



A Study on Philosophy and Educational Thoughts of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

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ABSTRACT

Aurobindo Ghosh was a multifaceted genius, a great philosopher, a freedom fighter, an eminent educationalist and a true yogi. He started his journey as a political thinker and became a spiritual integralist. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was basically an idealist. His idealistic philosophy of life was based upon vedantic philosophy of upanishadas. Aurobindo is not a fatalist. He believes that man is the maker of his own destiny and education is a big tool to achieve the target. Even heredity and environment are determined by the present and past actions of man. Value education is important to Aurobindo. He said that spirituality is the best thing in man. This paper reviews the five principle aspects of a complete integral education. According to Aurobindo, Integralism is possible through transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) can be considered as 20th-century renaissance person who propounded many unique principles of education. Sri Aurobindo studied at Cambridge University get special education. He was born on 15 August 1872 in Calcutta. He was yogi, philosopher, nationalist, revolutionary nationalist, author and poet. He was an idealistic person whose life was based on vedantic and upanishada. Sri Aurobindo incorporated such an educational philosophy which was proper for the Indian people, not something merely following the past but to the developing the skills of Indians which leads to self-creation and her eternal spirit. His concept of education is not only getting a simple knowledge but getting different types of knowledge that he points out the necessities of education. Aurobindo Ghosh's main objective is to awaken the powers of the human mind and soul. Sri Aurobindo always thought



about the education matter in India. He acquired quite good knowledge from Cambridge, and he also worked as a professor in the Bengal National College from

1897-1906, so he came to know the need and depth of the education sector. And he had hopes from the youth who can bring great changes in the field of education. He believed that the youth can contribute to the reconstruction of the nation. According to Aurobindo, Any nation that uses simple previous experiences and makes uses of the present has a better nation. If any nation does not use the past knowledge has no friend for the national development. According to Aurobindo by forgetting the present, we can win the present battle of life. So it is necessary to save for India that it has kept knowledge, noble thought and good character in its immortal past. We must acquire for her best knowledge and should have better teaching methodology to develop humanity. All these should have integrated with the good self-reliance, spirit to make up a human and not a lifeless machine. Aurobindo Ghosh was less found of the British education system in India. He called it soulless system which was instrumental in making the Indian brain incapable. All Indian students have so much potentiality which is not cared due to lack of an appropriate system of education. He wanted to guide the young generation of India on a good path. He has also mentioned the national education system in his study. It can be polished by the lifeless routine and its narrow and sightless spirit and mechanical method. It can only be developed by the light and hope of its resurgence. Maximum young Indians are isolated from their deeper roots and cut from their rightful heritage.

He influenced the Indian freedom struggle very positively with his thoughts and work behaviour and also provided a spiritual basis to Indian Independence. Aurobindo Ghosh was a fierce spiritual nationalist who prepared Indians spiritually and psychologically to achieve their Independence from the end of the British Empire. Romain Rolland has described Aurobindo Ghosh as the emperor of Indian thoughts and the great coordinator between the culture of Asia and Europe. Bengal has the distinction of having given birth to a great man like Aurobindo Ghosh. Aurobindo Ghosh had to appeared for the Indian civil service examination as per his father's wish. But Aurobindo Ghosh was not interested in administrative service from his heart. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh established his contact with many revolutionary organizations in India. The basic basis of Aurobindo Ghosh's political views is his spiritual faith. His views cannot be verified through reason or scientific test. It requires faith and devotion. According to Aurobindo Ghosh, history is decided by spiritual elements. He said that Bentham's theory was artificial and arrogant. Aurobindo Ghosh's ideas were based on the principles of Gita. He said that every man should work for the benefit of all the people instead of his personal benefit.



GENERAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH

Sri Aurobindo believed that the supreme truth of science and religion was already contained in the vedas. He told that the Gita and the Upanishads are the logical contribution of the vedas. Sri Aurobindo believes in traditional concept of man and accepts the classical views about the union of individual soul with supreme soul. Aurobindo says that Integralism is possible through transformation. Yoga divides the whole man bringing down the super mind to transform the human mind, life and body. The moment this aims get fulfilled man becomes a superman. Sri Aurobindo aimed at gradual spiritualization of the society. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is based on an experienced integralism. It is a synthesis of idealism, realism, pragmatism and spiritualism.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To discuss the different philosophy and role of Aurobindo Ghosh in the India's freedom struggle.
- To understand how his ideas of philosophy is different from moderates.
- To see how Aurobindo's spiritual thought coexist with the needs of the country. THE

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

- This study has been done on the secondary data mostly on the books, and journals related to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's writings were a very important source of this study. An attempt has been done to evaluate and analyse his thought about the awakening the nationalism based on spirituality among Indians irrespective of socio- religious creeds.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH

“True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are, it is what you become”. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh According to Aurobindo Ghosh , spiritual education should be such that it enables the students to identify the relationship between spirit and matter. One who can rationalize both physical and spiritual life. A spiritual education will prepare the students to face with greater confidence and with an integral perspective. He has been greatly appreciated as a modern philosopher and a vedic scholars . The first National College of education of Calcutta was facilitated by Sri Aurobindo and written much more on the subject of education. He suggested to a unique concept ‘Integral education’. The integration of



mind, spirit and body are taken and given importance. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh emphasize on whole theories of education and better form of pedagogy near to the integral teaching- learning approach which a self-propelling and self-starting approach.

