CHAPTER : VI

Upanishadic education and
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6.1. Introduction :

After a thorough study of all our ancient scriptures like the Veda, Upanishads and Gita etc. Sri Aurobindo is of opinion that we may derive from them things of immense value that may as well be delivered to future humanity and there is undoubtedly a fundamental eternal Truth for which all have been striving hard and by the significance of which all other truths owe their right meaning in the scheme of knowledge. Nevertheless Sri Aurobindo says that one must be of one’s own guard lest there might be a serious mistake on one’s part. He also reminds us that even if the method of attaining the truth is so valuable it cannot again be looked upon as a single trenchant rule for ever. With the passage of time and in the changed set of circumstances factors responsible for such changes must also be taken into account and relevant changes in the method of attaining knowledge, if necessary, must also be made, – of course, keeping in view the fundamental eternal Truth as the aim. This is why Sri Aurobindo in the changed circumstances has been inclined to introduce integral method of education to enable the scholars to attain higher stage of life under the guidance of the effulgent light of the psychic consciousness. What he has said regarding the method of the Upanishad etc. is shown below —
It may therefore be useful in approaching an ancient Scripture, such as the Veda, Upanishads or Gita, to indicate precisely the spirit in which we approach it and what exactly we think we may derive from it that is of value to humanity and its future. First of all, there is undoubtedly a Truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker.²⁴¹

Although Sri Aurobindo has received academic training and knowledge right from his early days to the University level out and out in the western system and has bathed for years together in the deep-sea water of the western culture and learning ultimately be emerges as a modern seer-poet and educator – the counterpart of the ancient seer-educators (Rishis) of the Upanishadic age. Through self-knowledge he occupies a unique position in respect of forming a macro view of life that alone can give us a vision of a comprehensive man-making ideal for the present-day humanity and of the posterity. From the writings of Sri Aurobindo we come to know that with great devotion he goes through the Upanishads and clings

²⁴¹ The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.15, Essays on the Gita, p.4 (PS)
to the Truth that he receives from the Upanishads and looks upon the eternal Truths as the bed-rock of human knowledge and on the basis of which he erects the edifice of his system of education popularly known as Integral Education covering both the world-knowledge and self-knowledge. Here lies his cryptic remark on the Upanishads —

_The Upanishads are epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge_\(^{242}\)

In fact, Sri Aurobindo forms his educational philosophy by the study of the Upanishads and other Indian scriptures and he makes serious attempts to realize the truths contained in them by applying the methods of the Rishis as he cannot satisfy himself with the philosophical ideas alone that come through intellectual exercise only. Surely at the outset there is no denying that the Upanishadic truths become an important source of knowledge to him but the methodology of attaining self-knowledge becomes an ideal of his educational philosophy which becomes fully developed only when knowledge spontaneously flows to him from higher consciousness as he devotes himself to meditation like the Rishis. It is better that we listen to the words of Sri Aurobindo himself in this regard —

\(^{242}\) The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, The Renaissance in India with A Defence of Indian Culture p.332 (PS)
My philosophy was formed first by study of the Upanishads and the Gita; the Veda came later. They were the basis of my first practice of Yoga; I tried to realise what I read in my spiritual experience and succeeded; in fact I was never satisfied till experience came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy ... The other source of my philosophy was the knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation, especially from the level of the Higher Mind when I reached that level.\textsuperscript{243}

As a great seer-teacher the import of the Upanishads is indeed very great to Sri Aurobindo. He looks upon the Upanishads as a store-house of knowledge, nay, a store-house of jnana and as such, in his macro view of the educational programme the modus operandi of attaining the truths of the Upanishads has a great role to play and in his Integral Education side by side with his recommendations for the training of the exteriorized aspects of man his emphasis on practice of the psychic consciousness has been made significantly important especially, by showing it as the leader of the march. In this connection let us glance over a few words of Sri Aurobindo —

\textsuperscript{243} The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.36, Autobiographical Notes, p.113 (PS)
The Upanishads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge in a higher degree even than the Vedas, but knowledge in the profounder Indian sense of the word, Jnana.\textsuperscript{244}

Sri Aurobindo has thoroughly studied the Upanishads and has become conversant with the applications of the educational system of that period. He says —

...in the jail I had the Gita and the Upanishads with me, practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads; these were the only books from which I found guidance.\textsuperscript{245}

Again he says —

The first Indian writings that took hold of me were the Upanishads and these raised in me a strong enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{246}

Sri Aurobindo, the seer-poet always calls a spade a spade. Here lie the words that clearly state how deeply he is moved by the visions of Vedas and Upanishads—

One might almost say that ancient India was created by the Veda and Upanishads and that the visions of inspired seers made a people.\textsuperscript{247}

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\item The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, The Renaissance in India with A Defence of Indian Culture p.331 (PS)
\item Ibid. Vol.36, Autobiographical Notes, p.98 (PS)
\item Ibid. p.113 (PS)
\item The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.26, The Future Poetry, p.264 (PS)
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In his auto-biographical notes Sri Aurobindo observes —

*My philosophy was formed first by the study of the Upanishads.*

The importance and significance of this observation is indeed very great and far-reaching. As he is a Yogi what he thinks and says bear testimony to a penetrating light to its entire works and makes them resplendent with effulgent light. A man of his height and depth looks at things as an integrated whole and there is hardly any inconsistency or piecemeal dealing of facts. And as such the light that comes out from the depth of his truth finds reflected in all his creative work. Whatever he has said regarding the Upanishads in the formation of his philosophy is true not only in all other fields of work but also equally true in respect of his ideas and activities in the field of education.

One should be on one’s guard, lest he might commit a fundamental mistake. In this connection one must go through another relevant statement for having a glimpse of his inner light exceeding the periphery of the intellect —

*I founded my philosophy, not on ideas by themselves. I owed nothing in my philosophy to intellectual abstractions, ratiocination or dialectics; when I have used these means it was simply to explain my philosophy and justify it to the intellect of others. The other source of my philosophy was*
the knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation, especially from the plane of the Higher Mind when I reached that level; they [the ideas from the Higher Mind] came down in a mighty flood which swelled into a sea of direct Knowledge always translating itself into experience, or they were intuitions starting from experience and leading to other intuitions and a corresponding experience.249

One should remember here that after all, Sri Aurobindo is capable of x-raying thoughts and ideas of others by the experience of the floodlight of his own Higher Mind and he himself also points out that the other source of his philosophy is the knowledge that flows from above when he sits in meditation. He has categorically stated in these lines that he owes nothing in his philosophy to intellectual abstractions and he has founded his philosophy not on ideas by themselves but the light from his higher mind that comes to him as a direct knowledge. He further adds what he has said in this regard is simply to explain and justify it to the intelligence of others.

