Chapter VII

Contents

7.1 The Context in which Aurobindo’s Thoughts were Formed .............................................................327
7.2 Aurobindo’s Encounter with the Education System in India ..........................................................328
7.3 Conceptualised Version of National Education ....330
7.4 A brief Sketch of the Philosophical Outlooks of Sri Aurobindo......................................................338
7.5 Sri Aurobindo’s Concept of Involution...............339
7.6 Concept of Super mind...............................................341
7.7 Knowledge and Ignorance.................................343
7.8 Triple Transformation of the Individual.............346
7.9 Supramental Existence ...........................................348
7.10 Developmental Philosophy of Social Evolution.....349
7.11 Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo..........350
7.12 Integral Yoga according to Aurobindo.............350
7.13 The Dichotomy of Vidya and Avidya ...............352
7.14 Education and the Role of Teacher ..................356
7.15 Progress of Individual towards Satvic Awakening .................................................................364
7.16 The Role of Spirituality and Culture in Education according to Sri Aurobindo...................367
7.17 Integral Education: A Conceptual Framework ......... 373
7.18 Five Dimensions of Integral Education ................. 374
7.19 The Physical Education ...................................... 375
7.20 The Vital Education ............................................ 377
7.21 The Mental Education ........................................... 378
7.22 The Psychic and the Spiritual Education ............... 380
7.23 Disciplined Learning through Concentration .......... 383
7.24 Divinity through Spiritual Evolution ...................... 384
7.25 Process of Creation and Evolution ......................... 385
7.26 Process of Involution and Evolution ...................... 385
7.27 Spiritual Change through Spiritual Discipline ........ 389
7.28 The Cultural Outlook in Aurobindo’s Educational Philosophy .................................................. 390
7.29 The Role of the Teacher in Imparting Cultural and Spiritual Values ............................................. 392
7.30 National Integration through Education .................. 394
7.31 The Foundation of Nationalism ............................ 398
7.32 Unity and Uniformity ............................................ 401
7.33 Force behind Enrichment of the National Soul and Dharma ...................................................... 402
7.34 Education as a Medium to Inculcate Patriotism ....... 404
7.35 The Corner Stone of Patriotism ............................. 408
7.36 The Psychological Approach to Imbibe Patriotism through the Medium of Education ...... 409
7.37 National Education as a Tool of Patriotism .......... 413
7.38 Inculcation of Morals and Values through Education .................................................................415
7.39 Arobindo’s Dharmic Cosmic Plan for India ........415
7.40 Theoretical Background of Value based Education.................................................................419
7.41 The Phased Imparting of Value Oriented Education .................................................................421
7.42 The Teacher as the Effective Practitioner of Moral Education ......................................................422
7.43 The Scheme of Moral Educational Frames ..........427
7.44 Satvic Trands of Personality Development ........428
Chapter VII

REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATION OF SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo, a modern Seer who belonged to the category of modern Rishis, had taken inspiration from ancient Vedic literature and analysed, interpreted and understood modern issues in its light. He had analysed Political, social, cultural and educational fields and suggested his own solutions to various issues. He was a person who had acquired modern Western education in the Western environment itself. But later on he studied Indian culture in detail and in that light changed his opinion on various issues of India and the world. Though purposefully denied access to Indian language and culture during his young age, after returning from England, Aurobindo quickly grasped the same and made significant contributions to Indian philosophy. He established new ideas and trends in the field of Indian education and imparted instruction through a blend of
theory and practical. Sri Aurobindo has been widely acclaimed as a modern seer and a Vedic Scholar. He had headed the first National College of Education, at Calcutta, and had written extensively on the subject of education. His approach, ‘Integral Education’, is in itself a unique concept. Education of the body, mind and spirit are each expounded in his writings on education, but their integration is even more significant. He has also dwelt on the social and psychological aspects of education.

Aurobindo’s life represented a shining chapter in India’s freedom struggle. The fiery nationalist who undertook bloody revolutionary actions for the sake of independence went on to become a ‘Rishi’, forsaking the material world. The contradiction between a Revolutionary and a Rishi was apparent throughout his life. Sri Aurobindo was not just a political activist. Though his identity is that of as a social reformer, he was also a poet and a thinker. There are few people like Aurobindo who recognized the value of education in the struggle for independence and the development of the nation.
7.1 The Context in which Aurobindo’s Thoughts were Formed

Sri Aurobindo’s father, Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghosh, desired that Aurobindo should become a bureaucrat in the British Civil Service. For this, the father wanted the son to grow up in an environment in which he would be familiar with the English language and so Aurobindo was sent to a missionary school run by Irish nuns at Darjeeling. From 1879 onwards Aurobindo had his education in England. Till the age of 20, Aurobindo was totally unfamiliar with India and its culture. It is the same Aurobindo, who had received his Western education from the West, later on became an ardent nationalist. Aurobindo, who acquired a deep knowledge about Indian culture and traditions, went on to establish a new and original branch of Indian Philosophy. “At Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo happened to read the book titled ‘Sacred Book of the East’, written by Max Mueller. It is from this book, that Aurobindo first became familiar with the term ‘Atman’. Aurobindo entered the Baroda State Service in February 8, 1893.”
He stayed in this assignment till 1907. During this period, Aurobindo applied for the post of temporary French language teacher at the Baroda College. It was during his stay at Baroda, that he gained his deep knowledge about Indian culture. He learned Bengali and Sanskrit. This was an effort to Indianise his own mind. Yet, he did not stop regularly reading the works of Western authors such as Homer, Vigil, Dante and Horace. He desired to translate the Sanskrit works he happened to read into English. He translated the Upanishads first” (Parameswaran. 1977, p. 43).

By this time, Aurobindo had become a spiritualist and proceeded to view every idea from this standpoint Aurobindo considered even political activism as an extension of the spiritual effort. Aurobindo was a total realist. He has not put forward any idea that deviates from the concepts of Vedanta.

7.2 Aurobindo’s Encounter with the Education System in India

It was during the period, when Aurobindo was a teacher, that he came to understand the inadequacies of our education system in
India. Subsequently, Sri Aurobindo had many authoritative contributions to make in the field of Indian education. In January 15\textsuperscript{th} of 1908, Aurobindo made a speech on ‘National education’ at Girgaon in Bombay. Aurobindo was very worried about the Western form of education being implemented in India. He said: “We have accumulated a huge mass of knowledge through ‘Yugas’ of scientific effort. Yet, all this knowledge has become a burden on our shoulders as it is not inspired by the spark of strength. I just like our ancient knowledge, the new knowledge acquired from the West is also something which, for us, is difficult to digest. We can, if we wish, blindly imitate England or Japan. But where will this blind imitation take us”? (Parameswaran.1977, p. 4). Aurobindo vehemently opposed the westernization of education.

In a letter written to his wife Mrinalini in August 30, 1905, Aurobindo says, “\textit{I am possessed by three kinds of madness. One is my belief that all my intelligence, knowledge and wealth is God’s gift. Another is my ardent desire to come face to face with God whatever the consequence. The third is my belief that India...}”
is my motherland and that I should submit all the fruits of my
‘Dharma' and 'Karma' at her feet’” (Sharma .1993, p.18). It is
these three ‘madness’ as labelled by Aurobindo which led
Aurobindo to his exalted state. Aurobindo who jumped into the
burning fire of our independence movement, labelled his societal
outlook as ‘The ‘Four equations’ (Chatusutra). “Aurobindo
based his social work on the principles of his ‘chathu sutra’
(Four equation), which called for – Self Rule, Swadeshi
campaign, National Education and the Boycott of foreign
Goods” (Sharma. 1993, p.10). In these four equations the idea of
national education is emphasized. These points to Aurobindo’s
strong conviction that social change can come about only through
the medium of education

7.3 Conceptualised Version of National Education

Aurobindo’s ideas about education are classified in his
collection of essays titled ‘National Education’. A preface on
National Education was published in two parts in the last two
issues of the ‘Arya’, Nov – Dec. 1920 and January 1921. The idea
Reflective analysis of perceptions on education of Sri Aurobindo

of an education system based on national traditions and realities was his dream. “For if we do not know very clearly what education in general truly is or should be, we seem still less to know – what we mean by National Education. All that appears to be almost unanimously agreed on is that the teaching given in the existing schools and universities has been denationalizing, degrading and impoverishing to the national mind, soul and character because it is overshadowed by a foreign hand and foreign in aim, method, substance and spirit” (Sri Aurobindo & Mother.1956, p. 6).

Due to the foreign rule, India’s indigenous education also was destroyed. India had a strong educational system which spanned thousands of years. Yet, though the imposition of an educational system designed to perpetuate foreign rule, the self-confidence of the Indians was destroyed. The educational system which the foreigners imposed on India was one which was designed to destroy the unity of India through a policy of divide and rule. The nationalists who were struggling for the Independence of the country saw national education as a mandatory prerequisite for
independence. It was in this context that people like Aurobindo became strong advocates of National education. He said: “We may have our own educational theories; but we advocate national education not as an educational experiment or to. Any theory, but as the only way to secure truly national and patriotic control and discipline for the mind of the country in its malleable youth” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 1, p. 75).

The system of education explained in his ‘National Education’ was one which was designed to anchor the new generations to the ideals of nationalism, national culture and love for the nation. “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” (Sri Aurobindo & Mother. 1956, p. 8).

The concept of National education was never an idea opposed or inimical to Western science or Western language. The term ‘swadeshi’ education did not in any way indicate a return to the bullock cart age. Indian languages were necessary as a medium to internalise Indian culture in the context of Indian circumstances.

Aurobindo had this to say about the real aim of ‘National Education’. “A language, Sanskrit or another should be acquired by whatever method is most natural, efficient and stimulating to the mind and we need not cling there to any past or present manner of teaching. But the vital question is how we are to learn and make use of Sanskrit and the indigenous languages so as to get to the heart and intimate sense of our own culture and establish a vivid continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of our future, and how we are to learn and use English or any other foreign tongue so as to know helpfully the life, ideas and culture of other countries and
establish our right relations with the world around us. This is the aim and principle of a true national 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. 1956, p. 10).

National education did not mean that we should cling to antiquity. Aurobindo’s call to replace English with Sanskrit and other indigenous languages was not due to an enmity towards English or for that matter any Western language. Aurobindo believed that the study of English and other Western languages was to understand the best better. At the same time, the concept of national education evolved from the desire to create our own foundation on indigenous concepts and languages.

The concept of ‘National Education’ is meant to understand and realize the soul of the nation. “It must be an education that for the individual will make it one’s central object, the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation soul and its Dharma and raise both into power of
the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity, and at no time will it lose sight of man’s highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being”

(Sri Aurobindo & Mother. 1956, p.16).

Aurobindo considers the development of the soul as the main aim of individual education. This education should be able to inculcate the national soul and national Dharma as the individual life-philosophy of the student. National education can be termed to have achieved its objectives when it awakens the divinity of the soul and elevates the student to the level of someone who is one with the national self.

