

## Quadrant-IE-Text

### Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Education
Course Name	Contemporary Indian Education
Course Code	EDU501
Module Name/Title	<i>Educational thoughts and practices: Critical reflection on the educational thoughts and practices of Sri Aurobindo with respect to the relevance in the present education system</i>
Module Code	CIE008
Pre-requisites	.....
Learning Outcome	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate and relate educational thoughts of Sri Aurobindo in present educational system</li><li>• Apply educational thoughts into various practices of education</li></ul>
Keywords	

#### 1. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
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## 1. Introduction

Sri Aurobindo is considered as one of the modern seers in Indian system of philosophy. He promoted Indian philosophy at the time when western philosophy and education is almost invincible in the life of an ordinary Indian. He was a critic of western education and that's why he believe that western education is devoid of scientism and spiritualism and thus make men more materialistic. He firmly believes that Indian ancient knowledge is highly scientific and spiritualist in nature and it help men to liberate themselves from all kind of materialism. Though, he was born in a family which always advocated for western education and that's why since early age till early 20s he received his education in missionary schools and went abroad to complete his education. But while studying in abroad he developed a taste in Indian culture. One of the first books he read about Indian culture was "Sacred book of the East" written by one of the famous German called Max Mueller. The book opened the eyes of Sri Aurobindo and awaken from inside about great Indian philosophy. He left his study and came back to India and started reading more about Indian philosophy. He started reading books of Vedas, Upanishads, and others in English language and made self familiar with ancient Indian knowledge. It was in 1908 in Alipore Jail he studied Vedas, Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Bhagwad Gita in Sanskrit and started engaging self in practice of yoga and meditation. It was this time; he transformed self into a practitioner of spiritualist. In 1926, he established Sri-Aurobindo Ashram-wherein experiments on education were conducted based on Indian philosophy at Pondicherry. Later on his disciple Mirra Alfassa also known as Mother continued his work of promoting spiritual based education called Integral Education which is based on five faculties of Human-Vital, physical, mental, psychic and spiritual. After

## 2. General Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

The fundamental idea upon which the whole structure of Sri Aurobindo philosophy rests upon-matter and spirit should be looked upon as a real. He envisages that spirit and matter, life and mind are interrelated and they are essential ingredients of life and work harmoniously with each other. He was first to declare that man can attain divinity in this terrestrial life, in this physical body. He conceptualizes the theory of evolution wherein he pointed out that evolution do not merely mean confines to raising of surface mind, life and body, but it means awakening of inner self. Within each of us dwells a spark of divinity which we called the soul. Evolution requires enlightening of soul. No development of "being" is possible without awakening of inner being.

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### 3. Educational Thoughts and Practice of Sri Aurobindo

The educational thoughts of Sri Aurobindo were the result of the prevailing contrived education practices in Indian schools. He believes that nay national system of education which pushes the child towards cramming and passing the exams in no way builds the mind and character of child. He in his book Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education has written that and I quote:

*“No doubt that the current system of Europe is a great advance on many of the methods of antiquity, but its defects are palpable. It is based on insufficient knowledge of human psychology. It is preparing humans to avoid punishment or to pass the exams through cramming” (p.22).*

He further asserted that present education system has been able to impoverish the mind, soul and character of man as it is being influenced too much by western aim, knowledge method, substance and spirit (Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education, 2016 p.6). He believed and always promote that any education system which reflects and glorifies its past is truly national. While advocating national education he said “We may have our own educational theories; but we advocate national education not as an educational experiment but as a measure of building our character and nation. He believed that national education would help the nation to anchor the forthcoming generations to the ideas of nationalism, national culture and love for nation. The patronage to national education by Sri Aurobindo does mean that he was emphasizing on regression to the past but it only means that next generation should be acquainted with the past and that too in his/her own language. He is never against the any kind of knowledge which pushes the man from present to past but knowledge which has blend of both modernity and tradition is what viewed by Sri Aurobindo. In his book Sri Aurobindo and Mother (1956) he highlighted that:

