

SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF 'EDUCATION'- ITS RELEVANCE AT PRESENT SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Sri Aurobindo, the great contemporary Indian thinker, has discussed elaborately the concept of education - its meaning, aim and methods. He emphasizes on the holistic and integral view of education. In this paper an attempt is made to highlight his educational philosophy and its relevance at present society.

INTRODUCTION :-

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, also known as Rishi Aurobindo, was a seer, yogi, philosopher, poet and a nationalist thinker of India in contemporary period. He was a follower of vedanta philosophy. His philosophical views can be summed up as Spiritualistic Humanism or Divine Humanism, because he insisted on the spiritual awakening of the human being. Sri Aurobindo believes that human beings are the fragments of the Divine. So, it is possible for man to achieve higher status through spiritual transformation. His educational philosophy is also consistent with this idea.

OBJECTIVE :-

The objective of this paper is to highlight the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and its relevance at present society.

METHODOLOGY :-

Descriptive and analytical methods are used to prepare this paper. Secondary sources, i.e, books are taken for data collection.

DISCUSSION :-

By 'Education' Sri Aurobindo means that which offers the tools by which one can live for the Divine, for the country, for oneself and for others. Defining true education he wrote, "There are three things which have to be taken into account in true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity."¹ The central principle of Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is the awakening of man as a spiritual being and to bring out integrality and unity among the human beings. In his view the true education is self education. He maintains that every human being has some fragments of divine existence within him and true education can develop it into its full extent.

Sri Aurobindo emphasizes such kind of education which can give an integrated view of the universe to the pupil. Integrated perspective is that through which a student of science looks at life, society and the universe not only from a scientific outlook, but also from spiritualistic, aesthetic, ethical perspective etc. Others should have also the same perspective etc. Sri Aurobindo maintains that a

synthetic outlook, a holistic view of the universe and life should be cultivated in man through education. An attempt should be made by education to develop the individual harmoniously.

In Sri Aurobindo's view education is a process of transforming man into an integral man. He stressed on the need of total transformation of man from his present state and for this purpose there is the need of integral yoga. Both education and the integral yoga aim at the individual and social development. Through the practice of yoga the upliftment of the whole aspects of individual is possible. Then evil will decrease in the society and goodness will be brought out by the integral men. And then only the society will move towards a divine life.

According to Sri Aurobindo, there are three principles of true education. The first principle is that nothing can be taught. In his view, the teacher is not an instructor, but a helper and guide whose business is to suggest the students instead of imposing his own ideas on them. He has to show them the paths for acquiring knowledge. Sri Aurobindo says that this principle is applicable to all irrespective of age and sex. Only, the amount of help and guidance that they need are different.

The second principle is that the mind has to be kept free in its own growth. Education must suit to the particular qualities and capacities of the pupils. It is a great error to impose parents' and teachers' desires and ideas upon the child while educating him. Sri Aurobindo believes that the chief aim of education is to find out the qualities of the child, develop it and use it for noble purpose.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the third principle of true education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. As man's nature is based on his past, heredity, surroundings etc. So he must begin with that and the free environment must be given for the natural and genuine development.

Sri Aurobindo believes that the true basis of education is the study of the human mind. As the educationist has to deal with the mind which is a subtle and sensitive organism, so the mind or 'antahkarana' is the instrument for the educationist.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the mind or antahkarana consists of four layers - (1) Chitta (2) Manas (3) buddhi and (4) Supra normal faculties. The Chitta is the store house of past memories and mental impressions. Manas, the sixth sense of Indian psychology, receives images of things through sensations of different sense organs and also receives mental images and impressions. The functions of buddhi are judgement, imagination, memory, reasoning, critical thinking, comparison etc. Supra normal faculties include extra sensory perception like telepathy, clairvoyance etc. which make man prophet. So, the first business of the educationist is to develop in the child the right use of the six senses, to guide them for intellectual development and to inspire them for raising their highest capabilities towards perfection.