Aurobindo frequently commented that our universities had failed to impart true appropriate education to its students. He argued that a national system of education was required for the task of national reconstruction. The Dawn Society’s magazine had reported on the National Education conference held at Pabna, East Bengal, on 13th February 1908, in its April 1908 issue as: “Sri Aurobindo Ghose… pointed out that the University system was defective in its aims and methods, intended only to serve the
purposes of the Government, not the requirements of the country. It turned out machines for administrative and professional work, not men. The national system of education was intended to create a nation. It must produce men with all their faculties trained; full of patriotism, and mentally, morally, physically the equals of the men of any other nation” (Sri Aurobindo. 1974, p.46).

According to Aurobindo, the entities - man, nation and humanity, are expressions of the divine self. Aurobindo tended to view man as a soul (Atma) rather than just a body. Similarly, he believed that India, as a nation, had a global spiritual mission to discharge. “India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity entrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, and intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all,
into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his ‘Paramardha’ and highest ‘Purushardha’. And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifestation in the human race evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim, it must be the idea of the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and conflict towards oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life motives of its many peoples, searching for perfection through the development of the powers of individual and his progress towards a divine being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectibility in the life of the race” (Sri Aurobindo & Mother. 2001, p. 34). He sought to awaken the slumbering capabilities in each person and thus release the forces which would elevate him to his divine self through the process of ‘National Education’. 
7.4 A Brief Sketch of the Philosophical Outlooks of Sri Aurobindo

A glimpse of the philosophical endeavour put forth by Sri Aurobindo is a unique phenomenon, namely ‘Poorna Advaita’. Aurobindo’s philosophy can be said to come under the category of ‘Idealism’. “Like the Rishis of the old, Aurobindo believed that the ultimate truth is the soul. Aurobindo’s world view led him to believe that the human race would evolve to gradually form an ‘ideal society’. Yet, Aurobindo’s ideal of the ultimate reality is not just a ‘Kerala Advaita’ as explained by Sri Shankara. As per Aurobindo, Sri Sankara’s ‘Maya Advaita’ philosophy is just a ‘Shoonyadwaitham’ (Hollow duality). Aurobindo’s philosophy is not just a philosophy based on God and His manifestation, it is actually ‘Poorna Advaita’ (Integral Dualism)” (Nair. 2000, p.222). The philosophy that recognises matter, soul, the ‘Nirguna Brahman’ and the ‘Sagun Brahman’ is called Integral Vedanta or ‘Poorna Sidhanta’ (Integral Theory). This idea has been explained in his complete works, second volume titled ‘Divine Life’. 
Like every other Indian Rishi, Sri Aurobindo believed that the material world was the manifestation of the divine reality. Aurobindo also believed and explained that there were two actions which led to the creation of the universe. The descending of the soul into the manifestation of the material world and the reverse action i.e., the ascending of the material manifestation into the realm of the soul. The ascending action can occur only following the descending process. Therefore, before evolution there should be an involution. He believed that the process of creation included the dual actions evolution and involution.

### 7.5 Sri Aurobindo’s Concept of Involution

The ‘Brahman’ through its will power, for its own pleasure, manifests itself into the universe. This is done so that the material world is to be led back to itself (Brahman). The ‘Sachidananda Swaroopa’ involutes into its material manifestation through certain stages between ‘Brahman’ and ‘matter’. The different stages in the evolution of the universe are matter, life, psyche and mind. For the mind to evolve and ascend into the divine ‘Sachidananda’, it is to
pass through different levels. These steps are as follows- Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind. The Evolutionary Concept of Sri Aurobindo is depicted as a figure in Fig. 7.1
Starting from the ‘Sachidananda’ it descends first to Supermind, then descends to Intuition, Illumined Mind and finally Higher mind and these enter into the human being. Sri Aurobindo says “An involution of the Divine Existence, the spiritual Reality, in the apparent inconscionce of Matter is the starting-point of the evolution” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972. Vol. 19, p. 683).

7.6 Concept of Supermind.

The Supermind is the all powerful creator himself as per Aurobindo. Yet, this is not God as explained in the Vedanta. As per Advaita, God is realised through his ‘Maya’. Aurobindo does not recognise this concept of Maya which is upheld by the proponents of Advaita Vedanta. The Supermind is the undistorted ‘Sachidananda’ himself. The Supermind is the dynamic version of the static ‘Sachidananda’. Aurobindo explains this concept as: “The Supermind is the Sachidananda itself. Yet it is different from the Sachidananda in the sense that it has manifested itself from its static, pure, endless self into a dynamic entity for the creation of the material universe” (Nair. 2000, p. 227).
The idea of Supermind is a constant reference in the works of Sri Aurobindo. One enters the core of Aurobindo philosophy only when one researches the idea of super mind. Aurobindo States that there are two levels of reality. A higher level and a lower level. The higher level is that of ‘Sachidananda’ itself. The lower level consists of matter, life and mind. Man through evolution has reached the level of the mind – ready to ascend itself into the next level. Yet this cannot leaps directly to the highest level of Sachidananda. There should be an intermediate link or level which binds or bridges the two levels. This link in the supermind. Because of this, the intermediate link shows the properties of both the mind and the supermind. It belongs to both the levels. Supermind is not the exact ‘Sachidananda’, yet it has the nature of Sachidananda. Because it is the Sachidananda consciousness which is different from the mind. The supermind what the mind desires to become. Thus the supermind resides between the eternal bliss of Sachidananda and the mind.

According to Advaita Vedanta, the ultimate truth is the ‘Nirguna Brahman’. Because it is ‘Nirguna’, it cannot create. So,
in order to explain the creation of the world, the Vedantists used the entities of ‘God’ and ‘Maya’. In the Vedanta, ‘God’ is ‘Saguna Brahman’ i.e. the Nirguna Brahman limited by the presence of ‘Gunas’. The whole world is unreal. Both are non-realities. But for Aurobindo, the supermind is a self-extension of the divine Sachidananda and hence real. That is why the supersmind is termed a reality by Aurobindo.

7.7 Knowledge and Ignorance

The absence of knowledge is generally perceived as ignorance. But according to Aurobindo, ignorance is not the absence of knowledge. For him, ignorance itself is a form of knowledge. It is an incomplete, partial knowledge. Aurobindo tabulates seven states of ignorance.

1. “Adima Ajnan-The ignorance which views oneself and the world around oneself as the reality and is ignorant about the reality of Brahma is called ‘Adima Ajnana’.

2. ‘Prapanjika Ajnana’ – While Adima Ajnana is the ignorance about the Brahma, the ‘Prapanjika Ajnana’ is the ignorance about the material world.
3. ‘Aham Ajnana’ – The ignorance about Aham (ego) is Aham Ajnana.

4. ‘Kalika Ajnana’ - The ignorance about the eternal nature and the knowledge which is limited by the lifetime/space envelope is Kalika Ajnana.

5. ‘Manasika Ajnana’ - The knowledge which is limited to that which is acquired by the organs of perception is ‘Manasika Ajnana.’

6. ‘Khadana Ajnana’: The belief in the knowledge based on the body and the genetic self alone is a form of ignorance which is termed as structural ignorance or ‘Khadana Ajnana’.

7. ‘Prayogika Ajnana’ - The ignorance which prompts one to plan the ends and means based on the above six ignorance is called Prayogika Ajnana or practical ignorance’” (Nair. 2000, p.p. 232-233).

As per Aurobindo, knowledge and ignorance are not contradictory. Ignorance is also a form of knowledge. It is Partial knowledge. In the context of the highest level of reality everything is knowledge -pure knowledge. “The evolution starts from the
insconscience (Achethana). Ignorance is the intermediate level and knowledge is the highest level. The lowest level of evolution is matter. From the matter evolves life and from life emerges the mind” (Nair. 2000, p. 235). This theory of evolution extends beyond that of Charles Darwin. This idea of individual evolution is a contribution of Sri Aurobindo. This idea of evolution was never a part of discourse among evolution theorists. According to it, evolutionary process is not confined to the universe but extends to the individual also.

An analysis of the evolutionary trends of Sri Aurobindo indicates that the evolution of the individual occurs in three forms. An individual is in possession of two kinds of Atmans. One is the ‘surface soul’ Aurobindo called it the ‘Desire- soul’ (Kamatmavu). This is the entity which is necessary for the sustenance of life, desires, passion, lust for power and knowledge. We have another entity which he called Antharatma (Inner soul). This is the entity which is manifest in the person who is undergoing evolution (To a higher level) and is associated with such positive phenomena as spirituality, love and happiness. The awakening of this inner soul is
of utmost importance. Aurobindo has commented upon a third kind of atman. This is ‘Jeevatma’. It is a part of ‘Paramatma’. It has no evolution. The Psychic awakening is just the first step of change. One does not achieve a total change on account of this alone. Till the ‘Paramatma’ descends to the lower levels, the ‘Jeevatma’ can illuminate only the lower levels of existence level like matter and mind. The ascending of the Andaratma and the descending of the overmind is termed as ‘Spiritual change’ by Aurobindo. This is the second change. The first step is the awakening of the inner mind. Yet this change or awakening alone does not elevate the human being to his ultimate level of consciousness. A third change is required for this. This change is in the supramental change. It is this comprehensive change that takes the human mind to its ultimate state i.e. to the super mind.

7.8 Triple Transformation of the Individual

Sri Aurobindo argues that man is born an ignorant, divided, conflicted being; a product of the original inconscience (i.e. unconsciousness) inherent in matter that he evolved out of. As a
result, he does not know the nature or reality, including its source and purpose, his own nature, including the parts and integration of his being; what purpose he serves, and what his individual and spiritual potential is, amongst others. In addition, man experiences life through decision and conflict, including his relationship with others, and his divided view of spirit and life.

To overcome these limitations, man must embark on a process of self – discovery in which he uncovers his ‘divine nature’. To that end, he undertakes a three step process, which he calls the ‘triple transformation’.

1. Psychic Transformation: - The first of the three stages is a movement within, away from the surface of life, to the depths, culminating in the discovery of his psychic being (the evolving soul). From the experience, he sees the oneness and unity of creation and the harmony of all opposites experienced in life.

2. Spiritual Transformation: As a result of making the psyche change, his mind expands and he experiences knowledge not through the hand churning of thought, but through light, and
revelation of knowledge, culminating in supramental perception. Light enters from the heights and begins to transmute various parts of his being.

3. Supramental transformation – After making the psyche and spiritual change, he makes the supramental and most radical change. It is basically a complete transformation of the mind, the heart, the emotions, and the physical body.

7.9 Supramental Existence

Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the future includes the appearance of what may be called a new species, the supramental being, a divine being which would be as different and superior to present humanity as humanity is to the animal. It would have a consciousness different in kind from the human mind and has a different status, quality and style of functioning. Even the physical form of this being would be different, more luminous and flexible and adaptable, entirely conscious and harmonious. Between this supramental being and humanity, there would be transitional beings, who would be human in birth and form, but whose consciousness would approach that of the supramental
being. This transitional being would appear prior to that of the full supramental being and would constitute an intermediate stage in the earth’s evolution, through which the soul would pass in its growth towards its divine manifestation as the supramental being in the earth nature.