In clear terms Sri Aurobindo divulges his frame of mind to all concerned that he has thoroughly gone through the Upanishads and prefers to re-explain them to the young generations and bring home to them the profundity and

249 The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-36, Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, p.113 (PS)
sublimity of such a store-house of knowledge. Nor is this all. He further resolves to give effect to social changes and spread some such ideas by his literary works, speech and practice. And in this way he has a mission to educate people on the basis of his philosophy founded on the bed-rock of the Upanishads. Of course, he has also mentions that he has a mind to add to the ancient ideas the revelations he has already been experiencing through meditation and yoga. Sri Aurobindo’s words to this effect are shown below —

I may say briefly that I have been given a ... mission, to re-explain the Veda & Vedanta (Upanishads) in the ancient sense which I have recovered by actual experience... which has been revealed to me & which, as I progress, I am imparting to the young men staying with me & to others in Pondicherry; I have also to spread certain ideas by literary work, speech & practice, to try & bring about certain social changes &

finally, to do a certain work for my country, in particular, as soon as the means are put in my hands.²⁵⁰

Sri Aurobindo talks of his new theory of ideal life based on the Upanishadic foundations towards which humanity must move. A great yogi, as he is, in his vision he has no difficulty to see the future mankind and this is why he

²⁵⁰ The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-36, Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, p.174 (PS)
confidently declares that his theory of ideal life on the basis of vedantic philosophy is going to lead the future humanity. Here, there is also his link with the Upanishads whether in the ancient sense or in the sense of one brought before us through his revelations and the source stands as a perennial one. And how can it be reckoned as to what a mega type of Educator Sri Aurobindo is, particularly when he says that the humanity must undergo a radical change if man follows it properly. Here are his words in reference —

My new theory of the Veda will appear as also a translation and explanation of the Upanishads ... a book of Vedantic philosophy giving the Upanishadic foundations of my theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move.\(^{251}\)

Sushmita Bhowmik in her article “Sri Aurobindo’s views on Education and its relevance” in the tome, entitled ‘Education: Philosophy & Practice’ says –

The primary aim of Sri Aurobindo was to make the youths of the nation conscious of their own culture and heritage and develop them as self-reliant human beings. Sri Aurobindo discussed about the fundamental aim and significance of true education. … Education should help him to become an ideal member of the nation who may gradually unite with the

\(^{251}\) The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-36, Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest, p.209 (PS)
entire humanity. Thus, true education should bring harmony between the man, the nation or people and the universal humanity\textsuperscript{252}.

6.2. **Educational Philosophy:**

Sri Aurobindo, the great seer-educator and the formulator of Integral Education – the first of its kind, a unique postulation in the sense that its schemes cover all the faculties and aspects of human life looks upon the Upanishads as the bed-rock of his man-making theories for the posterity. He points out that the Upanishads give the foundations of his theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move. Below is shown its relevance —

... a book of Vedantic philosophy \textit{(not Shankara’s but Vedic Vedanta)} giving the Upanishadic foundations of my theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move.\textsuperscript{253}

As individual man happens to be one of the sparks of the divine mere objective knowledge does not exhaust the whole of his being and as such according to Upanishads education means to him a modus operandi in his self-fulfilment. Hence, in the ultimate analysis the Upanishadic teaching views an

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\textsuperscript{252} Bhowmik Sushmita, Sri Aubindo’s views on Education and its relevance, Education: Philosophy & Practice, p.32 (SS)
\textsuperscript{253} The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.36, Autobiographical Notes, p.209 (PS)
\end{flushright}
individual man from a greater and total perspective in the context of his potentialities and growth and transformation and consequently stress has been laid on the inner than the outer piecemeal aspects of the individual life. Thus, in the pursuit of knowledge the chief concern of the Upanishadic education is to grow in the effulgent light of the Atma along with acquisition of objective knowledge.

What a deep regard the great educator has for the Upanishadic ideas in respect of leading the young learners towards a great future may be clearly marked in the following lines of Sri Aurobindo —

*I regarded the Upanishads as the most ancient source of Indian thought... the true Veda, the first Book of Knowledge.*

The great educator as he is a seer as well, has no difficulty to realize and see for himself with his insight that man surely has to undergo a radical change through the passage of time since the evolutionary thrust will not spare him from equipping him with the psychic faculty in due course. Sri Aurobindo once again points out here that a higher self has been waiting behind the mental being to be evolved and that is also impending. In the circumstances, Sri Aurobindo adds that

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254 Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.xxiii (SS)
255 Ibid. p.158 (SS)
256 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.15, The Secret of the Veda, p.36 (PS)
man must get ready for the preparation of manifesting the higher faculties latent in him and must receive necessary training to rise to the occasion, lest he will be a misfit to the posterity. In all probability it occurs to the great educator that the ancient Rishis of the Upanishadic age are aware of this possibility and promise in man and they have already made attempts to unfold higher consciousness through the training centres of Brahmacharyāshram and this is why they have led the scholars to make serious exercise of the spirit as Brahmacharins side by side with their training in the worldly life. What Sri Aurobindo says in this regard is cited below —

The Upanishad replies that there is such a greater existence behind, which is to the mind and its instruments, to the life-force and its workings what they are to the material world. Matter does not know Mind, Mind knows Matter; it is only when the creature embodied in Matter develops mind, becomes the mental being that he can know his mental self and know by that self Matter also in its reality to Mind.257

In the Upanishadic system of education the learning and attaining knowledge are not one and the same; there is a marked distinction between the two. In this respect there is an illustrious dialogue. Having asked by the great

257 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, vol. 18, Kena and other Upanishads, p.15 (PS)
preceptor Sanatkumar in the Chhāndogya Upanishad Narada<sup>258</sup> gives him to know that he has already learnt quite a number disciplines and he also jubilantly tries to enumerate them one by one. The great educator forthwith points out that mere acquisition or learning does not necessarily mean gaining true knowledge. As true knowledge is always luminous and transparent one must be seriously inclined for a genuine urge for Transcendental knowledge and at the same time must have the patience and courage to make oneself free from all intricacies of superficialities of learning.

In the Chhāndogya Upanishad again through another dialogue which is used as a method of teaching in the Upanishadic period, it has been convincingly shown how teaching can be made not only penetrating but also very effective. Here is a dialogue between a father and a son. In course of a conversation Shwetaketu’s father Āruni asks his son to tell him what is the thing by knowing which all can be known. The simple answer is ‘<i>Tat Tvam Asi</i>’ (तत्वमसि)<sup>259</sup> and Āruni points out that the quintessence of the entire phenomenal world which is also the inner unifying force transcends all and at the same time causes manifestation of all the multiplicity of phenomena.

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<sup>258</sup> Chandogya Upanishad, VII.1 (<i>PS</i>)

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. 6.8.7 (<i>PS</i>)
In the Katha Upanishad\textsuperscript{260} in course of a dialogue Yama marks the qualities of patience, sincerity, steadfastness and unquenchable quest of knowledge in the young Brahmacharin Nachiketa. Yama is also highly satisfied with the courage he has shown in respect of rejecting Yama’s offer of immense wealth, progeny and spectacular success in life. Finally, he allows him what he asks for. However, when Nachiketa’s choice falls on aspiration for secret knowledge it makes him all the more worthy to Yama.

In the story of Narada-Sanatsujat it occurs that Narada completely surrenders to Sanatsujat saying – अधीनि महान्\textsuperscript{261} Narada entreats Sanatsujat to allow him to be his disciple so that he may attain genuine knowledge under his guidance and training. Being asked Sanatsujat says – यदेऽबलवं तेन मोप्यलिद ततस्य बह्यानीति\textsuperscript{262} Now the guru wants to know from Narada all about his acquisition in the field of knowledge and only then he will be in a position to decide as to which part of knowledge has to be imparted to the latter. In his reply Narada produces an exhaustive list viz., the four Vedas, history, mathematics, grammar, reasoning, ethics, the ideas of devas, the art of archery, astrology, the knowledge of the snake, the knowledge of the gandharvas and the science of medicine (ayurveda) etc. Forthwith Sanatsujat points out that Narada has gone through them only

\textsuperscript{260} Katha Upanishad, I.1.4 (PS)
\textsuperscript{261} Chândogaya Upanishad, 7.1.1 (PS)
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid. (PS)
superficially and he is only familiar with the nomenclature of the scriptures - नामेवैतद्263, नामो ब्रह्म264, वाचं ब्रह्म265, मनो ब्रह्म266, संकल्पं ब्रह्म267, चितं ब्रह्म268. Thereafter the guru commences imparting fundamental lessons to him saying - ऋग्वेदं भगवोऽवेमि ब्रज्जवेदं सामवेदमाधवर्तं चतुर्भुजमितिहासपुराणं पच्चमं बेदानं बेदं पिन्यं राशिं दैवं निधिं बालोवक्येकायनं देवविदा।

The underlying meaning of this is Brahma is every thing - सर्वं स्वतं ब्रह्म। The lesson is that without having formal education Sanatsujat has mastered true Truth of immense height, unfathomable depth and in spite of having a wide range of surface knowledge i.e. scholastic attainments in as many as 64 sciences of Narada the light in him remains sealed in him and cannot come out of the cover. In the circumstances, fortunately he receives proper guidance from Sanatsujat and ultimately the effulgent light of his being leads him to self-knowledge and illumination.