Sri Aurobindo admits the traditional Indian philosophical view that the structure of man consists of three principles of nature - sattva, rajas and tamas which manifest as knowledge, passion and ignorance. Tamas darkens the knowledge within and creates ignorance, forgetfulness, slowness, inability to grasp and distinguish. Rajas is an undisciplined activity which darkens knowledge by passion, attachment, prejudice and wrong ideas. Sattva manifests the hidden knowledge. Sri Aurobindo says that the main duty of a teacher is to remove the tamas, discipline rajas and to awake sattva, which is a big challenge for the teacher. He had to train the students in such a way that they will be capable of illumination from within. Sri Aurobindo suggests that the removal of tamas, the disciplining of rajas and the awakening of sattva is possible only by following the strict moral disciplines. In this regard he refers to the principle of 'Brahmacharya' of ancient Indian system. He recognizes 'Brahmacharya' as the main psychological principle on which the ancient Indian system of education was based. Through the training of Brahmacharya the ancient Indian disciples were able to strengthen the medha or grasping power, thought conception, memory, judgement etc. So, according to Sri Aurobindo, a strong foundation must be built in student's mind in order to make him capable of bearing knowledge.

Man, according to Sri Aurobindo, has various aspects, viz, the physical, the vital, the mental and the psychical. Education must cover all these aspects of human being. physical education which includes sports and games, spiritual disciplines, practice of yoga, Asana and pranayamas which are essential for physical growth. Vital education includes the training of the senses. The aim of mental education is to acquire silence and concentration. According to Sri Aurobindo, "The first thing the teacher has to do is to accustom the pupils to concentrate attention."² The child should be encouraged to know a thing through all the senses, to analyse it and observe it attentively and systematically until he knows it as a whole. This learning process should be spontaneous instead of compulsion.

The most important contribution of Sri Aurobindo's educational theory is the psychic being which is the psychological centre of man. The function of education is to enable man to become conscious of the psychological centre. Psychic education is that which enables man to develop his integral personality in accordance with his inner nature.

Sri Aurobindo says that education must be related to morality. Education without morality is harmful to human progress. But the mere reading of moral and religious books provided by a fixed syllabus or the rigid disciplines in an educational institution or at home are artificial attempts to moral training. The best way to put the child on right way to his own perfection is watching, helping and suggesting by personal examples.

Sri Aurobindo points out some defects of educational system in modern time, specially in India. He believed that the aim of education is not to acquire a degree or service which is mostly found to be the motto of education in our society. He recognizes such kind of education as bad education. Sri Aurobindo believes that good education is that which is able to build up a strong foundation in man's mind so that he can bear knowledge and can strengthen the body and brain sufficiently. He says that the university can not complete the education of a man. Rather it can provide some materials through which a man can survive in life. He points out another important

mistake of the prevailing educational system, i.e, over stressing on gathering information and neglecting the psychology of man. In his view it is an error to confine ourselves mostly on the training of memory and ignoring the other faculties such as the power of reasoning, comparison, differentiation and the power of expression. According to Sri Aurobindo, these powers are present in all men, but the training and cultivation are needed to bring out them which is the true essence of education. He believes that to give knowledge to the student is necessary. But it is not necessary to emphasize on the amount of knowledge instead of using properly what we know.

As a nationalist thinker Sri Aurobindo advocates the concept of 'national education'. He defines national education as, "the education which starting with the past and making full use of the present builds up of a great nation." National education must be imparted in a national spirit and under national control. This means that one should not throw away one's traditional background. However, he is not against the modern advances done by the west which are also helpful to our national growth. But people must keep in mind that whatever he accepts must be suitable for him and does not harm his foundation. In this system of education the students are also taught, along with the other subjects, some vocational subjects such as carpentry, smity etc. so what they can earn their livelihood after completing their study. The central aim of national educational is that the student must support himself and does not look helplessly to others. Self reliance is the basic principle of national educational in Sri Aurobindo's view.

RELEVANCE :-

Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is relevant at present situation when the prevailing education system are criticised from many perspective. Sri Aurobindo is the Philosopher of contemporary Indian philosophy who expresses psychological explanation of education, He conceives a holistic and integral view of education which does not recognize man as a isolated being. As a social being man must live coherently with the other persons, his nation and finally with the

universal humanity. So, he can be capable for this through the education he attained. Again, Sri Aurobindo emphasizes on the developing of the whole aspects of human being such as physical, mental, vital, psychic, moral and spiritual. This aspect is mostly neglected in our education system. As a result our education system produces more carrier oriented persons rather than perfect men. Sri Aurobindo never wants to create some parrot learner, but the true learners which can be capable of thinking analytically and critically.

CONCLUSION :-

So, it can be concluded that Sri Aurobindo advocates such kind of education through which both the individual and the nation will be uplifted to the greatest extent. He synthesizes the east and west, eternal values and modern progress, national feelings and human unity and the idealistic and programmatic approaches. So, there is the necessity to evaluate the recommendations of Sri Aurobindo's view for the sake of national progress.

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