



3. Implementation of National Education Policy 2020 Through Adoption of Sri Aurobindo's Approach to Integral Education

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Abstract

The NEP 2020 strives to achieve excellence in Students, Faculty, Academics, Research, Scholarships, Leadership, Governance and Internationalisation of Higher Education. Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about Sri Aurobindo's Vision of National Education, on which NEP 2020 was founded in Mann ki Baat on November 29, 2020. Sri Aurobindo's literatures on the System of National Education provide useful guidance in implementing the NEP 2020. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of integral education aims to purify a student's life, mind, and soul. It is a comprehensive approach to learning that includes the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human existence.

This paper has attempted to review various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy regarding the system of national education and integral education that find resonance in several aspects of implementation of the NEP 2020. It has delved into various philosophical, conceptual and operational aspects to study and examine its relevance in adopting Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Integral Education in the effective execution and implementation of the NEP 2020.

Keywords: Integral Education, NEP-2020, Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy, Integral Education

National Education Policy[NEP] 2020:

According to the International Monetary Fund Estimate, "India is poised to grow as the fifth largest Economy in the World and to become the World's third largest Economy by the year 2027, as its GDP crosses US\$5 Trillion. By 2047, India will become a US\$30 Trillion economy, fulfilling all the features of a developed nation. India's population has reached the figure of 144 Crores, contributing 20 per cent of the world population, and it is emerging as one of the young nations with a median age of 29 years.

India's Higher Education System claims to have established and functioning 1,113 Universities/University-level Institutions, 43,796 Colleges, and 11,296 stand-alone Institutions with 4.33 Crore students. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education has steadily increased to 28.4. per cent in 2023-2024 (Concept Note: Viksit Bharat @ 2047) President Ram Nath Kovind ji, on 14th August 2020, stated that "youth empowerment is essential for building a strong nation. Implementing the National Education Policy(NEP) 2020 will transform future challenges into opportunities and pave the way for a New India. It will strengthen the culture of inclusion, innovation and institution in education. Imparting education in the mother tongue shall help young minds grow spontaneously, which will strengthen Indian languages and the unity of the country" (www.businessworld.in).



The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a blueprint for Self-Reliant India. The NEP:2020 is to be indeed called the 'Bharatiya Shiksha Niti'. It offers a transformational roadmap for Bharat to become 'Jagat-Guru (or) Vishwa-Guru. The key characteristics of the NEP 2020 can be outlined as viz., innovative; student (or) learner-centric; flexible; all-inclusive; integrated; equitable; transformational; revolutionary & futuristic aimed at achieving holistic growth & development of students with moral, ethical, social, and above all constitutional values through imparting of Value-Education through the weaving of teaching-learning of 'Indian Knowledge System' and above all Skills Development (www.education.gov.in)

The NEP:2020 advocates imparting education in the mother tongue. It is aimed at Integrating 'Local' With 'Global' through a 'Light but Tight' simple & single legal framework with a strategic focus on Liberal Arts; MERU [Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities] & Lok Vidya for stimulating upon 'How to Think' instead of 'What to Think'? The innovative, path-breaking initiatives and reforms to be implemented through NEP 2020 include a change in the Structure of Schools and higher education to enhance the developmental needs and interests of learners; Early Childhood Care with emphasis upon regional and local Indian Languages; adoption of an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach and ensuring lifelong learning for all (Ibid).

The Hallmark of NEP 2020 is to respect and honour various aspects concerning students' diversity, faculty and student autonomy and participation and partnership of stakeholders. It places great emphasis on teacher training.

The NEP strives to achieve excellence in varied areas, viz., Students, Faculty, Academics, Research, Scholarships, Leadership, Governance and Internationalisation of Higher Education. It envisions students becoming global citizens while remaining deeply connected to India's culture, heritage, customs, traditions and values. It wants to make the youth future-ready while focusing on national goals by reinventing the potential of India's higher education (www.education.gov.in).

