



*Journal of Advances and
Scholarly Researches in
Allied Education*

*Vol. XI, Issue No. XXI,
Apr-2016, ISSN 2230-7540*

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE JOHN DEWEY AND SRI
AUROBINDO IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF
EDUCATION**

AN
INTERNATIONALLY
INDEXED PEER
REVIEWED &
REFEREED JOURNAL

Contributions of the John Dewey and Sri Aurobindo in the Present System of Education

Gauriben Dayalbhai Solanki^{1*} Dr. H. B. Patel²

¹Assistant Professor

²Principal, Geowmore College of Education

Abstract – *Philosopher Aurobindo (1872-1950) can be viewed as a 20th century renaissance person. Born in Kolkata, India, Aurobindo was educated at Cambridge University. He was an intellectual who intensely analyzed human and social evolution. The present paper highlights the philosophical contributions of Shri Aurobindo Ghosh to Education. It relates the importance of Aurobindo's philosophy of education with different components of education: aims of education, curriculum, transaction, school, relationship of teacher and pupil; discipline; and finally the implication of Aurobindo's philosophy of education on globalization.*

In the present paper, we aim to highlight, starting from reference works of J. Dewey, a series of his contributions in the field of education. Starting from the principles of pragmatic pedagogy and fundamental paradigms of education we will identify the main elements of interference between these two conceptual spheres. The premise of this study was that the sociology of education provides a series of effective solutions to the problems facing school in the contemporary society. Therefore, the principles and the values promoted by John Dewey must be addressed as useful instruments for individual development, and social by default.

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

All the problems that India is facing today, they are probably not so pressing, not as urgent as the problem of educational reconstruction. So keeping in the mind this challenge, certain educational measures are need for reconstructing Indian education on modern lines. The investigator hopes that the present study of the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh will illumine the path and enlarge the scope of full thinking greatly along with new lines as this thinker has greatly contributed to the meaning and content of educational philosophy.

The guiding principles of Sri Aurobindo's education philosophy was the awakening of the individual as a spiritual being. It should be related to life truth and self-mastery by the child. Sri Aurobindo made a five-fold classification of human nature i.e. the physical, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual, corresponding to five aspects of education – physical education, vital education, mental education, psychic education and spiritual or super mental education.

Physical education includes control over physical functions, harmonious development of physical movements, over powering physical limitations and the awareness of body consciousness. Sri Aurobindo lays

stress upon games and sports because he felt that these were essential for renewing energy.

Vital education was the most important point in integral education. Sri Aurobindo called the vital being of man – the life nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, reaction of the desire – soul in man and of all that play a possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, speed etc. that belong to this field of nature.

Mental education included cognition, ideas and intelligence. The unique contribution of Sri Aurobindo regarding mental education was that ideas should be continually organized around a central thought.

Psychic education was the special contribution of Sri Aurobindo to education systems. The key to an integral personality was the discovery of man's psychic nature. Spiritual and sacramental education gives more importance to the growth of the spirit than intellectual, moral or even religious education.

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.

During the last decennia, most of the national education systems have been faced with a particularly important problem, namely the decrease of the interest and motivation for learning among pupils. The strategies meant to solve or mitigate this problem are diverse, starting with a detailed knowledge of the pupils' personality in order to realize an individualized training, continuing with the diversification of the teaching methodology and going up to the change of the organization of the educational process and/or system based on the open school or class principle.

The common denominator of all these changes in the educational sphere is the decision factors' and the practitioners' awareness regarding the fact that school, society and life cannot be approached as disjunct matters. Today's pupils need pertinent answers to questions such as: Why do I have to learn this? Is it a useful notion? In what social or professional context will I be able to use these pieces of information? etc.

