

Sri Aurobindo's Contribution to Education: An Assessment

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True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are; it is what you become. The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught.

-Sri Aurobindo

The above statement is quoted by a patriotic-revolutionary who turned into a great educator, seer and thinker. To understand the meaning and objective of the above quote is not a puzzle. When we go through the early life sketch of Sri Aurobindo, we find that he joined initially the Indian movement for independence from British rule, for a while he was one of its influential leaders and then became a spiritual reformer introducing his vision on human progress and spiritual evolution. He is exponent of the philosophies of Integral evolution, Integral psychology, Intermediate zone and super mind. There is remarkable literary work done by him; The Life Divine, The synthesis of Yoga, Savitri: A Legend and a symbol, an epical poem etc. are his worth creations.

The Untold truth about him is that he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1943 and for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950. His early life influenced the rest of his life.

Early Life sketch of Sri Aurobindo:

Aurobindo was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bengal Presidency, India on 15th August 1847. His father Krishna Dhun Ghose wanted to make him an ICS officer, so, he went for that and ranked 11th but he had no interest in the ICS and came late in the horse riding practical exam intentionally to get himself disqualified for the service.

Sri Aurobindo was master of many languages. Besides English, he mastered Latin and Greek and also learnt French, German, Italian and Spanish during his stay in England for 14 years from the age of 7 to the age of 21.

He returned to India in 1893 and devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali and mastered in the Indian Culture and philosophy. He began Yoga by himself in 1904.

He revealed the following educational thoughts in his books:

- i) A System of National Education
- ii) Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education

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Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Life-

Aurobindo's philosophy emerged out of his own experiences, thoughts and life education. During a visit to Baroda in 1947 Aurobindo took some private lessons from a Yogi Bhasker Lele. Soon after he had realization of silent impersonal Brahman in which the whole world assumed the appearance of "empty forms, materialised shadow without true substance."

'Savitri'- The Master Piece :

There was no ego, no real world, only when one looked through immobile sense, something perceived or bore upon it sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialized shadows without true substance. There was no one or many even, only just absolutely that, featureless, relation less sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realization nor something glimpsed somewhere above – no abstraction it was positive, the only positive reality-although not a spatial physical world, pervading, occupying or rather flooding and drawing this semblance of a physical world, leaving no room, or space for any reality but itself allowing nothing else to seem at all actual positive or substantial. I cannot say there was anything exhilarating or rapturous in the experience, but what it brought was an inexpressible peace, a stupendous silence, infinity of release and freedom.

The noteworthy things about this experience is-

- i) The first one is that it was a true realization in the sense that peace and inner silence can never be diminished.
- ii) The second according to him yoga is a means through which one can come in contact with the true self and unite the separate parts of oneself and can also see the same divine in others. His Yoga is integration of knowledge, work, devotion and meditation.

He told, "One who chooses, the divine is chosen by the divine. As the call for the Divine grows more Intense, so does his help come more readily."

Anyone can practice yoga in ordinary life. He told, if a merchant wishes to follow yoga, his business itself regarded as work divine and he keeps himself away from practicing corruption or black marketing. Similarly, a student can keep him away from many useless and harmful activities through practicing yoga and can attain higher values.

Educational views of Sri Aurobindo :

The following lines by Sri Aurobindo reveal his educational thoughts of him-
Man must aspire to go beyond his intellect, but first the spirit's ascent we must

achieve, out of the chasm from which our nature rose; the soul must sovereign above the form, our hearts we must inform with heavenly strength.

Surprise the animal with the occult god. Then kindling the gold tongue of sacrifice calling the power of a bright hemisphere, we call shed the discredit of our mortal state make the abysm a road for Heaven's descent, Acquaint our depths with the supernal ray and cleave the darkness with the mystic fire. (Quoted from 'Savitri')

He emphasized on integral education in addition to physical, psychic and mental aspects which denoted matter and spirit respectively. The element of integral education is (a) beauty (b) power (c) knowledge and (d) love. All the four are directed through physical culture, control of sensations, alertness of mind, fallings and emotions respectively.

Let's try to understand that how is this possible?

Firstly. I would like to talk about Beauty, beauty is the realization through physical culture, power is to be related to the control of sensations, knowledge helps in developing the mental makeup of an alert mind and love is formation of feelings and emotions, which should be directed towards others and the communion with divine. Everybody has 'something' divine in him, 'something' his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which god offers him to take are refuse. The aim of education should bring out to full advantage all that is in the individual child.

The teacher should focus to help the child to feel that touch of individuality, divinity and to find that 'something' to develop it and use it. Education should help the growing soul to draw out the best that is within and make it perfect for a noble cause.

He proposed three principles of teaching-

- i) True teaching is that nothing can be taught
- ii) The mind has to be consulted in its growth
- iii) Work from near to far, from known to unknown.

The process of education should be based on needs of real contemporary life. Inculcation of morality in the child should be another focus of educational process because he believed that without development of morality and emotion, only mental development becomes harmful for human beings.

Aurobindo described curriculum for different levels of education as-

- At Primary level, Mother tongue, English, French, Literature, National History, General Science, Social Studies and Arithmetic should be taught.
- Secondary level, Mother tongue, English, French, Literature, Arithmetic, Art, and Chemistry Physics, Botany, Physiology Health Education, Social Studies should be taught.
- University Level- Indian - Western Philosophy, History of Civilization, English Literature, French, Sociology Psychology, History, Chemistry, Physics, Botany should be taught.
- Vocational- Art, Painting, Photography, Sculpture, Drawing, Typing, Industrial, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Nursing etc. should be taught.

Aurobindo's Philosophy in global context and Auroville

'The City of Dawn' Auroville was inaugurated by the Mother on 28th Feb 1968 near Pondicherry with the representatives from 121 nations pouring soil from their respective land into a lotus shaped urn symbolizing the unity of human race.

According to its own charter, Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. It belongs to humanity as a whole. Concerned as "the city of humanity and unity", it aimed that there should be somewhere upon the earth a place where all can live freely as global citizens.

Auroville project has support of UNESCO and government of India. The development of Auroville- a city of universal culture is the most notable contribution of Sri Aurobindo. It is world university centre, a university in which continuing education from infancy to philosopher, is carried on with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo's (1872-1950).

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo's vision on education emphasized that education should be according to the needs of our present life that means to say that it is the necessities of changing world that the individual should be dynamic, creative, prolific and versatile through the means of education through which he is able to meet the modern complexities of life. According to him, physical development and

holiness are the chief aims of education; he also revitalized the concept of physical purity not only physical development, he harnessed the spirituality without which physical development is incomplete, according to him senses can be fully trained when nerve, chitta and manas are pure; hence purity of senses is possible through education without which development is impossible. Thus, Aurobindo emphasized that chief aim of education is moral development of an individual.

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