

Shri Aurobindo Ghosh

MPOLCC-8

Indian Political Thought

Prepared By- Ms.Kanak Priya

Introduction

Aurobindo occupies a pre-eminent position among contemporary philosophers of education in India. His knowledge of eastern and western educational thought is immense. His approach to philosophy of education is mainly value based and he wanted to look at education from an integral point of view. His ashram at Pondicherry has grown in to an important place of learning. Even now, they are conducting experiments with scientific approach to evolve an ideal system of education which gives equal importance to all aspects of education. His philosophy may be called as integral philosophy of education.

“I can only repeat that he is the most dangerous man we have to reckon with.”

-Minto Lord

“Long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as a poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands.”

-Ranjan Chitta Das

Some of Aurobindo's many literary works:

Bases of Yoga, Bhagavad Gita and Its Message, The Future Evolution of Man, Rebirth and KarmaSavitri: A Legend and a Symbol, Hour of God,etc.

Early Life of Sri Aurobindo

On 15th August-1871, Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta (Bengal). He was born to Sri Krishnadhan and Swarnalata's house, a well reputed family in their village. Raj Narayan Bose was a maternal grandfather of Sri Aurobindo. In Bengali literature, he was known as a well known acknowledged leader and the famous writer in the Modern Review. He was not only the maternal grandfather of Sri Aurobindo but also the grandfather of Indian nationalism. In the words of Aurobindo's Mother, he owes his rich divine life with spiritual and valuable nature as well as his very higher literary capacity. When Aurobindo was four years old, at that time he was sent to the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling to acquire well education and knowledge. In a very childhood age, as a boy, Aurobindo received his early education in a public school in England. In that school, Aurobindo was strappingly observed by his old headmaster of the school, he noted that Aurobindo was the most richly endowed with intellectual capability and strong inner power. Because of this observation, the headmaster decided to give scholarship to him and after that Aurobindo went to King's College at Cambridge where he distinguished himself as a student of European classics. In 1890, he passed the Indian Civil Service Examination with great credit in addition with good result. Failing to stand the required test in horsemanship he was not permitted to enter the Covenantal Service of the Indian Government. On that time, Aurobindo was a proficient and intellectual scholar in Greek. He got high distinction in Latin language and also learnt French language. He picked up some of German and Italian vocabulary to study the great writers work like as Goethe and Dante in the original. He was also steeped in the teachings of our ancient Vedic scriptures. Sri Aurobindo was a genius and spontaneous in history as well as poetry. He became a scholar in specially English and Latin language and literature and in other. He was stayed in England for 14th years with the genius and profound writer like Romain Rolland. He was not only an outstanding writer in French literature but also the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1915. He wrote about Sri Aurobindo that he was one of the superficial thinkers and writers of Modern India. The most complete synthesis achieved up to the present between the genius and intellectuals of the West and the East. At Baroda, Aurobindo joined a job in the state service. For the first time, he was started working in the Survey and Settlements department then after he was moving to the Department of Revenue in the same place and later on he joined as a Secretariat to writing speeches for the Maharaja Gaekwad. In that time, Aurobindo got deeply engaged with the study of Indian culture, he would like to teach himself the languages like Sanskrit, Hindustani and Bengali. In England, he did not learn these languages during his education, had withdrawn from him. Because of the lack of punctuality and promptness in his work, it became resulting of the work from his pre-occupation with these other pursuits. In Baroda, he recruited as a French Teacher and he was

