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## **THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF JOHN DEWEY AND SRI AUROBINDO**

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# The Educational Thoughts of John Dewey and Sri Aurobindo

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**Abstract – To fulfill the aspects of education such as in beauty, power, knowledge and love by integrating all of them through integral education that bring out the full advantage in each individual child and draw out the best that is within and make it perfect for a noble causes. In the said research, a study of thoughts of Sri Aurobindo was conducted.**

**This paper discusses the influence of John Dewey's educational thoughts on Education in the past and in the present. It also elaborates the manifestations of the Deweyan vision of a democratic and pro-gressive education.**

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## INTRODUCTION

A study on the educational thought of Sri Aurobindo focus on the different principles of teaching in which teacher is being told to help the child to feel the touch of divinity to find that something which can be developed. This study is very helpful to get different views on the methods of teaching and it tells how to perfect the instruments of knowledge and encourage pupil in educational process.

Sri Aurobindo too has placed emphasis on all round development of the personality, which includes education of the senses, body mind, moral and religious education. Vivekananda's educational thought laid emphasis on realization of the perfection already in man. He placed greatest stress on education as the gradual unfolding of the intrinsic quality of the individual and was of the view that no knowledge comes from outside. According to Mohd. Iqbal, the essential purpose of education is to develop man's individuality and felt that education should ensure the possibility of eternal progress. The educational philosophies of Indian thinkers have stressed that education must be comprehensive and should aim at the development of the total personality of the individual in harmony with society and nature.

As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "If seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside, for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use". Similar quotations may be hunted from other philosopher of education in west and east. The total development involves character development, development of social

virtues and individual skills. It includes all the various aims of education. It involves all the functions of education in human life such as development of natural abilities, character building, personality integration, preparation for adult life, control and sublimation of basic instinct, creation of useful citizens development of a sense of community, progress of culture and civilization, social welfare, use of leisure and synthesis of national as well as international consciousness.

John Dewey is considered to be the most influential theorist of the progressive education movement. His pragmatist, constructivist and democrat-ic ideas and views exerted great influence on the world of education. Many concepts and ideas used by progressive educators and outcome-based practitioners such as problem-solving skills, "learning by doing", critical thinking skills and life-long learning are Deweyan influences. Dewey argues in his writings that learning and education are interactive and social processes. The school, therefore, ought to be a social institution where social reform can take place. His vision of a school as a democracy in microcosm dedicated to addressing social inequalities still resonates through progressive educators of the present era. He has visited many nations during his lifetime and his legacy goes on and on around the globe.

## THOUGHTS AND WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo was born on 1872. A patriot-revolutionary turned into a great educator, seer and thinker. Besides English, he mastered in Latin,

Greek, French, German, Italian and Spanish during his stay in England for 14 years from the age of 7 to the age of 21.

After his return to India in 1893, he devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali and drank in the culture of and philosophy of India. He began yoga by himself in 1904. Aurobindo was a very brilliant student and passed the open competition for I.O.S. but did not try to qualify in the riding text.

Aurobindo's ideas on education are contained in his two books namely A System of National Education and Sri Aurobindo and Mother on Education.

The different aspects of education according to Aurobindo are given as follows –

### Integral Education –

According to 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 (a) beauty, (b) power, (c) knowledge and (d) love is what he called as integral education. Beauty is the realization through physical culture. Power is to be related to the control of sensations.

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 Commission with the Divine.

“If education is to bring out to full advantage all that is in the individual child we should first guarantee a safe custody of all that is in individual. Nothing is to be lost or damaged, twisted or crushed. ‘Everyone has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse.’

That Divinity in man is not to be insulted, that chance of perfection is not to be lost that spark of strength is not to be extinguished. The task of a teacher is to help the child to feel that touch of divinity to find that ‘something’ to develop it, and use it. Education should help that growing soul to draw out the best that is within and make it perfect for a noble cause.

### Principles of Teaching –

Sri Aurobindo enumerated three principles of teaching. 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 guide.

