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## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO'S INTEGRAL EDUCATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** Sri Aurobindo was one of the greatest philosophical thinkers in India. Not only a philosopher but also an educationist, Aurobindo realised the inadequacies of our modern education system. His integral education is not only a mere education system. It is a kind of education that talks about the human body, mind and intellect that are combined together to form a magnificent machine. The primary aim of the study is to find out how integral education emphasises the purification, regulation, and transformation of the physical nature to achieve harmonious personality development within an individual. The researcher adopted a historical research method, qualitative approach based on Sri Aurobindo's philosophical writings, educational works, as well as writings by other authors. The study finds that physical development is considered a fundamental aspect of holistic development, which is an instrument of the mind and spirit, so its proper development is essential for overall growth in present situation. In the modern era, where learners are often facing stress, lack of discipline and value conflicts, Sri Aurobindo's ideas offer practical relevance in this purpose. The study concludes that integrating physical education into contemporary curricula can help develop emotionally mature, physically fit, ethically grounded, and socially conscious individuals, thereby contributing to holistic and sustainable education, which is obviously much needed in the modern world.

**Key words-** Sri Aurobindo, Integral Education, Physical Development, Learners

### I. INTRODUCTION

It is needless to say that 19th-century India has produced a galaxy of great men who had enriched our national life by their talent, personality and philosophy. The spirit of Indian civilization and culture, which has been evolved through the ages has largely found its expression, in the life works of some of the Indian thinkers, reformers and philosophers such as Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda, Vidyasagar, Raja Ram Mohon Roy, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Mrs. Annie Basant, Acharya Vinoba Bhave etc. Sri Aurobindo holds a unique place of honour and reverence not only in the political history of India but also throughout the world. For his spiritual message of the general welfare of mankind as a whole, he belongs to all nations and all ages. In spite of a European upbringing and ignorance of the Indian languages and culture, Sri Aurobindo could not remain uninfluenced by the noble ideals of patriotism and service to mankind.

Sri Aurobindo's view of integral education is, effectively, an extension of his philosophical vision for humanity. As a seer who believed that humanity is destined to progress spiritually in stages towards the ultimate 'super-mind' status, Aurobindo approached education as a means to hasten that evolution of the mind of man so that the ultimate status can arrive faster than it would otherwise have. According to Sri Aurobindo, physical development in learners comprises the systematic education and refinement of the training, and perfection of the body. It should not be limited to games or exercises but include health, discipline, control, and refinement of bodily functions and senses within an individual.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It's essential to review the related literature. A relevant literature study or review improves the knowledge of the present researcher and helps to comprehend the background of such a study.

**Dey (2021)** studied the philosophy and educational thoughts of Sri Aurobindo. This study primarily aimed to investigate the significance of Aurobindo Ghosh's educational ideas within the context of an integral education system. In this paper, the researcher addressed Aurobindo's philosophy of life and social psychology in relation to their impact on spiritual education. Additionally, this paper addressed the principles of educational philosophy concerning mind, knowledge, intelligence, and consciousness, which are crucial to spiritual education.

**Majumder (2021)** studied the impact of educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. The educational contribution of Aurobindo Ghosh to our education system was underscored by this study. The study elucidated various philosophical dimensions of Aurobindo Ghosh, including the objectives of education, the teacher-student relationship, and the implications of Aurobindo's educational philosophy.

**Das (2020)** conducted a study on educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and its contribution to the educational field. This paper addressed Aurobindo's educational philosophy concerning mind, knowledge, intelligence, and consciousness, which are crucial to spiritual education. It also examined various aspects of Aurobindo's educational philosophy, including the aims of education, curriculum design, teaching principles, and teacher-student dynamics.

**Jeremie, Z. (2017)** conducted a study on "A Complete Integral Education: Five Principal Aspects". This article reviews the five principal aspects of a 'complete integral education' envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and Mother Mirra Alfassa and elucidated in their writings. This innovative, learner-centred pedagogy encourages holistic development through the acknowledgement and cultivation of the five dimensions of a human being—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual. The article suggests that a complete integral education contributes a potentially corrective alternative to outmoded orthodox methods that privilege intellectual proficiency over the holistic knowledge potentially present, given authentic engagement of learning communities.

**Rani (2017)** focused on the educational view of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's contribution. Aurobindo's philosophical contributions to education were emphasised in this paper. This paper discusses the educational concept, objectives of education, curriculum design, curriculum transactional process, teacher-students dynamics, discipline, and the application of Aurobindo's educational philosophy in contemporary times.