The sociology of education, as a science with an interdisciplinary character, situated at the confluence between pedagogy, sociology, psychology and other sociohuman sciences, has as its specific object of study the functionality of the educational system, approached from both a macro structural and microstructural perspective. The issues approached by it concern: the integration of the education system in the social system, education design and planning, self-education and permanent education, approached as social demands, the features of the school institution as social organization, the valorification of the social functions of education: social integration, professional selection, transmission, sociocultural reproduction, social conservation etc.

John Dewey (1859-1952) was an important philosopher, psychologist, and reformer of the educational domain. His innovative ideas left their mark on the educational and social system. At the same time, the name of J. Dewey is associated to: pragmatism as a philosophy, the progressive trend and functional psychology. His monumental work includes an impressive number of over 700 articles and about 40 books, out of which the most important for the educational sphere are: *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), *The School and Society* (1900), *The Child and the Curriculum*, *The Educational Situation* (1902), *Moral Principles in Education* (1909), *Educational Essays* (1910), *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Experience and Education* (1938).

Although he is not explicitly included in the sphere of the authors in the domain of the sociology of education, nevertheless starting from his representative works and based on his involvement, along with his friend G. H. Mead, in the socio-educational experiment called the Chicago School, we can affirm that John Dewey has had valuable

contributions in the sphere of the sociology of education, as well.

As Dewey drew the attention, in many of his writings, school is implicitly affected by social problems for whose solving a series of elements specific of the paradigms of the sociology of education need to be turned to good use, in the context of the current educational practices.

JOHN DEWEY : EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

Next, based on a dominantly hermeneutic, interpretative study, we will try to highlight the most important ideas present in J. Dewey's works, in relation to the connexions between school and society.

Actually, even since his early works, as is the case of *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), J. Dewey demonstrates a sociological perspective of the educational phenomenon, affirming that education is a social process and "school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends".

At the same time, J. Dewey affirms his conviction that education must be "a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Dewey, 1992, 48) In his opinion, school ought to represent a context allowing the child to exercise certain social practices, similar to the family and in a relation of continuity with it.

The arguments supporting these opinions are both psychological and social. Thus, it is necessary to assure a certain continuity between the two educational environments both regarding the process of development of the child's personality and that of his development as a social being, especially in point of the moral principles and norms desirable on the level of the family and of the society as a whole.

In the context of his works, J. Dewey proposes a series of valuable suggestions regarding the content of school education, the teaching methodology and the evaluation process.

Thus, he affirmed that "the true centre of correlation of the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography but the child's own social activities".

Reflecting attentively, we can conclude that, by his vision, J. Dewey is a promoter of the postmodern pedagogy, in the center of which there is the curriculum paradigm, according to which any instructive-educative process needs to be focused on the educational aims and, depending on them, the contents, methods and evaluation strategies need to be adopted. Another affirmation of Dewey's supporting

our previous statement is that according to which "Acting with an aim is all one with acting intelligently".

At the same time, we can realize a connexion with what we call today the integrated approach of the training contents, which supposes cutting off certain problems of the pupils' daily life and dealing with them by inter or transdisciplinary connections.

Along the same coordinates is also the idea according to which "we should not omit the importance for the educative aims of the close and intimate familiarization with the immediate nature, with the real things and materials, with the natural process of their manipulation and with the knowledge of their social need and uses".

In relation to the nature of the methods that ought to be used in the education process, Dewey's suggestions are centered on three elements, namely: The teachers' preoccupation for the acquisition by the pupil of correct representations, "vivid and strong of the objects he comes in touch with during his existence";

The observation and stimulation by the teachers of the interests manifested by the pupils, as they "indicate the development degree that the child has reached"; Valorization of the emotions appeared only as an effect of actions and elimination as much as possible of sentimentalism, considered as the worst evil "threatening our education", after "deadness and dullness, formalism and routine".

Regarding the evaluation, Dewey considers unequivocally, accentuating the social functions of evaluation, that "examinations are useful only to the extent to which they test the child's aptitudes for social life".

