

The following text will be presented for future publication in  
*Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education*  
 (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education),  
 ©UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 2000

This document may be reproduced free of charge as long as acknowledgement is made of the source.

# SRI AUROBINDO

(1872–1950)

*M.K. Raina*<sup>1</sup>

An explorer and adventurer in consciousness (Das, 1977, 1999; Joshi 1998a), a visionary of evolution (Satprem, 1984), Sri Aurobindo (1972a, p. 49), had disclosed ‘No one can write about my life because it has not been on the surface for man to see’ finds echo in Rabindranath Tagore (see Raina, 1997), the fellow Bengali poet-artist and a Nobel laureate with whom Aurobindo felt a deep mutuality, who too had warned that one should not look for the poet in his biography. In fact, McDermott (1972) felt that ‘interpreting the life of a great spiritual personality is always a treacherous enterprise, and the life of Sri Aurobindo is peculiarly inscrutable’ (p. 15).

Born in Calcutta, then the capital of British India on 15 August 1872, Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose—the Western middle name was given to by his father at birth—was the third son of his parents—Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose and Swarnalata Devi. The honorific ‘Sri’ was traditionally used as a mark of respect or worship forming an integral part of his name. In Sanskrit, the word Aurobindo means lotus. Aurobindo’s father chose this name for him, thinking that it was unique, but he little suspected that, in the language of occultism, the lotus is the symbol of divine consciousness.

Aurobindo received his early education in a convent school intended for European children and in 1879 was taken by his father to England for schooling in Manchester and later at St. Paul’s School, London. A scholarship from St. Paul’s enabled Aurobindo to go to King’s College, Cambridge, in 1889. He practically won all the prizes in Greek and Latin. He passed the first part of the classical Tripos in the first class in 1892. The same year he successfully passed his Indian Civil Service Examination. But he did not report for the riding test and thereby was disqualified for the civil service.

Sri Aurobindo, who had started writing at an early age, even during his study at Manchester (1879–84), had continued with his creativity through all the turbulent phases of his life, even during his incarceration. His first book, a collection of poems, entitled *Songs to Myrtilla*, was published in 1895. Between that and the last work to be published during his lifetime, *Savitri* (1950), he had written extensively on Yoga, culture, sociology, in addition to his poetry and plays—contributions of far-reaching and multi-faceted importance to human thought and in action. He has given a new cosmology and a new metaphysics in his *Life divine* ‘considered as the philosophical masterpiece of the century’ (Vrekhem 1999, p. 44) which has revolutionized our very conception of psychology and gave it a new basis in *Life divine* and in his letters. He formulated a profoundly new approach to sociology in his *The human cycle* and showed through a searching analysis of past and current systems of social and political thought how a truly spiritual attitude is essential as a foundation of a new and lasting social order. He extended the application of this very approach to the sphere of international politics in his *The ideal of human unity*. In his writings on education, he formulated a theory that could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the

world, fostering the growth of the integral consciousness in every pupil and bringing back to legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised. He showed in his *The synthesis of Yoga* how all the systems of Yoga combine and converge on the path to Supermind. In his *The secret of the Vedas*, *The essays on the Gita* and writings on Upanishads, he opened up new and epoch-making ways of studying the ancient Indian texts, throwing new light on philosophy and reducing both anthropology and anthropomorphology to their proper place in a balanced scheme of knowledge. He offered an illuminating interpretation of Indian culture down the centuries in his *The foundations of Indian culture*. Sri Aurobindo's elaborated epic, *Savitri* reveals the consummation of the many poetic styles that he attempted in all his works. Written in nearly 24,000 lines in blank verse, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* has been estimated to be the largest poem in the English language. In *The future poetry*, Sri Aurobindo worked out a literary theory (Heehs, 1989, 1998) considered as an original contribution to aesthetics in its concept of poetry (Gokak, 1973). All this and his translations, letters and minor works were compiled and published in a systematic manner after his passing away on the 5 December 1950. A new edition of them, in thirty volumes, was brought out on the occasion of the centenary of his birth in 1972. The Swedish Academy considered him for the nomination for the Nobel Prize of 1950, the last year of Sri Aurobindo's life (Heehs, 1989).

