CHAPTER VI
IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION
“When you begin to want to establish some discipline over your being, you make discoveries which are really tremendously interesting.”

The Mother
6.0 Introduction

No system of education can find its way into the classroom unless it has relevance to the stakeholders of the educational process. A teacher, for example, ought to feel that his exercises in the system are relevant enough to bear fruit. A student, again, must study under the impression that the process he is subjected to shall make verifiable difference to his levels of attainments that shall in turn serve to fulfil his goals in life.

This present study shall examine the relevance of the system of ‘Integral’ education critically and shall establish its present day relevance. One, important aspect of this system of education is that it invests a significant amount of effort on the mental and spiritual development of the pupils. At a time when the education systems have been suffering from the critical drawback of relegating spirituality to the background, the need of implementing ‘Integral’ education in our classrooms is significant, since material attainments can be lost easily if they are not backed by spiritual education. As such, the relevance of this system of education can hardly be neglected.

6.1 Implementation at SAICE:

The principles of Integral education, though adduced from the philosophical interpretations of man and spirituality of Sri Aurobindo, have been shown to work successfully in actual educational contexts and environment. One of the most interesting experiments in this field is the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) at Pondicherry, Puducherry. Established initially as an institution to cater to the educational needs of the children of the sadhaks at the Ashram, the Centre gradually grew into an educational experiment at a grand scale, involving children across the globe. It is indeed interesting that the educators at the Centre describe the activities of the SAICE as an ‘experiment’, since all education, especially spiritual education, are essentially aids towards spiritual evolution, and till the
transformation of man in the spiritual sense is accomplished, all activities, are
deemed to have the tentative and flexible status of experiments.

Established in December, 1943, under the overall guidance of The
Mother and a number of educationists, the Centre has been serving the interests
of spiritual development of children for the past few decades. From 1943 to
1953, the Centre served as an Ashram Primary School for the children of the
devotees and disciples who settled at Pondicherry. The idea of an institution to
put into practice the principles of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of man, was
apparent in the words of The Mother after the passing away of Sri Aurobindo.
On 5th December, 1950, she declared: “One of the most recent forms under
which Sri Aurobindo conceived of the development of his work was to
establish at Pondicherry an International University Centre open to students
from all over the world. It is considered that the most fitting memorial to his
name would be to found this University now so as to give concrete expression
to the fact that his work continues with unabated vigour.” (Collected Works of
The Mother; Vol-12;2003; p. 111)

The philosophical basis of the SAICE can be gauged from the following
words of The Mother spoken at the Convention of educationists in Pondicherry,
held in April, 1951. She said: “Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with
all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the
University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of
preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will
transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon the earth the new
light and force and life. In his name I open today this convention meeting here
with the purpose of realizing one of his most cherished ideals.” (Collected
Works of The Mother; V-12;2003; p-112). Again, in a different context, she
clarifies the ideals of the University Centre by saying: “There are people who
write wanting to join our University and they ask what kind of diploma or
degree we prepare for, the career we open out. To them I say: go elsewhere,
please, if you want that; there are many other places, very much better than

76
ours, even in India, in that respect. We do not have their equipment or magnificence. You will get there the kind of success you look for. We do not compete with them. We move in a different sphere, on a different level.” (Collected Works of The Mother; V- 12; 2003; p- 119) . The last quote clearly reveals the extent and philosophic reach of SAICE. Paradoxically, this makes the SAICE open to the debate as to whether it shall serve any worthwhile task in the sphere of education that aims at material upliftment of man along with the spiritual.

It is well understood by educationists that in SAICE there cannot be any fixed syllabi for all the students at the same academic level, because the prime basis of the instruction there is the ‘free progress’ system. In the system, it is unthinkable that students with different capabilities, studying under the teachers of their choice and pursuing the interests of their own development, will be bound by a fixed, rigid syllabus. For the SAICE, ‘progress’ is essentially a ‘growth of consciousness’.

As such, the Centre does not give any ‘certificates or mark sheets’ to those who complete courses of instruction there, but merely give a paper declaring that a particular student successfully completed a study as per the norms of SAICE and subscribed to the evaluation procedure there.

