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Maintenance of Human Values & Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education in the Present Crisisful Hours

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Abstract:

In spite of possessing supreme human values and a great heritage of lofty culture India has suffered from a colossal erosion of values at the present moment. Without a comprehensive approach such things cannot be done away with forthwith. Hence, education if it is to be, not a machine-made fabric, its central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit – it is the evoking of the knowledge and will and the power to use knowledge, character and culture.

Integral Education unites the ancient educational goal of self-knowledge with the modern goal of world-knowledge. Both of these goals are admirable, and they must go hand-in-hand in any educational system that is integral. Integral Education is a philosophy and practice of education for the Whole Child – body, emotion, mind, soul and spirit. Here the teacher and the parents have indeed a privilege of utilising some such affectionate tie of relationship with the child and implement the educational programme successfully.

Key words:

Integral Education, erosion of values, corruptions, cultural occupation, whole child, Truth, Harmony, & Liberty, honesty, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self-control, taskmaster, helper, guide, Complete man, Integrated man.

Introduction:

In spite of possessing supreme human values and a great heritage of lofty culture, India suffered from a colossal erosion of values. Obviously, there were deep-rooted causes that account for such a deplorable state and degradation of the people. The colonial rule that existed for about 200 years was bent upon having cultural occupation of this land in addition to the territorial occupation. As a result, the educated section came out as the product of the system. In the circumstances, radical changes in building the nation also did not take place as desired. The degradation that had already took root in the minds of the people during the British rule in India brought about further degradation and erosion of values in all these years leading to the crisis in humanity at the present moment.

Although truth and knowledge have no country it is an effete superstition to think that everywhere man can uniformly be constructed to order. Hence, education if it is to be, not a machine-made fabric, its central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit – it is the evoking of the knowledge and will and the power to use knowledge, character and culture.

Objectives of the Study :

- To focus on the present-day problem of erosion of human values causing a crisis in humanity.
- To know how to develop an integrated approach of education as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo that enables a learner to solve the problems of life from a comprehensive point of view.
- To get a clear idea of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and practice of Integral Education.
- To judge the ideal of the basal implementing columns of Integral Education.
- To have outlines of the roles of the teachers & the parents as seen in the system of Integral Education.

The problem: Erosion of human values causing a crisis in humanity:

The erosion of values during the last few decades poses to be an unusually alarming problem of the day. The various ethical problems of our present day life are prevalent in our society, for which it is irrelevant to mention the cases individually specially in respect of illegal transplantation of kidney, rampant corruption, shooting by the children at the school premises even, inhuman torture, media violence, violence in intimate relationships, abetting suicide, cheating others etc. etc.

The gravity of the situation is so overwhelming that it is not a very easy task to find a way out single handedly. Without a comprehensive approach such things cannot be done away with forthwith. In different countries we find that lessons on moral science and teachings are being imparted in different stages right from the primary stage. Seminars on "How to tackle the psychology of the little ones" are also being arranged from time to time. In pursuance of this, here it is intended to ventilate the illumining thoughts of Sri Aurobindo who has given us the idea of the development and integration of the all the elements of human nature irrespective of physical, mental, vital, psychic and spiritual since without the total and comprehensive training of the child this menace, going on, cannot be stopped.

Integrated Approach enabling a learner to solve the problems of life from a comprehensive point of view:

What was missing in the ancient academic discipline has been discovered and updated in the modern context by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo points out that the ancients of this land had the view that all knowledge is within and has to be evoked by education rather than instilled from outside. The famous educational discipline of ancient India which induced a calm, clear and receptive state of mind, free from pride, passion, bias and preoccupation was surely the foundation of Aryan culture and Aryan morals. Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo has stated in unequivocal terms that the actual system of ancient instruction cannot be preferred to be restored in its outward features but its fundamental principles are for all time and its old discipline can only be replaced by the discovery of a still more effective discipline. Thanks to the great seer-poet who sees and hears the Truth (Kavayah Satyashrutah) has himself discovered the academic discipline in the form of 'Integral Education' for future education of the generations to come.