In Chhāndogya Upanishad270 again we find a story wherein Rishi Goutam is very much pleased with the honesty and truth-clinging attitude of Satyakama

263 Chāndogya Upanishad, 7.1.14 (PS)
264 Ibid. 7.1.5 (PS)
265 Ibid. 7.2.2 (PS)
266 Ibid. 7.3.2 (PS)
267 Ibid. 7.4.3 (PS)
268 Ibid. 7.5.3 (PS)
269 Ibid. 7.1.2 (PS)
270 Ibid. IV.4 (PS)
when he is asked about his family background. Finally his truth-seeking attitude leads him to receive real knowledge at the instance of Rishi Goutam.

What the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic age say in respect of bringing out the inner light through education has been confirmed by the words coming out from the depth of Sri Aurobindo being, of course, having some changes here and there regarding its implementation but the fundamental massage seems to remain the same all through.

A seer-teacher as Sri Aurobindo is, he has before him the promise in man that is latent in him. Naturally when Sri Aurobindo thinks in terms of education he focuses on the future of mankind as well. He thinks as an educator he must also take into consideration how the latent traits of higher consciousness can be fruitfully organized for having them properly manifested in man. Here his thinking is analogous to the thoughts of the great educators, nay, the Rishis of the Upanishadic age viz., Āruni, Shwetaketu’s father and teacher of Chhāndogya Upanishad271; Yama, teacher of Nachiketa of Katha Upanishad272; Sanatsujat, teacher of Narada of Chhāndogya Upanishad273; Rishi Goutam, teacher of Satyakama of Chhāndogya Upanishad274.

271 Chāndogya Upanishad, 6.8.7 (PS)
272 Katha Upanishad, I.1.4 (PS)
273 Chandogya Upanishad, VII.1 (PS)
274 Ibid. IV.4 (PS)
In fact, the Rishis belong to a higher stage of existence that precedes long long before the age of an incomplete, outward and superficial stage of knowledge. What Sri Aurobindo realizes in the modern context had already occurred to the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic age. The Rishis also involved the learners to make exercise of the spirit right from the young age but their method of exercise was based on old conventional type. Sri Aurobindo equally feels the necessity of the exercise of the spirit to deal effectively the problems of human life. It also occurs to him that a more aspiring aim of human endeavour cannot be had in the absence of spiritual knowledge as it leads to integral perfection for attaining highest height as well broadest broadness.

Both the Rishis and Sri Aurobindo are found to lay great importance to the exercise of the spirit for leading the learners from the outward surface consciousness to the inmost truth of the spirit for the benefit of both the individual being and his communal existence. Regarding the Indian line of thinking Sri Aurobindo himself has said —

_Ancient Indian spirituality recognised that man lives in the Ignorance and has to be led through its imperfect indications to a highest inmost knowledge. Our life moves between two worlds, the depths upon depths of our inward being and the surface field of our outward nature. The majority of men put the whole emphasis of life on the outward and live_
very strongly in their surface consciousness and very little in the inward existence... A mere intellectual, ethical and aesthetic culture does not go back to the inmost truth of the spirit; it is still an Ignorance, an incomplete, outward and superficial knowledge. To have made the discovery of our deepest being and hidden spiritual nature is the first necessity and to have erected the living of an inmost spiritual life into the aim of existence is the characteristic sign of a spiritual culture.275

Kireet Joshi takes clues from the Upanishadic education and observes Sri Aurobindo’s Integral education as the right way for the future generation, saying—

*During the Upanishadic periods, there was an emphasis on the pursuit of an integral aim of life, which determined the discipline of integral education. Both the material and spiritual poles of being had their place in this system*276.

Aparna Banerjee in her article “Sri Aurobindo and his Philosophy of Education” as it is found in the tome, entitled ‘Education: Philosophy & Practice’ expresses her views in this regard —

275 The complete works of sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, Early Cultural Writings, p.419 (SS) /
SABCL: Vol.17, Education and Art, p.192 (PS)
276 Joshi, Kireet, The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil, p.36 (SS)
The word “integration” means a unity of parts into a whole in such a way that the parts themselves are blended and transformed into a new character.\textsuperscript{277}

Professor Indrani Sanyal, Jadavpur University in the introduction of the book entitled ‘Education: Philosophy & Practice’ expresses her views in this regard —

According to Sri Aurobindo a true education is one that integrates man, nation and spirit. Sri Aurobindo sees in man, the individual, a soul, a portion of the divinity enwrapped in mind and body. Though man is the highest of the created beings, he is not the last word in the evolutionary process. A great possibility awaits man.\textsuperscript{278}

Further she says –

…….the Upanishadic model of education, which had been pursued by Sri Aurobindo, may be viewed as a way for the development of the human.\textsuperscript{279}

As Sri Aurobindo is also a seer he is equally competent to see eye to eye with the ancient Rishi-teachers and their findings and truths contained in the Upanishads. Here Sri Aurobindo refers to the mantras from some of the Upanishads and intimates that by getting the knowledge (Vijnana) and possessing

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\textsuperscript{277} Banerjee, Aparna, Education: Philosophy & Practice, p.12 (SS)\\
\textsuperscript{278} Sanyal, Indrani & Ganguly Arindam, Education: philosophy & Practice Introduction, p.14(SS)\\
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid. p.16(SS)
\end{flushright}
the delight of oneness as envisaged in the Upanishads one is capable of realizing that One dwells in the delight of Truth which is free from all bewilderments and delusions. In Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Education he has also laid much stress on psychic exercise which enables the learners to attain the effulgent light of the psychic consciousness already latent in him and step into the successive stages of higher consciousness on the one hand and to reject all that is a hindrance to his escalation. Let us see what Sri Aurobindo has said in this connection —

When we have this realisation, when we dwell in it securely and permanently, all possibilities of grief and sin, fear, delusion, internal strife and pain are driven puissant from our being. We realise in our experience the truth of the Upanishads, आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वानं न विभेदि कतस्यन।

“He who possesses the delight of the Brahman has no fear from anything in the world,” and that other in the Isha Upanishad,

यथिनं सर्वाणि भूतानि आज्ञावाभूतं विजानत।

तत्र को मोहः कथा शोकं एकत्वमनुष्यस्वत॥२८०

When all created things become one with a man’s self by his getting the knowledge (विद्वान), thereafter what bewilderment can he have or what grief, when in all things he sees their oneness?” The whole world then
appears to us in a changed aspect, as an ocean of beauty, good, light, bliss, exultant movement on a basis of eternal strength and peace.\textsuperscript{281}

He further says –

*The Upanishads give their clue to the psychological and philosophical ideas of the earlier Rishis and hand down to us their method of spiritual experience and intuition.*\textsuperscript{282}

Sri Aurobindo takes into account of the fact that the Indian seer-teachers mostly Rishis resort to some unconventional methods and discover truths by intuition and revelation etc. Such truths of the Vedas and the Upanishads have later been systematized by the philosophers and made clear to the reasoning intelligence which has enabled man to acquire the sublime knowledge regarding man and the world. In his educational system Sri Aurobindo takes cognizance of some such facts and by dint of his own revelations and intuitions constructs the methodology of Integral Education for facility of attaining knowledge that may lead young learners to unfold all the latent diviner elements in their beings. He says —