*“There was never an attempt to regress to the age of bullock carts. At most, what can be demanded is a larger place for the study of the past of our country, the replacement of English by the indigenous tongues as a medium and the relegation of the former to the position of a second language but it is possible to challenge the advisability even of these changes. After all, we live in the twentieth century and cannot revive the India of Chandragupta or Akbar; we must keep abreast with the march of truth and knowledge, fit ourselves for existence under actual circumstances, and our education must have substance and also must be modern in life and spirit” (p. 8).*

For him knowing of language is great importance to an individual. What method of teaching is used by the teacher is unimportant but what is important that learning of indigenous language? He firmly believes that national education should be given in indigenous language as it is the means of knowing the culture and tradition of a civilization. So, if one has to

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understand the past it is indeed important one should know about indigenous language. The indigenous language provides the opportunity to “heart and soul” to connect with past and yet acquaint self with the future. He is in favour of learning other languages as it helps individual to know the ideas, culture of other countries and thus help in establishing relationship around the world.

Sri Aurobindo when advocated National Education, he actually wants that each individual should preserve, strengthen and enrich the national soul i.e. Dharma. How the Dharma will be preserved? He believed that through national education, one can unleash the power and possibilities of inner soul and in the process individual awakens his spiritual being and thus help in building national soul.

#### 4. Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

According to Aurobindo the ultimate aim of education is emancipation i.e. liberating oneself from all kinds of ignorance. He called them as man of knowledge or “Gnostic being”. According to Sri Aurobindo the concept of **Gnostic being** is more complete than **Jeevan Mukta** which means liberation from the cycle of birth and death whereas **Gnostic being** means attaining godly Status through **supermental transformation** within this world. How can an individual do it? He said that an individual through **integral yoga** one can reach to the stage of **super mind** in the existing life and thus convert it into **Gnostic being i.e. merging of** conscious identity with divinity. The method he prescribed is purification of personality and surrendering it which allows the psyche being to emerge and thus enable the individual to become supermental. Such individuals would become the basis of a new society culminating in a divine life of earth.

#### 5. Aims of Education

*This right aim and principle of a true education, not certainly, to ignore modern truth and knowledge, but to take our foundation on our own being, our own mind, our own spirit” (Sri Aurobindo & Mother on Education, 2016, p. 11).*

According to Aurobindo the chief aim of education should be “to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use” (Vashishhtha, Khndai & Mathur, 2011 p.420). Thus, education must be able to awaken the divinity of the soul. This can happen only if national **Dharma** is imbibed in the life of students. He was of the view that national education must produce man with all their faculties trained; along with physically sound health, patriotism, morality (Sri Aurobindo. 1974, p.46). In the book Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education following are the other aims of education:

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- a. Physical development of body and purity of mind.
  - b. All the six senses are to be trained so that they can work with perfection. As knowledge through senses would be real, perfect and valid.
  - c. Development of mental faculties is key for concentration, judgement, reasoning, imagination etc.
  - d. Moral education is advocated by Sri Aurobindo. He asserts that right emotions, noblest association, good physical habits, right action, can only be achieved through moral education. He of the opinion without moral development mental development is harmful for humans.
  - e. Aurobindo has placed conscience on he feels it is essential for the all-round development of a child.
  - f. Education without the spiritual development is incomplete and education should awaken the divinity of soul.

## 6. Role of Teacher

Indian has a long tradition of 'Guru-Shishya' parampara wherein Guru is treated equally or more than the God as he is the one who not only imparts knowledge but also take the disciple from the path of darkness to enlightenment. As the knowledge lies within oneself, it is the role of the teacher to facilitate the process of realisation of knowledge. According to Sri Aurobindo there are three basic principles of teaching in which he suggests what would be the role of teacher in the process of education:

*"True teaching is nothing can be taught. Teacher role is to help and guide the children. 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 shows student 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 and Mother on Education, 2016 p.22).