It is in the light of this knowledge that one can speak today with great assurance and certitude that the concept and practice of integral education is of the synthesis of the ancient secrets of the reign of Psychic over mind, life and body with that of the modern secrets of utilisation of the life in perfecting his body, mind and life. In fact, Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education is not meant only for patch-work and reforms in respect of the prevailing system of education, it is, so to say, not even meant for averting the crisis in civilisation only, it prepares the ground for overcoming the crisis in evolution as well.

India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it. The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it. An Integral Education which could, with some other variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilized.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and practice of Integral Education:

Integral Education is a philosophy and practice of education for the whole child – body, emotion, mind, soul and spirit. The modern practice of education for utility or for productivity is not enough for the children of the 21st century and so on. It seems the highest and truest parts one's being. Too often, it ignores the physical and emotional development of the child as well.

Integral Education unites the ancient educational goal of self-knowledge with the modern goal of world-knowledge. Both of these goals are admirable, and they must go hand-in-hand in any educational system that is integral.

Integral Education assists the child to discover for himself/herself out of his/her own temperament and being. If everyone truly has a spark of the Inner Light as the centre of his/her being, a comprehensive education must do more than ignoring it. Integral Education takes that spark of the soul being the guiding principle for the education of each child. Sri Aurobindo says - *"The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use."*¹

Everything is judged and evaluated from a momentary angle. That is why 'utilitarianism' is a disease and is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it. And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare them to pass examinations with success for the diplomas, certificates and titles and they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money. For them the study has no other purpose, no other interest. Sri Aurobindo says - *"To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to become master to oneself, to overcome one's weakness, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true....."*

Thus, education is for those who aspire for a higher and better life, who thirst for knowledge and perfection, who look forward eagerly to a future that will be more totally true. The educational programme for Integral Education is integral as it aims at to develop the WHOLE CHILD. The guiding principles of the new ideal of education are Truth, Harmony, & Liberty. Thus, Sri Aurobindo says: *"The children should be helped to grow up into straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature."*

Education must prepare us for life in the widest sense. It must help blossom the very best in an individual, the unique and exquisite, something which every individual is born to offer to the world. The vision of integral education is based on the pioneering work in education of Sri Aurobindo and his collaborator, Mirra Alfassa, known as the Mother. The Mother is of opinion that Integral Education aims at the total and complete development of the individual - a strong, supple, well-formed and healthy body; a sensitive, unselfish and mature emotional nature, a positively energetic vital, an enlightened mind with glimpses of illumination, a wide-ranging and vibrant intelligence, a strong will, a balanced and pleasant personality; and the subtler psychic qualities that can channelise, harmonise and direct all the different parts of an individual into a life that is beneficial to the individual and to his fellow-men. Integral education already has a developed body of theory for more than half a century of refinement and practice at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry, India, as well as at many other places.

Education to be complete must have five principal aspects corresponding to the five principal activities of the human being; the Physical, the Vital, the Mental, the Psychic and the Spiritual. Usually, these phases of education follow chronologically the growth of the individual; this, however, does not mean that one of them should replace another, but that all must continue, completing one another until the end of his life. The child is usually a soul with body, life energy (vital) and mind that needs to be harmoniously and integrally developed.

A key goal of Integral Education is to enable an adult human being to choose to follow and create a conscious, consecrated life, governed by the psychic. From this standpoint, Integral Education is a life-long learning process that makes it possible for anyone to manifest the full potential from their inner-most being and to create opportunities for living a better life.