The teacher's work is to suggest and not to impose on the mind of the student but helps him to perfect his mind, the instrument of knowledge and encourages him every way in this process. Thus is does not import knowledge, but shows the way he knowledge can be acquired. Knowledge is within the pupil and the pupil

has to must help himself to bring it out, but he needs help. Somebody must tell him where it is and how it can be ‘habituated to rise to the surface.’ The teacher alone can do this work.

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its growth. “The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition.”

The third principle of teaching is to work from the near to the far, from the known to the unknown. Man's nature is mold by his soul's past his heredity and his environment. The past is the foundation, the present is the material and future is the aim – and each must find its due and natural place in any national system of education.

### Teacher –

A guide and helper and moralizer through personal example. The teacher is not an instructor or task master; he is a helper and 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 GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWPOINT

Sri Aurobindo's interests were in history, literature, languages- all that dealt with the life of the people of all ages, all races. His writings touch Politics, Social Sciences, Dramas and Plays, Lyrics and Narratives, Sonnets and Short Stories, Literary Criticism, Creative Surveys of Culture, and so on. All that he wrote is essentially creative, opening new horizons.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is a vision and an approach to the future evolution of life. He is a revolutionary idealistic philosopher among the contemporary philosophers. He started a strong movement to introduce a national education based upon psychological perceptions. “Sri Aurobindo international Centre of Education” is based on his principles where the whole system of education is on aesthetic and soul values. Sri Aurobindo accepted life with a view to change it and make it perfect, instead of running away from it.

Therefore he built his philosophy of ‘The Life Divine’, bridging the gulf between Spirit and Matter, God and the world. He tried to integrate the best of the West, i.e., the material achievement, and the best of the East, the spiritual achievement.

Though Sri Aurobindo is a modern philosopher he is influenced by the Vedantic concept like the other

Indian modern philosophers of that time. But it is also true that Sri Aurobindo was also influenced by the western philosophy as he was brought up in England.

Sri Aurobindo tried to rebuild the Vedantic Theory in the light of the modern world. He tried to synthesize the tradition of both the east and the west. His Epistemology and Metaphysics are mutually dependent. For him, Brahman is the ultimate reality and the achievement of the knowledge of Brahman is the aim of human beings. The system of his philosophy is based on the integration within the self and integration of the self with the Universal Self.

When the other Indian philosophers opined that the path of knowledge aims at the realization of the supreme self in all beings, Sri Aurobindo goes a step further and holds that this aim of knowledge should be not only the realization of the Supreme Self in All beings, but also the realization of the phenomenal aspects of the world as a play of the Divine Consciousness. Sri Aurobindo describes different sources of knowledge, levels of consciousness, seven-fold ignorance and the ways of getting rid of this seven-fold ignorance. They are not same in the methods of approach, even the aims of these two philosophers are not the same. While the aim of the agnostic one is to search for the actual sources of knowledge, the other one is to arrive at the knowledge of the Supreme Reality.

Sri Aurobindo's Metaphysics is regarded as Integral Non-Dualism or Supramental Idealism. For him, Supreme Reality is One, Sat (Existence), Cit (Consciousness-Force) and Ananda (Bliss). Brahman manifests to us as Atman, Purusha and Ishwara. For him, all things in the universe are in the very essence of Brahman, the form, the substantiality of the Integral Absolute Brahman. Thus according to Sri Aurobindo, Brahman is both Eternal Being and Eternal Becoming, in his Metaphysics, an assimilation of materialism and spiritualism is clearly found. He is against the mechanical view of the Universe introduced by the Western philosophers. He has offered a comprehensive theory of Evolution by combining both the eastern and western theories of evolution. His theory of evolution has two series— ascending and descending. It is through evolution that man can comprehend the Absolute and again it is through involution that the Absolute can come down to the earth-consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo states that ethical conduct is a means for spiritual life when Russell took help of ethics for social life. But Sri Aurobindo was also a spiritual humanist; as he holds the spirit or God in man as the basic truth and goal of human effort. After analyzing the philosophical standpoints of these two philosophers, it may be concluded that both have their own perspectives. But the similarity is that they both tried to find the reality of the world. Russell tried to end

the misery, fear and unhappiness of the human race as Sri Aurobindo's gradual process of evolution widens the welfare of the whole humanity.