transferred to the Baroda College as a teacher of French. In that college, where he became a very popular and famous for his unconventional teaching approach and method. Later on he was promoted to the post of Vice-Principal at Baroda. It was the first time for him when he published the collections of poetry named The Rishi from Baroda. Then after he started to take interest in the India's freedom fighting against the British rule and finally he was actively participated in the fighting. He worked behind the scene as his position at the state of Baroda barred him from over political activity. When he was travelling with the aggressive states at that time he linked up the various groups in Bengal along with Madhya Pradesh. During the time of fighting he established reputed contact with the great and social persons like as Lokmanya Tilak and Sister Nivedita. As the part of awareness, he arranged the Military Training with Jatin Banerjee in the Baroda District Army. Among this Aurobindo inspired him to organize the distinctive resistance groups in Bengal. He was heartily invited by K.G. Deshpande who was a friend of him from his days in Cambridge as well as he was a leading in-charge of the weekly magazine named 'Induprakash'. He inspired and motivated to Sri Aurobindo to write something about the political situation of India. Aurobindo started writing a series of impassioned articles under the title New Lamps for the Old pouring vitriol on the Congress for its moderate policy. He wrote:

"Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism."

The editors of the paper who gave suggestions to Aurobindo for write about cultural theme as a substitute of Politics because the Congress which was practiced more mild and moderate criticism reacted in a way, due to this opposition it created the wider negative affection in the editors and they became frightened. On account of that opposition on writing about cultural and political reverence, Aurobindo totally lost his interest in the writing and because of this his series was discontinued by him. After returning to India, he was started the job with the designation of the Vice-principal in the State college of Baroda. He was greatly respected by the Maharaja of Baroda state. Aurobindo's scholarship dyed everyone's attention and also his way for success and he was briefly noticed by the public mostly to the educated people. The educated classes in Baroda State loved him and he was exceedingly popular with the general public. One of his students, named Sri K.M. Munshi, was inspired by Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and philosophy and he was highly admired and loved to Aurobindo. To the younger generation, Aurobindo became a veritable and genuine god for them. They gave him a precious name to call him and finally they started to call him as 'Aru Da', meaning 'Elder brother Aurobindo'. Later on Aurobindo was get married with an intelligent girl named Mrinalini Devi.

There were three strategies of Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities.

- 1. There was the action with which he started a secret revolutionary propaganda and organization to prepare an armed insurrection.**
- 2. There was a public propaganda intended to ignite the inspiration of an ideal of independence.**
- 3. There was the organization of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule.**

Sri Aurobindo abstained from the political activity for the few years while the duration of India's freedom fighting. In that course work, he was deeply engaged as well as involved in the surveillance in the conditions of the country so that he might be able to judge naturalizes. With that result he except the writing of the articles in the Induprakash. As his lieutenant, he sent to Jatin Banerjee at Bengal with accomplishment and action. Aurobindo said that when he came to Baroda from England at that time he searched out that what was the situation of congress at that juncture and he exactly formed the contempt for it. Then he introduced with the political leaders like Deshpande, Tilak,

Madhavrao and other companion whom played dominant role in the political reverence. Deshpande requested him to write something about the political matter in the Induprakash. There he strongly criticized and emphasized by the congress for its moderate policy. The articles were very slashing. Therefore, the great leader of Maharashtra, M.G. Rande asked the proprietor of the paper not to publish such aggressive and seditious articles which are written by Aurobindo on political issues and political matter. Sri Aurobindo was strictly instructed by M.G. Rande that if he will write such articles on political point of view at a time he might be arrested and such actions taken against him like imprisoned. Sri Aurobindo approached by Deshpande with the surprised news that he was requested to him and allowed him to write something less violent. He began to write on philosophy of politics. Soon he got disgusted with it. This particular series and writing on political philosophy arisen many political questions as well as the political issues. Because of this situation, Aurobindo displayed his power for the first time in front of the public. In the 'Induprakash', he showed a substitute and subtle power of his thinking capacity for expression and mastery over the language, rare courage, utter sincerity, burning patriotism and selfless character, all these seen in his series. Aurobindo visited Bengal for the first time after his return from England in 1894. He met all his relatives and close friends of him. At that time Aurobindo got changed in both inner and outer side. His mother did not recognize him because his appearance was totally different from before. Sri Aurobindo actively involved in Indian politics from