**Akhter (2015)** conducted a study related to the integral education of Sri Aurobindo. He came up with the conclusion that integral education helps in transforming man into a superman by awakening their consciousness. He suggested including yoga as an integral part of education for enhancing spirituality, harmony, and willpower in a person.

**Deshmukh and Mishra (2014)** conducted a study on the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo which did not consider that the study to develop physical, mental and psychic aspect is enough but a student must enhance knowledge, love, power and beauty also. All these integrated elements are called integral education. First method is that mind of a student must be consulted for developing his personality and shaping growth. Second, student should be taught from known to unknown and learning is conditioned by his environment. Third, nothing can be taught to a student.

### III. OBJECTIVES

The researcher has undertaken this study with some objectives, which are enumerated here:

1. To explore the concept of Integral Education proposed by Sri Aurobindo.
2. To study the philosophical ideals of physical development of learners in Sri Aurobindo's concept of Integral Education.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study is a historical method and qualitative in nature, as data collection and analysis have been fully done on previously published documents, such as books, doctoral theses, research articles, various online magazines and journals related to the topic.

### V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Education is a comprehensive framework that demands nurturing the physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual dimensions of the learner. Studying his approach to physical development becomes essential in the modern context because:

- 1) To help learners in their holistic development.
- 2) To help learners with the need for an education model that develops the physical being (discipline, control and dynamic energy).
- 3) To help learners' mental concentration and spiritual growth, and promote well-being.
- 4) To help learners face global challenges by fostering strength, endurance and flexibility, etc.

### VI. LIFE SKETCH OF SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, a famous sage, poet, patriot, philosopher and an educationist. is known by the name Aurobindo, was born on August 15, 1872 in Kolkata. The Ghosh word 'Aurobindo' means "Lotus" in Sanskrit. His father Dr. Krishan Dhan Ghosh loved the Western culture and he wished his son to grow up into a fake Englishman. So, Aurobindo was being sent to England at the age of seven and he stayed there for 14 years. He received education in London and Cambridge, and he became a master in English, Greek and Latin. He qualified the Indian Civil in 1890 but he could not appear for the horse-riding test. As a result, he was disqualified for the job and he came back to India in 1893.

Aurobindo studied sanskrit language and literature in India and served as an adviser and sometimes as secretary to the Maharaja for fourteen years in the princely state of Baroda. Then he became a professor of English at Baroda College. He learnt Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi, and delve deeply in the culture and philosophy of India. He practiced yoga in 1904. As per the instruction of the Indian National Congress, he became the principal of Bengal National College (now Jadavpur University) at Kolkata. After the Bengal Partition (1905), Aurobindo resigned from his job and became an active freedom fighter. He launched the journals Vande Matram, Karma Yagi. Dharm and the Bengali daily Yugantar to propagate his revolutionary ideas and arouse intense feelings of nationalism among the people of India. His political and nationalistic sentiments were expressed through his writings and fiery speeches. The then British Government arrested Aurobindo and put him in Alipore Jail for a year in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case in 1908. When he was in jail, he spent most of his time in yoga, meditation and the study of the Gita, philosophy and spiritual literature.

Once he was in Alipore jail, he perceived the presence of God in a dream. After his release from the prison, he kept off all his political activities immediately and returned to Pondicherry for penance and spiritual advancement. He spent his retired life at his ashram in Pondicherry. He became a yogi and engaged his time in yoga and meditation. He propagated his philosophy of dharma, education, spiritual advancement and brahmacharya across the country. He had established an international ashram and International Centre of Education at Pondicherry and started several educational and social activities. He set up Auroville as a city of universal culture for international cooperation and human unity. Aurobindo proposed his major philosophy and published it in Arya a new journal in English from 1914 to 1921. Aurobindo, the great saint, died on December 5, 1950. His death put an end to a glorious chapter in the spiritual history of India.

## VII. INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Sri Aurobindo occupies a very important position among the contemporary Indian philosophers of education due to his wide knowledge of East and West, ancient and modern systems of education. He has presented an integral philosophy of education through his 'ashram' at Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education is a holistic approach aiming for the complete development of an individual—physical, vital (life-force), mental, psychic (soul), and spiritual—beyond sheer academic knowledge, fostering self-realisation, internal growth through practices like yoga, and a balanced individual prepared for humanity's evolution, rather than rote learning or external achievement. It perceives the child as a growing soul, developing all facets of personality to their full potential in harmony with self, nation, and mankind, emphasising self-discipline, inner development, and a cohesion to one's culture and universal life.

Sri Aurobindo was a very visionary philosopher. His educational philosophy is, indeed, an extension of his philosophical vision for mankind. Humanity is indeed destined to move spiritually toward the ultimate 'supermind' status, so in this case, Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy acts as a means to speed up the evolution of man's mind for arriving at the ultimate status faster (Datta 2011).

