CHAPTER V

GOALS OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION
“Always seek to progress in quietude, happiness and confidence, that is the most helpful attitude.”

Sri Aurobindo
5.0 Introduction

Education is as old as civilization itself and it has been accepted universally that every educative process, whether conscious or unconscious, has certain goals. Specifying goals in the educational scenario has always been tricky affairs, since the scope of any education or a specific educational system is theoretically innumerable. Very often we settle for some easily observable and verifiable goals in education in order to evaluate the efficacy or otherwise of a particular educational system. It has also been a common observation among educators that certain preconceived goals in a particular educational set-up has been missed, whereas other equally acceptable goals, though not identified earlier, have been attained.

In the context of Integral education, eleven specific goals have been identified. All the goals have their sanction in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Importantly, all the eleven goals, so identified, can be used to validate the education process in an Integral education set-up. Interestingly, all the eleven goals can be identified from the writings of The Mother on education as she was actively involved in the enterprise of giving shape to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in the classrooms.

5.1 First Goal: To Lead One's Life in the Right Way

The statement of the first goal has two critical phrases, namely, 'lead one's life' and 'right way'. The concept of 'leading one's life' has its basis in the assumption that a person is a master of his fate. In other words, his free-will empowers him to choose between multiple courses in life, and he has to be responsible for the exercise of his choice. Critically, responsibility of exercise of choice leads naturally to the next phrase – the ‘right way’. The freedom of choice is a double edged sword, given its potential to harm if the choice is not executed properly. In other words, the development of the concept of the ‘right way’ is imperative if an individual has to be educated in the proper sense of the term.
The pivotal role in this case can be played by the teacher. As a person who has the potential to mould the thinking of his pupils, a teacher has to stand out as a living example of leading a life in the right way. Very often, it is by observation of the teacher that a pupil can form a definitive world view of the ways and means of leading a right life. More than moral preaching, a teacher's life is a model that should be apparent to a pupil in a much more obvious and practical way.

Also, a teacher ought to be cautious and vigilant so that his pupils do not expose themselves to undesirable influences. The Mother explains it thus: "(This) is the attitude of men in general; they come into life, they don't know why; they know they will live a certain number of years, they don't know why; they think they will have to pass away because everybody passes away, and they again don't know why; and then, most of the time they are bored because they have nothing in themselves, they are empty beings and there is nothing more boring than emptiness; and so they try to fill this by distraction, they become absolutely useless, and when they reach the end, they have wasted their whole existence, all their possibilities — and everything is lost." (Collected Works of The Mother, Vol-7, 2003; pp. 313-314).

In other words, a teacher ought to instil in the pupils a sense of inquisitiveness that would enable them to question whatever is handed over to them either through words or precepts. This inquisitiveness shall lead them to discern the desirable from the avoidable, and would help them to lead their life in the right way.

5.2 Second Goal: To Develop a Love for Aspiration

Aspiration has been one of the most visible and defining goals of evolution in the context of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. Effectively, aspiration means ‘the call in the being for the Divine or for the higher things that belong to the Divine Consciousness’. (Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, M.P.Pandit;2001;p-11) In other words, aspiration is the means of motivating
oneself to act in the direction that is desirable. One of the important ways of instilling a sense of aspiration in the students is to make them realize the futility of material existence, its temporal and unsteady nature. This can be instilled in them through examples from real life situations. The students should be made to realize the difference between purely material joys and the joys of higher thinking and right acting. Though it is often a tenuous task, the rewards are so rich that a teacher should always be motivated to mould the minds of the students so that they come to apposition where they can naturally develop aspiration for whatever they desire to do. The ‘Student’s Prayer’ of SAICE, drafted by The Mother is a reflection of the importance of developing aspiration among the pupils: “Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.” (Prayer at SAICE).