Particularly edifying for the illustration of J. Dewey's conception regarding the relation between school and society is the work entitled precisely: *The School and Society* (1900, reedited in 1915). In the eight chapters of this work the author brings into focus a series of problems specific of the sphere of confluence between the social macro system and the school institution, as a social subsystem.

In the context of the first chapter, entitled "School and social progress", the author draws the attention on the changes intervening on the level of the society and which ought to produce effects on the school level as well.

In harmony with his pragmatist spirit, Dewey supports the need to introduce, in the school practice, activities meant to determine the pupils to learn by direct action, by the manipulation of real objects. These, however, need to be viewed as "methods of living and learning, not as distinct objects of study".

Promoting the principle of work division, pioneered by the founding father of the sociology of education Emil Durkheim, Dewey appreciates that in school, as well as in society, the pupil needs to be involved in an action in whose context he assumes roles and secures statuses in the spirit of a certain social order.

AUROBINDO'S AIMS OF EDUCATION

Shri Aurobindo emphasized that education should be in accordance with the needs of our real modern life. In other words, education should create dynamic citizen so that they are able to meet the needs of modern complex life. According to him, physical development and holiness are the chief aims of education. As such, he not only emphasized mere physical development, but physical purity also without which no spiritual development is possible. In this sense physical development and purification are the two bases on which the spiritual development is built. The second important aim of education is to train all the senses hearing, speaking, listening, touching, smelling and tasting. According to him these senses can be fully trained when nerve, chitta and manas are pure. Hence, through education purity of senses is to be achieved before any development is possible. The third aim of education is to achieve mental development of the child. This mental development means the enhancement of all mental faculties" namely memory, thinking, reasoning, imagination, and discrimination etc. education should develop them fully and harmoniously. Another important aim of education is the development of morality. Shri Aurobindo has emphasized that without moral and emotional development only, mental development becomes harmful to human process. Heart of a child should be so developed as to show extreme love, sympathy and consideration for all living beings. This is real moral development. Thus, the teacher should be a role model to his children that mere imitation can enable them to reach higher and higher stages of development. Development of conscience is another important aim of education that needs to develop by the help of teacher. Conscience has four level chitta, manas, intelligence, and knowledge. Aurobindo emphasized that the main aim of education is to promote spiritual development. According to him every human being has some fragment of divine existence within himself and education can scan it from each individual with its full extent.

SRI AUROBINDO AS ROLE OF TEACHER

Sri Aurobindo has given a very respectable and very a responsible job for the teacher because in his system, activity more on the part of the people was needed. So the teacher should be careful enough to observe the working of the student minutely so that he could guide those students who were going on wrong track. Sri Aurobindo suggested the he should

not teach but suggest, organize their work and show them the direction to responsibility, and to help them to find out inner guidance. Sri Aurobindo discarded the punishment and the stimulation of fear.

RELEVANCE OF THE MODERN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Although Sri Aurobindo had given his theory in 1910 and 1937 respectively, yet his theory is relevant to the modern system of education. Sri Aurobindo's theory is relevant in respect of all round development of the child, compulsory education at least upto the age of 6-14 years, lifelong and continuing education, vocational education, creativity, study of science and technology, literature etc. Sri Aurobindo's main contribution in future education that is to prepare for future life. Sri Aurobindo also gave preference to national integration, international integration, value education and non-formal programs for rural and unorganized sectors.

SRI AUROBINDO: METHODS OF TEACHING

Sri Aurobindo suggested activity method, observation, self-discovery, discussion method, learning by doing, learning by self-experience during teaching learning process.

Teacher Taught Relationship -

Aurobindo enunciates certain sound principles of good teaching, which have to be kept in mind when actually engaged in the process of learning. According to Sri Aurobindo, the first principle of true teaching is "that nothing can be taught." He explains that the knowledge is already dormant within the child and for this reason. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster; "he is a helper and a guide." The role of the teacher "is to suggest and not to impose". He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect the instruments of knowledge and helps him 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.