Sri Aurobindo bases his philosophy on the original Vedanta of the upanishadas. Vedanta represents an integral or balanced outlook of life and believes that man is the creator of his own destiny. According to him, education is a big tool to achieve the target. He also believed that the best thing in man is his spirituality. He was a rational who intensely analysed human and social evolution. He said that the education must emphasize 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. Aurobindo Ghosh presented certain principles of teaching, which are to be kept in mind by the parents, educators, teachers, counsellor, social worker, policy makers etc. In other words, he says that the knowledge is already exists within the child and for this reason, it needs to be brought out. They said that the teacher does not need to communicate knowledge to the pupil but should show him how to achieve knowledge. The teacher is not a demonstrator. He is a helper, guide, counsellor and the role of the teacher is to 'suggest and not impose'. His philosophy also emphasised the moral and value education. According to him, that education is true, which helps the child to develop his intellectual and moral capacities to their higher limits. Without moral and emotional development mental development becomes harmful to human progress.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was basically an idealist. His idealistic philosophy of life was based upon vedantic philosophy of upanishads. Sri Aurobindo is not a fatalist. He said that man is the maker of his own destiny. Even heredity and environment are determined by the present and past actions of man. Value education was important to Aurobindo. He said that spirituality is the best thing in man. The guiding principle of Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy was to prepare the individual as a spiritual being. The educational theory of Sri Aurobindo aimed at the development of the latent powers of the child, training of six senses, training of logical faculties, physical education, principle of freedom, moral and religious education and above all training for the spiritualization of the individual.

CONCEPT OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh involved for around 45years out of 75years from yoga period. From the spiritual point of view, he developed affirmation and affirming the reality of the world for the ultimate point and socio-political action. He was sovereignty aware of the significance of variations in the concept of man,



his life and destiny, of the nation and humanity and the life of the human race, which get reflected in the respective philosophies of education, and developed his scheme on the holistic system of education that led in progressing soul, self-creation and future need. He saw in man as an individual soul and aware mind in nature as self and spirit.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the education must emphasis the following aspects in addition to the physical, psychic and mental aspects as denoted by the matter and spirit respectively. The cultivation of these aspects beauty, power, knowledge and love is what he called as integral education. Beauty is the realization through physical culture. Power is to be related to the control of sensation. 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 communion with the divine. An Integral education must possess “Five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual.”

SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION OF ANCIENT INDIAN POLITICS AND CULTURE

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was one of the great philosopher, a theorist and a political thinker. Through his writings, he has expressed an essential element of ancient Indian culture and political philosophy. His writings transmit the interesting concepts about Indian culture and political system that existed in the early periods. His perspective on the Indian political system and culture has always been considered as challenging. In this research paper an attempt has been made to examine Sri Aurobindo’s view of development in relation to a democratic and political system since ancient times. Aurobindo Ghosh says that Indians had no political and cultural consciousness and this has failed Indians in the field of politics and culture. But this assumption about India is absolutely baseless. Indian culture is the sum total of human experience and it is transmitted from one generation to another. The concept of Indian culture itself refers to the various forms of thoughts and activities of the general public.

The basis of Sri Aurobindo’s political ideas are spiritual concept of the individual. According to Aurobindo, the individual is not a mere conglomeration but a spiritual soul and self-expression of the universal and transcendent spiritual reality. Aurobindo Ghosh has studied his political ideas under seven heads: individual and community, state and individual, law and liberty, theory of passive resistance, nationalism, world government and war and peace. It is true that India was united politically only under the British rule. But culturally India was united as a nation for thousands of years before that which is also one great reason why India was able to unite itself politically so smoothly and swiftly as and when



the need arose. The feeling of one India, which means cultural unity of India, had been established long ago. We must accept the truth in this, because, had it not been so it would have been very difficult for India to politically organize itself so promptly. This work of cultural unity has been shaping itself ever since the beginning of ancient Indian civilization. This cultural unity not only cemented and facilitated but also expedited the case of political unity in India. Spirituality has been the core of Indian culture and philosophy. It was discovered and developed in the ancient soul of India and has been a distinctive part of Indian life.