5.3 Third Goal: To Develop a Love for Constant Progress

One of the most important precepts of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is that the entire human race, irrespective of caste, colour or creed is in a constant movement towards evolution for perfection. The aim of education is to effectively aid this process and hasten the attainments of higher levels of life and mind. Therefore, one of the principal roles of the teacher is to promote a sense of love for progress among the pupils. No external motivation can sufficiently and permanently instil in the minds of the pupils a love for constant progress. A teacher ought to prompt in the minds of the pupils the realization that lack of progress would effectively mean stasis and death. When this sense develops in the pupils, every action of theirs comes as a result of a scrutiny between progress and regression. Invariably, all actions that emanate from such pupils are actions which aid their progress in whatever field they chose to progress. The role of the teacher with respect to this goal is essentially one of a psychological scaffold that supports and sustains actions which are based on the goal of progress.
5.4 Fourth Goal: To Develop Concentration

The Mother often maintained in her writings to pupils at SAICE that the essential worth of a man is measured by the nature and quality of his concentration. Concentration can be defined as the ability to focus one’s mental energy on a task at hand so as to achieve the desirable results from the task. It is a common observation that most pupils in a classroom suffer from an inherent inability to focus on the activities at hand. The role of a teacher is critical in removing this obstacle to progress. If left unchecked, a wandering mind may often take refuge in the undesirable. A teacher ought to identify the causes behind a pupil’s lack of concentration and try to develop the power to concentrate. Though this is often easier said than done, it is not an altogether impossible exercise. This task is further complicated because the reasons of a pupil’s lack of concentration often lie outside the premises of the school. Under such circumstances, a teacher ought to research the reasons behind the lack of concentration and address them in effective and innovative ways. This may be done through mechanical concentration exercises, games and sports requiring concentration, or sometimes, even by narrating anecdotes or stories. Innovative approach is the key towards the attainment of this crucial goal in Integral education.

5.5 Fifth Goal: To Know Oneself and to Choose One’s Own Destiny

The first part of the goal is an essentially philosophical issue. Most classical schools of Indian philosophy proposes that the chief aim of man is to know oneself, in other words, to know one’s origin and purpose of life on earth. The aim of life is surely not to lead one’s life in a passive way, driven by ordinary material and physical desires. Once a pupil is made to realise the higher worth inherent in human beings, he shall be inspired to act in a way that would help him to realize his own destiny. Here, destiny does not mean deciding upon an aim in the ordinary, material sense of the term. Though materialism is never rejected outright in Integral philosophy, its inherently
subservient nature is stressed. The Mother explained: “To know oneself means to know the motives of one’s actions and reactions, the why and the how of all that happens in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one has decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen or to follow impulses, desires or fancies.” (*Collected Works of The Mother, Vol. 12, 2003; p-167*)

A teacher’s role in the realization of this goal is to open before the pupils the avenues which he is open to and to empower him to decide upon the right course of action in consultation with his latent capabilities.

**5.6 Sixth Goal: To Overcome the Tyranny of Lower Desires**

The youngsters and adolescents are being constantly harassed by blind desires of various kinds. This spectacle is quite common with the teachers dealing with their students. The problem aggravates when the students lose the capability to distinguish between a genuine need and a mere desire impulse. “.. They are apt to take all their desires for needs or necessities and plunge themselves into these with passionate abandon.” (*Principles and Goals of Integral Education; Jugal Kishore Mukherjee; 2005; p-36*).

The teacher therefore has to step in here and help the students to turn their attention from all undesirable pulls and orient their desire-impulse into the right kind of channels.

The Mother’s advice in this regard: “......when a child is full of desires, if one could give him a desire of a higher kind ----- instead of its being a desire for purely material objects, you understand, an altogether transitory satisfaction ------ if one could awaken in him the desire to know, the desire to learn, the desire to become a remarkable person----- in this way, begin with that. As these things are difficult to do, so, gradually, he will develop his will for these things.” (*Collected Works of The Mother, Vol -6; 2003, p – 413*).
Therefore, coming out of the habit of constantly hankering after trivial things, sums up the sixth educational goal in The Mother’s philosophy of education.