1902 to 1910. During the first half of this period, he joined in the swadeshi movement and worked with other co-workers in the beginnings of the faction. In August 1906, the National College was established at Calcutta and in that institute Sri Aurobindo recruited as the principal of the institutions. On 6th August, the declaration of the 'Vande Mataram' was unsuccessful. There were many conjectures regarding the declaration of 'Vande Mataram' and how was started and what connection Aurobindo had with it. Later on he gave his own explanation and suggestion that it will be started by Bepin Pal. Finally in 1906, after the retirement of Cruzan, Aurobindo started this with the help and participation of his nearest friends. The 'Vande Mataram' was declared prior to the nation, the programs of Boycott, 'Swadeshi' national education and passive Resistance with the idea of forming parallel government. On 13th October, the 'Vande Mataram' became a joint stock company in accordance with Aurobindo's suggestion. A board of directors was appointed. But Sri Aurobindo was the real and actual editor and he took the whole responsibility belonged to the board. Therefore, the government could not prosecute one single individual. Whenever the government found something wrong and objectionable, at that time someone could come forward to accept the responsibility and send to jail if it obligatory. Thus Aurobindo, the brain of the movement and also the manager of the revolution could escape imprisonment and continue his work with his co-workers and colleague. In the 'Vande Mataram', the articles were written so cleverly that they violated the spirit of the law. From October to December 1906, he became the victim of serious illness and he stayed there with his father-in-law named Bhupal Chandra Bose. On 4th November he had very high fever and could not able to write his editorial article for the 'Vande Mataram'. He recovered partially at the end of the November, but had a relapse in December. So he went to Deoghar for a change. On 26th December, he returned at Calcutta in order to attend the congress session. Dadabhai Navroji was the president of this congress session at Calcutta. For the first time, a resolution laying down independence as the goal of the congress session was passed. During this session Aurobindo also introduced among the nationalist leaders who attended the session were Tilak, Lajpatrai, Khaparde and Khare. It was mainly due to Sri Aurobindo's struggle in the reception committee and the working committee that the resolution was passed. His resolution had to get the support of the whole congress. So the meetings were held at the house of Subodh Mullick under the leadership of Tilak. This support for the resolution was secured there. In getting this support, Sri Aurobindo's share was not insignificant. Other resolutions were added via Swadeshi, Boycott, and national education with the main resolution of Swaraj. The prominent leaders of Moderate school of politics named Sir Phirozshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Surendranata Banerjee were opposed the resolution. Dadabhai, the president was indecisive in the beginning. However, when he found that there was a strong support to the resolution from Bengal and from other parts of India, he accepted it and got it accepted by all. Sri Aurobindo met Tagore once during these years at Tagore's

house. He was invited for dinner. From 27th January 1907 to early April 1907, Sri Aurobindo was at Deoghar. From 12th to 23rd April, he published his 9 series of articles on passive resistance in the 'Vande Mataram'. In this article he was written about the clear distinction between non-violence and passive resistance. Bhupendeanath Dutt, a brother of Vivekananda was sentenced for seditious material that appeared in 'Yugantar'. He wanted to defend the punishment. But Aurobindo said that it was an illogical for a revolutionary to recognize a foreign court and it's Jurisdiction. On 30th July 1907, there was a search of the 'Vande Mataram' office and on 16th August, a prosecution was instigated Sri Aurobindo was among the accused. There was a conference at Midnapore and in that important conference; Mr. K.B. Dutt was elected as a president. Sri Aurobindo was also elected as a coordinator in the conference. He arranged some systems and circulars to pass resolution as well as he was supporting in the nationalists programme. In nationalist elevation he won over the many moderate and judicious leaders. On 15th December 1907, a public meeting was held in Beacon Square. Sri Aurobindo suggested a resolution for supporting the nationalist programme. It was passed and was forwarded to the Surat congress. The moderates and the nationalists began their efforts and struggle to secure the majority for their side .Due to this they chose Surat to moderate as the venue. They believe that is the correct venue and thought that it would be easy to secure a majority there. Tilak, Kaparde and Khare were already participated from the side of nationalist. In the meeting, Balaji Tekra was chosen as preside over the meetings by Sri Aurobindo. In 1906, at last period, the Moderate leaders became doubtful about securing a majority for their resolution but finally it was successfully passed by the congress at Calcutta. The famous Alipore Bomb Case was became the turning as well as spinning point in the political life of Sri Aurobindo. It is a precious situation where Aurobindo faced with great strength. But in the result of that, as a part of an effort against it he was an under trial prisoner in solitary confinement in the Alipore Central Jail for one year. In this cell of the Alipore Jail, he dreamt about his future and the divine mission ordained for him by God. Aurobindo was getting very bore and tired during the time of the imprisonment. In the prison there was a lack of facilities like bad foodstuff, the inadequate clothes, lack of light and free air, the strain of boredom and the creeping solitariness of the gloomy cell. In the time of cell he decided to study over in leisure time and after that he started to read some religious books and also started to follow the spiritual thoughts. He utilized this period of incarceration for an intense study and practice of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita. Chittaranjan Das defended Sri Aurobindo. He was acquitted after a memorable experiment. According to Sri Aurobindo, he believes that spirituality and yoga is the master key of the Indian mind. It is this dominant inclination of India which gives character to all the expressions of her culture. In fact, they have grown out of her inborn spiritual tendency of which her religion is a natural out flowering.