While advising both parents and teachers regarding shaping of the child, he cautiously said that no child should be shaped by the desires of the parents or teachers as it is against the basic nature and psychology of the child. Let the child discover his/her innate potentialities and let him/her groom his abilities rather than groom by the teachers and parents. Otherwise, a mutilated, imperfect, artificial and mechanical human being will be unfolded before us. In this context Sri Aurobindo said that:

*"The mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities,*

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*capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common” (Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education, 2016 p.23).*

Like, Tagore and Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo also believes that child should be nurtured in the lap of nature so that wholesome personality can be developed. He emphasizes any education which is not based on traditions and nationality means lop-sided development of the individuals. Education should be such that it imparts knowledge about the glorious past, point out the opportunities of the present and develops insights among the students about the future. Students are the creators of future. Therefore, it is necessary that each student should be left free for own development. In this regard the Aurobindo third principle said that:

*“The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. The basis of a man’s nature is almost always, in addition to his soul’s past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sentence, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly and from that then we must begin. We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. 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 condition of genuine development. There are souls which naturally revolt from their surroundings and seem to belong to another age and time. Let them be free to follow their bent; but the majority languish, become empty, become artificial, if artificially moulded into an alien form. It is God’s arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education” (Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education, 2016 p.24).*

Thus, it can be concluded from the above paragraphs the following what M.B. Pandit said:

*Education hereafter will be child-oriented, not teacher centred. The teacher’s role has to be that of an awakener, a friend and guide. It is the aptitude of the student that should decide his line of studies and not the wishes of the parents or the availability of facilities” (Pandit. 1996, p. 25).*

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So, this principle simply defines the role of teacher in the development of child.

## 7. Curriculum

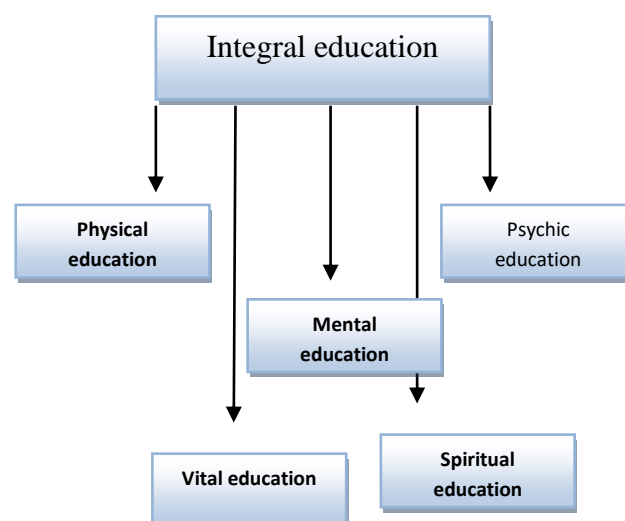
Sri Aurobindo was of the view that child inner potentialities will be blossomed if child is set free in the natural environment. It means, he was against any prescribed curriculum as it will lead to shaping of a personality which is against the very basic nature of spiritual being. Therefore, he advocated those subjects and activities which are of interest to the child and possess elements of creativity and educational expressions are to be taught to the child. He wished to infuse new life and spirit into each subject and activity through which development of super human being could be possible. The basic principles of curriculum are:

- a) Promote mental and spiritual development
- b) Motivate to attainment of knowledge as whole
- c) Develop the mental faculties and increase its capacities

Therefore, he suggested following subjects at different levels: Mother tongue, Science, Social Science, Arithmetic, Art, painting etc at primary level but as we move higher in the class more and more subjects could be added. He also laid stressed on vocational education in the curriculum.

## 8. Relevance of Educational thoughts and Practices in Present Education System

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education revolves around developmental psychology wherein he looks child as a whole entity. In present education system, educational thoughts and practices of Sri Aurobindo finds more relevance and utility. Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is transformed into Integral Education. The five areas of integral education as proposed by Sri Aurobindo are depicted in the figure:





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Aurobindo emphasised that only such education is true and living which helps one to develop his/her innate powers and enable the child to lead the right relationship with life. Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence; it is just the starting point to build the understanding. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge is no education. Education must be based on the psychology of the child's nature. Therefore, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century there is a vital need to create a mind who can think and rationalise the things through his own perspective, it is necessary that our education system must enable the child to develop his own practical, intellectual, moral and aesthetic capacities and to grow independently as an organic being.