5.7 Seventh Goal: To Lead a Life Ruled by Enlightened Reason

The seventh goal has two critical sides to it. The first is the acceptance of the need to lead one’s life through reason and the second is to ensure that the reason is enlightened. It is a common observation that most of the young people live a life of instincts and lower desires. They allow momentary impulses to dictate their actions without realizing that such actions which are driven by impulses are devoid of any worthy aim or motivation.

Reason is highly considered in the scheme of Integral education. It is this aspect which has made Integral education pertinent in today’s world. It is indeed true that any educational enterprise that does not have a place for reason is bound to be a failure in the modern society. However, in Integral education the reason has to be ‘enlightened’ by the use of discrimination.

Sri Aurobindo says something relevant in this context:

“It is not by becoming irrational or infrarational that one can go beyond ordinary nature into supernature; it should be done by passing through reason to a greater light of super reason. The superreason descends into reason and takes it up into higher levels even while breaking its limitations; reason is not lost but changes and becomes its own true unlimited self, a coordinating power of the super nature.” (Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 20, p. 269)

The scope of this goal goes beyond the years at school. However, at school, a teacher ought to bring in the child the concept of the importance of reason, more so, enlightened reason – a faculty that helps the child to distinguish between actions which are useful to him and those which are not.
Once this aspect is deeply implanted in the psyche of the child, he is likely to take this to his life outside the school and lead his life accordingly.

5.8 Eighth Goal: To Be Self – Disciplined:

The idea that discipline is imperative in the success of any enterprise is as old as civilization itself. Discipline brings in the much valued control and direction in any venture, including education. Modern day educators have opined that of all types of discipline, it is self-discipline that has the greatest value because any discipline concept that grows within a child’s mind is likely to last a long time, sometimes even permanently. In The Mother’s view, the education of the child should be based on spontaneity, love and freedom. Once a child’s mind has been trained to be discerning, he can be given true and comprehensive freedom and the teacher can rest assured that the freedom would not be misused. She says: “...from the spiritual point of view this is infinitely more valuable. The progress you will make because you feel within yourself the need to make it, because it is an impulsion that pushes you forward spontaneously, and not because it is something imposed on you like a rule -- this progress, from the spiritual point of view, is infinitely greater. All in you that tries to do things well, tries to do it spontaneously and sincerely; it is something that comes from within you, and not because you have been promised rewards if you do well and punishments if you do badly. Our system is not based on this.” (Collected Works of The Mother, Vol. 6, 2003; p. 431)

The role of the teacher in this context is, again, paramount. He leads not merely by example, but also by extolling the virtues of discipline from every observable sphere of life. He must be disciplined himself not only in his actions and behaviour, but even in his approach to the pupils and to the lessons he imparts to the pupils. Discipline, in this sense, would not be a constrictive force that inhibits freedom of movement, but a respect for law, order and control that brings in genuine joy and peace in the minds of the learners. In a letter written to a teacher at the Ashram school, The Mother says: “Example is the most
powerful instructor. Never demand from a child an effort of discipline that you do not make yourself.’ (Education, The Mother, 2003; p. 193)

5.9 Ninth Goal: To help every child to realize their full Potential:

One of the characteristics of modern day education system is the gross mismatch between educators and educands. It is a common experience of almost all educators in the contemporary education scenario that a teacher is left to manage a disproportionately large number of students in classrooms. This leaves a teacher with little or no possibility of individual attention to the pupils. Classrooms are crowded and classes as a whole are considered singular units rather than individual pupils.