School -

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education aims at modifying the school curricula, maximizing the learning modalities, helping the child to achieve his potentiality at his own pace and level and devote his time to discover himself. This kind of schooling is seen as an antithesis of an imposed uniformity of prescribed courses and teaching which the traditional schools purport to do and can be linked to what was taught in schools under the colonial rule. The type of schooling visualized by Sri Aurobindo is seen as aiming to bridge the gap between the child's life at school and that at home. In contrast to the educational ideas of Sri Aurobindo, the present day education system in India is purely an instruction of information enterprise,

supported by a subject time bound curriculum, which neither relates to the needs or abilities of the learner nor takes into consideration the way children learn successfully. Instead of being Child oriented it is subject oriented. The schools focus on competition with others, mastery of subject matter for getting better marks or grades than on learning in cooperation with and from one another for personal growth and for welfare of others. This is not exclusive to Indian phenomenon, rather all over the world education is largely reductionist, materialist, ego enforcing, and devoid of the joys of the spirit. It is in this context that there is a need to examine initiatives which are rooted in Indian tradition, seek alternatives in curriculum teaching and learning for measuring success, involve children in the process of learning and focus on learning from the another and not from an authoritative pedagogue.

Discipline -

Children should be provided with a free environment so that they are able to gain more and more knowledge by their own efforts. According to him any retrained and imposed environment stunt the growth and natural development. Aurobindo propagated the concept of self-discipline which was the cure of impressionistic discipline.

JOHN DEWEY'S EDUCATIONAL IDEAS

In delineating the meaning of things and events, the complexity of reality sometimes makes it imperative to first of all bring out the contrasts. This is true not only for concrete realities (real beings) but also for the concepts (ideal beings) with which we understand the world. Thus, our approach shall first of all assemble all the opposing theories of education which Dewey rejected and then state his positions on education, which are scattered in several of his works.

Dewey began by rejecting the 'Traditionalists', the 'Perennialists' and the 'Essentialists' notions of education, which saw education as a preparation for the future. For him education is not just a "getting ready" of the child for the responsibilities and privileges of adult life. This is more so not just because reality is in constant flux and by the time the child grows up, what he learnt would have become obsolete, but because learning will be difficult since the child will not be able to withstand adult programme.⁴

Again, Dewey rejected the realists' position whom he accused of seeing education as just a mere preparation for 'life after death'. This is somewhat ridiculous since life is for the living and not the dead. The 'dead' can, if need be, establish their own process of learning which is not for the living to determine. Education, for him, is exclusively earth-bound, and limited to the experiential, experimental world. It does not arise as an 'unfolding from within' or simply from a faculty of the mind. It involves the whole person and

must lead to a regeneration of the world. Hence every venture, every programme and indeed every institution that stifles initiatives, inventiveness and adaptability can never properly bear the name education.

In delineating the meaning of the term education then, Dewey employed a lot of descriptive attributes: 'Education for life', 'Education for direction', 'Education for reconstruction, etc. For him "education in the broad sense of formation of fundamental attitudes of imagination, desires and thinking – is strictly correlative with culture in its inclusive sense".⁵ As thus correlative with culture, it proceeds by the individual's participation in the culture of his race. One, as such, cannot be educated in isolation a culture. He will behave like a beast. Education therefore, is the process of living in the society and not just an acquaintance with the past or a preparation for future living. It should derive its materials from present experience and thus enable the learner cope with the problems of the present and future.

By drawing from past experiences, man refashions his present and future experiences and develops more intelligence in the art of living in a problematic society. For Dewey, education involves growth, individual development and problem solving. Life is a continuous process of problem solving. To the extent an individual is able to bring his previous experience to bear on the solutions of the here-and-now problems, to that extent can he be said to have been educated.