There are many ways of approaching Sri Aurobindo, but the light that one can gain from him, as Joshi (1998b) noted, will depend upon the height and breadth of one's own quest. It is in raising most comprehensive questions in their profundity relating to the world and its future possibilities and the role that we are required to play as also how we should prepare ourselves to fulfil that role that we shall find the real relevance of Sri Aurobindo and find ourselves truly equipped to study him and the supra-mental consciousness that he has discovered and brought down on the earth.

Three fundamental problems which gave direction to the spiritual quest and philosophical thinking and helped to fashion Sri Aurobindo's major theories, relate to the paradox of the national life of India, the supposed conflict between spirituality and action, and the evolution of man. The search for solutions to these problems relates to the unique and creative tension in his own experience between spirituality and politics, both during his years of political activity and during his four decades of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) at Pondicherry (Chaudhuri, 1972; McDermott, 1972). Aurobindo's writings provide the needed force for action, realization and transformation which is reflected in his philosophy arrived at through inner experience. He wrote (in Heehs, 1989, p. 110) 'in fact I was never satisfied till experience came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy'. His integral philosophy (see Sorokin, 1960) grew out of his Yoga—not the other way round.

Two phrases that surge out of Sri Aurobindo's writings that sum up his message are: 'Integral perfection' and 'Spiritual religion of humanity'. His call for integrality and synthesis is most distinctively reflected in his statements: 'We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. [...] We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future' (in Joshi, 1998b, p. 3). To attain integral perfection, Sri Aurobindo has found education to be critical.

## **Integral education for the growth of the soul**

Originally a poet and a politician, not a philosopher, Sri Aurobindo engaged himself for forty-five years out of his seventy-eight years in the practice of Yoga, and developed a philosophy of complete affirmation, affirming the reality of the world from the ultimate standpoint and the meaningfulness of socio-political action from the spiritual standpoint (Chaudhuri, 1972). He was sovereignly aware of the significance of variations in the concept

of man, his life and destiny, of the nation and of humanity and the life of human race, which get reflected in the respective philosophies of education, and developed his scheme of integral education rooted in ‘the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self creation, to her eternal spirit’ (Sri Aurobindo in Sen, 1952, p. 3). India, according to Sri Aurobindo (1990, p. 15), has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. In his educational philosophy, Sri Aurobindo (Ibid, p. 9) upheld the basic but commonly forgotten principle that ‘it is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with, and there the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilisation and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future’. In devising a true and living education, three things according to Sri Aurobindo—the man, the individual in his commonness and his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity—should be taken into account.

Accordingly, Aurobindo conceived of education as an instrument for the real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. He thought of education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation—soul and its Dharma (virtue) and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man’s highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being (Ibid, p. 16). A concept underlying the true and living integral education.

Integrity of education is conceived as a process of organic growth, and the way in which various faculties could be developed and integrated is dependent upon each child’s inclination, rhythm of progression and law of development, *Swabhava* (inherent disposition) and *Swadharma* (inner nature). Integral education is not conceived as a juxtaposition of a number of subjects and even juxtaposition of varieties of faculties. The idea is to provide facilities for varieties of faculties, varieties of subjects and various combinations of pursuits of Knowledge, Power, Harmony and Skill in works. These faculties are so provided that they could be made use of by each student and the teacher so that a natural process of harmonious development could be encouraged.

### ***Antahkarna* (mind): the instrument of the educationist**

According to Sri Aurobindo, mind or *antahkarana* which consists of four layers is the instrument of the educationist. ‘The reservoir of past mental impressions, the *citta* or storehouse of memory, which must be distinguished from the specific act of memory, is the foundation on which all the other layers stand. The passive memory or *citta* needs no training, it is automatic and naturally sufficient to its task; there is not the slightest object of knowledge coming within its field which is not secured, placed and faultlessly preserved in that admirable receptacle. It is the active memory, a higher but less perfectly developed function, which is in need of improvement’.

*Manas* or mind proper, the sixth sense of Indian psychology, is the second layer. Its function is to receive the images of things translated into sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, the five senses and translate these again into thought—sensations. Therefore right use of the six senses is vital to see that they are not stunted or injured by disuse, but trained by the child himself under the teacher’s direction to that perfect accuracy and keen subtle sensitiveness of which they are capable. In addition, whatever assistance can be gained by the organs of action, should be thoroughly employed. The hand, for instance, should be trained to

reproduce what the eye sees and the mind senses. The speech should be trained to a perfect expression of the knowledge which the whole *antahkarna* possesses.