*The work of the philosophers was to systematise and justify to the reasoning intelligence the truths of the self and man and the world*

\textsuperscript{281} The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, vol. 13, Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, p.77 (PS)

\textsuperscript{282} Ibid. Vol.15, The Secret of the Veda, p.33 (PS)
already discovered by intuition, revelation … and embodied in the Veda and the Upanishads, and at the same time to indicate and systematise methods of discipline founded upon this knowledge by which man might effectuate the highest aim of his existence.²⁸³

It occurs to Sri Aurobindo that since man is a mental being and by dint of his spirit of scientific enquiry pari passu his reasoning intelligence he has been able to fulfill his mission of the mental sphere; and he has now to exceed the periphery of his mind for he cannot be satisfied with what he has already attained. The higher self in man always drives him towards further progress and like Tennyson’s Ulysis his inner voice goads him with a strong urge for exceeding himself as his very nature does not know of what is called rest. Sri Aurobindo also does not stop here. The great seer-teacher believes that there is a strong creator within human being and such a being is not meant for a changeless littleness as he is destined to fit his acts to a transcendent scheme with the help of his sublime powers that are shut in Nature’s cell. Taking notice of the Upanishadic system of education and realizing the import of such a system Sri Aurobindo proceeds further and on the basis on the fundamental tenets of the earlier system in the light of his own revelations he rebuilds the model of his Integral Education laying stress on the

²⁸³ The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, The Renaissance in India with A Defence of Indian Culture p.343 (PS)
exercise of the psychic faculty in the modern context of the contemporary world. Only when a learner attains a higher state of consciousness during his formative period of life by the exercise of the spirit can he rise above sin and virtue or good and evil and in such a state of equality alone it becomes possible on his part to give a better look and understanding in the worldly affairs and bring a desired change for solving the problems of individual as well as social life and work for peace and progress for humanity. Since both the seer-teachers of the Upanishads and their modern counterpart, Sri Aurobindo hold that without spiritual knowledge it is not possible on anyone’s part to get over the limitations and the selfish as well as the parochial outlook of the conventional life and attain height and depth of selflessness which is surely the destiny of the posterity. And this accounts for the inclusion of exercise of the spirit in the Upanishadic system of education all along and subsequently Sri Aurobindo also includes spiritual education in his ‘Integral Education’ programme. Of course, much emphasis has been laid on psychic education in the modern context and let us have a glimpse of Sri Aurobindo’s comment in this regard —
Undoubtedly… the Upanishads teach the equality which rises above sin and virtue, beyond good and evil… for the man who is on the path and advanced enough to fulfil the supreme rule.\textsuperscript{284}

In the realm of the Upanishadic teaching morality or ethics has to be attained from the depth of the truth of the being and when the source of morality and ethics is spiritual knowledge it permeates throughout the whole being and as such it is not a piecemeal knowledge and does not know distinction whatever in respect of time and space. Morality in terms of Upanishadic education can be had only with the constant contact of the soul as it enables one to implement knowledge whether in the field of morality or ethics or in other fields, – it works effectively in all the levels of consciousness. Although it is attained through concentration and meditation and the exercise of the spirit of the individual it has great impact on the social level to the world of plurality as well\textsuperscript{285}.

In the episode of Narada-Sanatkumar\textsuperscript{286} we are given to know that Narada even after studying an imposing list of the leading sciences approaches Sanatkumar for a higher light of knowledge which alone is capable of leading him

\textsuperscript{284} The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.15, Essays on the Gita, p.34 (PS)
\textsuperscript{285} Mundaka Upanishad, I.2.13 (PS)
\textsuperscript{286} Chandogya Upanishad, VII.1 (PS)
to infinite knowledge and Bliss. For real fulfillment and real light we also hear
the voice of Sanatkumar declaring – यो देव भूम्यत ततं सुकम, नात्ये सुकम्य अस्ति, भूमेव सुकम् 287
The Infinite is Bliss and there is hardly any Bliss in anything small. The Infinite
alone leads to the Bliss.

The entire teaching of the Upanishads focuses on the realization of the
Divine Truth by getting rid of ignorance and by dissolution of ego and attachment
– whether Maitreyi of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad288 or Nachiketa of Katha
Upanishad289 all aim at Divine knowledge and rise above all limitations and enter
from the earthly and physical consciousness into a realm of sublime
consciousness of the Absolute.

Does not Sri Aurobindo express almost the same idea regarding the
fundamental basis of True education when he says -

*It is not yet realised .......... that the true secret, whether with child or
man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within.*

*That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call
it into the foreground as “the leader of the march set in our front”, will
itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and
develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of*

287 Chandogya Upanishad, VII.23.1 (PS)
288 Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, II.4.3 (PS)
289 Katha Upanishad, I.1.4 (PS)
its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception.  

The author, Sri Biswanath Sengupta in his book entitled ‘A New Vision of Education in the light of Sri Aurobindo’ points out -

_Frankly speaking man is still a half animal. At the most, we may call him a reasoning animal with the faculties of mind and intellect. Even after great achievements in the fields of philosophy, science and technology he has still been treading the circling tracks of mind. He does not know even at this stage of progress around him that his success is chiefly confined to material advancement only. He is not also aware that his actions will one day emerge as swift revealing steps for he is not body and mind and life only. In fact, he is made of an indestructible substance for Transcendental powers are shut in human nature’s cell. He has really a bright future. A greater destiny waits him in his front. If he wills he can make his life many times more powerful. This is high time to explore his being’s hidden realms. Surely he cannot remain satisfied with surface acts in establishing supremacy in the physical world. Nature in him has also now kindled the fire of exceeding_  

290 Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, p.33 (PS)
the periphery of mind which is always stirred by the impulse of life. Now this is the hour of taking the concealed light in him in wider fields. So, in spite of wide experience in illumined knowledge the great seer-teacher of the Upanishadic age can never segregate himself from the search for truth and he is found making joint venture with the young Brahmacharin for more and more illumination and self-knowledge. Never does he neglect he feel tied in putting efforts for the search of the sublime. Never does he neglect his dedication in the study and acquisition of knowledge. Never does he neglect his duty of imparting knowledge to his sishya. Never is he negligent of welfare and throbbing of the sishya. Never does he neglect to keep his physical frame sound. In fact, he stands before his sishya as a burning example of Truth incarnate. He carries on his intense research for spiritual perfection in secret knowledge in the pursuit of discovering the highest Light in the darkest caves of the Retas. The seer-teacher of the Upanishadic school also retains much of the conception of the Vedic life and he lays great emphasis on an integrated approach to both material and spiritual aspects of human life in the educational programmes. But later the original impulse has been lost and its consequences are inconceivable. Before completion of the integrated macro approach to the possibilities of the transformation of the physical life in the effulgent light of spiritual knowledge a

291 Sengupta, Biswanath, A New Vision of Education in the Light of Sri Aurobindo, p.102 (SS)
trend of exclusivism develops into such a degree that it has no longer been possible to preserve the original dynamic movement of the Indian life and Indian education.

It is by the revered one like the seer-teacher’s living example that lessons may have impact infinitely better than holding theoretical discussions and outstanding instructions. When the young one finds his guru whom he looks upon as the leader of the march acting in accordance with lofty ideals all the while and does what he says sooner or later all such things of the guru start silently reflecting in the attitude and performances of the sishyas. In this way the revered guru happens to be the demigod to the tender-aged pupil and in his turn he of his own accord begins to imitate the guru’s straightforwardness, selflessness, sincerity, courage and many such outstanding qualities such as perseverance, self-control etc. etc. Following the guru the young learner has gradually been able to do away with little by little his defects like want of self-control, weaknesses, arbitrary impulses, impatience, ill-tempered nature and the like. The very presence of the guru for whom his (Sishya) reverence knows no bounds has a dynamic impact on his inner and outer life – he seems to be in all readiness to do any sacrifice in the hour of the guru’s need. Taking account of all these things it may be pointed out here that to make education of the young ones effective and meaningful and spontaneous bonds of trust with discerning affection, which alone
can make the task easy-going, has to be created and in this respect the Upanishadic system of education has throughout been spectacularly successful.