Equally interesting is the role played by the Ashram and its ideals in the instructional processes at SAICE. Since SAICE is an integral part of the Ashram at Pondicherry, it would be natural to expect that a religious-spiritual bias would be at work in the activities of SAICE, including the courses. However, the conventional subjects, including the materialistic and natural sciences form as serious a part of the curriculum as spiritual education. An interesting problem puzzled many Ashramites when in the mid-forties, Mother introduced in the Ashram a full-fledged programme of physical education for the children of the sadhaks. This was supported by Sri Aurobindo himself. For many it was a difficult paradox to reconcile. Jugal Kishore Mukherjee refers to
the development of Dilip Kumar Roy writing a letter to Sri Aurobindo mentioning the oddity of the situation. Sri Aurobindo replied by justifying the inclusion of physical education in the Ashram, describing physical education as an aid to the spiritual endeavours of the Ashram. The Mother categorically spelled out the purpose of physical education thus: “The basic programme will be to build a body, beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and agile in its movements, powerful in its active resistant in its health and organic function.” (Principles and Goals of Integral Education; Jugal Kishore Mukherjee; 2000; p-96).

The education at SAICE is organized so as to secure:

1. The fullest possible development of the physique;
2. A fruitful channelization of the life-energy in pursuits that contribute to the growth of the personality;
3. A sufficient training of the mental faculties in the fields of various Humanities and Sciences;
4. The requisite help through a powerful spiritual atmosphere, for the soul to come forward and gradually begin to govern the rest of the being. SAICE clearly declares that the aim of education at the Centre is not to enable students to ‘succeed’ in life, but to ‘increase his perfectibility to the utmost.’
5. The Centre of Education has continued to grow and has provision for education from the nursery to the higher levels of study. At present it comprises of the following sections, which were named by The Mother:
6. Kindergarten (1,2,3)- 3-5 years of age
7. L ‘ Avenir (The Future) (1,2,3) – 6-8 years of age
8. Progre’s (Progress) (1, 2, 3) – 9-11 years.
9. En Avant Vers la Perfection (Forward towards Perfection)-12-17 years
10. Knowledge (1, 2, 3) – 18-20 years of age.
The centre of Education has faculties of Humanities, Languages, Science, Engineering, Technology and Physical Education. It has also facilities for Art, Music, Dance and Drama... In Addition, facilities are provided for practical and manual work.

SAICE has been publishing a quarterly Bulletin on its activities in a particular quarter. The Bulletin details those activities conducted at the SAICE, and has pictorial depictions of the important aspects of the academic life there. A study of the Bulletin in any quarter reveals the following activities pupils go through:

- Meditation around the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother;
- Meditation in the playground;
- Tournaments in table-tennis, tennis and cricket;
- Academic lectures by visiting dignitaries;
- Piano music;
- Indian traditional music and dance;
- Exhibition of photographs and paintings of students;
- Playing of recorded western music;
- Screening of educational films in English and Hindi;
- Educational and recreation tours to places of interest.

The activities reveal a wide ranging diversity that caters to all-round mental, physical and aesthetic development of pupils, besides the spiritual. Clearly, a pupil undergoing such an educational set-up, is likely to become a complete citizen of tomorrow and shall be able to tackle the emerging problems of humanity better. In order to understand the needs of the application of the Integral education principles in education, a survey of the current status of education in general would be necessary.

Clearly, the true test of any education system is to nurture the inherent possibilities in a child without reducing the process of education to a
predetermined exercise of mutual convenience. Since the prime principle of Integral education is the aiding of the spiritual evolution of man, activities at the Centre are planned and co-ordinated to serve that interest, and as such differs radically in some of their activities from educational institutions offering traditional instruction. Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, in his book, *Principles and Goals of Integral Education, 2000* gives us a graphic account of the details of the academic and other activities carried out at SAICE.

