



SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH: SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Abstract

The paper deals with the spiritual education with special reference to the Aurovindo's Philosophy in which his life philosophy and social psychology influence spiritual education. The paper also deals with the Principles of his educational philosophy based on Consciousness, Mind, Intelligence, and Knowledge which are the integral part of spiritual education. In this paper an attempt has been made to recognize, comprehend, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and critically examine the dominant factors responsible for strengthening spiritual education in Sri-Aurovindo's philosophy. The paper concludes 'Spiritual Education' as "it is highest level of education which helps to fulfill the potentialities of the individuals through Universal Brotherhood, Freedom, Service, Co-operation, Knowledge, Power, Beauty, Love, Sympathy, Wisdom, Peace and Harmony, Truth, Tolerance, Self-control, Self-determination, Self-Confidence, self-expression, and Self-Realization and to prepare them to solve the everyday problems for life creatively and constructively in the new situation of the socio-psycho-physical environment for attaining the highest values and ideas of education, if the teachers enable to modify such kind of behavior patterns of individuals in the free and creative environment, - this is spiritual education."

1. Introduction

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) is an extraordinary luminary within the annals of India's history, celebrated for his profound and comprehensive approach to life, philosophy, and spirituality. Hailing from Calcutta, he initially embraced a conventional English education, yet his heart and soul were inevitably drawn towards the intricate tapestry of India's cultural and spiritual legacy. This remarkable journey traversed a diverse array of roles, beginning with his fervent engagement as a political activist and ardently devoted freedom fighter. As time unfurled its wings, he seamlessly transitioned into the role of a visionary philosopher and an earnest yogi. In crafting his teachings and immortal writings, Sri Aurobindo embarked on a mission to mend the perceived chasm

that lay between the ethereal realm of spirituality and the tangible domain of the material world, epitomizing a harmonious fusion of these seemingly disparate aspects.

2. Spiritual Life

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of yoga in 1904. Even before this, several experiences had come to him spontaneously, "of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness". There was, for instance, the mental experience of the atman or true Self, which he had while reading the Upanishads in London in 1892. The next year a "vast calm" descended upon him the moment he stepped on Indian soil after his long absence in England. This calm surrounded him and remained for many months afterwards. Also in 1893 Sri Aurobindo had a vision of the Godhead surging up from within when he was in danger of a carriage accident. In 1903, while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-Suleman in Kashmir, he had the "realisation of the vacant Infinite", and a year or two later he experienced the "living presence of Kali" in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada.

In 1904 Sri Aurobindo began yoga with the "assiduous practice of pranayama". Around this time he met the yogi Brahmananda and was "greatly impressed by him", but he had no helper or guru in yoga until January 1908, when he met the Maharashtrian yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. Lele showed Sri Aurobindo how to establish complete silence of mind and immobility of consciousness. Within three days Sri Aurobindo succeeded in achieving this state that sometimes requires a lifetime of yoga to attain. The result was a series of "lasting and massive spiritual realisations which opened to him the larger ways of yoga". Lele finally told Sri Aurobindo to put himself entirely into the hands of the Divine within and to move only as he was moved by Him. This henceforward became the whole foundation and principle of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. Sri Aurobindo and Lele parted ways after a month or two, and from this time until the Mother came to India Sri Aurobindo received no spiritual help from anyone.

In 1908 and 1909, while Sri Aurobindo was an undertrial prisoner in the Alipur jail, he had the constant vision of the omnipresent Godhead: "I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned: no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not a tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover.... I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies."

In the Sri jail Aurobindo spent much of his time reading the Gita and Upanishads, meditating and practising yoga. Even in the courtroom he remained absorbed in meditation, attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence. During this period his view of life was radically changed; he had originally taken up yoga with the idea of acquiring spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for his political work. But now his inner spiritual life and realisation, which was continually increasing magnitude and universality, assumed a larger place and took him up entirely. His work became a part and result of it, far exceeding in its scope the service and liberation of the

country: it fixed itself in an aim, previously only glimpsed, which was worldwide in its bearing and concerned with the whole future of humanity. Sri Aurobindo's yoga and spiritual philosophy area founded on four great realisations. Two of these he had realised in full before his coming to Pondicherry in 1910. The first, the realisation of the silent, spaceless and timeless Brahman, he had gained while meditating with Lele in 1908. The feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world which at first attended this realisation disappeared after the second realisation, which was gained in the Alipur Jail in 1908 or 1909, the realisation of the cosmic consciousness and the vision of the Divine, as all beings and as all that is. In his meditations in the jail Sri Aurobindo was already on his way to the other two realisations that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading to the Supermind. By 1912 the third realisation was attained when Sri Aurobindo experienced an "abiding realisation and dwelling in Para brahman" (the supreme Reality). The process of ascent into the higher planes of consciousness and of bringing down the power of those planes into the physical consciousness continued. On 24 November 1926 this effort was crowned by the descent of the "Godhead of the Overmind", the highest of the planes between Mind and Supermind, into the physical. This descent was preparatory to the descent of the Supermind itself, by which "the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come". From 1926 Sri Aurobindo worked spiritually to bring about the supramental descent, and in 1950 left his physical body to hasten its advent.

3. Conclusion

In the tapestry of human history, few luminaries shine as brightly and multifariously as Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. His journey from a fervent political activist to a visionary philosopher and yogi, and the seamless fusion of spirituality and practicality that threads through his life, make him a beacon of inspiration for seekers of truth and holistic evolution. Rooted in the vibrant heart of Calcutta, Sri Aurobindo's life unfolded as a remarkable narrative that transcended conventional categorizations, weaving together the diverse strands of Indian heritage, Western education, political fervour, and profound spiritual insights.

4. References

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