Basal implementing Columns of Integral Education:

A little one usually always looks upon his teacher and parents as very endearing to him. In fact, he generally moves and grows under their constant touch, affection and care. To him they are his friends, philosophers and guides. Whatever they do or act seems to be ideal to him. Therefore the responsibilities of the teachers and parents are indeed very significant. If they are on the right track the child will also imitate them and will also acquire positive ideas smoothly. In the circumstances, the teachers and parents from both ends can motivate the child by practising good instances in the presence of the child. In this way they can capture his mind without difficulty. As a consequence, the child on the other hand can also of his own accept their examples as pleasing things to him. Here the teachers and parents have indeed a privilege of utilising some such affectionate tie of relationship with the child and implement the educational programme successfully.

As things they are in Integral Education, a child can grow with all his faculties integrated if he can draw enthusiasm and inspiration from his teachers and parents simultaneously without any predicament. When a congenial environment is offered to him by the teachers as well as the parents, not only his vital education

¹ On Education : Sri Aurobindo, p. 21

moves in a dynamic way to the positive side but also his psychic faculty gains momentum for multiplying his mental and physical exercises, maintaining harmony with other organs all through. Here lies the importance of the roles of the teachers and parents on the one hand and the right attitude of the learner on the other and all these three factors together form the basal implementing columns of Integral Education.

The Role of the Teachers in Integral Education:

The teacher of the Integral Education will lead the discipline through the nature of the disciples. The wise teacher will seek to awaken much more than to instruct. He will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will give a method as an aid, as an utilizable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine. His whole business is to awaken the True Light and set working the Truth Force of which he himself is only a means and an aid, a body or a channel.

The example is more powerful than the instruction. It is not the example of the outward acts but that of the personal character of the teacher. A teaching can be profitable only if it is perfectly sincere. Words often repeated, thoughts often expressed cannot be any longer sincere. So, teach the children to take interest in what they are doing. Sri Aurobindo has mentioned principles of True Teaching for a successful teacher²:

- “The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He only helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself.
- “The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted to its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parents or teacher is a barbarous & ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature.
- “The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be..... If anything has to be brought in from outside it must be offered not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the education of genuine development”

The Role of the Parents in Integral Education :

The education of a human being should begin at birth and continue throughout his life. Indeed, if one wants this education to have its maximum result, it should begin even before birth; in this case it is the mother herself who proceeds with this education by means of a twofold action: first, upon herself for her own improvement, and secondly, upon the child whom she is forming physically.

For it is certain that the nature of the child to be born depends very much upon the mother who forms it, upon her aspiration and will as well as upon the material surroundings in which she lives. To see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings always noble and fine, her material surroundings as harmonious as possible and full of a great simplicity — this is the part of education which should apply to the mother herself. And if she has in addition a conscious and definite will to form the child according to the highest ideal she can conceive, then the very best conditions will be realised so that the child can come into the world with his utmost potentialities.

There are other parents who know their children must be educated and who try to do what they can. But very few, even among those who are most serious and sincere, know that the first thing to do, in order to be able to educate a child, is to educate oneself, to become conscious and master of oneself so that one never sets a bad example to one's child. For it is above all through example that education becomes effective. To speak good words and to give wise advice to a child has very little effect if one does not oneself give him an example of what one teaches. Sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self-control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches. Parents, have a high ideal and always act in accordance with it and you will see that little by little your child will reflect this ideal in himself and spontaneously manifest the qualities you would like to see expressed in his nature. Quite naturally a child has respect and admiration for his parents; unless they are quite unworthy, they will always appear to their child as demi-gods whom he will try to imitate as best he can.

² Sri Aurobindo, Centenary Edition, Vol. 17, pp. 204-5.

Conclusion:

An inner change must precede the outer if it must be lasting and meaningful. An integral education is the key to this inner change on a larger collective basis; it is the key to true world-progress and a better future for all mankind. One must therefore understand education in its widest and deepest sense. Education is meant to bring out the best in Man, to develop his potentialities to the maximum, to integrate him with himself, his surroundings, his society, his country and humanity to make him the "Complete Man", the "Integrated Man".

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