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Sri Aurobindo and the mother on five aspects of integral education

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ABSTRACT

The complete education proposed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has five major aspects connecting to the five main activities of the human beings: the physical, the mental, the vital, the psychic and the spiritual. This type of education is known as the “Integral Education” and its aim is “all-round development” of the individual, locally and globally.

Keywords— Sri Aurobindo, Mother, Physical education, Mental education, Vital education, Psychic education, Spiritual education, Integral education, Yoga

1. INTRODUCTION

“The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface.”

-Sri Aurobindo

The guidance to the individual must begin from the birth and proceed for a long time flawlessly at various stages his life. “Education to be complete must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the mental, the vital, the psychic and the spiritual.” Normally these stages of education and training succeed each other in a sequence following the growth and development of the individual; this does not imply that the one ought to displace the other yet all should proceed, complementary to one other from birth to death or even from womb to tomb.

2. PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The physical is completely guided by order, discipline, and method. The physical is a bundle of habits to adjust to the environment and to the various factors of development and advancement. The physical education of the body may begin from birth and must continue during the life of the individual. “In the use of such activities as sports and physical exercises for the education of the individual in childhood and first youth, which should mean the bringing out of his actual and latent possibilities to their fullest development.”

The training of the body has three main perspectives:

- (a) Control and discipline
- (b) An amicable development of all parts of the body
- (c) Correction of defects and deformities.

Take care of food, cleanliness and hygienic habits. It is better to remember, “Prevention is better than cure.” Every-day forty to fifty minutes of walking is a must to various systems of the body. The moving about in the Sun is very useful to the body. Rest and sleep are important for the body to carry metabolic activities properly.

Even from the young age youngsters should be guided to respect for physical wellbeing, strength and balanced nature. The significance of beauty should be insisted upon. The child should aspire for beauty, not to please others or to gain name and fame, but for the love of beauty itself. “For beauty is the ideal which physical life has to realize.” If one holds inside oneself the living aim of beauty will be realized and one is certain to achieve the aim.

3. MENTAL EDUCATION

The psychological education is famous and being used yet it is incomplete and insufficient. “The true basis of education is the study of the human mind. The instrument of educationist is the mind, which consists of four layers.” – Sri Aurobindo

The four layers are:

- (a) Memory
- (b) Mind
- (c) The intellect
- (d) The fourth layer is still developing

The genuine education of the mind prepares an individual for a better life and it has five main stages. Typically these stages come in a steady progression, yet in exceptional cases, they may come alternately or simultaneously. The five stages are:

- (a) Development of the power of concentration and attention.
- (b) Development of capacities of expansion, complexity, and richness.
- (c) The organization of thoughts around a central idea or ideal that will serve as a guide throughout every-day life.
- (d) Control of thoughts, rejection of undesirable thoughts, so that one may, at last, think just what one needs and when one needs it.
- (e) Development of silence, calm and a more absolute receptivity to inspirations originating from the higher regions of the being.

The dispersion of thoughts influences the psychological progress in the child; a wishful effort is required to fix it. When we succeed in guiding him to be interested, he is fit for attention. In addition to concentration and attention, observation, accuracy, and a good memory are very important. The child must be encouraged to comprehend because if he comprehends he always remembers. Things learned by heart mechanically will be forgotten easily and finally, nothing remains in the memory.

It is not difficult to stir the interest in the children if you respond with knowledge and reply carefully to the questions they put. If the reply motivates the child, he is roused and learns considerably more than what he generally does. The mind will be free from all rigidity and thinking becomes supple, rich, plans for the complex performances. It further uplifts a longing for a genuine source of information. The contradictions may be changed into complementaries if he discovers a greater thought that will try to tune them. Learning is an aspect of the cerebral activity. Another angle is creativity, an ability that prepares for work.

The psychic cleansing must be done as frequently as possible to have control over the activities. To achieve the control cater every day some time to those thoughts and place them in a particular order. This helps to balance your hold over the thoughts during activity and work, the “dynamic consciousness” allows, the items required, after that, they turn very dynamic and powerful. Whenever required all psychic vibrations may be stopped to total silence. The silence opens gradually to the greater psychic domains and tries to observe with awareness.

“The fact is that, like all the other parts of the human being, the mind too needs rest and this rest it will not have unless we know how to give it.” The art of giving relaxation to the psyche is the quality that has to be developed. The change of the mental activity is a way to give rest and another way is in the silence. A couple minutes of silence is more effective to give rest to the mind than hours of sleep. When one learns to silence the mind at will and concentrates it in the receptive silence, then there will be a capacity to solve the problems and it is easy to find solutions. “Thought, while in agitation, becomes confused and impotent; inattentive tranquility, the light can manifest itself and open new horizons to man’s capacity.”