While propounding a National Education Sri Aurobindo points out that:

*“It is not the question between modernity and antiquity, but it is between imported civilisation and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future”.*

This reflects the outlook of the Sri Aurobindo towards indigenous education where man making is more important than merely teaching few subjects, character building is more important than scientific advancement, to become being is more important than human.

Another important question he raises, it is not important how we have learn science but it is more important what shall we do with the science and how we will develop scientific mind among the children.

One of the central tenets of National education is growth of the individual soul. Here he emphasizes that growth of the individual soul be in line with the national soul. He further emphasized that education should be able to preserve, strengthen and enrich the national soul.

Integral Education as proposed by Sri Aurobindo is a complete education wherein there is insistence on development of **knowledge, will, harmony and skill**. Since each individual is unique in its own sense in terms of its capacities and propensities, integral education in its practice tends to become increasingly individualized. Thus, methods of education should be dynamic which involves active participation of child in its own growth.

The justification for incorporating psychic and spiritual education rests upon three important considerations: (a) Education provide an individual to explore human consciousness; (b) What is the aim of human life in respect to self and to the society; It is the development of psychic and spiritual faculties of knowledge; (c) The present crisis of humanity has arisen because of unbalance between material advancement and spiritual progression. If,

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crisis has to be met, then what is needed is to develop the psychic and spiritual consciousness of individuals. According to Sri Aurobindo, there is no fundamental opposition between matter and spirit. True integrity, means rejection of no element in the human personality and no denial of anything that can contribute to the full flowering of faculties of personality.

## 9. Summary

Aurobindo is naturalist and nationalist philosopher whose ideas about education are obtained from national education proposed in the year 1907 which is the outcome of his educational philosophy. He proposed that education is nothing but bringing out and nurturing the latent potentialities; integrate oneself with self, harmonious living of individual with society, country and humanity to make oneself a complete being or integral human being. He believed that purpose of education is not merely cramming of facts or information because this will lead to temporal achievement of goals in life but education is making of character, personality and values. He placed high importance to the indigenous education, language as it will help the child to understand his /her past and connect with the present so that he /she can progress in the future. He was not against any western education but he believed that we should learn from western education about their advancement in knowledge. He believed that chief aim of education is awakening of divinity in the individual. This can be done through yoga, meditation. He had given five secondary aims of education- physical, spiritual, moral, mental and psyche development which he later called it as Integral Education. According to him, process of education is the development of one's physical, vital, spiritual, mental and psychic aspects of human. He was of the opinion that role of teacher is very minimal in the teaching-learning process as teaching will corrupt the mind of the child. So he believed that let the child explore the world around us and blossom on the basis of his/her innate abilities. He firmly believed that each country has a set of own values, culture and history and it is the responsibility of teachers to make students aware of it and develop them in line with the values, ideals and traditions. He called it as **Swadhrma**. He criticized the modern education as it is inadequate to prepare the children for wholesome personality. He believed that only education which awakens the consciousness of individuals will transform the nation socially, economically and politically. That's why his thrust on integral education is for developing futuristic citizens-a balance individual having both traditional and modern.

**Quadrant-III Learn More/Web Resources/Supplementary Materials:**

Books, articles, research papers, journals, case studies etc.:

- Joshi, K. (2012). Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, Popular Media: New Delhi
- SABDA. (2016). Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education, Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram
- Aurobindo Ashram (1956). Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram,
- Pandit, M.P. (1996). A New Approach to Education. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Science
- Joshi Kireet. (2000). A National Agenda for Education, Delhi. The Mother's Institute of Research,
- Joshi, Kireet. (1996). Dimensions of Spiritual Education, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Science,
- Jasta, Hari Ram. (1999). Spiritual Values and Education. New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan,
- Mother. (1952). The Mother on Education Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Vol.2

