

## ULTIMATE AIM OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO 'SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH'

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### ABSTRACT

Sri Aurobindo was a great patriot-revolutionary who turned into a great educator, seer and thinker. He studied in England for 14 years from the age of 7 to the age of 21. After his return to India in 1893, he devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali and drank in the culture of and philosophy of India.

According to Sri Aurobindo, people of India always see and feel a soul in living beings as a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Integral Education is based on this conception of man.

"Integral" in the Aurobindonian sense is a term that comes from the Sanskrit word "purna," which means "complete." In more general terms, holism concerns itself with all aspects of existence, which includes physical, emotional, instinctual, mental, moral, social and spiritual aspects; it looks upon them as equally valid and contributing for growth and evolution.

According to Sri Aurobindo, a truly Integral Education should have three central aims: 1) for an individual, it is growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, 2) for the nation, the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its Dharma, and 3) to raise both the individual and nation into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity.

Sri Aurobindo's ideas on education are contained mainly in his two books namely A System of National Education and Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education. In this paper, approach of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh towards Education is theoretically examined to address this fundamental question: "What is the Ultimate Aim of Education in the light of Integral Education?"

**Keywords :** Sri Aurobindo, Integral Education, Devine, Aim of Education.

### INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo writes – "Education to be true must not be a machine made fabric, but a true building or living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of human being." Thus, according to him our education should be in accordance with the needs of our real modern life.

Sri Aurobindo was born on 1872. A patriot-revolutionary turned into a great educator, seer and thinker. Besides English, he mastered in Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian and Spanish during his stay in England for 14 years from the age of 7 to the age of 21. After his return to India in 1893, he devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali and drank in the culture of and philosophy of India. He began yoga by himself in 1904. Sri Aurobindo was a very brilliant student and passed the open competition for I.C.S. but did not try to qualify in the riding test.

Aurobindo's ideas on education are contained mainly in his two books namely A System of National Education and Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education. In this paper, approach of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh towards Education is theoretically examined to address this fundamental question:

“What is the Ultimate Aim of Education in the light of Integral Education?”

### INTEGRAL EDUCATION:

“Integral” in the Aurobindonian sense is a term that comes from the Sanskrit word “purna,” which means “complete.” In more general terms, holism concerns itself with all aspects of existence, which includes physical, emotional, instinctual, mental, moral, social and spiritual aspects; it looks upon them as equally valid and contributing for growth and evolution. But without transformation of these aspects of existence, a true integration or synthesis is not possible. Cenker (1976/1994) explains: Integralism is possible in Sri Aurobindo's system through transformation. He integrated experience not through a forced juxtaposition of realities and levels of being. Diverse principles and realities do not unite on their original level but are first transformed and then enter into a greater synthesis. For example, matter and spirit enter into synthesis only if matter loses its imperfections and limitations, but when it does so it can be integrated on a new level, a spiritual level, of being. The work of transformation is the work of man and the divine; transformation takes place most significantly on a supramental plane. What appears diverse is transformed and then integrated in such a way that unity and not opposition exists in the diversity (p. 147). It is in this sense that the Integral transformation achieved through an evolution of consciousness becomes much wider, higher and deeper than holistic transformation.

Integral Yoga is the basis for Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision of Integral Education. Integral Yoga is a grand synthesis of several major schools of Yoga – Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Without rejecting any of these Yogas, Sri Aurobindo takes the idea of Yoga to the next level – Yoga of self-perfection. But he is careful in explaining that the principle of Integral Yoga is “not perfection of the human nature as it is but a psychic and spiritual transformation of all the parts of the being through the action of an inner consciousness and then of a higher consciousness which works on them, throws out their old movements or changes them into the image of its own and so transmutes lower into higher nature. It is not so much the perfection of the intellect as a transcendence of it, a transformation of the mind, the substitution of a larger principle of knowledge – and so with all the rest of the being” (Sri Aurobindo, 1993/2000, pp. 9-10). This transformation or self-perfection, Sri Aurobindo explains, begins with the discovery and knowledge of the powers, principles and process of self-realisation. It requires a patient and persistent personal effort in growth and change. Integral development of different parts of the being – physical, vital, mental and psychic and – brings about a transformation into a spiritual being. Such a transformed and spiritualized being is the final goal of Sri Aurobindo's system of Integral Education. “[Education's] central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit, it is the formation, or, as I would prefer to view it, the evoking of knowledge and will and of the power to use knowledge, character, culture, – that at least if no more” (Sri Aurobindo, 1956/2004, pp. 9-10).