**7.10 Developmental Philosophy of Social Evolution**

Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual vision extended beyond the perfection and transformation of the individual; it included within its scope the evolution and transformation of human society. In both the individual and in society, the soul and spirit is at first hidden and occult. This, he argues, influences the direction and course of development from behind, but allowing nature to follow its gradual zigzagging, and confluent – ridden course. At the highest stage of mental development, he argues, a greater possibility and principle becomes apparent, which is spiritual and supramental in nature. At this point a true solution to humanity’s problems becomes visible in the context of a radical transformation of human life into a form of divine existence.
7.11 Educational Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

As per Aurobindo, the ultimate aim of education is the emancipation of the individual from all his ignorance. A person who has undergone this complete and comprehensive change and is illuminated by the light of pure knowledge is called *Jnani* or man of knowledge or ‘Gnostic being,’ he avers. According to *Bharateeya Yoga Shastra*, the person who reaches the state of ultimate knowledge is called ‘*Jeevan Mukta*.’

The concept of the ‘Gnostic being’ is very similar to the concept of *Jeevan Mukta*. Yet, there are certain basic differences. Aurobindo’s ‘Gnostic being’ is a more rich and complete entity than the *Jeevan Mukta*. Though detached from the material reality in all other aspects, the *Jeevan Mukta* is partially attached by the bonds of ‘*Karma*’. That being so, the *Jeevan Mukta* has not forsaken his body. When the bonds of Karma are completely broken, he acquires the state of *mukti* – freedom from the body. He frees himself from the cycle of birth and death. Yet for the Gnostic being, there is no such liberation. While the *Jeevan Mukta*,

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*Reflective analysis of perceptions on education of Sri Aurobindo*
freed from this world enters another, the Gnostic being through the supramental transformation will attain a godly status in this world itself.

For Aurobindo, the status of ‘Nirguna Brahma’ was just one step of the evolutionary process. The second step is realisation of ‘Sachidananda’. Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga has another objective. It is to bring down the supermind. The aim of Integral Yoga is to change the material world. It is not just to achieve ‘Mukti’.

7.12 Integral Yoga according to Aurobindo

The meaning of the word yoga is ‘to join’. In Indian philosophy, yoga means the joining of the Jeevatman, which transcends its boundaries and joins with the Paramathma. Paramathma is the seat of all knowledge. On joining with the paramatma, the ignorance of the Jeevathma comes to an end. Aurobindo approaches the Indian yoga science from his own separate perspective. By Integral Yoga he means bringing down the supermind in the human body and thus conversion of an ordinary human into a Gnostic being. In the Synthesis of Yoga, and in his volumes containing instructions given by him to his
disciples collected under the title ‘Letters on Yoga’, Sri Aurobindo laid out the psychological principles and practices of the Integral Yoga or ‘Poorna Yoga’. The aim of Integral Yoga is to enable the individual to undertake the attainment of the conscious identity with the divine – the true self- and to transform the mind, life and body, so they would become fit instruments for a divine life on earth. In addition, Sri Aurobindo indicated that the aim of his yoga is the divinisation of earth by bringing down what he called the super mind, which is the true consciousness. The particular method he suggested is the purification of all parts of the personality and their eventual surrender, which allows the psychic being to emerge enabling the individual to become the supramental being by opening to and receiving the supramental force. Such Gnostic individuals would then become the basis of a new society, culminating in a divine life on earth.

7.13 The Dichotomy of Vidya and Avidya

The Vedanta discusses a lot about Vidya and Avidya. The Vedanta says that Vidya is the knowledge about the ultimate truth of the universe. This is the real knowledge. Avidya is the
knowledge that the Universe is a combination of mutually contradictory materials. The universe is formed by the same divine force which holds it together. In Aurobindo’s opinion, real knowledge, or *vidya* is the knowledge about the universal oneness. According to him, any idea that is contrary and accepts diversity as true is an illusion, and this illusion is *Avidya*. Aurobindo’s views on education can be grasped from his interpretation of the concepts of *Vidya* and *Avidya*. “*All manifestation proceeds by the two terms, Vidya and Avidya, the consciousness of Unity and the consciousness of Multiplicity. They are the true aspects of the Maya, the formative self conception of the eternal. Unity is the eternal and fundamental fact without which all multiplicity would be unreal and impossible illusion. The consciousness of Unity is called Vidya, the Knowledge*” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 12, p. 105).

*Vidya* and *Avidya* are not mutually exclusive. According to the Upanishads both reside in the ‘*Parabrahman*’; ‘*Vidya*’ means seeing the inner reality as one. To see it as diverse is *Avidya*. Seeing the truth as varied (not one) is also ‘*Jnana*’. But it is only
partial knowledge. By combining both, one obtains complete knowledge. Sri Aurobindo says “The fundamental knowledge is knowledge by identity. The second level of knowledge is that by intimate, direct contact. The third is separative direct contact. The fourth is knowledge by indirect contact. In this the first one in pure knowledge” (Nair. 2000, p. 274).

Integral non-dualism is the core of Aurobindo’s ideas. Aurobindo says that there are seven levels to that divinity responsible for the creation of the universe. “Sat, Chit and Anandam are the three higher levels of this divinity, mind, life and matter are the three lower levels. Between them, there is the supermind. Supermind in the self-consciousness of the pure divinity. This is often termed as truth consciousness, or real idea. It never loses its unity with the Sachidananda. It is through the supermind that the divine ideal manifests itself into the universe” (Parameswaran. 1977, p. 160).

By true education Aurobindo intends the descend of the ‘Supermind’. This frees the human being from ignorance completely. The mind achieves prominence when the evolutionary
process reaches the level of the human being. The intellect develops, yet, the human mind is not strong enough to understand the ultimate truth. It can understand only partial and fragmented pieces of truth. That fragmented understanding is \textit{Avidya}. The evolution from one level to the next in actually a jump. A call from below, a reply from the top or a descend from the top and consequently, a metamorphosis- these are the three stages. \textit{“The jump from mind to supermind is qualitative, because it is a conscious evolution. Even though endowed with consummate abilities, man is not the pinnacle of evolution. He is an intermediate state in the evolutionary process, a halfway house on the long road. His one part is still rooted in matter and animal consciousness. The other part tries to reach out towards divinity and to merge with it. That is why the level of the human in the evolutionary process is considered crucial in the spiritual scheme”} (Parameswaran. 1977, p. 164).

The next step is to transcend the realm of the mind to that of the higher mind. Today there is a crisis which cries for solution.
This is called evolutionary crisis. A creature of the mind (Manojeevi), the human being has developed his mental power and intellect to the maximum. Using this power, he has made tremendous progress in the field of science. Many things which were considerd impossible have now become possible and even easy on account of this. Man today considered himself as the master of creation. Yet all this has taken the human race to the edge of an overwhelming crisis so that his own creative power has been turned into a force which today threatens the whole universe. The solution to this crisis is the evolution of the mind to the super-mind. The educational process has to aid this evolution.

7.14 Education and the Role of Teacher

India has always given more importance to spiritual knowledge than to temporal affairs. The idea being: To one, who has acquired spiritual knowledge, all temporal affairs will be revealed clearly. By acquiring ‘ONE’, one can know all, and so it is most important to know that ‘ONE’. The ‘ONE’ is spiritual knowledge, also known as knowledge of the Brahman. The Vedanta says that to know the universe it is enough to know
oneself. Sri Aurobindo was also of the same opinion. “If then we can extend our faculty of mental self-awareness to awareness of the Self beyond and outside us, Atman or Brahman of the Upanishads, we may become possessors in experience of the truths which form the contents of the Atman or Brahman in the Universe. It is on this possibility that Indian Vedanta has based itself. It has sought through knowledge of the Self the knowledge of the Universe” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 18, p. 65).

India has a tradition in which the Guru who imparts knowledge is considered on a par with God. Even so, educationalists like Aurobindo had a very clear view on what the role of the Guru should be in the process of imparting knowledge. No teacher can teach a student something outside himself. Knowledge is something which emanates from within the student. The Guru only facilitates the process of realisation of the soul. Some Gurus, who do not understand this delicate creative process, try to impose their will on the student and transform the process into one of aggression and domination. This intrusion will not create anything positive within the student. Aurobindo describes
the role of the teacher in the process of education. “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. 1972, Vol. 17, p. 204).

The role of the teacher is only to bring out the hidden knowledge residing within the student. The effort by the teacher and parents to transform a student into something which only they want is anathema to the principles of modern educational psychology. The personality of the student is not something which should be twisted and deformed as per the requirement of the parents. It is only when each person grows and develops as per his true personality becomes completely formed. The role of the
teacher and the parent is only to set up the environment for this natural progression to happen. He said: “The second principle is 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, 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……. 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” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 17, p. 204).
According to Aurobindo, the process of education should take place in the comfort zone of the individual. Any educational process which ignores his tradition, nationality and this own comfort zone will not be effective. To impose upon him unknown facts is not the correct method of education. Real education should lead to independent and natural growth. Students are the owners not only of the future but also the present. They are the creators of the future. The National educational process should impart the knowledge of the glorious history, point out the opportunities of the present, and the give hope for the future. Education is to be something that tends to expand the soul and to take it to the next level. Like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo also was for a system of education which entered the soul and made him whole.

Sri Aurobindo says: “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 .1972, Vol.17, p.p. 204-205).

Arobindo’s vision on education was one which gives credence to modern educational psychology. His statement that education
should start with objects and ideas that are familiar to the student is in line with modern thoughts on educational psychology. His idea was that the process of education should be natural and bereft of any kind of compulsion.

Education should never be centred on the teacher. It should be student-centred. The good teacher should be like a friend who invokes curiosity in the student for his subject. Sri M.B. Pandit, who has done detailed research on Aurobindo’s philosophy, has this to say: “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).

Many of the prominent educationalists are of the opinion that the teacher has a prominent role to play in the holistic development of the student. Eminent educationalists like Kireet Joshi are of the opinion that the teacher should first attain a high level before imparting quality education to the student. “If teachers are to ensure integral development of their students, they
themselves have to be trained to attain higher and higher degrees of integration of their own personalities” (Joshi. 2000, p. 16).

Aurobindo says that the primary aim of education is the development of the soul. The task of a teacher is the development of the soul so that it may lead to sublime goals. Sri Aurobindo says, “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” (Pandit.1996, p. 3). Aurobindo had a very clear concept about education and the process of teaching. Like Vivekananda, Aurobindo believed that no one could teach someone else something that was totally new. A teacher can only bring out the knowledge that is dormant in the student’s mind. The teacher is only a guide who helps the student recognize the innate knowledge within the student.

It is proved here that true education is the expansion of self-knowledge. The teacher can provide suggestions which will help the student with his studies. But the teacher should not impose himself upon the student. First of all, Aurobindo says that nobody can teach anybody else. Though one may find this view
controversial, Aurobindo has illustrated this idea with a set of rational reasoning’s. A real teacher does not impart knowledge. He aids the student to elicit knowledge. Aurobindo states that parents or teachers should not without reason interfere with the mental development of the student. Aurobindo encourages the natural growth and expansion of the student’s mind.