Aurobindo's political philosophy can be described in the three stages of his career. Firstly, he worked as a contributor of articles to the *Indu Prakash* an Anglo-Marathi paper edited by his Cambridge friend K. G. Deshpande under the caption of 'New Lamps for Old'. In this article he criticized moderates, the dominated figures of the congress during 1843-1906. His initial political activism involved emphasis on the urgency of demanding total freedom from the British government.

Secondly, he left Baroda and became the Principal of the national college Calcutta in 1906. After one year he became the editor of *Bande Matram*. As for his third stage it is concerned from 1910, when he retired from active politics and settled down at Pondicherry. After setting in Pondicherry, he dedicated himself to his spiritual and philosophical pursuits.

Aurobindo Ghosh criticised the ways and means adopted by moderates who took to mild reforms in socio-political ways, he was the first nationalist who favoured complete independence of India. According to Aurobindo, Indian National Congress was a body of middle class people who never cared for landless peasants and working classes. The country could not be uplifted without the peasants and workers. He was thinking of the spiritual elevation of the masses through proper education. He suggested passive resistance as an appropriate method for compelling the Britishers to surrender power.

AURBINDO'S NATIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH SPIRITUA- NATIONALISM

As a politician Sri Aurobindo tried to formulate the idea of national unity which is an urgent need for the integration of a nation with others. Aurobindo Ghosh says that a nation must have national integration to demonstrate to the world. Sri Aurobindo is considered a nation in the sense of nation-state. But according to Karl Popper, a nation-state has some amount of political unity to bind it together with all odds of religious, customary, caste and sect-related differences of a nation. However, due to the external political domination of people residing in a nation the concept of nation-state stands as a utopia to



popper. This theory is opposite of Sri Aurobindo. Hence, Sri Aurobindo's national unity can never be compared with political unity.

AUROBINDO'S VIEWS ON CULTURAL-SPIRITUAL NATIONALISM

According to Aurobindo Ghosh there is fundamental unity between God, human being and universe. He argues that divine Brahma manifests itself in to reality through its divine play. Aurobindo Ghosh believes that the main characteristic of human being is to satisfy the divine needs which are the essence of their existence. He said that social and economic equality is not a primary factor for the rise of nationalism, but on the contrary, nationalism is a pre-condition for social and economic equality. He said that humanity should work and live for the higher purpose of nationalism. Aurobindo considers nation as a divine unit. Aurobindo said that nationalism in India is gift of God. Nobody can kill nationalism in India. Partition of Bengal inspired the feeling of nationalism in India. Sri Aurobindo's concept of nationalism is deeply influenced Bankim Chandra, a great Bengali novelist.

AUROBINDO GHOSH AND REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM

Aurobindo Ghosh was the founding father of revolutionary movement in Bengal and was the important figure of the Indian freedom struggle. Moreover, he was an eminent thinker and scholar. When he was 8 years old, his father sent him to England. They contained their studies in England with the help of Krishan Dhan Ghosh's friends. He passed the civil service examination in 1890. At the end of two years of probation Aurobindo Ghosh failed to present himself in the riding examination and was disqualified for the service. In October 1890, he got enrolled at Kings college, Cambridge as a student in humanities stream. During his stay at Cambridge, he gave many revolutionary speeches. While in England, he came in touch with a revolutionary society known as the "Indian Majlis". Later on, he joined one more secret society called "Lotus and Dagger".

FINDINGS

Under this study an attempt has been made to identify, understand, apply, analyse, synthesise, and evaluate the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. Aurobindo Ghosh's philosophy has great relevance in today's times, both inside and outside the schools. It can bring a dynamic change in the field of education system not only for India but for the world. This study makes an in-depth analysis of the Indian education system as modified in the light of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in the context of the theory of development and inclusion. This theory of Aurobindo Ghosh creates the conditions of social,



psychological and physical environment for creatively solving the problems of everyday life of the individual and for the good of all humanity. In this, the spiritual gains of light, bliss, and power and its impact in the field of education have been done on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's analysis. Aurobindo's philosophy is mainly based on consciousness, mind, intelligence and knowledge as well as mental aptitude, psychological needs, physical purification, self-control, freedom, creativity, peace and harmony, love and sympathy, nationalism and internationalism. The concept of Aurobindo's world federation of that time is relevant even today because today's united nation organization is the form of world federation. Aurobindo Ghosh has given an importance place to the participation of the public in nation building. It is through his efforts that a strong desire has been awakened among the common people to take an active part in the national life. In this way, he has made a successful effort to strengthen the system of democracy. Thus, the youth of modern Independent India still need the message of Aurobindo Ghosh.

