

**A Project Report on  
Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education Philosophy and its Application**

By  
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## 1. Introduction.

Education that starts initially in an informal manner in the family takes a formal course when the child is ready for formal schooling. A preview of different forms of schooling from time immemorial indicates various types bearing the names of Gurukula, Monasteries, Montessori, Madrasas, Schools etc,. The pedagogy, goals and objectives of these institutions have been changing as driven by the changing times. Today educationists recognise the role and importance of multilingual and multicultural education, with a focus on connecting the ancient and the traditional knowledge with contemporary learning. Today people have realized that Technology is not a solution to a problem. It is just an instrument! Any knowledge in absence of 'Ethical values', 'Morality' and 'Right Spirit', promotes cultivation of dogmatic prepositions.

By looking at the demerits of modern education system, there is a pressing need for hybrid content of Indian early childhood education to demand a **sphere of value-based education for a sustainable livelihood**. The paradigm shift is essential to revisit the purpose of education (secondary education) and need for alternative education systems along with the mainstream of education which is inclusive and collective in nature. Educationists, Ministry of Education, Educational Administrators are now encouraging empirical researches to revisit the various indigenous educational practices and to bring into practice the merits of those practices. Integral Education of Sri Aurobindo is one of such practices that have provided evidences for the overall development of its student.

According to Sri Aurobindo every individual possesses inherent divinity and through a process of evolution one realizes it. This requires a conscious effort of unifying physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual dimensions of reality. It is education that allows one to walk through the process of evolution. Therefore, education according to Sri Aurobindo, must emphasise on the whole aspects of human life such as physical, psychic, mental, beauty, power, knowledge and love etc. It is in this respect it is known as integral education that involve culturing and cultivating these faculties in one's self. The metaphysical foundation of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is better understood by analysing three concepts namely Evolution, Integral Yoga, and Integral Education. Attainment of Divine Life, the ultimate goal, is contingent upon the process of Evolution and the practice of Integral Yoga which is facilitated by Integral Education.

## 2. Methodology

### Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to understand the philosophy of Sri. Aurobindo and how the philosophy has been adopted in schools run with Aurobindo philosophy as the basis to develop human beings at all levels from physical, vital, mental, and spiritual to supramental. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study and explore Sri. Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Education.
2. To examine the practice of Sri. Aurobindo's Integral Education Philosophy in Institutions established based on this philosophy.
3. To develop a framework for the application of Integral Education philosophy and compare it with the framework of other educational institutions

### Procedure

The current study was descriptive and exploratory in nature. Mixed research method involving Quantitative and Qualitative methodologies was adopted. It involved three components namely Theoretical, Empirical, and developing framework.

#### Theoretical -Part I

The first component of the study comprised of examination of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of life in general and philosophy of education, that are available in the form of his varied writings from his books, articles, and treatises. Related secondary material from other writers and sources on Sri Aurobindo and his philosophy were also explored. Based on this the major focus and dimensions of integral education were identified.

#### Empirical - Part II

The empirical part of the study constituted examination of selected educational institutions and their practices that are based on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Information collected from these schools were curriculum, pedagogy, learning outcomes, student development, Governance of the institution etc. With the help of mixed methods like **In-depth interviews, FGDs, Survey and case study data was collected and analysed.** The respondents were students, education providers, school founders, principals, parents, alumni, and other stakeholders of schools based on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Furthermore, the manner and the degree to which the

convergence and alignment of the purpose, means, methods and outcomes as underlined by the philosophy, theory, and practice were analysed.

### Sampling Framework

The sample for the study were drawn from experimental schools practicing Sri Aurobindo’s Integral education Philosophy based schools in India. However, for an in-depth study of the experimental schools these schools have been classified into two diverse types based on the degree to which the principles of Aurobindo is being put into practice. *Auroville schools which practices free progress, CBSE Schools and New era schools that have incorporated practices of their respective affiliative bodies in addition to Aurobindo philosophy.* Following Integral education schools which have adopted and practicing Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy was considered in the present study is given in the following table.

**Table 1:** Showing the sampling frame considered for the study.

<b>Auroville &amp; Outreach Schools</b>	<b>CBSE Schools</b>	<b>New Era Schools</b>
Transition School, Puducherry	Sri Aurobindo International School, Hyderabad.	Creative School, Bengaluru
Last School, Puducherry	Sri Aurobindo School of Integral education, Orrisa	Samkruti School , Warangal, AP
Mirambika Free Progress School, Delhi	Sri Aurobindo memorial school, Banashankari 2nd stage	Coveda, Chhattisgarh
Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Puducherry	Isai Ambalam School, Puducherry	
	Udavi School, Puducherry	
	Aikiyam School, Puducherry	
	New era of senior secondary school, Puducherry	

## **Unit of Analysis**

- i. Interview Method and FGDs** – Since the data collection method was interview based, Inductive category formation from the transcripts was used to draw themes. The themes were observed as the first category formulation based on five components of Integral education model, the second was based on teaching methodology and pedagogy approaches articulated by interviewees in integral education. Third category was related to understand the philosophical approaches in which interviewees refereed or quoted throughout the conversation.
  