7.15 Progress of Individual towards Satvic Awakening

All education aims at the progress of the individual. The progress is essentially a growth of consciousness, discovery and increasing awareness of an inner power and principle of guidance, which holds in it the light and truth of the development of harmony and perfection of our body, life and mind. It could be said that true progress is an ever-open step towards a total evolution of our entire being and consciousness. The process helps to transcend all the limitations to which man as an evolutionary being is subject to. And this can only be done by a constant living contact with man’s true self, the soul.
The child is essentially a soul with a body, life-energy and mind to be harmoniously and integrally developed. The education is therefore so organized as to secure:

- The fullest possible development of the physique;
- A fruitful channelization of the life – energy in pursuits that contribute to the growth of the personality;
- A sufficient training of the mental faculties in the fields of various Humanities and sciences; and
- The requisite help, through a powerful spiritual atmosphere, for the soul to come forward and gradually begin to govern the rest of the being.

Indian teachers see the aim of education as raising the student’s consciousness from the level of ‘Tamoguna’ to ‘Rajoguna’ and finally elevating it to ‘Sathwaguna’. All these three states are present in all living beings. The domination of Tamoguna keeps the consciousness in darkness. Such people will be very lazy. The knowledge of someone at the level of Rajasika consciousness will be incomplete. Many a time his understanding will be wrong. A person who has achieved satwaguna will have a keen and focussed
intellect. He will have realised the divine truth. Real education is raising the student to this ‘satvic’ level. Sri Aurobindo has this to say about this subject: “The constitution of man consists of three principles of nature sattva, rajas and tamas, the comprehensive, active and passive elements of universal action, which, in one of their thousandfold aspects, manifest as knowledge, passion and ignorance. Tamas is a constitutional dullness or passivity which obscures the knowledge within and creates ignorance, mental inertia, slowness, forgetfulness, disinclination to study, inability to grasp and distinguish. Rajas is an undisciplined activity which obscures knowledge by passion, attachment, prejudice, predilection and wrong ideas. Sattva is an illumination which reveals the hidden knowledge and brings it to the surface where the observation can grasp and the memory records it. This conception of the constitution of the knowing faculty made the removal of tamas, the disciplining of rajas and the awakening of sattva the main problem of the teacher” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 3, p. 335).
Ultimately, Aurobindo’s educational aim was the achievement of self-realization. The person who achieves this self-realization does not detach himself from the society. Instead, he is firmly rooted to the soil and continues to work to impart education to others.

7.16 The Role of Spirituality and Culture in Education according to Sri Aurobindo.

Spirituality and culture have always been connected to religion. Yet, sometimes religion has been lowered to the realm of narrow-mindedness. This happens religion detaches itself from spirituality and acquires mechanically ritualistic forms. Culture and spirituality are meant to guide human beings to progress and goodness. It is when culture and spirituality get detached from religion that such religions become the source of much of the religious conflict in the world. Hence it is essential that the students should be imparted, from the lowest classes, an education which teaches them the right concept of spirituality and culture. According to Aurobindo, the culture of India, which is rooted in
spirituality, is an asset to Universe. According to him, practice or the practical application of theory is more important than the theory itself. Aurobindo says: “After all, an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory. Our own belief is that the motions of the world are travelling towards a signal refutation of the atheistic and agnostic attitudes and that India is the place selected for the revelation. It is for this reason that these experiences are becoming so frequent in men who are rather men of action than what is generally known as purely religious men, that is to say, who seek God in life and the service of men and not merely in the closet and the Ashram. A new religion is summing up and correcting the old, a religion based not on dogma but on direct knowledge and experience, is the need of the age, and it is only India that can give it to the world” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.2, p.408).

The aim of religious life is the liberation of the human soul from all the shackles of material life. This is termed as ‘Sakshathkara’. This is realisation the ultimate truth. The way to this is through knowledge. Aurobindo defines the aim of Indian
religions thus: “The ultimate goal of our religion is emancipation from the bondage of material Nature and freedom from individual rebirth, and certain souls, among the highest we have known, have been drawn by the attraction of the final hush and purity to dissociate themselves from life and bodily action in order to move more swiftly and easily to reach the goal” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 3, p.344).

India is a country with abundant cultural wealth. Our culture is anchored in spirituality. As far as India is concerned, culture and spirituality are synonymous. A person who does not understand our culture and spirituality will not grow up as an Indian. So there is a lot of emphasis on culture and spirituality in the education system professed by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo believed that birth as a human being is not incidental. There should be a purpose for every type of birth. It is when one recognizes the real purpose of one’s birth that one achieves fulfilment and success in life. A good educational system points out to each person his reason for existence. The Mother at
Aurobindo Ashram says, “An aimless life is always a miserable one. Every one of you should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life. Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to others. But whatever you’re ideal; it cannot be perfectly realized unless you have realized perfection in yourself” (Mother. 1952, p.108).

Realisation is a spiritual process. The realization of ideals points to the spiritual level of education. True education is the realization of the ultimate truth.

Aurobindo was greatly proud of the spiritual strength of the Indian nation. It was during the time Aurobindo spent inside the jail, that he had his first spiritual experience. The revelation that everything is ‘Vasudeva’ ‘(Vasudeva Sarvamithi)’ happened to him when he was in jail. From then on Aurobindo became a complete spiritual person. He said,...“we have behind us a history of manifold greatness, not surpassed by any other race, we are the descendants of those who performed Tapasya and underwent unheard-of austerities for the sake of spiritual gain and of their
own will submitted to all the sufferings of which humanity is capable…….God has chosen to manifest himself and has entered into the hearts of this people and we are rising again as a nation” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.2, p.p. 62-63).

Sri Aurobindo had great pride about this country, where, he believed God, himself had incarnated. He was also proud of its all encompassing spirituality. He believed that spirituality and godliness were not concepts far removed from humanity but elements within the reach of human race. He says, “The eternal religion is to realize God in our inner life and our outer existence, in society not less than in the individual. ‘Esa dharmah Sanathanah’; God is not antiquity nor novelty: He is not the Manava Dharmastra nor Vidyaranya, nor Raghunandan; neither is He an European. God who is essentially Sachindananda, is in manifestation Satyam, Shakti, Prema – Truth, Strength and Love” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol- 3, p. 123).

The aim of education is self realization. This idea is upheld by ancient sages and by modern ones like Aurobindo. This self-
realization occurs when the realization dawns that the *jeevatma* and *paramatma* are one and same. The State of ‘*So ham*’, ‘He am I’ should become a reality. Aurobindo’s dream is the realization of the ‘*sathvik*’ spiritual man. “*Self-realisation with the Infinite that is unity. But fulfilment is not possible, unless the ‘Soham’ – *He am I* – is recognized and practiced as the ultimate truth of things. The realization of God in the self with the eye on the body is the fulfilment of the ‘*tamasic*’ or material man; the that with the eye on the mind is the fulfilment of the ‘*rajasic*’ or psychic man, that with the eye on the spirit is the satvin’ or ‘*spiritual man*” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.3, p. 402).

Sri Aurobindo who viewed the world from the highest pedestal of spirituality saw spirituality everywhere. Aurobindo who saw the aim and path of education as spiritual, considered the process of acquiring knowledge as realization of Brahman. He says: “*Vedanta itself can only speak in two great trilogies, subjective and objective sachidananda, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss; satyam, jnanam, anantham – Truth, Knowledge, Infinity. That is Brahma is the satyam; Brahma is jnanam, , knowledge;*
Brahman is anantham Endlessness” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 12, p. 16).

7.17 Integral Education: A Conceptual Framework

The education of a human being should begin at his very birth and continue throughout his life. Indeed, if the education is to give its maximum result, it must begin even before birth: it is the mother herself who proceeds with this education by means of a twofold action, first, upon herself for her own improvement, and secondly, upon the child which she is carrying within her physically.

According to Aurobindo for education to be complete it must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Usually, these phases of education succeed each other in a chronological order following the growth of the individual. This, however, does not mean that one should replace the other but that all must continue, completing each other, till the end of life. Five Dimensions of Integral Education of Sri Aurobindo is depicted as a figure in Fig. 7.2.
7.18 Five Dimensions of Integral Education

An education which has accepted the goal outlined by Sri Aurobindo and which takes into account the entire complexity of man’s nature can rightly be termed an ‘Integral Education.’ Education to be complete, it must have five aspects relating to the five principal aspects of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Each of these parts has its
own law of growth and its own fulfilment. Truly, the spirit remains unchanged as it is beyond space and time. “....*We shall perceive that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects, Love, knowledge, power and beauty. These four attributes of the truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being, the psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind will be that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and a perfect harmony*” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 12, p. 210).

### 7.19 The Physical Education

The traditional belief ‘Shareeramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam’ was shared by Aurobindo. Man desires perfection. In this concept of perfection, the physical body cannot be ignored. For the discharge of ‘Dharma’ and for carrying out one’s own duty, ‘Karma,’ the physical body is essential. For the ‘Sadhaka’ a healthy body is unavoidable.

It is true that, in the past, the body was regarded by spiritual seekers as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and discarded,
than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change. Aurobindo disputes the traditional belief that spirit and matter are contradictory entities. Aurobindo is loath to belittle the contribution of the physical body in the endeavour for self-realisation.

The results that a wholesome and methodical programme of physical education may be expected to bring about are:

- **A sound and healthy body:** This is a vast subject on which a good amount of knowledge has already been accumulated. The means include the acquisition of good habits in food, sleep, hygiene, and the use of physical exercise to regulate the various functions of the body.

- **Strength and fitness:** Not only muscular strength and physical stamina, but the use and command of life energy at any time it is required.

- **Training of the senses:** A quick perception of the eye and ear and a quick response of all parts of the body to any call made upon them, a wonderful coordination and mastery over the reflexes.
Not only strength, but also grace, beauty and harmony:

Beauty is not a superfluity but the very spirit of the physical world.

Self-mastery and discipline, courage and confidence to control one’s impulses, reactions, and weaknesses are a very important thing.

In short, according to Aurobindo, physical training is a mandatory part of education as a healthy body is inevitable for spiritual pursuit as well as material success. Thus, physical and intellectual developments are essential for developing into an integral personality.

7.20 The Vital Education

The vital is the life – force made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions of the desire – soul in man and of all that play of possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, greed, lust etc., that belong to this field of nature. The vital is a vast kingdom full of forces acting and reacting upon one another, the very nexus of man’s life and the motive power of his action – for good or evil.
The child has to be shown that the ‘will’ can be cultivated by practice, beginning with very easy tasks. He will take interest and little by little become capable of taking charge of himself and of his training. The only way for him to train himself morally is to habituate him to the right emotions, the noblest actuations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and following right actions and fundamental impulses of the essential nature.

7.21 The Mental Education

In the intellect or ‘buddhi’, which is the real instrument of thought and that which orders and organises the knowledge acquired by the other parts of the mental machine, there are “…. Several groups of functions, divisible into two important classes, the functions and faculties of the right hand, the functions and faculties of the left hand. The faculties of the right hand are comprehensive, creative, and synthetic; the faculties of the left hand critical and analytic. To the right hand belong judgement, imagination, memory, observation; to the left hand comparison and reasoning. The critical faculties distinguish, compare, classify generalise, deduce, infer, conclude. They are
the component parts of the logical reason. The right hand faculties comprehend, command, judge in their own right, grasp, hold and manipulate. The right hand mind is the master of the knowledge, the left hand its servant. The left hand touches only the body of knowledge, the right – hand penetrates its soul….. These important functions of the machine have all to be raised to their highest and finest working power, if the education of the child is not to be imperfect and one – sided” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 12, p. 410). There is no superior or inferior branch of knowledge. It is a question of personal interest and capacity, and also of general demand at the time considered. Moreover, one may note that the division between the humanities and science is somewhat arbitrary; pure mathematics is sometimes included in the arts course, the gap between psychology and physiology is vanishing rapidly, and the introduction of scientific methods in psychology, sociology, economics and history, has earned for them the name of ‘Human Sciences’ (or sciences of man).