## **DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY AND THEORIES**

### **Education and Experience-**

John Dewey, as the American Pragmatist philosopher, believed that American Democracy is a continuous process and that American Democracy is continually developing. The key ingredients to this developing process of American Democracy are: citizens in their public role and private role, the Great Society becoming a Great Community through communication, and education.

These key ingredients are necessary if citizens are to become a meaningful part of democracy. Public administrators can then serve as the guarantors and facilitators that provide citizens with the opportunities for exercising true powers of governance. Public administrators will be able to serve in the roles of teacher and learner as they collaborate with citizens. This is how freedom will be experienced in a democracy according to Dewey.<sup>54</sup> His pragmatic philosophy which is imbedded with democratic theory includes democratic organizations who foster democratic ideals whose end result is freedom.<sup>55</sup> Follett did not define democracy in terms of participation, but like Dewey, defined it in terms of the "organization, the relating of parts, co-functioning . . . ." <sup>56</sup> Follett did not believe that the Lockean principle-- consent of the governed--explained the reason for democracy. The true heroes of democracy, then, are the teachers

who help the people have "vision, method, and knowledge."<sup>57</sup> Follett quotes Dewey in citing the important role of teachers. The teachers primary purpose is to "increase freedom." Freedom and education become interchangeable terms when understood in this light. It becomes so easy to come to the conclusion that public administrators could become the teachers Dewey speaks of in fostering democratic ideals whose end result is freedom.

To understand John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism is to understand Dewey's philosophy of education as a "lived-experience" philosophy. It also is a "shared experience" which implies that a person experiences learning with others, hence, the expression "experiential learning." This "shared experience" becomes a basic tenet of Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism. Learning with others is experiencing with others.

This is the foundation of Dewey's philosophy of education. The theory of experience as a basic tenet of the philosophy of education brings together the

pragmatic lessons of theory and practice. Through experiencing with others one learns one of the "most important lessons of life, that of mutual accommodation and adaptation."

### **A Dewey Truism: "Education is a mode of life, of action."**

As education becomes a part of the individual, armed with the scientific method, the "pursuit of happiness" becomes real. The individual is free to determine what is worthy of pursuit for ones' self as well as for the community.

The individual experiencing democracy with others is in a continuing mode of education. One begins to feel and understand the learning cycle that Dewey talks about in all his writings--though not explicitly, but as weaving in and out of his ideas, in a cyclical manner. Dewey says it best:

"Education is by its nature an endless circle or spiral. It is an activity which includes science within itself. In its very process it sets more problems to be further studied, which then react into the educative process to change it still further, and thus demand more thought, more science, and so on, in everlasting sequence."

The underlying theme of Dewey's prolific writing is the concept: "cycle of learning." The cycle of learning concept entails growth and development in an expanding experiential sense. The cycle of learning requires communication in the sharing of ideas. Dialogue then becomes the vehicle by which this transformation of growth and development take place. Dewey recognizes "language" as an important ingredient in carrying on this sharing of ideas in achieving an authentic dialogue. He explains this in his "Principles of Continuity and Interaction" concept that leads us to "experiential continuity." Continuity is symbolic of growth. Dewey believes that growth occurs continuously when individuals experience government with others--public administrators, power brokers, and ordinary citizens. The sharing of ideas through authentic dialogue by all parties concerned is a growth in the learning process.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sri Aurobindo's views on education was to cover the whole aspects on education such as psychic and mental , spiritual, physical, vital by cultivating the beauty , power , knowledge and love. Everyman has divinity by some extent according to him which is not to be insulted but the teacher should help the child to feel that touch of divinity and their mind has to be constructed in growth. This study helps to guide the teacher to choose the correct form of teaching and provide inspiration and facilities for the complete growth of mind.

Dewey's learning cycle is applicable to this discussion. The institution of education must take on the

responsibility of teaching about democracy, democratic principles, and democratic practices. In a democratic environment with democratic experiences, students will have been inculcated with the language and praxis of democracy. As each institution becomes acclimated to the learning cycle, they, too, will accept the responsibility for teaching democracy, democratic practices, and building a democratic environment and experience. Dewey is all inclusive in his theory of education and democracy when he incorporates art and aesthetics as primary in the "remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity."

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