- ii. Survey** – Survey items constituted multiple choice questions, check list and open ended questions. The data collated was sorted and grouped and analyzed using appropriate methods and tools. Suitable descriptive analysis was carried out and are presented.
  
- iii. Case study** - The focus of case study was to identify the salient features and the novel ways in which these institutions have incorporated the principles of integral education and the manner in which they have integrated them along with the main stream education.

## **Developing Framework – Part III**

Based on the data collected from the various methods and keeping the awareness about current main stream educational system in the background, certain aspects of integral education that could be brought into the main stream education are suggested.

### **3. Key Findings**

#### **Learning from the Interviews**

- ✓ Emphasis is on continuous dialogue and engagement between the teacher and the student.
- ✓ Teacher student ratio plays a very important criterion for practicing integral education and progressive model.
- ✓ Greater emphasis on teachers training in creating classroom environment for learning, curriculum design and planning.
- ✓

#### **Learning from Focused Group Discussion**

- ✓ Integral education provides foundational knowledge as an evolving soul with a unique potential and unique.
- ✓ Dedicate time are provided by these institutions towards teachers' reflection time or personal growth and for self-care and wellness is core of integral education.
- ✓ Teachers emphasized various forms of assessment starting from anecdotal observation, to rubrics to checklists to informal inquiry based assessments as well as art therapy for self-expression and review

#### **Case Study**

- ✓ Emphasis is given to creating classroom environment by connect with nature, energy, body and mind.
- ✓ Teacher playing a role of facilitator to guide the child in the process of learning
- ✓ Emphasis on self-reflection and self-discovery on activities, curriculum design and planning and evaluation methods.

#### **Survey - Principles and Practices of IEP**

- ✓ About 80% of the respondent teachers have received former training in Aurobindo philosophy or they have lived experience at Pondicherry ashram
- ✓ About 98% of respondents prepare and present Candidates for State Board or Central Board examination
- ✓ Multimethod teaching is used to facilitate learning. Practices like ATB (Awareness through Body), EBD (Education by Design), TPR (Total Physical Response) and

STEM activities, integrated project based learning, concept ladder, worksheets, project based learning, wisdom circle, mediation, breath work, healing circle, and many other techniques/tools are aimed at development of physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual aspects of self-discovery.

### **Learnings from the field visit - Auroville.**

- ✓ Absence of institutional memory: one of the points that is often reiterated by the founders of integral education is that these institutions do not have any institutional memory
- ✓ Environment play a significant role: Providing a conducive learning environment is another salient feature of these schools.
- ✓ Psycho social environment provided in the class room is permissive in nature.
- ✓ Teachers play a pivotal role in the success of integral education. Self-reflection, self-discovery and self-development is an integral part of both the teachers as well as students.
- ✓ Project based method with multidimensional approach is more suitable
- ✓ Physical education is very essential: Awareness of the body consciousness is said to be necessary for integrating the body to higher level of consciousness.
- ✓ Vital Education as an essential component
- ✓ Educational Experiment for Inner spirit – In Auroville life is growing and perfecting itself without creating any kind of programme or revolution

### **Scope of integrating integral education to the main stream education**

- ✓ Change in the outlook especially for physical education
- ✓ Introducing and testing some of the tools and strategies:
- ✓ Relooking at the importance of co-curricular programs
- ✓ Periodical practice of Wisdom Circles, Healing Circles etc
- ✓ Changes in teacher education program

## **Conclusion**

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy speaks about Divine Life and one need to continuously indulge in self-reflection. His philosophy stresses on becoming a sadhaka and evolve oneself through integrating the five bodies. Integral education is considered only as a part of his discourse and it is the Mother who gave a structure and pragmatic approach towards the practice of principles of integral education. The practice of svadharma and swadhyaya i.e. self-discovery and self-reflection is crucial for the teachers of integral education. The degree to which educational institutions provide conducive environment for the practice is essential.

The process of evolution of consciousness on the part of teachers during the process of teaching and learning and teacher's ability to facilitate to evoke the inner potential of each learner is a challenge to the teachers of main stream education. However training the in-service teachers in the principles and pedagogy of integral education is one of the means to adopt the merits of integral education to the main stream education. Current teacher education program could be changed with an emphasis on the principles of IE and providing opportunity for experiential learning in the form of longer periods of internship during their teacher training course. Further giving importance to the development of physical and vital Body especially at the primary and secondary level are easier to be brought in to the main stream education and can be empirically validated.