The great masterpieces, whether in literature or the fine arts, are immortal landmarks of the spirit. In this vision, the longings of
the heart as well as the prompting of the mind would both find their harmonious blending and their ultimate satisfaction.

7.22 The Psychic and the Spiritual Education

According to the Mother, with psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of life, the reason of our existence upon earth, the very discovery to which life must lead and the result of that discovery, the concentration of the individual to his eternal principle. This discovery very generally is associated with a mystic feeling, a religious life, because it is religions particularly that have been occupied with this aspect of life.

‘Psychic’ means – belonging to the soul, or psyche. The psychic being is a conscious form of the divine growing in the evolution. According to Aurobindo, “The true central being is the soul but this being stands back and in most human natures is only the secret witness” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.12, p.86).

The discovery of the soul, the real man within, is truly the first great goal of human life. Education can and should give a good start in the right direction. But the discovery is a matter of personal effort and aspiration.
Through spiritual education one can be released from all slavery to the flesh. This liberation from all personal attachment is not the last fulfilment. There are other steps before one can reach the summit of the psychic realization which opens the gates of the future. According to the Mother, “Some say that the psychic life is immortal, endless time, limitless space, ever – progressive change, unbroken continuity in the world of forms. The spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, means live the infinite, and eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation beyond time and space. To become fully aware of your psychic being and to live a psychic life you must abolish in you all selfishness; but to live spiritual life you must be selfless” (Sharma. 1997, p. 298).

Contrary to the type of education we have spoken of till now in which progress occurs from below and spreads upward through an ascending movement of the different parts of the being, the supramental education will progress downward from above, its influence spreading from one state of being to another till the final state, the physical, is reached. This last transformation will happen in a visible manner only when, the inner states of being have
already been considerably transformed. It would be therefore quite unreasonable to try to judge the presence of the supramental by physical appearance. The physical is the last to change and supramental force can be at work in a being long before something of it becomes perceptible in the life of the body.

In brief, one can say that the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of the human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but in a transformation of the nature itself, a transformation 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 the divine race upon earth.

Mankind has reached a crossroads. Man, in the atomic age, is in the grip of a mighty crisis. He walks on a knife-edge. He has no other option but to do so. He can overcome this crisis only through an evolution into a supramental being. For this to happen, he should be subject to an educational process in which the cultural and spiritual aspects are emphasised.
Aurobindo says that only through a spiritual evolution can a man progress and acquire the correct knowledge. Education is meant to create the right culture and the corresponding changes within the individual. It is the open and kind approach to life and to others living around you which defines true spirituality. Aurobindo establishes that such spirituality can bring about a revolutionary change within an individual. He also asserts that those who have acquired this level of spirituality can bring about a similar change in other individuals. “A divine life upon earth, the ideal we have placed before us, can only come about by a spiritual change or own being and a radical and fundamental change, an evolution or revolution of our nature” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 16, p.41).

7.23 Disciplined Learning Through Concentration

The term concentration (Ekagratha) is referred abundantly in Vedic educational texts. Sri Aurobindo also has placed this ‘Ekagratha’ as the prerequisite to education. There is a close relationship between this concentration and spirituality in Indian philosophy. Ekagratha is the most important quality which a
person who seeks the emancipation of the soul should have. In the quest for knowledge, concentration is essential for precision. Aurobindo’s words suggest that he gave a lot of importance to the concept of ‘Ekagratha’ in the context of his ideas on education. “Attention is a factor in knowledge, the importance of which has been always recognized. Attention is the first condition of right memory and of accuracy. To attend to what he is doing is the first element of discipline required of the student, and as I have suggested, this can easily be secured if the object of attention is made interesting. This attention to single thing is called concentration” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.17, p.220).

7.24 Divinity through Spiritual Evolution

Aurobindo theorised that the human being would transcend all his inherent limitations and evolve into a supramental being. While Darwin’s theory refers to a physical evolution, Aurobindo refers to a spiritual evolution. According to Aurobindo, a society which has spiritually evolved would take the world towards satvic tendencies and thus enrich it spiritually. Aurobindo believed that
an educational system based on spirituality was needed to make
this spiritual evolution possible.

Sri Aurobindo argues that humankind is not the last rung in
the evolutionary scale, but can evolve spiritually beyond its current
limitations to a state of spiritual and supramental existence. This
evolutionary existence, he called a ‘Divine life on Earth’,
characterized by a spiritualized, supramental, truth conscious and
oriented humanity.

**7.25 Process of Creation and Evolution**

He speaks of two central movements in the process of
creation: an involution of consciousness from an original
omnipresent reality, manifesting a universe of forms, including
matter, and an evolution of those material forms in creation
upward toward life, mind, and spirit, reconnecting to their spiritual
source.

**7.26 Process of Involution and Evolution**

This is the process by which the Energy of creation emerged
from a timeless, spaceless, ineffable, immutable reality. Sri
Aurobindo refers to this as Involution. In that process the reality
extended itself to being Existence (Sat), Consciousness, that generated a free (Chit); and Bliss (Ananda) self-enjoyment in existing and being conscious. Thorough the action of a fourth dimension, supermind (i.e. Truth Consciousness), the force (Chit) of Sat-Chit-Ananda was divided into knowledge and will, eventually formulating as an invisible energy that would become the source of creation. Through its own wilful self-absorption of consciousness, the universe would begin as a conscientious material existence from out of that Energy.

The process of existence emerging out of this is referred to as evolution. Initially, it emerges gradually in the stages of matter, life, and mind. First, matter evolves from simple to complex forms, finally mind emerges in life and evolves from rudimentary to higher forms of thought and reason. As each new principle emerges, the previous stages remain, but are integrated into the higher principle. Humanity represents the stage of development of mind in complex material forms of life.

The higher development of mind in the mass of humanity is not yet a secure progression. Reason and intellect still do not
dominate the life of most human beings; rather, mind tends to be
turned to the purposes of the life principle, which is focused on
self-preservation, self-assertion and satisfaction of personal need
and desire. But evaluation does not cease with the establishment of
reason and intellect; beyond mind are higher levels of a spiritual
and supramental consciousness which in nature of things must also
emerge. This higher evolution is described as a dual movement;
inwards away from the surface consciousness and into the depths,
culminating in the realization of the Psychic Being (the personal
evolving soul); and then upward to higher levels of spiritual mind
Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Over Mind,
culminating in the final stage of supramentalisation. Whereas these
higher levels of consciousness have been attained in particular
individuals, they must eventually emerge more universally as
general stages in the evolution. When they do emerge, there will
come the embodiment of a new species on earth that will be once
again united in consciousness with Sachidananda. Pavithra, who
has done an in depth study Aurobindo’s theories of the minute
changes which take place in the individual consciousness, has this
to say: “The transition from mind to Supermind is a passage from Nature into Super nature. For that very reason it cannot be achieved by a mere effort of our mind or our unaided aspiration. Over mind and Supermind are involved and hidden in the earth nature, but, in order that they may emerge in us, there is needed a pressure of the same powers already formulated in their full natural force on their own super conscious planes. The powers of the super conscience must descend into us and uplift us and transform our being. What should be the preparation for the supramental transformation? First an increasing control of the individual over his own nature and more and more conscious participation in the action of the super nature.

A second condition consists in a conscious obedience, a surrender of our whole being, to the light of the truth, and force from above. The third condition is the unification of the whole being around the true self and opening of the individual to the cosmic consciousness. Four steps of ascend lead from the human intelligence to the supermind, these are: 1) Higher mind2)

7.27 Spiritual Change through Spiritual Discipline

Spiritual discipline is very important in spiritual education. Celibacy is the most important component of this spiritual discipline according to ancient teachers. According to them the individual life can be classified into four stages. They are: Brahmacharya, Grihasthasrama, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. These are called Chathurashrama. Of these, the first stage where celibacy is maintained, is the period when the person acquires education. According to ancient seers, by maintaining celibacy during his years of education, the student is able to retain his creative skills and maintain sharpness of intellect. Aurobindo also says that celibacy is essential in the student if he has to maintain his satvic quality. He says: “This easy and unfailing illumination crowning the unfailing energy created by Brahmacharya was due to the discipline which developed sattva or inner illumination. This illumination makes the acquisition of knowledge and all other intellectual operations easy, spontaneous, swift, decisive and
comparatively unfatiguing to body or brain. In these two things lies the secret of Aryan intellectual achievement, Brahmacharya and Sattwic development created the brain of India: it was perfected by Yoga” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 3, p.339).

7.28 The Cultural Outlook in Aurobindo’s Educational Philosophy

Aurobindo’s philosophy is just the elaboration of Indian culture. Though his philosophy can be termed as ‘Integral Dualism,’ many philosophers consider it as another interpretation of ‘Advaita’ philosophy. He was a person who took great pride in India’s Vedic culture. The core of Vedic culture is Yajna. The culture of Yajna signifies renunciation. ‘Nothing is mine’....Everything is of yours (God’s)...This is the core idea of the yajna hymns. Only when the yearning for service of the world around is created in the student, the core aim of education is realised. Our education system should also be able to create respect for a culture which seeks to inculcate such lofty ideals among the students. India survives due to its ‘Arsha’ culture. The British were able to reduce the commitment towards and the respect for this.
culture through their Western educational system. It is in order to reverse this trend that Aurobindo worked towards a national educational system as part of the freedom struggle. Aurobindo strongly believed that cultural education would create humanist values. His words show that his cultural ideas were in sync with the concept of universal human values. “India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the Universal self and spirit” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 17, p. 199).

In Aurobindo’s idea, education is a cultural activity that is aimed at achieving total personality development. Education is a cultural activity which imparts world view at an individual, social, national and international level. Sri Indra Sen, who has done a detailed study on Aurobindo’s educational philosophy, has this to say: “Education is the highest cultural activity of life aiming at the fullest and harmonious growth, exercise and enjoyment of the varied capabilities of human personality, viz; the physical, the vital, the mental, the moral, the aesthetic, the socio-political and the spiritual, leading to an increasing satisfaction and success in
individual living as also collective living, socially, nationally, and internationally” (Sen. 1996, p. 45).