The real instrument of thought which forms the third layer is the intellect or *buddhi*. It orders and disposes of the knowledge acquired by the other parts of the machine. Infinitely the most important of the three thus far named for education, Sri Aurobindo considers intellect as an organ composed of several groups of functions, divisible into two important classes, the functions and faculties of the right hand, the functions and faculties of the left hand (for its implications in the context of hemispheric specialization and education see Raina, 1979).

‘The faculties of the right-hand are comprehensive, creative and synthetic; the faculties of the left-hand critical and analytic. To the right-hand belong judgement, imagination, memory, observation; to the left-hand comparison and reasoning. The critical faculties distinguish, compare, classify, generalise, deduce, infer, conclude; they are the component parts of the logical reason. The right-hand faculties comprehend, command, judge in their own right, grasp, hold and manipulate. The right-hand mind is the master of the knowledge, the left-hand its servant. The left-hand touches only the body of knowledge, the right-hand penetrates its soul. The left-hand limits itself to ascertained truth, the right-hand grasps that which is still elusive or unascertained. Both are essential to the completeness of the human reason. These important functions of the machine have all to be raised to their highest and finest working-power, if the education of the child is not to be imperfect and one-sided’ (Aurobindo, 1990. P.24).

Sri Aurobindo adds that there is another layer of faculty which, not as yet entirely developed in man, is attaining gradually to a wider development and more perfect evolution. ‘The powers peculiar to this highest stratum of knowledge are chiefly known to us from the phenomena of genius, -- sovereign discernment, intuitive perception of truth, plenary inspiration of speech, direct vision of knowledge to an extent often amounting to revelation, making a man a prophet of truth. These powers are rare in their higher development, though many possess them imperfectly or by flashes. They are still greatly distrusted by the critical reason of mankind because of the admixture of error, caprice and a biased imagination which obstructs and distorts their perfect workings. Yet it is clear that humanity could not have advanced to its present stage if it had not been for the help of these faculties, and it is a question with which educationists have not yet grappled, what is to be done with this mighty and baffling element, the element of genius in the pupil. The mere instructor does his best to discourage and stifle genius, the more liberal teacher welcomes it’ (Ibid, p.25).

## **The significance of physical and moral education**

Seeking to effect a synthesis of the values of the East and the West in the contemporary philosophy of education, Sri Aurobindo insisted that a healthy body is a necessary condition for intellectual or spiritual attainment. For him physical education means not only the proper functioning of the various organs of the body but also the development of strength, balance, and a sense of beauty. According to him, beauty is the ideal which physical life has to realise. ‘If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being’, says Aurobindo, ‘the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. [...] The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by means at our disposal’ must be the ultimate aim of physical culture’. Therefore, ‘a development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, but for that the right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible’ (Ibid, p. 68-69).

The education of the intellect, says Aurobindo, divorced from the perfection of the moral and emotional nature, is injurious to human progress. He admits the difficulties

involved in providing a suitable moral training for the school and college. He distinguishes the heart from the mind, and says, that to instruct the mind is not to instruct the heart. He senses the danger of moral textbooks being used for the purpose, in that they make the thinking of high things mechanical and artificial, and whatever is mechanical and artificial is inoperative for good. Further, he points out pertinently that 'the attempt to make boys moral and religious by the teaching of moral and religious text-books is a vanity and a delusion, precisely because the heart is not the mind and to instruct the mind does not necessarily improve the heart (Ibid. p. 27).

The best kind of moral training for a man, that Sri Aurobindo conceives of is, 'to habituate himself to the right emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature' (Ibid, p. 27). By way of moral and religious education, any attempt at imposition of a certain discipline on children, dressing them into a certain mould, lashing them into a desired path is essentially hypocritical and heartless. Only what the man admires and accepts, becomes part of himself; the rest is a mask. On the other hand, to neglect moral and religious education is to corrupt the race. In moral training, Sri Aurobindo stresses the value of suggestion and deprecates imposition. 'The first rule of moral training', he says, 'is to suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example daily converse and the books read from day to day' (p.29).

'Every boy should', says Aurobindo, 'therefore be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in the nature. If he has bad qualities, bad habits, bad *samaskaras* (behaviour patterns), whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the *Rajayogic* (a type of yoga) method of *samyama* (self-control), rejection and substitution' (Ibid, p. 30). Instead of discouraging such people, Aurobindo would like them to be rather encouraged to think such bad traits, 'not as sins or offences, but as symptoms of a curable disease, alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will—falsehood being rejected [...] and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love' (p. 30). Unformed virtues may not be rejected as faults.