In this context the premise of Integral education that every single child must be helped to attain their full potential assumes significance. Every single child is a different individual from the rest and as such any man-making education must cater to every single child in the classroom and beyond. The teacher’s role becomes critical in this situation. Since reducing the number of students in the classroom is beyond the scope of a teacher’s powers, he has to make the best use of the situation to cater to individual students. The Mother has said: “The teacher should not be a book that is read aloud, the same for everyone, no matter what his nature and character. The first duty of the teacher is to help the student to know himself and to discover what he is capable of doing... The old method of the seated class to which the teacher gives the same lesson for all, is certainly economical and easy, but also very ineffective, and so time is wasted for everybody.” (Collected Works of The Mother, Vol. 12, 2003; p. 369)

This quotation leads us directly to what Sita Ram Jaiswal in his essay ‘Education of the Future’, says ‘the crisis of priorities’. “Limited resources in terms of time would naturally lead a teacher to prioritize his actions in a manner that ensures maximum possible individual observation of the pupils.”
Stereotyping educational approaches would be a strictly avoidable recommendation for the teacher since stereotypes fail to cater to the dynamic environment of a classroom and fails to respect the child as an individual.

5.10 Tenth Goal: To Develop Genuine Individuality:

Development of individuality is yet another critical goal of all educational systems, more so, Integral education system. Approached from a psychological point of view, development of individuality would imply a concurrent development of self-confidence and self-belief. It is commonly seen that lack of self-confidence often leads children to be easily subject to what is termed ‘the band-wagon effect’, where he merely follows what others around him are doing. No genuine individuality can develop without a child’s awareness of his own potential and of what he is capable of. The Mother says rather eloquently to a group of students at the Ashram school on 28 July 1954. “... at least ninety-nine parts of an individual's character are made of soft butter... on which if one presses one’s thumb, an imprint is made. Now, everything is a 'thumb': an expressed thought, a sentence read, an object looked at, an observation of what someone else does, and of one's neighbour’s will. And all these wills ... (are) intermingled, each one trying to get the uppermost and causing a kind of perpetual conflict within....”

A teacher has to operate with this realization that all such ‘imprints’ are managed properly with the focus remaining on what a child is capable of rather than what he is exposed to. It is indeed common knowledge that successful people are often those who have refused to walk the popular path in their lives. Examples of such lives in a classroom, for example, can work wonders in ‘imprinting’ the concept of genuine individuality among children. A teacher’s work in this goal shall imply a significant amount of what can be termed an ‘un-learning’ process – a teaching that shall negate the unhealthy ‘imprints’ a
child gets outside the environment of the school. Practical examples, rather than bland theorizing of morals can be effective in the attainment of this goal.

5.11 Eleventh Goal: An All-round Development of All the Instruments:

Sri Aurobindo had persistently maintained that human beings are all instruments of the Divine. Whether we know it or not, we are all serving the purpose of God through our activities on earth. In some cases the activities may apparently run counter to goodness and civility. However, deeper examination of such activities reveals that they serve a greater purpose of rectification through wisdom.

Since Integral education is a step in the preparation of man for Divine purpose, a teacher should augment all-round development of a child’s personality. A perusal of the activities of the Ashram school during any quarter reveals the enormous range and varieties of activities a child is exposed to. Far from attuning specifically to their intellectual needs, the activities there sharpen a child’s physique, develops his interests in the liberal arts, such as singing, dancing, recitation, acting, and a host of other qualities. This sense of completeness that is imparted to a child in the Ashram school as well as some other schools following the system of Integral education, go a long way in strengthening a child’s physical, vital, and other capabilities. The Mother explains this brilliantly: “When you want to build with a stone, you chisel it; when you want to make a formless block into a beautiful diamond, you chisel it. Well, it is the same thing. When with your brain and body you want to make a beautiful instrument for the Divine, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, complete what is missing, perfect what is there.” (*Collected Works of The Mother, Vol. 5, p. 48*)
The school environment is the workshop here and the teacher is the sculptor. Since a person is an integrated entity, a neglect of any faculty can impair the progress made in others, and it is for this reason that the principles of Integral education are the need of the hour.

5.12 Conclusion

The eleven goals of Integral education are earmarked categorically to ensure that all stakeholders and participants in the education process can visualize in concrete terms the mode of action that is to be followed in the classroom. An examination of the goals reveals that the onus of the success of the system of Integral education falls generally and crucially on the teacher. Since they are in the direct knowhow of the principles and aims of Integral education, they are expected to become what Sri Aurobindo in a different context calls ‘willing servitors of the Divine’.