Spiritual Life of Sri Aurobindo and Practice of Integral Yoga

In 1904, Sri Aurobindo began his practice of yoga because he wanted to rich the way of spirituality. Even before this, several experiences had come to him spontaneously and he felt the inner power became the strong and also felt the power of spirituality. For instance, there was the mental experience of atman or true self, the peaceful mental experience. While reading the Upanishads in London in 1892, he had felt the same type of experience. The next year a vast calm descended upon him and because of this calmness surrounded him and remained for many months afterwards. In 1893, he had achieved a vision of the Godhead surging up from within when he was met in danger of a carriage accident. In 1903, he had the realization of the vacant which was felt by him with Infinite thoughts while walking on the bridge of the 'Takht-i-suleman' at Kashmir, In 1904. Sri Aurobindo began yoga with the assiduous practice of Pranayama. Pranayama also considered as a part of yoga. It is the way for the yoga. At that time, he met yogi Brahmananda and was greatly impressed by his spirituality and inner capacity. On the other hand, he had not found guru or expert of yoga, whom teach him yoga until January 1908. After that, he met the Maharashtrian yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele whom was master in the yoga. He had whole knowledge regarding the yoga. Lele showed Sri Aurobindo that how to establish complete silence of mind and how to control the thinking of mind and immobility of consciousness and how to create concentration of mind. Within three days, Sri Aurobindo succeeded in achieving this state of mind. Sometimes he requires a lifetime of yoga to attain. The result was a series of Lasting and Massive spiritual relations which opened to him the larger ways of yoga. He realized the spirituality in the inner side of his body and also he was greatly impressed by this strong interior power. Lele finally told Aurobindo to put himself entirely into the hands of the Divine Power and open himself ahead of this Divine influence. This became the whole foundation and principle of his sadhana. Sri Aurobindo and Lele parted ways after a two month. At the same time The Mother came to India for the first time. The former governor of Jammu and Kashmir and former Union minister named Jagmohan, writes in The Asian Age about the vision outlined by Sri Aurobindo great thinker and philosopher, a hundred years ago:

Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that Sanatan Dharma is designed to uplift the entire human race and not merely the Hindus but for the whole society:

“What is this religion which we call Sanatan, eternal? It is the Hindu religion only because the Hindu nation has kept it... But it is not circumscribed by the confines of a single country. That which we call the Hindu religion is really the eternal religion because it is the universal religion which embraces all others.”