7.29 The Role of the Teacher in Imparting Cultural and Spiritual Values

These values can never be imparted through oration. Ancient Indian teachers who had realised these cultural and spiritual elements through personal meditative effort, used to convey the same to their students. The realisation of the ultimate truth can only be imparted by someone who has already realised the same. It cannot be conveyed through force. A real teacher actually tries to raise the consciousness level of a student to his own. Thus there should be a natural flow of cultural and spiritual values from the teacher to the student. Many a time the knowledge to the student will be imparted by means of certain role models. According to Aurobindo, there are three instruments available to the teacher for his teaching. These are instruction, example and influence. Aurobindo explains how this can be used: “According to Sri Aurobindo, a teacher possesses three instruments – instruction, example and influence. The good teacher will seek to awaken
much more than to instruct, he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will not impose his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind… He will know that the example is more powerful than instruction. Actually, the example is not that of the outward acts but of the inner motivation of life and the inner states and inner activities. Finally, he will also acknowledge that influence is more important than example. For influence proceeds from the power of contact of the teacher with his pupil, from the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into the pupil, even though in silence, all that which the teacher himself is or possesses” (NityanandaBhat.2011, p.23).

Spiritual education is something which lasts throughout the life. It gives meaning and scope to life. The starting point of all educational effort is from spiritual education. Because of this, the role of the ‘Guru’ becomes all the more important. A Guru should be able to motivate his student all through his life. Kireet Joshi, who has done research on Aurobindo, has this to say this about the
importance of Aurobindo’s spiritual educational vision: “A complete psychic and spiritual education is a life-long process, and yet, in so far as they truly give meaning to the life development, they must determine the entire process of the education of the child and youth. In fact, they must truly be the starting point of all education” (Joshi, 1996, p.52).

Spiritual and cultural values are essential for the victory in life for any individual. It is only through such an education can a person have a sweet and balanced disposition towards life and face the trials of life with calmness.

**7.30 National Integration through Education**

Aurobindo was a soldier in the war of independence who saw nationalism as an emotion. His concept of ‘National Education’ evolved from his idea that National integration was possible only through an education system which aided the same. He put forward this idea of ‘National Education’ with the intention of reconstructing and reforming the system which had been devastated by the British. The educational system which was not suited to inculcate nationalistic pride in our own country, was a
lifeless one. The cultural identity which transcends the superficial diversities of the nation and which formed the basis of the concept of ‘unity in diversity’ was to be emphasised in the curriculum. According to Aurobindo, “Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero – worshipper and a patriot, appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation’s history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist” (Sri Aurobindo. 2001, Vol. 12, p. 24).

If the heroic and glorious history of the nation is presented before the student who is eager to learn, this will help strengthen national integration. For Aurobindo, the nation was not just a geographical entity consisting of sand and stone. It was the physical manifestation of the ‘Parashakthi’ (ultimate power). Viewed from this perspective, the nation is the goddess. It is for this reason that, for Aurobindo, nationalism was an emotion. He says: “When others look upon their country as an inert piece of matter—a few meadows and fields, forests and hills and rivers—I look upon my country as the mother. I adore her, I worship her
as the mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother’s breast and started sucking her blood?...I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength- I am not going to fight with sword or gun –but the strength of knowledge” (Sri Aurobindo. 1994, p.16).

Aurobindo was one of those who believed that national integration could be achieved using the strength of knowledge. For Aurobindo, nationalism was not just a political idea. For him nationalism was a religion. He was one of those who believed that our nationalism was rooted in our culture. He has revealed this idea in his famous ‘Uttarappara Speech.’ “…Nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith; I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith: I say that it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism.... When the Sanathan Dharma declines, then the nation declines and, if the Sanatan Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatan Dharma it would perish. The Sanathan Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you” (Sri Aurobindo.1972, Vol. 2, p. 10).
Aurobindo was very much aware of the idea of cultural education. He knew that national integration could be achieved only through cultural education.

The opening of a new college (The National College) at Calcutta in 1906 was an important event in Aurobindo’s life. This college was started to counter the ill effects of Western style education. Aurobindo also contributed to this effort. Aurobindo’s ‘National education’ was designed to strengthen national integration. He believed that, for national integration to become a reality, the people of the lower strata of society should be emancipated.

Nationalism can win only when the whole nation is aroused and works together. The people who are left behind from the national mainstream should be aroused and brought back. This can be achieved only through a system of national education. “Man’s biggest wealth and knowledge resides within himself. The Indian nation is replete with this wealth. The world awaits this Indian wealth. The experience of the past, the gains from the progressive present and the opportunities of the future can be acquired only
through a system of nationalist education” (Sri Aurobino. 1956, p. 163). Thus Aurobindo believed in the concept of national integration through nationalist education.

7.31 The Foundation of Nationalism

Nationalism is a thing which binds a people to a certain geographical entity. Nationalism evolves from the culture of that particular geography. Culture is reflected in the lives of the people of that region in the form of rituals. It is only when culture thrives, the nation remains united. In India, due to long periods of colonial rule, there has been a concerted effort to dilute cultural unity. It is also to counter this cultural dilution, which will lead to national division, people like Aurobindo proposed the idea of national education. In a large geographical entity like India, it is but natural that there will be diversity in terms of language and attire. The strategy of the colonialists, whereby they presented these diversities as contradictions, continues to contribute to the challenges to national integration even today. There is also a concerted effort to portray religious, casteist and regional
differences as sub-national identities. According to Aurobindo, only an education based on nationalism can guarantee the nation’s sovereignty. Amidst this diversity, there exists an underlying stream of commonality which binds the people together and this forms the basis of our nationality. “That unity in race, religion or language is essential to nationality is an idea which will not bear examination. Such elements of unity are very helpful to the growth of a nationality, but they are not essential and will not even of themselves assure its growth... If these are not essential elements of nationality, what, it may be asked, are the essential elements? We answer that there are certain essential conditions, geographical unity, a common past, a powerful common interest impelling towards unity and certain favourable political conditions which enable the impulse to realize itself in an organized government expressing the nationality and perpetuating its single and united existence. This may be provided by a part of the nation, a race or community, uniting the others under its leadership or domination, or by an united resistance to a common pressure from outside or within. A
common enthusiasm ... with a common interest is the most powerful fosterer of nationality” [Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.I, p.507].

According to Aurobindo, India’s nationalism is a model which the world could emulate. This is a nationalism which tolerates no separation based on caste or religion. Like the various organs of a living entity (Virat Purusha), India’s nationalism represents various peoples living together in perfect co-ordination. Sri Aurobindo says: “In the ideal of Nationalism which India will set before the world, there will be an essential equality between man and man, between caste and caste, between class and class all being as Mr. Tilak has pointed out different but equal and united parts of the Virat Purusha as realized in the nation” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.I, p.533).

Aurobindo saw India’s nationalism as a spiritual concept. This nationalism was spiritualism which lay beyond the realm of religion. Aurobindo wrote in Bhavani Mandir: “What is a nation? What is motherland? It is not a bit of sand. It is not a figment of imagination. It is power, A mighty power. This is a sum total of
thousands of powerful elements. Did not millions of Devas combine together to form Bhavani who destroyed Mahishasura himself? Similarly, the power of the thirty core of Indians combines to form the mother India who is a living entity” (Nair. 1981, p.47).

7.32 Unity and Uniformity

The belief that in order to have unity there should be uniformity is wrong. The method of imposing uniformity to achieve unity is fascism. There is no place in India for this fascist outlook. None of the people who had struggled for national renaissance had sought uniformity. The very nature of India is unity in diversity. Yet, embedded in this diversity is spirituality. It is this spirituality which is considered by people like Aurobindo as the unifying factor in our nation. According to Aurobindo, this nascent thread of nationalism has to strengthen by the instrument of education, and through this, national renaissance should be achieved. Even while being a strong proponent of nationalism, Aurobindo had great regard for individual preferences and differences. He said, “Unity does not mean uniformity and the
removal of all differences. There are some people who talk as if unity in religion, for instance, could not be accomplished except by uniformity. But uniformity of religion is a psychical impossibility forbidden by the very nature of the human mind. So long as men differ in intellect, in temperament, in spiritual development, there must be different religions and different sects of the same religion” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.I, p.314). In a country like India with its wide diversities, Aurobindo’s educational philosophy, which does not insist on uniformity and instead lays stress on the positive aspects of diversity, is certainly important in cultivating national integration and cohesiveness.

7.33 Force Behind Enrichment of the National Soul and Dharma

Just as an individual, a nation too has a soul. Aurobindo had yearned for the spiritual renaissance of individuals through the medium of education. According to him, along with the development of the individual, the soul of the nation and also its ‘dharma’ has to be strengthened. “It may be disputed whether this is a true account of the human or the national being, but if it is
once admitted as a true description, then it should be clear that
the only true education will be that which will be an instrument
for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the
individual and the nation. That is the principle on which we
must build, that the central motive and the guiding ideal. It must
be an education that for the individual will make its one central
object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for
the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening
and enrichment of the nation- soul and its Dharma and raise
both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of
humanity” [Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.17, p. 200].

According to scholars like M.P. Pandit, the reason for
education lies beyond the material advancement of the Individual
or the nation. Education is something which makes him realise his
cultural moorings and makes him an instrument in the holistic
development of the nation. M.P. Pandit, who was an interpreter of
Aurobindo philosophy, has this to say this: “In other words,
education is something more than a developmental project. It is
to help the individual to find his cultural identity and enable him
to participate in the all-sided growth of his country” (Pandit. 1993, p.18).

Aurobindo’s nationalism is universal. He rejects anything that does not encourage humanistic values or is narrow-minded. According to him, each nation has a separate culture and those who imbibe this culture within themselves become binding elements in the nationalism of their nation state. National pride is nothing but self-respect. An education which imparts this national pride will automatically lead to national resurgence.

7.34 Education as a Medium to Inculcate Patriotism

Patriotism is the unadulterated love and devotion for the motherland. Patriotism has its fountainhead in the belief in the culture, tradition, historical identity and the love for the nation, which is equivalent to that for one’s own mother. For patriotism to develop, there should develop in the minds of the people a sense of pride and confidence in the nation. Education is the ideal medium for imparting this concept to the masses. Knowing this, the Western colonisers introduced a system of education designed to
destroy nationalism and the love for the nation. The person who led this effort was, Lord Macaulay. He said, “I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth, moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and therefore I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture. For if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation” (Sri Aurobindo & Mother. 2001, p.1). Macaulay establishes that, in order to conquer the people it is enough to destroy the emotional icons which form the basis of their love for their nation.

An ardent nationalist, Aurobindo talks about his dreams: “The establishment of a unified independent nation, the reformation of Asia, a better life for the human race, a spiritual peace for the whole world originating in India – these are my
objectives” (Sharma. 1993, p. 32). It is the primary duty of a nationalist to free his nation and so Aurobindo’s first objective was an independent, unified India.

Aurobindo’s patriotism was never directed to endanger world peace. His patriotism was seen evolving into a global humanism. This evolution can be understood from his second idea i.e. the reformation of Asia and his desire to give the whole humanity a better life. His fourth idea was to export Indian spirituality and thus ensure peace to the whole world. This shows that the patriotism of Aurobindo was not a narrow one. He establishes that one can be an ardent patriot and at the same time a citizen of the world.