**Web Resources**

- i. Jeremie Zulaski (2017). A Complete Integral Education: Five Principal Aspects [https://integral-review.org/issues/vol\\_13\\_no\\_1\\_zulaski\\_a\\_complete\\_integral\\_education.pdf](https://integral-review.org/issues/vol_13_no_1_zulaski_a_complete_integral_education.pdf)
- ii. Integral education by Sri Aurobindo centre for Advanced Research <http://www.sacar.in/pdf/Integral%20Education.pdf>
- iii. Educational Philosophic Outline of Aurobindo Ghosh
- iv. [https://www.academia.edu/11999030/EDUCATIONAL\\_PHILOSOPHIC\\_OUTLINE\\_OF\\_AUROBINDO\\_GHOSH](https://www.academia.edu/11999030/EDUCATIONAL_PHILOSOPHIC_OUTLINE_OF_AUROBINDO_GHOSH)
- v. [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/12799/14/14\\_chapter%207.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/12799/14/14_chapter%207.pdf)
- vi. [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/73933/13/13\\_chapter%206.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/73933/13/13_chapter%206.pdf)
- vii. <http://paperofphilosophy.blogspot.com/2012/12/aurobindo.html>
- viii. A System of National Education [https://ia802801.us.archive.org/33/items/A\\_System\\_of\\_National\\_Education\\_Aurobindo\\_Ghosh/A%20System%20Of%20National%20Education%20Aurobindo%20Ghosh.pdf](https://ia802801.us.archive.org/33/items/A_System_of_National_Education_Aurobindo_Ghosh/A%20System%20Of%20National%20Education%20Aurobindo%20Ghosh.pdf)
- ix. Educational philosophy of sri aurobindo [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/188583/6/06\\_chapter%201.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/188583/6/06_chapter%201.pdf)

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## Videos

The educational philosophy of sri aurobindo

<https://youtu.be/vqd7X6IpXNY>

Sri Aurobindo Ka Shaikshik Darshan

<https://youtu.be/vtZmlHxM98w>

Aurobindo and his educational philosophy Agatha Pallavi Mukhia

<https://youtu.be/ia5iKbaLLWY>

Sri Aurobindo (INDCUL)

<https://youtu.be/A8q2-fnfwq0>

**EDU501**

**Contemporary Indian Education**

**CIE008**

**Quadrant-IV: Self-Assessment**

**Description:** In self-assessment Question No. 1 to 10 consist of multiple choice questions in which learners are required to select the correct one out of the four alternatives

Q1. Which book Sri Aurobindo read which gives him knowledge about Indian Philosophies?

- (a) Vedas
- (b) Upanishads
- (c) Bhagwat Gita
- (d) Sacred book of East

Q2. Which one of them is the ultimate aim of education?

- (a) Spiritual Development
- (b) Physical Development
- (c) Mental envelopment
- (d) Moral Development

Q3. What is Gnostic Being?

- (a) Liberation from the cycle of birth and death
- (b) Awakening of divinity in self
- (c) Awakening of divinity in the existing human life
- (d) Awakening of inner self through yoga

Q4. According to Aurobindo, what is national education?

- (a) System of education based on Indian language
- (b) System of education based on indigenous subjects
- (c) System of education based on the cultural traditions
- (d) All of the above

Q5. Sri Aurobindo educational philosophy belongs to.....

- (a) Pragmatist
- (b) Idealist
- (c) Spiritualist
- (d) Naturalist

Q6. What kind of curriculum Sri Aurobindo proposed for children?

- (a) Open
- (b) Closed
- (c) Rigid
- (d) flexible

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Q7. According to Aurobindo, the teacher should act as .....  
(a) Leader (b) Manager (c) Awakener (d) None of the above

Q8. Which one of them does not belongs to Integral education?  
(a) Psychic (d) Mental (c) Physical (d) Emotional

Q9. Where Sri Aurobindo started his experiments for national education system?  
(a) Kolkata (b) Pondicherry (c) Delhi (d) Gujarat

Q10. What is the crux of the third principle of teaching?  
(a) Freedom to individual  
(b) Autonomy of individual  
(c) Accountability of Individual  
(d) None of the above

**Answers:** - 1(d), 2(a), 3(c), 4(d), 5(d), 6(d), 7(c), 8(d), 9(b), 10(a)