As a formal institution, the constituents of education are multiple namely, the school, the child as learner, the curriculum, the methodology, discipline and values. For Dewey, educational aims or goals and the process of education are identical. You cannot isolate one from the other without losing your bearing. The objective of learning, for example, cannot be remote to the structure of the curriculum of studies, methodology, discipline or even the school itself through which it is imparted. In its true sense, education entails a 'continuing reconstruction of experiences'. It trains man's intelligence as an instrument for problem solving, and relies heavily on experimental information. The ethical principle of consequentialism which lends credence to the doctrine that the 'end justifies the means' could not have been given much consideration by Dewey since education prepares the individual to live in society through living in society.⁷ The process is always central for the attainment of its designed goals. To delineate the goals of education in Dewey therefore, it will be paramount to examine the specific structures that constitute the process of education.

CONCLUSION

Sri Aurobindo has given a very respectable and very a responsible job for the teacher because in his system, activity more on the part of the people was needed. So

the teacher should be careful enough to observe the working of the student minutely so that he could guide those students who were going on wrong track. Sri Aurobindo suggested the he should not teach but suggest, organize their work and show them the direction to responsibility, and to help them to find out inner guidance. Sri Aurobindo discarded the punishment and the stimulation of fear.

Dewey's theory, obviously does not allow for any ultimate value because of its negation of supra-sensible realities. In consequence, it has no room for the religious instruction of the youths. But one important question one may ask here is: are there realities which are not proximately perceptible to the physical, senses experience? For, if in fact there are spiritual realities, and if such realities are important to man, should the child not be directed towards them? Dewey's approach, it must be stated, fits perfectly well with the general trend of pragmatism of his time which viewed reality in terms of its practical uses and successes rather than in terms of representative accuracy.

We cannot conclude without a short reflective analysis on the extent to which the innovative ideas launched by J. Dewey, nearly a century ago, regarding the need of school reform, find their echo in the current educational practices.

Certainly, important steps have been taken in the direction of a pupil-centered education, related to his interests and preoccupations; in the curriculum have been introduced markedly applicative disciplines; modern training methods, based on action and cooperation, are used; in the approach of the contents of education, there is an attempt to pass from the monodisciplinary approach to the interdisciplinary, trans disciplinary approaches and even to the integrated approach; school is becoming an institution increasingly better anchored in the community problems by the multiple partnership projects it develops etc.

REFERENCES

- Aurobinda S (1990). On Education, reprint, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. p.15
- Aurobindo Sri (1990). 'On Education', Ashram, Sri Aurobindo, Pondicherry, Reprint.
- Babu A. S. (1998). A study of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Education. Ph.D. Dissertation, SVU.
- Babu A.S. (2008). A study of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Education. Ph.D. Dissertation, SVU.

- Chaube S. (1993). Educational Philosophies in India, Vikas publication House, New Delhi, p. 103
- J. Dewey (1938). Experience and Education in Mortimer A. J. (Ed.). Op. cit. p. 101
- J. Dewey. (1938). Experience and Education in Mortimer A. J. (Ed.) Great Books of the Western World. (Chicago: Ency. Britannica Inc., 3rd edition, Vol. 55, 1992), p. 120.
- K. Joshi, Sri Aurobindo (1998). 'Speech Delivered at Indian Technological Institution', New Delhi, p. 25
- Pani R. (1997). Integral Education Thought and Practice, A.P.H Publishing Cooperation, New Delhi, p. 22.
- Rukhsana A. (2009). Relevance of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's Educational Philosophy in the Post Modern Era, M.Phil Dissertation, Edu. Kashmir University, p107.
- S. Okafor, and F. Quist (2008). Philosophy of Education for Beginners. (Onitsha: Etukokwu Press), p. 20.
- Shankar, Hari (2001). Comparative study of philosophy and educational views of Maharishi Aurobindo and Rousseau. Ph.D. Education, Kumaran University.
- Sharma, R. S. (2003). Humanism in the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Ph.D. Education, Meerut University.

Corresponding Author

Gauriben Dayalbhai Solanki*

Assistant Professor