Sri Aurobindo's System of National Education:

Sri Aurobindo's writings on the system of national education provide useful guidance and robust support in implementing the NEP 2020. Sri Aurobindo's literary contribution includes articles on education in the Karmayogin during 1909-1910 entitled "A System of National Education" and "The National Value of Art". Sri Aurobindo's preface on "National Education" was published in two parts in the Arya in 1920.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "The aim and principle of a proper national education is not to ignore modern truth and knowledge but to take our foundation on India's own being, mind and spirit. One of the central objects of the system of national education should be the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, as well as the observation, strengthening and enrichment of the national soul and normative needs of its ascending movement. It should aim to raise both the individual soul and the national soul into the powers of life and ascend the mind and soul of humanity.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education, if implemented, can prepare the men and women of India to become powerful instruments of Indian culture, its universality and its natural



harmony and unity with the progressive forces of human civilisation can culminate in the realisation of the ideal of human unity that recognises at once the freedom of each nation and the underlying oneness of the human species. There is so much to learn from Sri Aurobindo, and he is a perennial inspiration to practice the most significant lessons of Indian heritage and spirituality, all contributing evergreen fruits to the World of its dynamic Spirituality, robust Intellectuality, and victorious Vitality” **[Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy of National Education-Kireet Joshi-Archives]**.

Sri Aurobindo explained that “National education starts with the past and fully uses the present to build a great nation” (Pavitra,2002). Sri Aurobindo’s fundamental purpose in framing national education policy is to focus on the spiritual upliftment of his motherland, India. Sri Aurobindo’s educational thesis aims to attain the universal harmony of mankind, where no bar of nations should be entertained at all.

“The goal of proper education is to make human life to be superior to divine life. Three aspects of education are viz., the man, the nation with all its limitations, and most of all, internationalism. The man then becomes free from all boundaries created by the family, coterie, and nation surrounding him, and then he can truly realise the inner spirit of man.

Sri Aurobindo has termed this arousal of the inner spirit as ‘Divine Life’. Integral education has to follow the path of four-fold austerities and four-fold liberations to reach the ultimate end of Life Divine. The four austerities are Tapasyas, Love, Power, Knowledge, and Beauty. The four liberations are Physical Liberation, Mental Liberation, Emotional Liberation, and Vital Liberation” (Prof. Debashri Banerjee,2016).

Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy of Integral Education:

According to Sri. Aurobindo, “The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use. Education, to be true, must not be a machine-made fabric but a true building or living evocation of the power of mind and spirit of human beings. Physical development and purity of mind are the chief aims of education on which spiritual development is built. Education is to train all the senses, viz., Hearing, Speaking, Listening, Touching, and Smelling, which can be fully trained when the nerves, Chitta, and Manas are pure. Education should enhance the development of mental faculties, viz., Memory, Thinking, Reasoning, Imagination, and Discrimination. Sri. Aurobindo emphasized that without moral and emotional development, mental development is harmful to the human process. Development of Conscience (Chitta, Manas, Intelligence, Knowledge) and Spirituality are essential for the all-round development of a student” (Chanda Rani,2017).

The primary purpose of education should be to make the youths conscious of their own cultural heritage. It should focus on the integral and holistic development of the student's life, mind, and soul. This philosophy is known as ‘Integral Education,’ which aims at purifying a student's life, mind, and soul. Integral Education seeks to cultivate well-rounded students equipped to navigate modern life's complexities with wisdom and compassion.

“Sri Aurobindo stated that education should be aimed at the wholesome transformation of student life through imparting an integral education having three central aims to be fulfilled,



viz., for an individual to outgrow the fullest possibilities of his soul; for the nation to strengthen and enrich its national soul, to focus on its dharma, and advancement of both the individual and the nation in such a way that it can grow into the ascending powers of mind and soul of humanity” (**Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education,2004**).

Sri Aurobindo envisioned education as a means to awaken and manifest each student's divine potential. His vision emphasises the importance of harmonising human existence's Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual dimensions to achieve integral development.

The Mother, emphasised upon the role of education in the evolution of consciousness and the realisation of one's true self. Her vision of integral education emphasises cultivating inner qualities such as Sincerity, Gratitude, and Aspiration alongside intellectual growth.

Integral Education is a comprehensive approach to learning that encompasses the Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual dimensions of human existence, which are described in brief below (**Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education,2004**).