4. VITAL EDUCATION

The preparation of the vital is very essential and the most crucial. It isn’t frequently taken up and sought after because the enterprise is of confusion and it is extremely hard to be successful in it. Two thoughts are widespread the first thought is the goal of life is a pleasure and the second thought is by birth the individual has a specific trait, it is difficult to change it. But, the objective of life isn’t to get selfish bliss, however, to motivate the human towards the real consciousness. The great change is possible through divine grace, by control and determination.

The education of the vital has two foremost perspectives, very different as to the aim and the process, yet both are equally important.

- (a) The first is to develop and use the sense organs.
- (b) The second is to become conscious and step by step master of one’s conduct and character and in the end to achieve its transformation.

The sense organs are to be developed to achieve precision and power in their working. The student must be instructed to be innovative, refine the energy with precision. He should be informed to appreciate the items of the human creation and of nature. The real culture will give umbrella protection to him from corrupting impacts. The refinement will bring responsibility and liberality that will be reflected in his conduct and he will be far from base and perverse movements. The child must be instructed to watch himself very cautiously that changes him and his character.

There are different methods according to types of cases for awakening this will to surmount and conquer:

- (a) On specific individuals, it is rational arguments are effective
- (b) For a few others, it is the sentiment and goodwill are to be brought into play
- (c) On other individuals, it is again it is the sense of dignity and self-respect

For all, anyway it is the example shown constantly and truly that is the most powerful means.

5. PSYCHIC EDUCATION

The psychic education illuminates the genuine method of reasoning of our living and that revelation is to connect the individual to the eternal aim. The one consciousness is concretized in reality of the individual and changes by development as the soul or the psychic being. The truth of the being comes into contact and states of living by the psychic being.

The psychic training has to be pursued to acquire mastery and be aware of the psychic presence. "You must find in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, timeless continuity. Then you decentralized, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating the individuals from each other break down." This is just one part of psychic realization among various aspects. The psychic being is an extraordinary discovery to be made that is present within the individuals.

So as to continue on the way, it is completely indispensable to keep away from all mental opinions and reactions. Give up all personal seeking for comfort delight or bliss. "Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you like help for progress and make at once the progress required. Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure."

Never get excited, anxious or agitated. Remain perfectly calm in the face of all conditions. Always be conscious to discover the advancement you have still to make and lose no time in making it. Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something different, the real thing which escapes the superficial understanding. Never complain about the conduct of anybody, except if you have the ability to change in his nature that makes him act thus; and if have the ability, transform him carefully, instead of complaining.

"Whatever you do never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing small or big in this enterprise of a great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus at the time you eat, before you go to bed before you act and before you talk think two to five seconds in the desire to discover the psychic being." Always remember the "purpose and goal of your life".

"Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will open suddenly and you will come out into a dazzling splendor that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have lived always."

6. SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

The psychic and the spiritual educations are ordinarily joined and branded as the "yogic discipline". The aim and objective are not the same and different.

- (a) For one, it is the higher awareness on the earth
- (b) For the other, a release from all mundane, even away from the entire world, a reach to the un-manifest.

The life of the psychic the immortal, infinite time, boundless space, dynamically changing, unbroken movement in the mundane world. The awareness of spirituality is to experience the eternal and the infinite, to live one-self outside all creation that is beyond the space and time. To know about the psychic being and for psychic life, you should nullify all narrow-mindedness.

In the psyche's growth and development, numerous names are given as per the environment and the path followed. Religious people call it God, the transcendent God beyond all forms; others call it as the Absolute. Few will call it as Nirvana, others will reveal it the only reality, others will call it the Absolute reality, others will call it the Relative reality and others will call it the Sole Truth. Each one of these definitions contains a part of the truth, however, all are fragmented and expressing an only a single aspect of the inquiry, what is that? But, finally, it is always the same experience. Total self-surrender is very important in any path. When the surrender becomes pure and total, it will carry with it the desire for oneness with that and this results in achievement and triumph.

There is a fundamental point between the similarity and the one with the psychic aspect.

- (a) The first one can be known in the contemplation
- (b) The second one "can be felt at every stage of one's life" in a wakeful state and in sleep. At that point will start additionally another instruction called the supramental education.

"In brief, one can say that the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but a transformation of the nature itself, a transfiguration of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards Superman, leading in the end to the appearance of a divine race upon earth."

The conclusion is that complete education has five main aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human beings: the physical, the mental, the vital, the psychic and the spiritual. This type of education is known as the integral education and its aim is "all-round development" of the individual. Physical education refers to the training of the body by various activities. The mental education deals with the true education of the mind and prepares the individual for the best life. The vital education advises the individual must observe the self very carefully that transforms the individual, the conduct and the character. The psychic education has to be practiced to gain mastery and be aware of the psychic being. Spiritual education refers to the awareness of the absolute that is metaphysical and practical in its nature.

"It is only in the collective order and organization, in a collaboration based upon mutual goodwill that lies the possibility of a man being lifted out of the painful chaos where he is now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied at the "Center of Education" and their solution will be given in the light of the "Supramental Knowledge" which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings."

- Mother

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