No religious teaching, according to Aurobindo is of any value 'unless it is lived, and the use of various kinds of *sadhana*, (spiritual self-training and exercise) is the only effective preparation for religious living. The ritual of prayer, homage, ceremony is carved for by many minds as an essential preparation and, if not made an end itself, is a great help to spiritual progress; if it is withheld, some other forms of meditation, devotion or religious duty must be put in its place. Otherwise, religious teaching is of little use and would almost be better ungiven' (p. 31).

## **The principles of teaching and the training of the senses**

In a series of articles that Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1909–10, he enunciated three fundamental principles of teaching. '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 a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose'. The second principle according to Sri Aurobindo, is that 'the mind has to be consulted in its growth'. He pointed out that the idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parents or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. He warned that to force the nature to abandon its own *dharma* is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deform its perfection, and that there can be no greater error than for the parents or the teachers to arrange beforehand that the given student shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues or be prepared for a pre-arranged career. And the third principle of education that Sri Aurobindo laid down is to work from near to the far, from

that which is to that which shall be. In other words, Sri Aurobindo underlined that education must proceed from direct experience and that even that which is abstract and remote from experience should be brought to the ken of experience. Knowledge has to be a growth from personal experience to larger and intenser and higher experience.

There are several other guidelines that we find in Sri Aurobindo. While explaining the instruments of the work of the teacher, he writes ‘Teaching, example, influence—these are the three instruments of the *guru* (teacher or guide). But the wise teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is productive and sure as a seed that will grow under the divine fostering within. He will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will give a method as an aid, as a utilisable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine. And he will be on his guard against any turning of the means into a limitation, against the mechanising of process’ (Sri Aurobindo, 1972b, p.60).

‘What is his method and his system?’ asks Sri Aurobindo and answers, ‘He has no method and every method. His system is a natural organization of the highest processes and movements of which the nature is capable. Applying themselves even to the pettiest details and to actions the most insignificant in their appearance with as much care and thoroughness as to the greatest, they in the end lift all into the Light and transform all’. (Ibid, p. 55).

‘This imperfect nature of ours,’ ‘explains Sri Aurobindo, ‘contains the materials of our perfection, but inchoate, distorted, mis-placed, thrown together in disorder or a poor imperfect order. All this material has to be patiently perfected, purified, reorganised, new—moulded and transformed, not hacked and hewn and slain or mutilated, not obliterated by simple coercion and denial’ (Ibid, p. 233).

These principles, it will be observed, are subtle and complex, and no rigid formula of practice can be derived from them. They impose a great responsibility on the teacher and demand from him extraordinary qualities of a profound psychologist (Joshi, 1975).

In the matter of the training of the senses, Aurobindo aims at nothing less than perfection. This, he says, must be one of the first cares of the teacher. The two important things that are needed of the senses, he points out are "accuracy and sensitiveness". The senses depend for their accuracy and sensitiveness on the unobstructed activity of the nerves which are the channels of their information and the passive acceptance of the mind, the recipient. In case of any obstruction, the remedy lies in the purification of the nerve system. ‘This process inevitably restores the perfect and unobstructed activity of the channels and, if well and thoroughly done, leads to a high activity of the senses. The process is called in yogic discipline *nadi-suddhi* or nerve – purification’. (Aurobindo, 1990, p. 37).

Six senses which minister to knowledge, sight, learning, smell, touch and taste, mind or *manas* (the sixth sense of the Indian psychology) can be developed through the physical nerves and their end—organs, but *manas* could be developed through yogic discipline *sukshmadristi* or subtle reception of images. Aurobindo wrote (Ibid, p. 38-39):

Telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, presentiment, thought-reading, character-reading and many other modern discoveries are very ancient powers of the mind which have been left undeveloped, and they all belong to the *manas*. The development of the sixth sense has never formed part of human training. In a future age it will undoubtedly take a place in the necessary preliminary training of the human instrument. Meanwhile there is no reason why the mind should not be trained to give a correct report to the intellect so that our thought may start with absolutely correct if not with full impressions.

