy of self-realisation. According to him education brings out –‘to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter his right relations with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member.’ Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of education is based upon the ancient Indian Vedanta transformed in the light of modern western advanced knowledge. In the words of Aurobindo ‘ the time basis of education is the study of mind, infant, adolescent and adult.’ Therefore, it is function of education to study the mind of the individual, the people, the nation and the universe. Through the study of only human mind, we can change the man and society. So , in his system of education he gave emphasise on the study of human mind. An ideal teacher is one who can study the mind. In integral education attempts are given on the integral development of physical being, vital being, psychic being and mental being to bring about a transformation of man into a spiritual being. The ultimate aim of Aurobindo’s system of education is to produce a transformed and spritualized new man.

Supporting physical education Sri Aurobindo express that it is essential for for controlling the sex drives. According to Aurobindo’s philosophy of education a seeker of truth should have control over sex-impulses. So, he stressed on games and sports in educational system which helps to renew physical energy and to develop tolerance, self-control, friendliness self mastery of ego etc. in ‘Ashram School’ a definite portion of the time table is allotted for physical education along with the minutes for concentration. Thus, through this physical education attempts are made to express the inner consciousness.

According to Sri Aurobindo, ‘Each human being is a self- developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material.’ The aim of education must be the integral development of the educand. The educator, the educand and the school together constitute the integral pattern of education. He emphasized on the need of the moral and religious education along with yoga as necessary part of curriculum. He thought that religious education effects the child’s moral and spiritual development of life and that should be applied in practical life. He was not in favour of any particular religion which may inculcate narrowness in a child. By religious education, he wants to enable children such that they become able to look after the social and national well-being and yoga alone can bring about an accelerated development not only in the powers of mind, but in the psychological personality and character of our people. The four-fold approach to education advocated by Sri Aurobindo like the vital, the physical, the mental and the psychic develop power, beauty, knowledge and love in the

individual student through which a man can get liberation from material world, desires, ignorance and suffering. A total spiritual education is the goal education which is more important than the intellectual , moral and religious education. Spiritual transformation of man is the goal of education. He recommended that curriculum should therefore include physical education, vital education through which life energy is channelized and disciplined, mental education and psychic and spiritual education. Regarding examination he remarked that mechanical examination cannot help to evaluate the progress of the child in these lines. The examinations which is spontaneous and cater to the needs of the child is recommended.

In 1910 he wrote in Karmayogin about the necessity of evolving A system of National Education in India and most of his suggestions remain extremely relevant today also. Sri Aurobindo's main aim of education is to make man go beyond man. He expressed in 'The Life Divine' as 'The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and learning laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she will work out the superman, the God.' Dr. Rajendra Prasad has rightly remarked about Sri Aurobindo that he was a courageous and fearless thinker like our ancient rishis- the messages that he has left behind and the scent of spirituality that he has spread, will continue to inspire not only the coming generation of the nation but also of the whole world. India would continue to worship and establish his memory and will accord him a place among the greatest hermits and gods.

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