Aurobindo understood the need of encouraging patriotism in the younger generation, and it is for this that he put forward the concept of National Education. He believed that an education system that did not inculcate patriotism in the students was sterile. This he believed because patriotism was the essential ingredient for the nation’s integrity, prosperity and unity. When he speaks of national Education, he has this to say about Swadeshi (indigenous) education: “Swadeshi in Education does not mean teaching by
Indian professors only or even management by Indians only. It means an education suited to the temperament and needs of the people to build up a nation equipped for life under modern conditions and absolutely controlled by Indians…” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.I, p. 480). The concept of ‘Swadeshi’ education had evolved from his ardent patriotism. For inculcating patriotism, it was required to be ‘Swasraya’ (Self-dependence) in every sense of the word. His idea of Swadeshi education was one appropriate for the formation of a reformed nation. His words show the importance which he has given to patriotism in his scheme of National education. “Unless this movement is carried on, as it was undertaken, as part of a great movement of national resurgence, unless it is made, visibly to all, a nursery of patriotism and a mighty instrument of national culture, it cannot succeed ” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.2, p.337).

Aurobindo saw patriotism as a ‘panacea’ for all the ills brought about by the foreign colonial rule. He said : “A political Europeanisation would be followed by a social turn of the same kind and bring a cultural and spiritual death in its train...Either
India will be rationalised and industrialised out of all recognition and she will be no longer India....” (Sri Aurobindo. 1994, p. 134).

7.35 The Corner Stone of Patriotism

Patriotism is often viewed as an undesirable ideology. The patriotism of Hitler and Mussolini left deep scars in the peace loving world. It is in this context that the idea of nationalism was viewed as something opposed to the interest, of the human race. As per Aurobindo, patriotism was essential for the healthy growth of a nation. He considered patriotism to be a cultured emotion of respect and love an individual felt for a geographical entity, the people residing within that entity, its culture, traditions and its valiant patriots. The educational system of that land should be able to impart this refined cultured form of nationalism to its future generation. Aurobindo had this to say, about the relationship an individual had with this nation: “Apart from the natural attachment which every man has to his country, its literature, its traditions, and its customs and usages, patriotism has an additional stimulus in the acknowledged excellence of a national civilisation” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.I, p. 426).
As with other concepts, Aurobindo traces the origin of patriotism to spirituality. He says, “**India can once more be made conscious of her greatness by an overmastering sense of the greatness of her spirituality. This sense of greatness is the main feeder of all patriotism. This only can put an end to all self-depreciation and generate a burning desire to recover the lost ground**” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. I, p. 428).

To make it short, Aurobindo establishes the idea of patriotism within the structural frame-work of spirituality. Aurobindo’s concept of education as one understands it, is designed for self-realization. He argued that the educational system must encourage the natural growth of patriotism in the students and that such a system was inevitable. It is when one sees the lack of nationalism among today’s educated elite of this nation that one realizes the importance of Sri Aurobindo’s ideas.

**7.36 The Psychological Approach to Imbibe Patriotism Through the Medium of Education**

Patriotism is an emotion. This evolves from love towards the nation. Aurobindo had returned to India from England with the
purpose of achieving national freedom by creating a generation of patriots. Aurobindo was a participant in the Congress meetings of 1904 and 1906, and he had played a significant role in persuading the party to take up the four fold-plan. The four-fold plan consisted of Swaraj, Swadeshi, rejection of foreign goods and national education. All these steps indicated a psychological approach aimed at inculcating patriotism among the masses. Aurobindo insisted that the curriculum of the national education should be designed to inculcate patriotism among the students. Aurobindo also said that we should learn from Japan in the effort to inculcate the love for the nation among the students. It is when the students are taught about the struggle through which their ancestors had gone through for the national interest, the students would develop a patriotic attitude. Aurobindo thought that when the subjects of geography and philosophy were taught, the nation should be portrayed as a living entity in the form of the motherland and not just a geographical lifeless form. He said: “Let us learn from Japan how to awaken the national spirit among the people by a contemplation of the heroic deeds of our ancestors. Let us
bear in mind that we have a debt to discharge not only towards our ancestors but also to our posterity. If such a noble ideal is steadily kept before our mental vision, we shall see that our nation will give birth to great philosophers, statesmen and generals. This ideal has been kept in view in guiding the movement for national education in Bengal. In teaching Geography, we impress upon the minds of our students that India is their Motherland, that Maharashtra produced Shivaji, that the Punjab was once ruled by Ranjith Singh, and the Himalaya gave shelter to our ancient Rishis. History and Philosophy, too, are taught in a similar manner with a view to awaken the spirit of nationality amongst the pupils” (Sri Aurobindo.1972, Vol.27, p.67).

The basis of patriotism in any country is the culture, history, the pride about their ancestors and their national victories. There is a significant role for history in inculcating patriotism. In this context, it can be seen that India had a glorious history and the British had deliberately tried their level best to gloss over this
history and even in some cases distort it. Aurobindo’s first intellectual expedition was against the British plan to portray Indian history as a lesson in defeats and to create an opinion that the country had made no significant cultural contribution. By this scheme the British sought to break the self-confidence of the native population and imbibe a form of mental slavery which would help the colonialists to hang on to their power over the natives. The speech made by Sri Aurobindo at Utharappara, after he was released from the Allipore jail, was an inspiring one and filled with nationalist sentiments. Through this speech he established that the foundation of Indian nationalism was ‘Sanatana Dharma’. “Sri Aurobindo tells us that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. It is even more, it is the Sanathan Dharma. India will arise to give to the whole world the Sanathana Dharma. It is only through this law that India can become great because this is the purpose of her soul” (Norman.1996, p.76).

India can regain its lost glory only when it recognises its spiritual ancestry and culture. It is the knowledge of its past
greatness that creates the feeling of patriotism. Aurobindo believed that if the education system was able to impart this greatness to the new generation, they would become uncompromising patriots.

7.37 National Education as a Tool of Patriotism

Aurobindo had very specific views on how this national education had to be imparted. It is not necessary that, just because the teachers are Indians, or because the management of the school is Indian that the education imparted would help students to imbibe nationalism and patriotism. Aurobindo was convinced about the need to design a system of education which would take into consideration the prevalent situation in the country. “Swadeshi in Education does not mean teaching by Indian professors only or even management by Indians only. It means an education suited to the temperament and needs of the people fitted to build up a nation equipped for life under modern conditions and absolutely controlled by Indians....” [Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.I, p.480].

Aurobindo says that the medium of instruction of the nationalist syllabus should be the mother- tongue. It may seem that
in this land of diversity where various languages are spoken, a single language would be used as a common medium for nationalist instruction. However, Aurobindo argues otherwise and says that the best medium would be the ‘mother-tongue’. He says that the diversity does not imply contradictions in the Indian context. As an expert educationalist, he argues that the right medium which would aid the imagination of a student to flower is his own mother-tongue. Imagination and emotion are closely related. Aurobindo understood that, in order to strengthen the feeling of patriotism in an individual, the mother-tongue as a medium would be most appropriate. He also argues that the emotional aspect of history would be imbibed only if the student was instructed through the medium of his mother-tongue. “The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium. Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the nation” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.17, p.214). As
the nation spends huge sums of money for the purpose of education, it is imperative that education should be able to inculcate feeling of nationalism among the students.

7.38 Inculcation of Morals and Values Through Education

It is the basic duty of any educational system to inculcate morals and eternal values in its recipients. There are values which one has to receive at home, from the society, from the educational institution as well as from life itself. A generation which evolves without moral and ethical values is a threat to the society as a whole. Today one of the main problems confronting the world is a collapse of moral values. The consumerist outlook and the idea of ‘Survival of the fittest’ in the Western world have led to this moral degradation.

7.39 Arobindo’s Dharmic Cosmic Plan for India

India’s ‘Puranas’ and epics indicate how much the people here valued the concept of Dharma in their individual and social outlook. Vedas and the Upanishads refer to ‘Dharma’ and moral
outlook. Aurobindo’s words illustrate the extent of symbiosis between eternal values and India’s soul.

Aurobindo declares that because *Dharma* is the soul of India, India will not be destroyed. The *Dharmic* concept as upheld in India will become the *Dharmic* concept of the entire world. In order to renovate the entire universe, India should renovate itself first, according to Sri Aurobindo. “*India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal Religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. In the sphere of morality, likewise, it is her mission to purge barbarism (mlechchhahood) out of humanity and to Aryanise the world. In order to do this, she must re-*Aryanise herself*” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 1, p.66).

The one who leads and is based on the concept of *Dharma* – he is the *Guru*. Viewed in this context, India is the ‘*Guru*’ of the
universe. Aurobindo has set all hopes in the morally enlightened youth for the reformation of the nation. He predicts that the future belongs to such a youth. “The future belongs to the young. It is a young and new world which is now under process of development and it is the young who must create it. But it is also a world of truth, courae, justice, lofty aspiration and straightforward fulfilment which we seek to create. For the self-seeker, for the talker who goes forward at the beginning and afterwards leaves his fellows in the lurch there is no place in the future of this movement. A brave, frank, clear-hearted, courage and aspiring youth is the only foundation on which the future nation can be built” (Sri Aurobindo. 1994, p. p.53-54).

Right from the time of the Vedas, morals and dharmic values had an important place in Indian education. The aim of education was the creation of a ‘complete man’. It is not through superficial advice that values and morals were imparted. The Upanishads show that moral values were imparted through the medium of parables and examples. “…During the Upanishadic times
education system aimed to transform the potentialities of an individual to a complete man. And this was done not just through imparting precepts and theories but was also through giving examples quoting parables. Education meant imparting knowledge which will inculcate the quality such as self-discipline, charity, and compassion” (NityanandaBhat. 2011, April-June, p.43).

In this era of science and technology, if there has been a decline in values and morals, it is due to the fact that the value based education which was prevalent since the time of the Vedas has been ignored. If human values cannot be imparted through education a situation will develop, whereby the very existence of society will be threatened by the ensuring anarchy. “In the world of science and technology, teachers should endeavour to equip the student with every kind of scientific and technical training, but they should do it without sacrificing the permanent values” (NityanandaBhat. 2011, April-June, p.26).
7.40 Theoretical Background of Value Based Education

Aurobindo viewed everything from a spiritual standpoint. His ideas on value education also were in this manner. He believed that even though man was confined by physical limitation, the nature of his soul was *Sachinananda swaroopa*. This soul is reflected through the mind of the person. If the mind is pure the reflection of the soul would also be pure. The soul which is *Sachidananda* itself, is the abode of all knowledge. It is this all knowing form which the *Vedantis* call ‘God’. It is when this complete knowledge gets reflected in a pure mind, that the person becomes a ‘*jnani*’ (Gnostic being as per Aurobindo). Therefore the first step for acquiring *Jnana* is to make the mind pure. It is through the knowledge of *dharmic* values that the mind becomes pure. The root cause of all ignorance is the impurity of the mind. It is when the values and morals cleanse the mind and make it pure, the *Sachidananda* (God), who is the centre of all the knowledge, gets reflected in it. It is in this condition that the person becomes a *Vijnani*. Aurobindo explains this philosophy in this manner:
“From the standpoint of our lower state in the kingdom of death and limitation Atman is Sachidananda, supra-mental, but reflected in the mind. If the mind is pure, bright and still, there is the right reflection; if it is not purified, troubled and obscured, the reflection is distorted and subjected to the crooked action of Ignorance” [Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.12, p.90].