Sri Aurobindo while analysing the causes of inefficiency of the senses, as gatherers of knowledge, attributes it to ‘insufficient use’. Students, he suggests, should overcome tamasic (optuseness of the mind and the senses) inertia and ought to be accustomed to catch

the sights, sounds, etc., around them, distinguish them, mark their nature, properties and sources and fix them in the *citta* so that they may be always ready to respond when called for by the memory. 'Attention' according to him, is the chief factor in knowledge and considers it the first condition of right memory and accuracy. Besides attention 'concentration on several things at a time' says Aurobindo is often indispensable. He holds the view that it is quite possible to develop the power of double concentration, triple concentration, multiple concentration, which is a matter of *abhyasa* or steady natural practice.

Along with faculties of memory, judgement, observation, comparing and contrasting and analogy which are indispensable aids in the acquisition of knowledge, Aurobindo emphasizes Imagination as the most important and indispensable instrument. It has been divided into three functions, the forming of mental images, the power of creating thoughts, images and imitations or new combinations of existing thoughts and images, the appreciation of the soul in things, beauty, charm, greatness, hidden suggestiveness, the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world. 'This is in every way as important as the training of the faculties which observe and compare outward things' (p. 47). These mental faculties, as Aurobindo suggests, should first be exercised on things, afterwards on words and ideas.... All this should be done informally, drawing on the curiosity and interest, avoiding set teaching and memorising of rules.

Sri Aurobindo is critical of the practice of teaching by snippets which is in practice in the existing system of education. Teaching by snippets, says Aurobindo, must be relegated to the lumber—room of dead sorrows. He is critical since:

A subject is taught a little at a time, in conjunction with a host of others, with the result that what might be well learnt in a single year is badly learned in seven and the boy goes out ill—equipped, served with imperfect parcels of knowledges, master of none of the great departments of human knowledge ( Ibid, p. 32).

He characterizes such a system of education as one attempting to 'heighten this practice of teaching by snippets at the bottom and the middle and suddenly change it to a grandiose specialism at the top. This is to base the triangle on its apex and hope that it will stand' (p. 32). Aurobindo has, therefore, found some meaning in the old system which was more rational than the modern: 'If it did not impart so much varied information, it built up a deeper, nobler and much more real culture. Much of the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average modern mind is due to the vicious principle of teaching by snippets' (p.32).

However, Aurobindo is clear that in the future education we need not bind ourselves either by the ancient or the modern system but select only the most perfect and rapid means of mastering knowlege. For him, every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to these qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiring. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the ground work of the faculty of the artist (p. 34-35). It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us Aurobindo is particular that the first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments and, until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. 'The mother tongue', he says 'is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium' (p. 34). In connection with language teaching he advocates that when the mental instruments are sufficiently developed to acquire a language easily and swiftly, that is the time to introduce him to many languages, not when he can partially understand what he is taught and masters it laboriously and imperfectly. He believes in the

disciplinary value of learning one language, especially one's own language, which he says, prepares one for mastering another. He maintains that with the facility developed in one's own language, to master others is easier.

## **The psychic and spiritual education**

Aurobindo also speaks of mental and psychic education, but his real interest is in a still higher stage, which according to him is spiritual or supra-mental education. This does not imply the annihilation of the individual but his enrichment through contact with the Absolute. The spiritual stage transcends the mental and the psychic stage. The justification for psychic and spiritual education rests upon three important considerations: a) education should provide to the individual a steady exploration of something that is inmost in the psychological complexity of human consciousness; (b) the most important question of human life is to consider the aim of human life and the aim of one's own life and one's own position and the role in the society; and this question can best be answered only when the psychic and spiritual domains are explored and when one is enabled to develop psychic and spiritual faculties of knowledge; and (c) the contemporary crisis of humanity has arisen because of the disbalancement between the material advancement on the one hand and inadequate spiritual progression. If, therefore, this crisis has to be met, development of psychic and spiritual consciousness should be fostered. Aurobindo tries to draw a distinction between psychic and spiritual in the following terms. At the life of psychic life, the individual feels an unbroken continuity in the world of forms and sees level as an immortal function in endless time and limitless space. The spiritual consciousness goes beyond time and space and is an identification with the infinite and the eternal. Aurobindo is expressing the same idea when he says that in psychic life selfishness must be discarded, but in the spiritual life there is no sense of the separate self. Aurobindo insists that it is not annihilation of the individual but its transformation which is the end of integral education. When man attains such education there is total transformation of matter. He calls it supramental education as it will work, not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and even upon the physical environment in which they live.