6.3. **Teacher-Taught-Environment**

Thus, the ancient Indian system of education emerges in the age of the Upanishads as the fountain head of our education and create a tradition of guru-shishya relationship. Like great scientists and experimenters the illumined seer-educators discover ways and means i.e. methods that help the learner to exceed himself and be free from limitations for facility of fresh quest in the infinitude.

In the Āshram or gurukula the teacher who is also the seer along with his wife who also at times is a seer usually live with the pupils and as such, both of them look upon the young disciples as their children. In the circumstances, the tender-aged learners are brought up with love and care. Although the guru is possessed with illumined wisdom and wide experience he does not act as an instructor or task-master. The profundity of knowledge and the light in him prompts him to awaken the learners in such a manner that they may depend more on their own efforts of concentration and proceed by voluntary choice with patience, on the basis of a distinction between Shreyas (श्रेयस्) and Preyas (प्रेयस).
Kireet Joshi says –

The pupil is treated as a closed bud of the lotus of knowledge, which can unfold petal by petal, under the uplifting influence of the teacher. And while the pupil is expected to manifest inner enthusiasm to learn, the teacher is seen only as an aid in providing the necessary elements by means of which the lotus of knowledge which is enclosed in the bud can flower into its fullness.²⁹²

Sri Aurobindo has categorically outlined the teacher-taught relationship in clear terms and analyzed its salient features one by one, detailing out a complete view of the role of the teacher as well as that of the learner, and it is interesting to note that the Upanishads have also maintained some such views, of course, in their own style and mode of expressions. Here one may find the text of what Sri Aurobindo has said in this regard —

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and guide. 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

²⁹² Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.81 (SS)
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.  

In the Upanishadic period also nothing is imposed by the guru. He is just like a helper, a coordinator. He inspires the pupil to make contact with the depth of his truth for spontaneous manifestation.

Upanishadic education has laid stress on self-concentration, meditation as well as self-scarifying asceticism in respect of attaining higher knowledge through the exercise of human spirit. The teacher of the Upanishadic school is always on his guard. And his chief aim is to see that the pupil makes progress in the matter of attaining higher knowledge by dint of his own persistent hard enveavour. In fact, the seer-teacher of the Upanishadic age has no mind to intervene and impart education to his pupil as he wants his pupil to grow in the effulgent light of higher consciousness himself and without help from outside.

Sri Aurobindo holds the same view in this respect. His view that ‘Nothing can be taught’ has been mentioned in the same light as we find in the views of the seer-

293 The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-1, On Education, p. 184 (PS)
294 Mukherjee, Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.116 (SS)
295 Chândogya Upanishad, VI.2 (PS)
296 Ibid. VIII.8.4 (PS)
297 Brihadaranyak Upanishad, VI.2.6 (PS)
teachers of the Upanishadic features. He wants that the latent power of the young learners has to be attained by themselves through their own efforts and the teacher has to keep vigilance on them without the least intervention and help – at best what the teacher can do is to inspire the learners in all possible ways. In this connection Kireet Joshi observes –

In his book ‘The Synthesis of Yoga’, Sri Aurobindo lays central importance on concentration and speaks of four principal methods by which concentration can be attained, namely, meditation, contemplation, witnessing the passage of thoughts as they pass through the mind, and quieting and silencing the mind. There are also dynamic methods of meditation, in which the light of higher knowledge is introduced into lower states of consciousness and even of impulses and vibrations of desires, so that the latter can be enlightened and transformed\textsuperscript{298}.

Mention may here also be made that there are Charakas or the wandering scholars from whom there is ample scope for gathering knowledge in the Upanishadic age\textsuperscript{299}.

According to the Chhāndogya Upanishad the guru or the teacher is aware that every individual student has within him a store-house of knowledge and it

\begin{footnotes}
\item[298] Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.96 (SS)
\item[299] Brihadaranyak Upanishad, XI.3.1 / 7.1 (PS)
\end{footnotes}
lies dormant in him but whenever he concentrates deeply with a background of a regular and sincere contact with the central consciousness of his being the knowledge within him will have a chance of opening itself through his thoughts and illuminations.\textsuperscript{300}

Sri Aurobindo further points out —

\begin{quote}
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 ... The task is to find it, develop it, use it. 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.\textsuperscript{301}
\end{quote}

Here the suggestion is that every individual learner should be allowed to develop himself spontaneously his urge for a working hypothesis in accordance with his own nature and draw out the best in him unhindered and go forward to utilise the chance perfectly. Keeping an eye on the learner’s own inclination the teacher has to induce him to take initiative in the matter of being involved in a particular discipline and take up other disciplines one by one if he so desires in accordance

\textsuperscript{300} Chāndogaya Upanishad, IV.9.2 (PS)

\textsuperscript{301} The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-1, On Education, p. 184 (PS)
with his own priority. Here it may be pointed out that Chhāndogya Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad\textsuperscript{302} have also stated some such things regarding the role of the teacher and much emphasis has been laid on it. It may again be mentioned here that in the Upanishadic age a pupil has the privilege of opting for a vidyā freely out of a number of such vidyās as per the learner’s mental frame, inclination and willingness. And the question of any sort of imposition on the part of the teacher does not arise at all.

The Upanishadic system of education while allows freedom of choice in the matter of learning it equally allows the disciples to ask questions – ‘परिष्कृत्वेन स्वेत्या’. In quite a number of respects also the Upanishadic system is flexible and free from rigidities. To each and every learner individual attention is a must. For each learner the method that suits him best for his growth has to be devised and high efforts according to one’s capability is the norm here. For all these things the teacher is looked upon as the supreme absolute being. It is not authoritarianism on the part of the teacher that prompts the learner to see his guru to be seated on the highest pedestal and reverence. One who quenches the intense thirst of knowledge must surely have a high place of respect. The guru is equally looked upon as a surgeon who has to undertake operation for the patient, so is the role of

\textsuperscript{302} Chāndogya Upanishad, IV.2 (PS)/ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, VI.2.6 (PS)/ Chāndogya Upanishad, VIII.8.4 (PS)
the teacher. Here the teacher surely deserves respect and reverence. Such a seer-
teacher at times also appears in the heart-centre of the learner as his inner teacher
and the leader of the march. There is reason to believe that the āshram life is
rigorous to the young learners, nevertheless it is not without mirth and joy as well
as charm and beauty.

Once again Sri Aurobindo points out -

*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 sustenance, the air
which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed.
They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly. 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 clime. 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 for mankind 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.\footnote{303}{The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-1, On Education, p. 184 (PS)}

In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad\footnote{304}{Brihadaranyak Upanishad, II.4 (PS)} mention has been made of three processes of education viz., Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. Sravana means listening what is taught. Only broad hints are given by the preceptor usually. The teacher now asks the pupil to think out for himself. Here lies the scope for introspection and contemplation on the part of the pupil. Manana or cognition is a step for convincing oneself of the truth of what has been referred to. Kireet Joshi argues—

> The process of realisation of the Object of Knowledge consists of four steps: śravana, hearing the word that discloses the Object of Knowledge, manana, cogitation and reflection on the Object of Knowledge, nididhyāsana, dwelling in concentration on the Object of Knowledge, and sākṣātākāra, realisation of the Object of Knowledge\footnote{305}{Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.95 (SS)}. 