Some of the salient points which may serve to promote Integral education across the country may be stated as follows:

1. SAICE does not believe in giving periodic long vacations to students. There are no Puja vacations, Christmas vacation or Summer vacation.
2. Except for Sunday and the first day of every month (called the ‘Prosperity Day’ wherein the inmates collect their monthly requirements), and the ‘Darshan Days’ (auspicious days at the Ashram), there are no holidays earmarked for students;
3. Classes continue throughout the year in two sessions: first, from 7.45 am to 11.30 am, and, next, from 1.50 pm to 4.00 pm.
4. There is a long annual recess – from November 1 to December 15. This is made to ensure the students with sufficient time to prepare for annual cultural activities in December.

At SAICE the purpose of the school environment is to give the child the stimuli that impel him to a self-educative activity. Therefore, the requirements or equipments of the class much depend on the age and mental development of the children. Three stages have been distinguished in the relation of the children with the outer material world: manipulation, construction, observation. There exist no sharp delimitation of the three stages and they blend gradually into one another. The teaching of reading, writing and counting starts generally in the Kindergarten and pursued during the first two
years of the school. There is a blend of collective teaching with individual attention. Large use of educational games and other devices are taken into account at this stage.

After the child assumes a good working knowledge of reading, writing and counting, then he or she can make the best use of the originality and usefulness of the Integral system of education. The work in a new class falls generally under three heads- Collective Teaching, Individual Work and Team Work. The question now arises as to what part of the class-work can or should be done collectively, i.e., the teacher addressing the whole class. The teacher speaking out his or her knowledge with the view to communicate it to the students --- so that they accept it, try to understand and remember it, is led to rejection at SAICE. The aim of supplying needed information through collective teaching is justified and therefore accepted as a part of instruction. If the talking is on both sides, then the teacher's aim of training the ear and the tongue of the students is fulfilled. This is considered to be an indispensable part of language teaching and is given due place in the methodology.

The traditional method of lecturing as a means of imparting knowledge had strong objection of Sri Aurobindo. It has been disliked equally by many modern educationists. During the lecture hours there is very little participation from the students. A passive mind cannot for long remain attentive. The difference between imparting knowledge and supplying information therefore is given much importance at SAICE.

Then comes the concept of Individual work. This helps the students in their self-educative activity as well as the discovery of knowledge. The method of individual work is primarily based on work-sheets. Fundamentally, a work sheet is a set of instructions concerning the work that the student should himself do.
The work-sheets generally includes:

- A didactic part—(meant to teach)—The students will find an introduction to the subject, definitions of the new terms, a historical background. The text is so drafted that the student understands it readily. After each step questions are put which are called focussing questions. Their function is to help the student to delve into the text, understand and assimilate it. Then exercises or problems follow which offers practice and training.

- A heuristic part—(serving to discover)—The students here are expected to discover the problem and supply their results and conclusions. For subjects like Zoology, Botany, Chemistry— the predominance is of this method.

- Mixed type—For subjects like History and Geography a mixed type of work-sheet prevails wherein there exist both the heuristic and the didactic part.

- Testing type—The fourth type of work sheet is of testing type which is given to the student at the end of a section or a chapter and aims at leading the student to recapitulate and assess his control over the work. If he succeeds he proceeds to a new section. If not, he is given a work sheet of supplementary type, suited to his deficiencies.

The team work takes into account the need of the child for contact, association and collaboration with other children. Here the students or the participants are required to take decisions, solely by themselves: scope of the work, how it is to be carried out, allocation of its various parts to the participants, materials needed and details of the execution. The attitude of the teacher is constant with attentive presence, always ready to guide and assist, understanding the needs of the students and respecting their freedom.
A study of the practices at SAICE clearly reveals that they are programmed with a greater scientific and psychological basis, and the fact the SAICE has been continuing its progress for the last five decades reveals that the Integral education system has its practicability and usefulness in ensuring education proper to our children.

### 6.2 Implementation in Other Institutions:

The fact that very few educational institutions had been set up in the last few decades of the last century with the aim of giving Integral education to children, has perhaps, put the system of Integral education into some question of doubt as to its applicability in the Indian education contexts. However, a study of some institutions functioning outside the geographical ambit of the Ashram at Pondicherry, reveals that Integral education is becoming popular and acceptable by the day in many parts of the country. Two institutions, one at Kolkata and the other at New Delhi, have been functioning creditably for the last few decades guided by the sole light of the teachings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Needless to say, they are applying the principles of Integral education successfully, in the mainstream curricular set up of the country.

