CHAPTER – I

Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The word ‘education’ has been derived from a Latin word 'educare' which means bringing up children physically and mentally. Though education nowadays is regarded as school instruction only, it does not cover the whole programme as it does not exhaust the whole being of a man. As a part cannot be looked upon as the whole, the prevailing school education alone also does not mean a comprehensive scheme of training of a dynamic psychological being having latent subtler forces and light in his body, life, mind and soul. In fact, in the true sense of the term education is supposed to mean an attempt to unleash powers that lie hidden in all the faculties for bringing out a full-fledged man and as such one should have vital, mental, ethical training as well as the exercise of the spirit for discharging his responsibilities successfully as a human being.

The Upanishad which is chiefly a formidable part of the Vedas constructs the foundations of an education system that leads one to the resplendent growth of human life. It holds that a teacher should have faith in the inherent potentialities of each and every young learner. In fact, our early education system that prevails in the Upanishadic age stresses for meaningful self development.
Many of the leading educators of our times also have now been laying great stress on the aspect of self development in education.

The Vedic as well as Upanishadic system of education aims at the knowledge of the physical world (bhur), the vital world (bhuvan), and the mental world (swar). It also aims at covering the knowledge of the fourth world (mahas) which Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda & Sri Aurobindo make its right use in their respective scheme of education. Rabindranath very often tries to bring home to the students and inculcate in them the significance of the ideas of Gayatri Mantra & Brahmacharya whereas Swami Vivekananda has shown equal zeal for making the students interested in the exercise of Brahmacharya. And 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’. Here the researcher aims at throwing light on Upanishadic education and its influence on the educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda & Sri Aurobindo –

আধুনিক ভারতে যে মনীষীরা লুপ্ত ভারতীয় ঐতিহ্যের পুনরুজ্জ্বল সাহায্য করেছেন এবং এ দেশের শিক্ষার মধ্যে তা প্রতিফলিত করার চেষ্টা করেছেন তারা সকলেই প্রধান কয়েকটি উপনিষদ ও গীতার দ্বারা বিশেষভাবে প্রভাবিত। ... আমরা তিনজন শ্রেষ্ঠ শিক্ষানুষ্ঠাতার কথা আলোচনা করব :
(Those men of genius of modern India that came forward to initiate reawakening of the obsolete Indian tradition in order to have its impact on education of this land, in fact, all of them had been especially influenced by some of the leading ideas of the Upanishads and Gita. ... Here we are going to hold a discussion on three such preceptors namely, Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo. It will be clear that the basic ground works and structures of the thoughts of all the three lie in the tenets of the Upanishads. And there is a predominating impact of the Upanishad on all of them.)

On the whole what occurs to us is that the time-old man-making spirit of the Upanishadic education system is a theme of fundamental importance to all the three great educators viz., Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. And the most striking feature of this trend is that a rearising force and light is found to be tremendously running and illumining the educational thoughts and works of all these three educationists all through. All of them are fully convinced that a greater humanity has been waiting in the elements of the little

1 Sarkar, Sri Sunil Chandra, Rabindranather Sikshadrashan O Sadhana, p.73 (SS)
learners and if such young learners are offered a congenial as well as inspiring infrastructure or environment and on the other hand if they are also equally willing and able to do what is necessary on the occasion they are sure to come out with flying colours as many times more powerful human beings. Kireet Joshi, the great author writes –

*The living influence of the Upanishads can be evidenced by the fact that the greatest leaders of Indian renaissance have attempted to study the Upanishads and have declared their contemporary relevance to the needs of developing modern India, and particularly in developing a new system of education in India. The writings of Maharishi Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have underlined the importance of the Upanishads, and have even advocated the redesigning of contemporary Indian system of education in the light of the Upanishads*.

1.2. **CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**:

The system of education that prevails now in the length and breadth of this land of ours has chiefly been constructed in such a way that as if it were a legacy of the colonial rule in British India. Sixty four years have elapsed since we

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attained our independence. The country needs a kind of education that is not yet being conceived in the real sense of the term – that can be proper to the Indian soul and at the same time fit to modern requirements. Here people must be on their guard lest one should commit serious mistakes. Hence, education if it is to be, not a machine-made fabric its central aim must be building of the powers of the human mind and spirit – it is the evoking of the knowledge and will and the power to use knowledge, character and culture. If India has to play a leading role in meeting the challenges of the contemporary civilization and crisis we have to redesign our education system right now.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The researcher has undertaken this research with some objectives which are enumerated here as under:

- To study the methods and practices of the Upanishadic education system which may still have some bearing even today.
- To bring into view the educational philosophies of these three educators viz. Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo along with the impact of the Upanishadic system of education on them.

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3 Joshi, Kireet (2005) Good Teacher and the good pupil, p.39 (SS)
5 The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.VI, p. 38 (PS)
To investigate how the three great educators are influenced by the educational ideas of the Upanishadic education in respect of creating their respective centres of education and their congenial environment.

To evaluate how the three great educators are influenced by the educational ideas of the Upanishadic education in respect of the attitudes and the relationship of the teacher and the taught.

To trace out the living influence of Brahmacharya of the Upanishadic education system on the educational ideas of these three great educators.