In Indian philosophy, where the intimate knowledge of God is taken as the primary and sole objective, God is knowledge. Vedantis say that attaining God (Ishwara Sakshathkara) is the acquiring of the ultimate knowledge. It is from the Vedantic theory, which says that you yourself shine in every other living being, that the reason for loving all others as you do yourself, is formed. Every humanistic values flow from this love and kindness. According to Aurobindo, value based education is one which inculcates humanistic values in the student. Aurobindo explains the philosophical side of this argument in this manner: “The first movement of self-realisation is the sense of unity with other existences in the universe. It’s early or crude form is the attempt to understand or sympathise with others, the tendency of a
widening love or compassion or fellow-feeling for others, the impulsion of work for the sake of others” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.12, p.91).

7.41 The Phased Imparting of Value Oriented Education

It is seen that even if the teacher continuously harps on dharmic values, the student does not necessarily imbibe the same. The student should be able to observe the practical illustrations of the dharmic values. More than oral appeals, living examples are more important as teaching tools. On the subject of moral values, three things have to be considered. The emotions, the Samskaras (formed habits) and the Swabhava (nature). When noble thoughts are formed repeatedly in an individual, it becomes the ‘nature’ (Swabhava) of the individual. Thus, when the culture becomes nature, the person’s life becomes value based. In short, education should be designed to elicit sublime emotions. From such emotions, pure actions evolve. “There are three things which are of the utmost importance in dealing with a man’s moral nature, the emotions, the samskaras or formed habits and associations,
and the svabhava or nature. The only way for him to train himself morally is to habituate himself to the right emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 17, p. 209).

7.42 The Teacher as the Effective Practitioner of Moral Education

In imparting moral education, the primary condition is that the teacher should be the role model. It is the value based life of the teacher which forms the first lesson for the student. It is the life of the ancient Rishis that the students of India since time immemorial had considered as examples to be followed. In the light of the authority granted by the knowledge and practice of traditional rituals to the teacher, the teachers’ words were taken as irrefutable instructions by the student. “The old Indian system of the guru commanding by his knowledge and sanctity the implicit obedience, perfect admiration, reverent emulation of the student
was a far superior method of moral discipline” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.17, p.210).

The role of the teacher is just to point out the right direction for realising moral values. The teacher can give necessary encouragement. Apart from observation and instruction, the teacher can also help the student to produced in the right direction. But there should never be an attempt to impose values. The development of moral values the student should be natural. Aurobindo says: “As in the education of the mind, so in the education of the heart, the best way is to put the child into the right road to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping but not interfering” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 17, P. 210).

Aurobindo firmly believed that no student could be led towards moral and value based life through a process of strict instruction or by imposition those teachings. The best method for this is for the teacher himself to become the model. There are a number of morals which the student should imbibe by watching the life of the teacher. The teacher should familiarise the student with
the teachings of great men and also their lifestyle. The teacher should also inculcate the humanistic values as seen in the great works of literature in the student. The role of history and biography in inculcating moral values cannot be overemphasised. Thus, it can be seen from Aurobindo’s words that he had done a deep study on value based education. “The first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily converse and the books read from day to day. These books should contain, for the younger student, the lofty examples of the past given, not as moral lessons, but as things of supreme human interest, and, for the elder student, the great thoughts of great souls, the passages of literature which set fire to the highest emotions and prompt the highest ideals and aspirations, the records of history and biography which exemplify the living of those great thoughts, noble emotions and aspiring ideals” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 17, p.p. 210-211).

There will be many crises in front of the teacher who wants to inculcate moral values in the student. The most important is the
distortion in character of the students due to their earlier experiences in life. It may be so that the circumstances of life at home and negative societal influence that may have caused unfortunate distortions in their character. Aurobindo has clearly indicated on how the teacher should handle students who have gone through such unfortunate circumstances and have been scarred by it. Firstly, the teacher should handle such students with utmost patience. It is not possible to bring such students who may show antisocial qualities, by imposing harsh discipline in the form of harsh words or punishments. Sri Aurobindo believes that these students can be brought around by the practice of Raja Yoga. Aurobindo describes how the teacher should handle such situations: “Every boy should, therefore, be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in nature. If he has bad qualities, bad habits, bad samskaras, whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the Rajayogic method of Samyama, rejection and substitution” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 17, p. 211).
If moral education is given through dry and lifeless advice, the student will reject it. It is here that the use of the medium of art and culture becomes important. Good art and culture purifies the human mind. Aurobindo has emphasised the role of art and literature in the syllabus that he has proposed. By encouraging the artistic and literary faculties in the mind of the student, it is possible to elevate the thought process of the student to a sublime level. It is also required that the student should be trained to appreciate good art and literature. Sports and games also play a great role in the expansion of the human mind. By celebrating cultural events which promote societal cohesion along with other students, the student acquires many good qualities. In short, moral education is not something which should be confined within the four walls of the classroom. Eminent educationalist Pandit. M.P. has described Aurobindo’s educational vision thus: “Moral or spiritual education which aims to draw out the deeper and higher potentialities of the being has a subtler character. It cannot be a subject taught in a particular period. This communication, implantation of an aspiration to develop the higher qualities,
should be done in an unseen manner, students must be encouraged to project these ideals in their cultural and outdoor activities, plays, poetry, games, tournaments, community festivals and the like” (Pandit. 1996,p.p. 24–25).

7.43 The Scheme of Moral Educational Frames

There are individual and societal moral values. When Love, kindness toward the aggrieved, individual purity, respect for elders, Ahimsa, truthfulness, are all personal values whereas responsibility as a citizen, the belief in democracy, respect for to all religions, cleanliness, are all societal values. The aim of moral education is to create a human being who cultivatess these individual and societal moral values in his life. The aim is to create a balanced personality. Eminent educationalist Pavitra comments on Aurobindo’s views in this manner: “The aim of education is always fourfold: there is a collective aspect and there is an individual aspect from the collective point of view, education is expected to turn the individual into a good citizen, i.e. into a person who has harmonious relations with the other members of the community, who is useful to the society and who fulfils with
zeal his obligations as a citizen. On the other hand, it may be expected that education will give to the individual a strong and healthy body, help him in building up his character and attaining self mastery, and supply him with good opportunities of discovering and developing harmoniously his nature abilities (Pandit. 1996, p. 39).

The definition given by eminent educationalist Dr. Hari Ram Jasta to the aim of moral education mirrors the views of Sri Aurobindo on this subject: “Any education which aims at cultivating in the individual habits of right conduct is termed as moral education” (Jasta.1999,p.12). Aurobindo believed that such moral education is mandatory in the scheme for personality development.

7.44 Satvic Trands of Personality Development

Aurobindo’s words illustrate the importance he gave to ‘Dharma’ and eternal morals for the reconstruction of the nation. He argued that music, painting and poetry should be induced in the curriculum of education. Because he believed, today education is often confined to technical studies and hence fails to embrace
humanism. Aurobindo recognized the contribution of music, poetry and fine arts in the development of the human mind. He said: “Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onwards march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilising forces.” (Sri Aurobindo. 1994, p.62).

Aurobindo who considered that education should be based on spirituality, had his own idea about the contribution of his spiritual education to the development of individuality also. Without imbibing moral values in one’s own life a person cannot proceed in his path of spiritual realisation.

Aurobindo says: “Renunciation of ego, acceptance of God in life is the Yoga I teach” (Sri Aurobindo. 1994, p. 103). This 'false pride' is the main hurdle which Aurobindo seeks to remove from the path of those who seek morality and self-realization.
Values are achieved when, as a first step, one abandons false pride and accept humility. Suffering and self-sacrifice, according to Aurobindo, are his main values. **“Every act of the new Nationalism has been a call for suffering and self-sacrifice. Swadeshi was such a call; national education was such a call”** (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.2, p.110). Aurobindo, through his concept of nation education, teaches self sacrifice for the nations sake and acquiring the capacity of forbearance. Only those who have a commitment to values can have the capacity for self-sacrifice and forbearance.

The ancient practice of accepting ‘Brahmacharya’, during the years of education, had its basis in the emphasis of Dharma and morality. Aurobindo understood the importance of Brahmacharya for the educative effort. He said, **“This was the first principle on which the ancient Aryans based their education and one of the chief processes which they used for the increased storage of energy, The practice of Brahmacharya is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force within and turning it to such uses as may benefit the possessor or mankind….The**
source of life and energy is not material but spiritual” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 3,p.p. 335 - 336). When the strength and fountainhead of life becomes spiritual, morality acquires importance. Aurobindo considered Brahmacharya as the first step in the endeavour for morality in life. Aurobindo says that the purpose of education is to inculcate the human mind with ‘Satvic’ thoughts. It is when a person imbibes ‘Dharmic’ value in one’s own life that he becomes ‘Satvic’. A real education is one which makes a person ‘Satvic’. This is what Aurobindo had to say: “The constitution of man consists of three principles of nature the satva, rajas and thamas- the comprehensive, active and passive element of universal action, which in one of their thousand fold aspects manifest as knowledge, passion and ignorance. Tamas is a constitution dullness or passivity which obscures the knowledge within and creates ignorance, mental inertia, slowness, forgetfulness, disinclination to study, inability to grasp and disinclination Rajas is an undisciplined activity which obscures knowledge by passion, attachment, prejudgment, predilection and wrong ideas. Satva is an illumination which reveals the hidden
knowledge and brings it to the surface where the observation can grasp and the memory re-sorts it. This conception of the constitution of the knowing faculty made the removal of tamas, the disciplining of rajas and the awaking of satva the main task of the teacher... The disciplining of rajas was effected by strict moral discipline which induced a calm, clear, receptive state of mind, free from intellectual self- will and pride and the obscuration of passion – the famous discipline of the brahmachari which was the foundation of Aryan culture and Aryan moral... The removal of tamas was effected by the discipline of moral purity” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol.3, p. 363).

As per Aurobindo, an ideal educational system is to discard the ‘Tamasic’ and ‘Rajasic’ proclivities in an individual and instead inculcate a ‘Satvic’ bent of mind. For this to happen, there should be dharmic value in his life. It is for this reason that ‘Brahmacharya’ becomes essential to the student while he acquires education. Aurobindo says, “Brahmacharya and satvic development created the brain of India; it was perfected by yoga” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, p. 364).
The reason why Aurobindo stresses on ‘Dharmic’ and moral values is because he believed that a person becomes a complete individual only when he internally evolves into a spiritual man. For this, values are essential in life. He says “The spiritual man is the sign of this new evolution, this new and higher endeavour of Nature” (Sri Aurobindo. 1972, Vol. 11, p. 722).

He considered the evolution into the spiritual man as the ultimate aim of the moral value system. In the absence of a moral ideal not only the development of the individual becomes incomplete, but also the future of the society becomes unstable.

To make it short, Aurobindo through his arguments has tried to establish that it is only through a system of education based on India philosophy could a generation of patriots and value based individuals be created. This is apparent to anyone who understands Aurobindo’s literature. Even with all its diversity, Aurobindo believed an appropriate system of education would be able to bind the various strands holding the country together. The core of his educational philosophy is the national integration and
national pride through love for the nation. Aurobindo’s dream was an India which was free and undivided. To any patriot nurturing this dream, Aurobindo’s philosophy will reveal itself as relevant and practical.
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