Physical Education:

Physical Education shall develop discipline, good habits, flexibility, and endurance among students. According to Sri Aurobindo, ‘If our seeking is for the total perfection of the being, 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 (Sharma Ramnath,2000).

Vital Education:

Vital education emphasises vital and sensory organs, viz., Eyes, Ears, Nose, Skin, Palate, and the internal sense organ Citta/Manas. It aims to develop Creativity, Equanimity, and Willpower to manage students' emotions.

Mental Education:

Mental education focuses on developing the mind or Antahkarana to develop the power of Observation, Reasoning, and the Capacity for Judgment among students.

Psychic Education:

Psychic education centres around the actual motive of human life and the reason for one’s existence on this earth. Under psychic education, training of the soul or psychic being seems highly essential for students. Spiritual Education shall develop true knowledge, elevate consciousness, and awaken inner being.

Supramental Education:

Supramental education shows the challenging pathway of the human race's rise towards Sachhidananda (**Sharma Ramnath,2000**).

Three principles of Integral Education:

Integral Education is guided by principles such as Holistic Development, Value-Based Learning, Experiential Education, Community Engagement, and Lifelong Learning. These principles are the foundation for creating a transformative educational experience transcending mere academic achievement.

Three principles of integral education are described in brief as follows.

[1] Nothing can be Taught:

This implies that the student should not experience any pressure while receiving an



education. Teachers should not provide lots of information but show the true way of developing every student's inner possibilities.

[2] The Mind has to be Consulted in its Own Growth:

It focuses on the natural growth process of students. We should not impose any external factor or thing upon him. The parents should not try to plan or develop a pre-determined career and set of qualities, capacities, ideas, and virtues in their child and provide him or her sufficient freedom to nourish his or her inner potential for perfection.

[3] To Work from Near to Far:

It implies that man's nature is totally dependent upon his or her heredity, atmospheric circumstances, nationality, and love for his or her country, the soil, the air, and the water, etc., i.e., Pachabhuta Tattva (Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education, 2004).

Relevance for Adoption of Sri Aurobindo's Approach of Integral Education in the Implementation of NEP 2020:

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform India into a 'Vibrant Knowledge-Driven Society' by designing an 'India-Centric' education ecosystem capable of disseminating high-quality education sustainably to all. The NEP 2020 emphasises developing an India-centric education system to ensure the transformation of India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing high-quality education to all.

Ancient literary works and the Indian concept of art and culture are integral to the curriculum, focusing on knowledge of 64 'Kalas' and Banabhatta's *Kadambari* under the NEP 2020. In the past, India enjoyed great recognition for its contribution to painting, textiles, drawing, architecture, and many other artistic works (www.education.gov.in).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji too endorsed Sri Aurobindo's vision of national education, on which NEP 2020 was founded, during his monthly radio broadcast on *Mann ki Baat* on November 29, 2020.

Sri Aurobindo's book 'A System of National Education (1921)' eloquently stresses, "The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit." Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education, which finds its reflection under the NEP 2020 (Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education, 2004).

Sri Aurobindo has made a very significant contribution to the foundation of Indian Culture, which is explained in terms of three tasks that India had to accomplish. The first task concerns recovering ancient spiritual knowledge (Veda, Upanishad, Puranas, and Gita).

The second task is for India to pour that knowledge into new modes of philosophical, scientific, and critical knowledge. This is well explained in his philosophical work, "The Life Divine."

The third task is to deal with contemporary problems in a new manner and to realise a spiritualised society (Aurobindo, Sri., 2014).

Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on education transcend the traditional boundaries of academic learning. He posited a transformative model that combines Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual growth, emphasising each individual's inner potential.