### AIMS OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION:-

Aims of Life and Aims of Education Based on a deep and conscious awareness of the significance of socio-cultural variations in the concept of man, his life and destiny, of the nation and of humanity and the life of human race, which get reflected in the respective philosophies of education, Sri Aurobindo developed his scheme of integral education rooted in the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self creation, to her eternal spirit (Raina, 2000). According to Sri Aurobindo, people of India always see and feel a soul in living beings as a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Integral Education is based on this conception of man. This truth of man's existence also carries within it the truth that it is important to distinguish and cultivate in man “a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the

summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that [India] has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his paramartha and highest purushartha" (Sri Aurobindo, 1956/2004, p. 15).

True and living education helps to "bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member" (pp. 13-14). A truly Integral Education should have three central aims: 1) for an individual, it is growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, 2) for the nation, the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its Dharma, and 3) to raise both the individual and nation into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity.

#### A. AIMS TOWARDS INDIVIDUAL

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between the psychic being that is individual and embodied, and grows from life to life; and central being (Atman, Self) which is immortal and remains the same through all lives. The psychic being is the link between the outer personality and nature, and the highest Atman or Self. It can also be understood as the evolving soul, the soul of the individual evolving in the manifestation, the soul-individuality. Though the word "soul" is sometimes used as a synonym for psychic being, in Sri Aurobindo's terminology there is a difference between the two. The soul is the divine essence or spark of the Divine in the individual, the psychic being is the developing soul-personality put forth by the soul as its representative in the evolution. This psychic being evolves and grows by its experiences in the manifestation; and as it develops, it increasingly aids the evolution and growth of the mental, vital and physical parts of the being. It is this psychic being that takes an important place in the educational thought of Sri Aurobindo. For him, education must help prepare the learners grow in their psychic being, so it can develop and manifest itself. Because it is this psychic being that supports "the evolution or the unveiling of the Divine Consciousness on earth, so that one day there will be Divine Life possible right here on earth" (Huppes, 2001, p. 9).

For Sri Aurobindo, that is the beginning of his Integral Yoga, and this Self-realization is one part of the triple transformation that he views as necessary for the transformation of the individual, society, humanity and the earth as a whole. The first transformation is the psychic realisation or transformation when the psychic being in man becomes the guide and true leader, and his physical, vital, and mental are perfect instruments of this true inner guide, the psychic being. The second transformation is the spiritual realisation or the Self-realisation. But for Sri Aurobindo, this Self-realisation or Moksha is not the goal or ultimate aim of man's life; it is a sure step toward the Supramental realisation and establishment of the Supramental Force on the Earth itself. Also, the realisation of the Self or Atman is partial if there is no transformation of the lower nature of man in the Light and Spirit of the Divine. This deeper transformation is needed for the Life on Earth to be transformed into a Life Divine. The central purpose of Integral Yoga is understood as: "Transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and being into a deep and wide spiritual consciousness and an integrated inner and outer existence and of our ordinary human living into the divine way of life" (Pandit, 1992, p. 127). The practice of Integral Yoga emphasises the need for personal transformation as a way to act towards a deeper transformation of the evolving outer world with a goal to enable a progressive and fundamental change in individual and collective consciousness.

It is this fulfillment of the man in this world, the inner and outer transformation that is necessary for this fulfillment, and the evolution of consciousness that facilitates such transformation that are

behind Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on education and its aims. Education, in this light, becomes the means to prepare learners for such transformation, which requires that all parts of their being – physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual – are properly prepared and developed to manifest a harmonious and integral personality. The emphasis is more on integral development, instead of emphasizing any one or two aspects of personality.

According to the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, important aims of education for an individual are as below:-

**(i) Physical Development and Purity:**

The first aim of education is to achieve complete physical and pure development of a child. According to Aurobindo, it is the body which performs all religious obligations. Physical development and purification are the two basis on which the edifice of spiritual development is built.

**(ii) Development of Senses:**

The second aim of education is to train all the senses namely hearing, speaking, and listening, touching, smelling and tasting. According to Sri Aurobindo these senses can be fully trained when nerve, chitta and manas are pure.

**(iii) Mental Development:**

The third aim of education is to achieve mental development of the child. This mental development means the development of all mental faculties namely - memory, thinking, reasoning, imagination and discrimination etc.

**(iv) Development of Morality:**

Shri Aurobindo has emphasized that without moral and emotional development mental development becomes harmful to human progress. For the moral development of child emotions, impressions or habits and nature are the three essential factors. Thus the ideals of a teacher should be so high that the child, by mere imitation, is able to reach higher and higher stages of development.

**(v) Development of Conscience:**

Another important aim of education is to develop the conscience. According to him, it has four levels namely – (1) Chitta, (2) Manas, (3) Intelligence, (4) Knowledge. A teacher should develop all these four levels harmoniously. This will promote the development of conscience.