The Future Foundation School at Kolkata (TFFS) administered by Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture, Kolkata, is founded on the principles of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and administers the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, New Delhi, curriculum for Class-X (ICSE) and Class-XII (ISC) course. A study of the applications of the Integral education principles at TFFS can serve as a classic example of the application of Integral education principles in mainstream curricular scenario. Interestingly, the method to education practiced here is ‘no method and every method; myriad forms of teaching and facilitation – theme, project and seminar-based, role-plays and debates, replacement of block-tests with continuous evaluation, parameterized grading instead of formal ranking, involvement in physical education and cultural activities. It is a delicate combination of rules and freedom, love and the loving enforcement of discipline, a rigid-superstructure
with a fluid movement of consciousness within; an experiment in its own light and in its own scale.'

The methodology followed in the Junior School has the following principles:

1. Giving the child the space to grow and learn at its own pace;
2. The role of a teacher is one of a facilitator;
3. Learning is based on experience;
4. Syllabus is skill based;
5. No formal system of Block Tests till Class-V but continuous evaluation throughout the year.
6. Theme based teaching in Classes-I and II and Project based teaching from Classes III to VI.

The Senior classes too have a methodology keeping in mind the basic Integral education principles:

1. The focus is to enable the pupils to become true citizens of the world;
2. Seminar-based debates and role-plays inside the classroom;
3. Sports and music form an integral part of the curriculum;
4. No formal ranks awarded;
5. Regular exhibitions and co-curricular activities.

Significantly, the motto of the School is: 'No Words – Acts.' A student subjected to such a discipline for most of his school life would be better prepared to face the real life challenges, besides succeeding in the formal examinations of the examining body to which the School is affiliated. In fact, a perusal of the results of the students of TFFS in the Class- X and XII examinations reveal that when a child is nurtured with the aim of bringing out the best in him, he can easily handle and succeed in an examination in a conventional education set-up. Consistently high scores, though not a priority
in Integral education system, can become the norm if a child is nurtured in the principles of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Another experiment on Integral education principles, is being conducted successfully at the New Delhi branch of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Named ‘Mirambika’, the School with classes upto the eighth standard, has also been serving as a ground for training of educators in Integral education principles for the past few years. Learning in the School is based on the principle that ‘each individual comes into life with an evolutionary purpose and corresponding potentialities; educating means drawing out this potential.’

One of the unique applications of the Integral education principle here is the ‘topic approach’ to learning. In this approach, a child works from nine to twelve on topics. A ten-year old child chooses a topic of his choice, decides the area of work and activities to do, what experiments to perform, and what points of view are to be included. At the end of the morning, the child evaluates his work systematically. This process enables a child to ‘study independently, reason out things clearly, be more self aware and responsible.’

The school timings at Mirambika are from 8.15 am to 3.45 pm. There is one hour of sports every day and children and their caretakers are responsible for keeping their environment clean and beautifying their spaces. This activity gives them a first hand realization of the importance of neatness and cleanliness in their day-to-day life. There is a time specified for meditation where they learn the art of silence and the power of a controlled mind. The rest of the day is divided into activities, such as projects or topics which give them the know-how of envisioning a problem, exploring solutions and working towards certain well-defined and motivated actions. There are ‘Home Sessions’ where the children are left to themselves so that they can develop a feeling of existence through co-operation and togetherness, in a burden-free atmosphere.
Institutions such as the Future Foundation School and Mirambika can serve as examples of the practical applications of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of Integral education as envisioned by The Mother and can serve as role models for many more institutions in the country and abroad.

6.3 Conclusion:

An interesting aspect of the implementation of the principles of ‘Integral’ education in our classrooms is its extreme flexibility. It has been shown that this system has been implemented with significant success across various educations boards in the country. Though there is always a scope for adjustments in the actual implementation it cannot be denied that many institutions have been doing commendable work in the sphere of ‘Integral’ education for decades – a fact that proves that this system is there to stay and guide our education in the years to come.