An unprecedented kind of experiment in education (Joshi, 1998c) was launched by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, when in 1943, a school came to be established at Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry with merely 20 students on its rolls, soon it began to grow, and in 1951, when the number of students had increased, and studies in Higher Education had to be organized, it was expanded into Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. The Centre was conceived as one of the best means of preparing humanity for future that would be marked by the manifestation of a new light and power—the supra-mental light and power. It was launched so that the elite of the humanity may be made ready who would be able to work for the progressive unification of the race and who at the same time would be prepared to embody the new force descending upon the earth to transform it. The Centre conducted a programme of experimental research under the direct guidance of the Mother, and it became a laboratory of education for tomorrow (for details see Tewari, 1998).

The educational doctrine of Sri Aurobindo is closely linked with his futuristic vision of human destiny which is reflected in his statement: 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 (Aurobindo, 1990, p.12). Aurobindo's (1971) visionary mystic mind articulated a concept of life which was unique since he conceived of it as a lavish and manifold opportunity given us to discover, realize, express the Divine and accordingly, visualized a system of education which would help expression of unrealized potentialities, in line with his concept of life. This called for a creative vision and an



extraordinary adventure. For him human destiny is an ascent towards the supermind, towards realization of the Godhead and his philosophy of education provides a forceful and resilient framework to attain this goal.

### Note

1. *M.K. Raina (India)*. Professor and Head, Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations of Education, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi. Formerly Senior Fellow, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Receipt of the VKRV Rao Award in Social Science and the First World Council Creativity Award of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, USA. Recently published research on Rabindranath Tagore and his two most recent books are *Creativity passion* and *International perspectives in creativity research*. Associate editor, *Encyclopedia of psychology* and contributor to *Encyclopedia of creativity* and *Encyclopedia of psychology and neuroscience*.

### References

- Aurobindo, S. 1971. *Social and political thought*. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- . 1972a. *On himself*. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Centenary Edition, Vol. 26).
- . 1972b. *The synthesis of yoga*. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Centenary Edition, Vol. 21).
- . 1990 reprint. *On education*. Pondicherry, Aurobindo Ashram.
- Chaudhury, H. 1972. The philosophy and yoga of Sri Aurobindo. *Philosophy east and west*, Vol. 22, p. 5-14.
- Das, M. 1977. *Sri Aurobindo*. New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi.
- . 1999. *Sri Aurobindo on education*. New Delhi, National Council for Teacher Education.
- Gokak, V.K. 1973. *Sri Aurobindo : seer and poet*. New Delhi, Abhinav Publications.
- Heehs, P. 1989. *Sri Aurobindo : a brief biography*. Delhi, Oxford University Press.
- . 1998. *The essential writings of Sri Aurobindo*. Delhi, Oxford University Press.
- Joshi, K. 1975. Education for personality development. (National Institute of Education Lecture Series delivered at National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, 22 and 24 February, 1975).
- . 1998a. Sri Aurobindo. (Lecture delivered at Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, 21 November 1998).
- . 1998b. Philosophy and yoga of Sri Aurobindo. (Lecture delivered at Rajendra Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi, 23 November 1998).
- . 1998c. An experiment in education for tomorrow (Lecture delivered at Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, 22 November 1998).
- . 1972. The experiential basis of Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga. *Philosophy east and west*, Vol. 22, p.15-23.
- Raina, M.K. 1979. Education of the left and the right. *International review of education* (Hamburgh), Vol. 25, p. 7-20.
- . 1997. 'Most dear to all the muses' : Mapping Tagorean networks of enterprise – A study in creative complexity. *Creativity research journal* (New Jersey, USA), Vol. 10, p.153-173.
- Satprem. 1984. *Sri Aurobindo or the adventure of consciousness*. New York, Institute for Evolutionary Research.
- Sen, I. 1952. *Integral education*. Pondicherry, Aurobindo International University Centre.
- Sorokin, P.A. 1960. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo. In : Chaudhari, H. Spiegelberg, F., eds. *The integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Tewari, D. 1998. Auroville : an experiment in education. (Lecture delivered at Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, 22 November 1998).
- Vrekhem, G.V. 1999. *Beyond man*. Delhi, Oxford University Press.