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303 The Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-1, On Education, p. 184 (PS)
304 Brihadaranyak Upanishad, II.4 (PS)
305 Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.95 (SS)
A very interesting instance of some such teaching has been mentioned in the Taittiriya Upanishad\textsuperscript{306}. Here Varuna instructs his son Bhrigu and after listening (\textit{Sravana}) the hints five times Bhrigu is in a position to comprehend the Absolute. There is another very interesting instance in Chhāndogya Upanishad\textsuperscript{307}. Here Svetaketu’s\textsuperscript{308} father has shown how psychological conditions are linked up with the physiological conditions. He has amply illustrated how mind and its faculties depend upon the energy of the body. Svetaketu after taking fast for fifteen days to his utter surprise finds that he does not possess an iota of knowledge in him but as soon as he takes food and drink knowledge begins to dawn upon his mind. Hence, this experiment illustrates that the truth of the mind or \textit{Manana} has to depend upon the food or \textit{Anna}. In the same way Vak also depends upon \textit{Tejah} or energy. These illustrations make it crystal clear that education in the highest knowledge aims at achieving a direct perception of truth by one’s own experiments and discoveries through constant contemplation of the One Reality. This process is called \textit{Manana}. The next process of the Upanishadic education is \textit{Nididhyasana} which is nothing but the concentrated contemplation of the truth and its realization. In fine, it may be concluded that through his own efforts education is attained by the pupil and the teacher only presides over the process.

\textsuperscript{306} Taittiriya Aranyaka, III (PS)
\textsuperscript{307} Chāndogya Upanishad, V-VI (PS)
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid. V.3-10 (PS)
Sri Aurobindo also holds the same idea when he says as the first principle of true teaching - ‘…nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose’. His second principle of true teaching is that ‘the mind has to be consulted in its own growth’. His third principle of true teaching is ‘from that which is to that which shall be’. So here Sri Aurobindo fully endorses the views of the Upanishadic teachers in respect of teaching and the role of the learners.

The teaching may contain prayers and advices but they are chiefly inspirations and not admonitions. In course of a discussion on the codes and conduct in Taittirya Upanishad309 some broad ideas are only brought before the disciples viz., ‘एकद ज्ञानम्’ (it should be worshipped), ‘एव कैदोपनियत’ (the secret teaching of the veda), तम्, सत्यम् and धम्म310. Here some modes of disciplines and orderliness have been mentioned so that the tender-aged ones may know their responsibility to the divine and society, pointing out how to maintain right relationship with others, how to cling to the truth, how to have the right way to living, how to show respect for the guru, elders and guest etc. etc. for achieving amity of feelings in the society311.

309 Taittirya Upanishad, I.I.6 (PS)
310 Taittireeya Upanishad, I.9 & 11 (PS)
311 Ibid. I.10 & III.10 (PS)
In the age of the Upanishads, as one is already aware that centres of education are mostly run by the Rishsi, the seer-teachers and when they impart lessons to the learners who live with their teachers in the same premises and eventually come so close to the Rishsis that they seem to belong to the same family as children of the Rishis and the Rishis on the other hand also make them totally identified with all the young learners of the Āshram. The relevant words of Professor Indrani Sanyal may as well be referred in the following lines –

The Acharya of the Upanishad delivers knowledge as inspired by the spiritual energy. The acharya is regarded as the Sakta, i.e., one who is capable of bringing about the strength in those who are being educated by him. In order to strengthen with Sakti, i.e., power or energy, the teacher or preceptor must be capable of placing himself at the level of Prajnanam, i.e., transcendental energy. The pupil is Sikshamana i.e., one who is being educated. The preceptor energies the pupil, the pupil accepts. There are passages at the very beginning in the Tattiriya Upanishad and also in some other places, where we find that prayers are offered jointly by the teahcres and the students.

The student-teacher relationship reaches its height through the close bond between the teacher and the student. The following prayers of the Acharya are important in this connection.
The acharya and the pupil are not poles apart where the acharya teacher and students are taught.\textsuperscript{312}

6.4. Brahmacharya on Education:

At the basis of the old Aryan system is the all-important discipline of Brahmacharya\textsuperscript{313}. The first necessity for the building up of a great intellectual superstructure is to provide a foundation strong enough to bear it. Those systems of education which start from an insufficient knowledge of human faculty, think they have provided a satisfactory foundation when they have supplied the student with a large or well-selected mass of information on the various subjects which comprise the best part of human culture at the time. The school gives the materials, it is for the student to use them,—this is the formula. But the error here is fundamental. Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence, it can only be part of the material out of which the knower builds knowledge, the starting-point, the nucleus of fresh discovery and enlarged creation. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge, is no education. The various faculties of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{312} Sanyal, I. & Ganguly, A., Education: philosophy & Practice Introduction, p.19 (SS)

\textsuperscript{313} The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, Early Cultural Writings, p.370 (PS)
\end{flushleft}
memory, judgment, imagination, perception, reasoning, which build the edifice of thought and knowledge for the knower, must not only be equipped with their fit and sufficient tools and materials, but train scholars to bring fresh materials and use more skilfully those of which they are in possession of. And the foundation of the structure they have to build, can only be had with the provision of a fund of energy sufficient to bear the demands of a continually growing activity of the memory, judgment and creative power.

The Upanishadic education although is an ancient Indian system it contains a unique and unparallel feature of Brahmacharya, never conceived or experienced by any other nation of the world, causes unlike the piecemeal training of the physical, mental and intellectual education prevailing all over the world an all-pervading and comprehensive transformation from the physical unit ‘ेक’ to ‘ज्ञ’ and from ‘ज्ञ’ to ‘आज्ञ’ right from the formative age of the learner. The Rishis or the seer-poets of the Upanishadic age are well aware that dynamic changes can be caused through the channels of the inner nature that automatically have great impacts on exteriorized aspects of human faculties. Thus after receiving education through Brahmacharya a learner undergoes a radical change though silent yet revolutionary in the body, life and mind as well by degrees wears a new vision of life and becomes quite fit for performing the working hypothesis of life without difficulty.
Kireet Joshi is also of opinion that –

*In the Indian system of education, there was a great deal of emphasis on discipline. The life of the pupil began with a resolve to impose upon himself the ideal and practise of Brahmacharya, which mean not only physical continence, but a constant burning aspiration for the knowledge – Vratam charishyami*.314

In the story of ‘Shvetketu-Āruni’315 of Chhāndogya Upanishad the dialogue that chiefly explains the secret cause of creation in its entirety is of a father and a son. The theme referred to here is - यथा सोम्यकेन्न मूल्यिण्डेन सर्व मृत्यं विद्वान्न स्वातः316 – the suggestion is that before worshipping an image of earthly material the worshipper usually infuses the earthly image into an incarnation of a supreme image with the help of the dynamic and subtler power of the mantra. The man-making programme of the Upanishadic system of education strives to give shape to a full-fledged and integrated human being with the pulsation of an effulgent Light monitoring every movement of thought and action. The system of education of the Upanishadic age is known as the Gurukul system. Under the gurukul system the tender-aged young learner is required to observe Brahmacharya or celibacy

314 Joshi, Kireet, The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil, p.31 (SS)
315 Chāndogya Upanishad, 6.1.1 (PS)
316 Ibid. 6.1.4 (PS)
and stay in the residential house or the Āshram of the guru for undergoing an all-round and integrated course of training that aims at physical, intellectual and moral development in the light of Brahmacharya (ब्रह्मचर्य) through the exercise of the spirit which ultimately makes communion with the Transcendental Being -

It transpires that Shvetketu is highly impressed by the role of knowledge of Brahmavidyā.