To find out the outlines of the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo for reconstructing of contemporary Indian system of education in the light of the Upanishads.

1.4. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- Why the methods & practices of the Upanishadic education may have some bearing even today?

- What are the educational philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo which have the bearing of the Upanishadic system of education?

- How the three great educators are influenced by the educational ideas of the Upanishadic education in respect of creating their respective centres of education and their congenial environment?
How the three great educators are influenced by the Upanishadic education in respect of the roles of the teacher and the taught?

How does the concept of Brahmacharya of the Upanishadic education system influence these three great educators?

How these three great educators are influenced by Upanishadic education for reconstructing the contemporary Indian system of education?

1.5. EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM:

Lord Macaulay’s statement reminds us that we have behind us a history of manifold greatness which has been transgressed very diplomatically for enslaving the race. His words ran thus:

*I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have seen not a person who is a beggar, nor a thief, such wealth I have seen in this country, such moral high values. People of such calibre that I do not think we will ever conquer this country, unless we break the very back born of this nation which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her own ancient education system, her culture for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own and they will loose their self-stream and*
their native self-culture and they will become what we want them a truly dominated nation.\textsuperscript{6}

The atrocities of the colonial education policy haunt the researcher as to what is at the basis of the greatness of the masses of people in India? It is surely the ancient education system on the one hand and the time-old great literature of this land and the social & cultural fabric that move people to nobler ideas with colossal creativity. The educational system of our ancients that moves our people to lofty ideas and the vibrant as well as diverse creativity in India have inspired the researcher to take up the study of the Upanishadic education system and its influence on the educational thoughts of great educators like Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo for rekindling the dormant luminous light and help awakening our future generations in the sunlit path that might lead us creating a new humanity.

1.6. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The researcher takes up the gauntlet and engages himself into a thorough study of the obstinate problem that has changed the scenario of the educated Indian mind. The object of some such study is surely to open an avenue for understanding the educational views of the Upanishads and their influence on the

\textsuperscript{6} Lord Macaulay, British Parliament, 1835, February, 2 (SS)
great educationists like Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. This is why the researcher undertakes the research work entitled “Upanishadic Influence on Educational Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo”.

1.7. SOURCES OF RESEARCH MATERIALS:

The researcher has prepared his thesis on the basis of data available in the books and journals. The data which are available in the form of the text have been treated as primary source. The relevant portions of the Upanishads and the original writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo in the form of articles, speeches etc. on education have been treated as the Primary Source (PS) and writings on the same texts or topics by great authors have been referred to as the Secondary Source (SS) here. The ideas of the great educationists as mentioned in our research are taken from their original books generally known as collected works or selected works etc. and the writings on their educational thoughts by great authors and scholars in the books, journals etc. have been treated as the Secondary Source.
1.7.1. **PRIMARY SOURCES (PS)**

To develop the research meaningfully the researcher goes through the original text as available today. For example:

- The original Upanishads viz.,
  - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
  - Taittiriya Upanishad
  - Katha Upanishada
  - Chhāndogya Upanishad
  - Isa Upanishad etc.

- The original works of Rabindranath Tagore (রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)
  - Published by Govt. of West Bengal
  - Viswabharati Publication

- The complete works of Swami Vivekananda,

- The original works of Sri Aurobindo
  - The S.A.B.C.L. (Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library)
  - The complete works of Sri Aurobindo (hard copy, digital version)

1.7.2. **SECONDARY SOURCES (SS)**

The researcher takes help from a number of books and journals which require a long space for enumerating them. References will help a lot in this regard. To mention a few of those are:
Books of various authors of national & international repute on education system of the Upanishads

Educational thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore by distinguished authors

Educational thoughts of Swami Vivekananda by distinguished authors

Educational thoughts of Sri Aurobindo by distinguished authors

1.8. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

- The present study is historical in nature.
- Studying the Upanishadic texts on educational idea
- Searching the original educational thoughts and methodologies of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo reflected as primary source.
- Finding out the authentic writings of different authors regarding their relevant views on the proposed topic as Secondary Source.

1.9. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The researcher points out the following things as delimitation of the study:

- Although the edifice of the Upanishadic education system has been built upon the experiences of the Vedic era the researcher has not entered into the discussion of the Vedic education.
The researcher here has tried to discuss on Rabindranath Tagore’s fundamental thoughts on education in the light of educational thoughts Upanishads and his (Rabindranath Tagore) efforts towards their implementation in the Brahmacharyashram Vidyālaya at Santiniketan. But in this thesis the researcher has not made any attempt to discuss in respect of the development of some such thought and work.

On education Swami Vivekananda lays emphasis on helping learners to manifest what is already in them by resorting to Brahmacharya and some such ideas of the Upanishads. The researcher has striven hard to focus on this point only and he has not spared time to discuss on any other thing. No attempt has been made here to enter into the discussion on the execution of Vivekananda’s educational ideas.

The researcher has brought under his purview Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Education particularly showing the educational thoughts of Sri Aurobindo which coincide with that of the Upanishad. But the researcher has not brought any other thing for discussion. Nor any light has been thrown here on the aspect of its implementation.