**(vi) Spiritual Development:**

Shri Aurobindo emphasised that the main aim of education is to promote spiritual development. According to him every human being has some element of divinity in him. In his own words – “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.”

**B. AIMS TOWARDS SOCIETY**

Education is not a matter that concerns only the individual; it also deeply concerns the society, the collective. And Sri Aurobindo recognizes and deeply values the inter-connection between individual and collective, as reflected in their thoughts on education including its aims.

Sri Aurobindo is also concerned about the relation between the individual and the society. But he also emphasizes that an individual “is not merely a social unit; his existence, his right and claim to live and grow are not founded solely on his social work and function. He is not merely a member of a human-pack, hive or ant-hill; he is something in himself, a soul, a being, who has to fulfill his own individual truth and law as well as his natural or his assigned part in the truth and law of the collective existence” (Sri Aurobindo, 1949/998, p. 24).

So there is a much more equal relation between the individual and society in this view, which has implication for the education as well. An Integral Education, in Sri Aurobindo's view, will not emphasize society's demands over the individual's need for inner development and growth. It will allow complete freedom to the individual soul to grow and evolve in a multi-faceted and harmonious way. At the same time, the social nature of man will not be ignored because not only will the learning be happening in a communal setting and in close relations with the teachers, but more importantly, the role of individual transformation in the larger, spiritual transformation of humanity will be emphasized and modeled for the learners. In the light of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on the destiny of mankind, this truer and deeper connection between individual and collective in the evolution of consciousness is the basis of Integral Education. Education, in this view, is the means for facilitating individual transformation to prepare man, one individual at a time, for a collective transformation. The nature of upliftment that is of concern to Sri Aurobindo is the upliftment of consciousness—individually and collectively. Human society, in its present nature—with all its pleasures and pains, abilities and limits, gains and losses, convergences and conflicts, peace and war—is a creation of human consciousness that is in its turn limited by and subject to its present nature. As long as this consciousness remains, all adjustments and readjustments, all revolutions and re-organizations, re-thinking and re-planning in the society and its structures—political, economic, cultural—will be devised by the same consciousness that created the earlier structures, and are therefore bound to solve problems facing humanity only for a short period of time, if at all they are able to solve any. So what is needed? A new consciousness is the key. What will be this new consciousness? A consciousness that is wider, higher, and deeper than the one in which the humanity persists at present. A consciousness which enables the separative, divisive, egoistic tendencies that are presently behind every action and decision we make in our personal and social conduct to transform and evolve into unifying, integrative, harmonising, and ego-less tendencies. This deep transformation does not happen all at once in masses of humanity, but is a long and arduous process that happens one individual at a time. It occurs through an evolutionary ascent of consciousness and through Divine Grace represented in the descent of Supramental Consciousness that transforms the nature and process of evolution itself.

Sri Aurobindo has illuminated for us the nature of this new supramental consciousness, the conditions necessary for coming of a new spiritual age, the kind of Gnostic beings who will be the pioneers of spiritual age, and the nature of transformed social structures in such a spiritualised society. However, it is important to note that these details are not presented in absolute terms based on some abstract sociological projections, but are only indicated as hints in the light of spiritual realizations and experiences of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This new consciousness does not evolve in a vacuum. It is the most natural progression for an individual consciousness, and indirectly for the group or societal consciousness. This is where the aim of Integral Education comes to the forefront again. It is the evolution of consciousness in the individual that the education is concerned with, but this evolution is an integral part of the evolution of societal consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo, compels us, with our feet planted firmly in the present, to set our eyes on the society of the future that he envisions for us, the spiritualised society that would be the result of a supramental consciousness. Sri Aurobindo reminds us that "To hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 1059). Sri Aurobindo is concerned with the integral development and transformation of inner and outer nature of the learners and educators, and a centre of education that experiments with such a system of integral education becomes a dynamic ideal for the society through the very nature of its work in facilitating individual and collective evolution of consciousness.

## CONCLUSION

According to Sri Aurobindo, the education must emphasis on the whole aspects of human life such as physical, psychic, mental, beauty, power, knowledge and love etc. Integral Education is basically the cultivation of these aspects in human being. 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. Love is the formation of desirable feelings and emotions, which should be directed towards others and the Commission with the Divine. Everyman has divinity by some extent according to him which is not to be insulted but the teacher should help the child to feel that touch of divinity and their mind has to be constructed in growth. Education should help that growing soul to draw out the best that is within and make it perfect for a noble cause.

Thus, in the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the ultimate aim of education is to help learners to develop divine ways of meeting the Divine and bringing the Divine on Earth so that the Earth may automatically be Heaven for living beings, being full of Devine.

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