The methodology for imparting knowledge to the young disciples in the Upanishadic age may not be the same as that of Sri Aurobindo’s thought of education and surely there is a marked difference between the two methodologies viz, Brahmachrya-based education and Integral Education but the fundamental objective of both the schools seems to be one and the same with some degrees of changes of some terms and all that for when the Upanishadic teachers lay emphasis of self-knowledge Sri Aurobindo equally gives stress on psychic light in view of attaining a higher stage of life. In the following lines Sri Aurobindo has outlined how the Rishi-teachers of the Upanishads have given the guideline for seizing higher knowledge by marshalling the rays of knowledge along with accumulating and arranging the store in the steady or ‘Dhira’ mind and the right application of thoughts and intuitions through elimination of extensions and misapplication of false thoughts created by hasty mind —

317 Chāndogaya Upanishad, 6.8.7 (PS)
We must give time for the viveka to seize on our thoughts & intuitions, arrange them, separate their intellectual from their vijnanamaya elements, correct their false extensions, false limitations, misapplications & assign them their right application, right extension, right limitation, make, in the image of the Upanishads, the vy’uha or just marshalling of the rays of the sun of knowledge, व्यूहतः र्त्समयः. Knowledge is not for the hasty mind but only for the dhira, who can sit long accumulating & arranging his store and does not rush away with fragments like a crow darting off with the first morsel of food on which it can seize.\(^{318}\)

It occurs to us that the fundamental truth contained in the Upanishadic system of education has struck his mind so deeply that he is laid to believe that genuine advancement through educational programmes has to be made on the basis of such truths that the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic age have offered to the mankind for further progress. Modern education system all over the world as it prevails in our contemporary world is simply piecemeal imitation of the European academic world. At best it imparts education on the basis of some psychological leanings of the human mind. But Sri Aurobindo as a seer-teacher is convinced with his intuitive knowledge that the conventional mechanical type of European education is not capable of serving the demand of the present day man

\(^{318}\) The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, vol. 21, The Life Divine, p.517 (PS)
as well as the future man and in view of constructing educational methodology requires ways and means for harnessing deeper consciousness of the young learners. Sri Aurobindo says that in the circumstances many lovers of the past system may come with the proposal of introducing the Upanishadic system of education at the present moment as they are of opinion that it is high time to resort to this for surely it would meet the demand of the day. But Sri Aurobindo differs with them. He points out that the fundamental principles of the Upanishadic system of education must surly be retained but the modus operandi or the method has to be discovered to suit to the changed conditions of life. Here are the findings of Sri Aurobindo in this context —

*It is not our contention that the actual system of ancient instruction should be restored in its outward features, - a demand often made by fervid lovers of the past. Many of them are not suited to modern requirements. But its fundamental principles are for all time and its discipline can only be replaced by the discovery of a still more effective discipline, such as European education does not offer us.*

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In this connection Sri Aurobindo also says-

...each human being is a self-developing soul and that the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material.  

6.5. Psychic and Spiritual Education:

In ancient India the great teachers have been well aware that education means manifestation of what is already in man. Hence, they set up centres of learning for imparting thorough and comprehensive education. For some such full-fledged education they stress on the exercise of the spirit for having light that might illumine physical, mental, vital and all aspects of human existence. The learners are processed right from the early days of life for being fit to face all problems of human life courageously, competently with a truth-seeking attitude in their light of their spirits. Sri Aurobindo studies all the Upanishadic ideals and their practices and in the light of his own intuition and revelation builds up the edifies of Integral Education wherein the aims and principles of the Upanishadic seer-

320 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.25, The Human Cycle The Ideal of Human Unity War and Self-Determination, p.33 (PS)
teachers have been retained all through, of course, with the change of the modus operandi only in the field of application. The prevailing system of education which is concerned chiefly with the mental and intellectual exercise only can at best offer degrees through professional and some such academic disciplines is neither in a position to draw out the inner light and reflect them on the outer faculties nor is it capable of offering a thorough knowledge on the basis of man-making programmes. Sri Aurobindo in one of his articles says -

*The Indian University system has confined itself entirely to this (the intellectual part of education) branch … A degree is necessary for service and therefore people try to get a degree. Good! let it remain so. But in order for a student to get a degree let us make it absolutely necessary that he shall have a good education. ... it is a fundamental & deplorable error by which we in this country have confused education with the acquisition of knowledge and interpreted knowledge itself in a singularly narrow & illiberal sense. To give the student knowledge is necessary, but it is still more necessary to build up in him the power of using his knowledge.*

There is frame of psychic light in every child. It is usually concealed within the being. For the awakening of the psychic entity the teacher, father and specially the mother of the child may play an important role in the awakening the

321 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, Early Cultural Writings, p.359 (PS)
psychic entity in the child. As the child is the man in the process of formation he must also be given congenial environment and guidance to find his own psychic light. In the psychic light the child has the chance to feel and know spontaneously in a much more direct and luminous way and the psychic exercise helps one to have a macro view of life. Sri Aurobindo says —

... there is a secret psychic being, a divine element in our depths that is concealed even more than garbed by the mind, body and life.\textsuperscript{322}

Sri Aurobindo further adds in this context —

....it (the psychic).....can truly come forward and impose its power on the outer members.\textsuperscript{323}

It is by the exercise of the psychic in one’s nature that one comes in contact with one’s central being. And the psychic element is also a spark of the divine —

....the psychic entity ....... manifests itself as the central being which upholds mind and life and body and supports all the other powers and functions of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{324}

It must be kept in mind that the mind is not the seat of knowledge and truth but the psychic element is the original seat within of the truth and knowledge. In fact,

\textsuperscript{322} Sri Aurobindo, Essays Divine And Human, p.369 (PS)
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid. The Synthesis of Yoga, p.155 (PS)
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid. The Life Divine, p.941 (PS)
man’s success till now is chiefly confined to the material advancement only. As a
greater destiny waits him in his front and he has the chance of making his life
many times more powerful by the swift revealing steps of the psychic entity the
need for awakening the psychic entity in the learner through psychic education is
an urgent necessity. Let us listen to Sri Aurobindo’s words in this connection —

...the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education...\(^{325}\)

Children are under the influence of the psychic light and this may be called a
precious possession. In pursuance of Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Integral Education’ The
Mother says —

Every human being carries hidden within him the possibility of a greater
consciousness ... what the human mental consciousness does not know
and can not do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that
shines at the centre of the being, radiating through the thick coverings of
the external consciousness.\(^ {326}\)

Sri Aurobindo points out that the psychic entity or the deeper self within the
learner has to be awakened making it as the leader of the march to take up most of
the business of education out of our hands. Sri Aurobindo further mentions that as

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325 Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, p.33 (PS)
326 The Mother, On Education, p.30 (PS)
the leader of the march the psychic entity will surely develop the capacity of the psychological being towards the realization of its potentialities of which the external routine methods cannot accomplish it.

The knowledge of the Atma can only be had by attaining real knowledge\textsuperscript{327}. In fact, without meditation highest knowledge cannot be attained\textsuperscript{328}. The effulgent light that the learner gains through the self-identity with the Atma enables him to have the highest knowledge\textsuperscript{329}. Upanishads have laid much emphasis on the system of concentration as well as meditation for developing the inner self as part of the educational programme\textsuperscript{330}. Discussions on the practice of some such systems are found in the Katha Upanishad\textsuperscript{331}, Svetasvata Upanishad\textsuperscript{332} and Maitra Upanishad\textsuperscript{333}. Kireet Joshi also admits the same view. He says –

\begin{quote}
There was a secret knowledge that the highest light is contained in the darkest caves of the physical or the inconscient, and that one must descend into the depths of darkness to recover that highest light. I n the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[327] Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.115 (SS)
\item[328] Brihadaranyak Upanishad, I.5.23 (PS)
\item[329] Chāndogya Upanishad, VIII.15 (PS)
\item[330] Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.115 (SS)
\item[331] Katha Upanishad, III & IV (PS)
\item[332] Svetasvata Upanishad, II (PS)
\item[333] Maitra Upanishad, VI (PS)
\end{footnotes}
practical terms, this implied not rejection of physical and material life but an intensive cultivation and transformation of that life.\textsuperscript{334}