EVALUATION

Aurobindo Ghosh was the pillar of extremist movement. He had given a new slogan to his contemporary national leaders. He combined the materialism of west and spiritualism of India. As a nationalist he was a great politician and raised slogan of Swaraj. By his speeches he gave new hope and optimism among the demoralized people of India. He refused the supremacy of English people in culture and race. Passive resistance and boycott were the effective instruments to finish the British interest in India. Aurobindo Ghosh has been a great figure in the field of renaissance and nationalism of modern India. His ethical, spiritual and intellectual thoughts greatly influenced the civilized and educated people of India. Aurobindo Ghosh was a fierce nationalist thinker like Lokmanya Tilak. The British government was horrified by the wave of freedom he started in Bengal. After the publication of his book "Magnum Opus, The Life Divine" the attention of some important scholars of the world was attracted towards him. Romain Rolland called him the Prince of Indian thinkers. The greatest achievement of Aurobindo Ghosh is that he kept the ideal of complete Independence in front of his countrymen and gave the message of love for Independence to Indians. As a great philosopher, Aurobindo Ghosh attempted to synthesize spiritual idealism and the political dignity of the individual. Aurobindo Ghosh understood the difficulties of armed revolution and emphasised on passive resistance. His passive resistance though negative, was a programme to energize national life. Presenting nationalism in the colour of spirituality is a great work of Aurobindo Ghosh and an important achievement for the entire humanity. There was a wonderful confluence of modernity and antiquity in his nationalism. Aurobindo's nationalism was not anti-Muslim



as he wanted full inclusion of Muslim in the national life. Despite being a strong nationalist, Aurobindo Ghosh presents the ideal of humanity unity and one-world theory which is needed most. Thus, he gave not only as a nationalist but as an internationalist a concept of brotherhood of nations. Aurobindo Ghosh wanted to raise man so high that exploitation and subordination could not touch them. To protect the dignity of human, he propounded his theory of superman.

CONCLUSION

After studying the related literatures on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy it is felt that there is a great deal has been done by his lectures and writings to trace the development of philosophical and non-material thought and action with special reference to spiritual doctrines and assumptions. In his views on spiritual philosophy of education Sri Aurobindo made a considerable contribution for attaining of the spiritual goal of education. Thus, spiritual philosophy is the knowledge centre of his spiritual education. To have an access to the realization of thought and action with respect to his philosophy which serves as a foundation of nurturing spiritual education. Sri Aurobindo strongly teaches us his own's new idea the theory of evolution which reflects spiritual education. Sri Aurobindo survived the Gurukul system of education that nurturing spiritual education through simplicity, high thinking, truth, knowledge, power, beauty, love, sympathy, peace, harmony, and freedom. Sri Aurobindo's experiment on his 'Integral Education' by developing a method of spiritual practice what he called 'Integral Yoga'. Sri Aurobindo saw education as a tool for the real work of the spirit of the nation and the mind of the individual. According to his educational philosophy, every individual has some degree of spiritual consciousness as some special potential which should be recognized by the teacher. He involved all for the upliftment of man from the present situation to a brighter future. He thought of such an education as that of a man who would make the development of the soul a central object of his strength and possibilities. He was actively involved in cementing his vision for mankind during his time of Sadhana in Pondicherry. Finally, he expanded his philosophy in to the sphere of education at the Ashram with the establishment of the Sri Aurobindo international centre for education. This theory of Aurobindo Ghosh is acting as a veritable laboratory for applying the principles of his philosophy in education. Aurobindo's nationalism is undoubtedly an ideal and sacred idea. According to the critics, it is very difficult to fully understand this idea of nationalism coloured in the colour of spirituality and to give it a practical form. It is beyond the understanding and ability of common people. Some people are of the opinion that Aurobindo Ghosh's nationalism is philosophical and mystical. Its so far from reality. His nationalism was based on Hinduism



and due to which Muslim religion was kept away. But there is no merit and truth in these criticisms. Aurobindo Ghosh's nationalism was very broad and universal in nature.

Aurobindo Ghosh had a multifaceted character. He was a genius, a great philosopher, a freedom fighter, an eminent educationist and a true yogi. He started his journey as a political thinker and become a spiritual integralist. Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is student oriented philosophy which recommends to focusing on integral development of student covering the whole aspects of education such as psychic and mental, spiritual, physical, vital by cultivating the beauty, power, knowledge and love. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh aims at providing a free environment to the students to bring out their hidden expertise and innovation. Aurobindo Ghosh was in favour of such an education system which can make a person healthy, knowledgeable, intelligent, and transform the society. This study is helpful to guide the teacher to choose the right form of teaching and to provide inspiration and facilities to the students for complete growth of mind.

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