While building on Sri Aurobindo's foundations, The Mother elaborated on the practical aspects of implementing such an education system in the real world. Central to their philosophy was the belief that education should not be a mere accumulation of facts but a harmonious cultivation of the human being towards self-realisation and the evolution of consciousness. The principles of Integral Education, as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, find resonance in many aspects of NEP 2020 **(Professor Nimesh Joshi & Mr. Punit Pathak, 2024)**

Changes in the structure of schools and higher education with the provision of multiple entry and multiple exit to facilitate lifelong learning under the NEP 2020 are in sync with the prescription of Sri. Aurobindo provides students with a free and creative environment with rigorous emphasis on different activities, viz., Internships, Apprenticeships, Projects, Fieldwork, etc., for providing practical exposure, hands-on training, and real-life experiences. Sri Aurobindo's approach to integral education emphasises selecting courses based on the needs and interests of the students to nurture creativity, innovativeness, and building capabilities and capacities. Sri. Aurobindo also advocated for an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach as it becomes visible under the implementation of the NEP 2020. Sri Aurobindo suggested various subjects to be taught considering different levels of a child. The curriculum should include basically those subjects which are highly relevant to the society like Mother Tongue, English, History, Social Science, History, Chemistry, Physics, Arithmetic, General Science, Literature, various Foreign Languages and vocational subjects as well as above all, Physical Education, Yoga, Sports, Arts, Crafts, Music, Painting, Dramatics etc. as a part of the systematic curriculum.

A study of Teaching-Learning and Evaluation methods under the NEP 2020 reveals that Sri Aurobindo, too, under integral education, has already suggested making use of various methods, viz., Observation, Self-Discovery, Activity Method, Teaching with Love and Sympathy, Learning by Doing, Discussion Method, Learning by Self-Experience, Teaching-Learning through Mother Tongue, and Co-operation during the teaching-learning process **(Chanda Rani,2017)**.

Thus, education aims twofold: the collective and the individual aspects. From a collective perspective, education is expected to make individuals good citizens. People living in harmony with others in society fulfil their duties as citizens. The individual aspect gives the citizen a strong, healthy mind-body balance, helping him attain his identity, character, and self-mastery. This, in turn, enables them to develop their natural abilities **(Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education,2004)**.

Challenges in the Implementation of the National Education Policy[NEP] 2020:

The NEP 2020 brings changes to transform India's education system. However, the critical aspect is its implementation and execution, which calls for the theatrical simplification of decision-making structures and the re-prioritization of budgetary resources. Achieving the Gross Enrolment Ratio [GER] of 50 per cent by the year 2035 shall require



immediate setting up of Schools and Universities by allocating a substantial amount of investment in classrooms and campuses that should be reflected in 'funding' is one of the most critical challenges in the timely execution & implementation of the NEP 2020. To design and effectively deliver curriculum, India shall require trained and committed teachers who can better address the pedagogical needs, which also calls for substantial mindset shifts, mainly on the part of teachers and parents.

The success and effective execution with regard to implementation of the NEP 2020 shall depend upon the role being played by teachers and, above all, the political wish list and commitment of the 'Government'. It calls for mind shifts, continual training and upskilling on the part of teachers to create a conducive teaching-learning environment as well as building a student-centric support system and, finally, mobilisation of Physical, Human and Information and Communication Technology [ICT] resources and infrastructural support to educational institutions by the Government and various other stakeholders.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 by the Government of India focuses on imparting holistic, learner-centric, flexible, and value-driven education as reflected in several tenets of Integral Education.

The NEP 2020 provides structural and pedagogical reforms; the depth of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision offers deeper spiritual and philosophical insights that could further enhance the policy's implementation. Thus, integrating the principles of Integral Education with the vision of NEP 2020 shall help impart holistic and value-based education in India. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy on national education and system of education with an approach of integral education is of enormous significance and relevance for achieving and sustaining peace and harmony in the 21st century.

This can be realised only by raising human beings from materiality to spirituality. According to Sri Aurobindo, "True happiness lies only in finding and maintaining the natural harmony of spirit, mind, and body". The NEP 2020 has greatly emphasised Physical Education, Sports, Recreation and 'Yoga'. One finds great emphasis on 'Integral Yoga' as stated by Sri Aurobindo that: 'All life is Yoga. Yoga is a generic name for any discipline by which one attempts to pass out of the limits of one's ordinary mental consciousness into a greater spiritual consciousness". Like the NEP 2020, Sri Aurobindo's approach to integral education too places enormous importance on imparting value education and promoting national and international collaboration for peace, harmony, global citizenship, and, above all, humanity.

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