In 1908 and 1909, while Sri Aurobindo was under trial prisoner in the Alipore jail, he had the constant and spiritual vision of the omnipresent Godhead because he was stayed

with the many of religious books which were based on the philosophical point of view. In the jail, he spent much of his time reading the 'Gita' and 'Upanishads'. During that time he started to learn about the basic concept on concentration, meditation and practicing yoga. Even in the courtroom, he remained absorbed in meditation which is known as the conscious level of the mind. On account of this, he hardly attended little to the trial and listened to the evidence. During this time his view of life as well as vision for the life was fundamentally changed. He started to follow the way of spirituality. He had originally taken up the idea of yoga to acquiring some spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for his political work. However, his inner spiritual life and realization was continually increasing in his magnitude and inner strength. It was working like as the divine force. It assumed a larger place and took him up entirely life. His work became a precious part and result of it.

Describing his experience yoga during the imprison, he notes;

"I did not think either of questioning the truth or the possibility, I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw one thought and then another coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free."

Yoga and spiritual philosophy are founded by Sri Aurobindo, on four great realizations which of them, two of these he had realized before his coming to Pondicherry in 1910. He had gained the first realization which was the silent, speak less and timeless Brahman. While meditating with Lele in 1908, this realization disappeared after second realization. It was hardly gained in Alipore Jail in 1908 or 1909. It was the immense realization of the cosmic consciousness and the spiritual vision of the Divine Power. In the learning of his meditations during the time of Jail, Sri Aurobindo was already on his way to learn the other two realizations. It was one of the supreme realities with the static and dynamic Brahman. The third and very important stage of realization was attained by him in the path of realization in 1912. It took place when Sri Aurobindo experienced and instead of it he started to acquire an Abiding realization and dwelling in Parabrahman (the supreme reality). The process of rising up to the higher planes into the physical consciousness was successfully continued by him on 24 November 1926. This effort was crowned by the descent of the Godhead of the over mind. This descent was preparatory to the descent of the supermind itself from 1920. Sri Aurobindo extremely worked on spirituality to bring about the super mental descent of mind. In 1950, then he had to move on ahead from this physical world and body rush its beginning. When Aurobindo was free from Jail, he again started his political activities with a new apparition and reason. It was necessary that India get complete freedom, if India has to grow and become supreme. He affirmed in his words:

“India does not grow similar to other nation of this world, when she is powerful and able to crush the feeble. She is growing to give force to the eternal glow and becomes trusted among all over the other countries. India always stands for the all humankind in her own self who is very much superior” Sri Aurobindo, then started two different articles in English language, named: the ‘Karmayogin’ and another one is ‘Dharma’ in his mother tongue language Bengali. But at that time the atmosphere of politics was completely occupied buzz and rumors of a looming capture. On that time, about Sri Aurobindo, in Lord Minto, British Government had mentioned in clear words that

‘I can just represent it that Sri Aurobindo is the most hazardous person we have to suppose with.’

Sri Aurobindo then moved from Bengal to Chandranagar and then on 4th April, 1910 he reached at Pondicherry to find out the spiritual way. He was not alone in this journey of Pondicherry. There, he stayed with four or five companions with his companion at his friend’s place in Pondicherry. Gradually, the number of members increased because of his intellectual spirituality. After some time finally Sri Aurobindo established an Ashram in the Pondicherry with the help of his companion and natives. An Ashram grew up around him. Mira, a French lady and wife of Paul Richard, was imbued with the same spiritual and philosophical ideal. With this similarity, she joined the Sri Aurobindo circle in 1920. At that time Mira was known as “The Mother” and this name was heartily given by Sri Aurobindo in his Ashram. She was addressed as the Mother and directed the Ashram and the devotees. Every morning she used to stand herself on the balcony and it is known as ‘Darshan’, for those devotees who eager for ‘Darshan’. She managed all and every small part of thing of the Ashram and organization and also she was developed the Ashram with the good willing. A national journal ‘Arya’ was started by the Ashram, a spiritual journal in English language under the organization and supervision of Sri Aurobindo companion Mira the Mother. In which Sri Aurobindo’s all famous and significant works were chronicle wise published in every week in that journal. And after almost six year of it publication it was stopped. Ashram was visited by Sr Rabindranath Tagore and uttered words for Sri Aurobindo that:

“You have the sounded word and people are behind you to accept it from you. India will going to converse throughout your sound and voice to the humanity and world.”