Sri Aurobindo envisages three things essential for true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness, and his uniqueness, the nation or people, and universal humanity. Therefore, in Rishi Aurobindo's view, the idea of education is thus a true education that draws out with complete advantage and makes individuals with full purpose and goals. This permits an individual man to enter into the right connection with life, mind, and soul. It leads individuals towards humanity, which helps in unifying nations and communities. In this regard, true education is thought of as an instrument for working of the spirit in the person's mind and body, which ultimately improves individual life and the entire nation. Sri Aurobindo's view of education focuses not only on the individual man but also puts special places for the nation and humanity. His education system is effective in making the mind and the soul of the person and also of the nation for serving mankind, which is important for societal development. Thus, it is true that Rishi Aurobindo's system of education can be deliberated as the perfect mode of effective social change based on spiritual evolution.

Thus, it can be expressed that the term 'Integral Education' considers the educational approach of Aurobindo, which is mainly focused on the spiritualistic view of man, containing physical as well as mental development of an individual. Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator Mirra Alfassa (known as 'The Mother') thought to form an experimental community in Aurobindo's Ashram in Pondicherry in the 1930s for the devotion to human unity. This project was upheld by the Government of India and UNESCO in 1968 for the sake of the future of humanity. The school system in Auroville is based on Rishi Aurobindo's educational philosophy, which is integral education. At present in Delhi, there are two schools Mother International and Mirambika, which are set up based on integral education. The integral educational system unveils individual potentialities, uniqueness, and commonness (Chandra and Sharma 2002).

## VIII. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS

Sri Aurobindo emphasised the importance of a strong and healthy human body as the foundation of a balanced life, which is much needed in the modern era. It is not that Physical education is limited to physical fitness, but includes the development of endurance, flexibility, discipline, grace, and control over bodily functions. It enables the individual for sustained intellectual and spiritual pursuits by fostering physical harmony and strength, and well-being. The main goal is to develop the body as a fit instrument of the spirit. According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother All education of the body should begin at birth and continue throughout life. It is never too soon to begin nor too late to continue.

Physical education had three principal aspects: (1) control and discipline of the functioning of the body; (2) an integral, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body; and (3) correction of any defects and deformities.

It may be said that from the very first days, even the first hours of his life, the child should undergo the first part of this programme as far as food, sleep, evacuation, etc. are concerned. If the child, from the very

beginning of his existence, learns good habits, it will save him a good deal of trouble and inconvenience for the rest of the life; and besides, those who have the responsibility of caring for him during his first years will find their task very much easier.

Sri Aurobindo's physical development refers to systematic development, proper training, and proper function of the body, which is not limited to any exercises but also includes health, discipline, self-control and proper function of body. It also deals with daily physical training, endurance, cleanliness, proper diet, proper lifestyle habits and maintaining discipline.

## IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is needless to say that many researchers have conducted studies on implication of the integral education. In today's modern life many people are suffering from stress and leading tense life. If one's mental health is not good one cannot be efficient and productive (Zaki 2018). Education, according to Aurobindo, is the combination of spiritual, physical, rational, vital, mental aspects, which builds it an integral education system. According to Aurobindo, integrated or complete education must have five principal aspects related to the five principles activities of human being namely, the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. However, these phases of education normally follow one another in chronological order, based on the individual's development.

The ultimate aim of Aurobindo's educational philosophy is to generate a dynamic citizen in society so that they can manage all complexities of life. Aurobindo's integral education is a whole-person approach that is not only focused on physical development but also on physical purity, which is ultimately needed for spiritual development also.

Sri Aurobindo, who introduced the concept of Integral Education, emphasised the holistic development of human personality. It was believed by him that education should nurture five aspects of personality: physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual. Among these, physical education serves as the foundation, as the body is the instrument through which higher development takes place.

## X. CONCLUSION

Rishi Aurobindo was one of the most important personalities in India. His role was varied in the context of Indian history as well as from a political point of view. Aurobindo's concept of integral education is one of the very influential concepts in the education system in the modern era in India as well as abroad. Being considered as a complete system of education from various angles, integral education develops not only the cognitive mind but also impacts different aspects of the personality (physical, vital, spiritual, mental and psyche) of the individual. It helps in the nourishing sense of integrity, beauty, and harmony included in aspects of mankind. Integral education supports the unveiling of the potentials of the individual. According to him, true education is unlimited to spiritual development but also mental development, which makes it integral education. So, keeping in view the above contexts, one can obviously understand that Rishi Aurobindo's educational philosophy is efficient in ensuring the holistic development of an individual's all-around development.

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