As we have already stated Sri Aurobindo at a stage reminds us that the fundamental principles of the Upanishadic system of education are for all time and they need to be retained by any means but the methodology for the implementation of such principles by the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic age should not be restored as they do not fit with the changed conditions of the present contemporary world. He further says that its discipline can only be replaced by the discovery of a still more effective discipline, such as European education does not offer us. Sri Aurobindo himself has discovered a more effective discipline to suit the modern requirements. But there is even in identity a difference. It means that the education that develops in the Tapovan under the guidance of the seer-teachers or Rishis of the Upanishadic age, laying emphasis on the education of the spirit (spiritual education) and the Integral Education of Sri Aurobindo in the modern world giving stress on psychic education though identical in their nature has some difference, especially, in respect of implementation and all that. Let us see what Sri Aurobindo says in this regard —

\textit{It is not yet realised … that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if  

\textsuperscript{334} Joshi, Kireet, The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil, p.36 (SS)
we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as “the leader of the march set in our front”, will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception.\textsuperscript{335}

Truly speaking man is still a half animal and at the most we may call him a reasoning animal with the faculties of mind and intellect. Even after great achievements and spectacular successes one after the other in the field of philosophy, science, technology etc. pari passu his ventures in respect of riding the heavens and reaching the stars he is still a petty adventurer and prisoner of a dwarf humanity treading the circling tracks of mind around his little self and petty things. And surely he is not meant for such a one sided surface life only. As the psychic light stares through the curtains of the mind’s windows he has the possibility of unfolding the higher light in him and face the veilless Truth. The life he leads conceals the Light in him. According to Sri Aurobindo man is destined to cross the dangerous spaces of his inner self. The great educator further adds – if sense could wake in tissue, nerve and cell, if in the crowded dumb

\textsuperscript{335} Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, p.33 (PS)
vibrations thought fumbled what then hinder the psychic light, hidden behind the
curtains stealing in? As man is the deputy of the aspiring world he has to
manifest himself and carry on his journey along the sunlit path and he has to push
forward in foreseeing depths of his being which would enable him to stand awake
in the effulgent light of the psychic. In spite of wrestling with unseen powers and
emerging as the master of a huge environment around him he is still now a
progressing human being among his brute compeers. Something higher and
nobler constantly waits and surrounds him towards which man moves to exceed
himself from the preceding stage and uncover his being as his imperfection as
well as ignorance toils towards perfection. In view of this Sri Aurobindo is bent
upon introducing psychic education which will unfold latent transcendental
powers that are shut in Nature’s cells since he has been already close to the Truth
of the psychic light. With much emphasis Sri Aurobindo states that the resultant
effect of psychic education is a thing decreed, inevitable, irresistible and
irrevocable. Once again Sri Aurobindo points out that education proper to the
Indian soul that people of this land are quest of cannot be confined to the past
efforts made by the Upanishadic Rishis but their principles must be carried
forward to the future need, to the greatness of its self-creation, to its eternal spirit.

336 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.33 & 34, Savitri, p.648 (PS)
Sri Aurobindo says —

... education proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit.  

In fact, Sri Aurobindo occupies a unique position in respect of his attainments chiefly derived from the studies of the monumental achievements of the Rishis belonging to the Vedic and Upanishadic fund of knowledge and on the other hand, from that of the Western education primarily based on intellectual exercise, besides his own spiritual advancements. In the next place, he is also a seer of outstanding height and depth and as such, he is above all parochial ideas. Open-minded and truth-seeking as he is, when he comes forward to appreciate greatly the utility of the reasoning intelligence in the modern world he reminds the people of this land of ours equally of the unparallel spiritual education of the Upanishadic period that has not only heightened the human existence but also paved the way for the manifestation of the developing soul through the ancient system of education. Hence, he is not ready to compromise with any system of education which does not make provision for the coming out of the developing

337 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, Early Cultural Writings, p.419(PS) / SABCL: Vol.17, Education and Art, p.192 (PS)
soul with effulgent light. Of course, he is equally ready to accommodate with the
attainments of the modern world and in view of this he has offered us a scheme of
Integral Education. Here lies his recommendation for blending and harmony in
respect of principles of Upanishadic education and the modern methodology
based on reasoning intelligence. Let us listen to what Sri Aurobindo says —

... education which starting with the past and making full use of the
present builds up a great nation. Whoever wishes to cut off the nation
from its past, is no friend of our national growth. Whoever fails to take
advantage of the present is losing us the battle of life. We must therefore
save for India all that she has stored up of knowledge, character and
noble thought in her immemorial past. We must acquire for her the best
knowledge that Europe can give her and assimilate it to her own peculiar
type of national temperament. We must introduce the best methods of
teaching humanity has developed, whether modern or ancient. And all
these we must harmonise into a system which will be impregnated with
the spirit of self-reliance so as to build up men and not machines.  

338 The complete works of sri Aurobindo, Vol. 6 & 7, Vande Mataram, p.895 (PS)
Aparna Banerjee in her article “Sri Aurobindo and his philosophy of Education” as it is found in the tome, entitled ‘Education: Philosophy & Practice’ expresses her views in this regard —

In spite of his nationalist zeal he wanted to introduce the best methods of teaching that as a whole humanity had. He wanted to harmonise it all into a system which would be characterised by a spirit of self-reliance.  

An educator without an insight of a seer will surely fail to have a full view of the latent forces in the learner and it is our proud privilege that we are having a discussion of no less a person than Sri Aurobindo who is not only a great educator but also a seer-teacher of unfathomable depth. Sri Aurobindo looks upon the learner not merely as a homosapien but a human being with a developing soul. To Sri Aurobindo the learner is not a force-compelled earth-born being only trading solely along the circling tracks of his mind around his little things and he is not meant for changeless littleness. If he wills he can be awake with spirit’s air and can be the author of high change. So Sri Aurobindo is not satisfied with the acquisition of the surface knowledge only he wants that the learners are inspired to take exercise of their higher consciousness. Hence, so far as the aims and objectives are concerned Sri Aurobindo with the seer-teachers of the Upanishadic

339 Banerjee Aparna, Education: Philosophy & Practice, p.16 (PS)
age is in favour of bringing out the powers and the light of the soul for making such things perfect for noble use. Here are the words of Sri Aurobindo in this regard—

*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.*

Kireet Joshi in his “The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil” observes—

*Sri Aurobindo undertook a programme of research involving the discovery of new knowledge in the light of which a new synthesis relevant to the needs of today and tomorrow can be created. The secret of that synthesis is the manifestation of Spirit in Matter, leading to an unprecedented perfection. Sri Aurobindo’s discovery of possibility of full operation in physical life may be regarded as the most significant gift of reascent India to humanity’s effort to overcome its crisis.*

**6.6. Conclusion:**

Thus, in the educational schemes of Sri Aurobindo we also come across the effulgent light of the Upanishadic ideas and he develops such ideas in the scheme of ‘Integral Education’. Sri Aurobindo points out that the ancients of this land had

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340 The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, Early Cultural Writings, p.384 (PS)
341 Joshi, Kireet, The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil, p.39 (SS)
the view that all knowledge is within and has to be evoked by education rather than instilled from outside. In the Upanishadic age the famous educational framework of ancient India was surely built upon the discipline of ‘Brahmacharya’ which happens to be the secret of ancient India’s pivotal discipline of the head & heart. In Integral Education Sri Aurobindo carefully retains the fundamental principles envisaged in the disciple of Brahmacharya. He has introduced Integral Education on the basis of this ancient goal of self-knowledge with the modern goal of world-knowledge. Both of these goals are admirable, and the two of them must go hand-in-hand in any educational system that is integral. To him education is a life-long learning process that makes it possible for anyone to manifest the full potential from their inner-most being and to create opportunities for living a better life.