



Fivefold Education

A brief overview

Times are changing, perceptions are changing, beliefs are fast changing. Our view of what we are, what we want from life, what is possible for us, is no longer the same as it was a few decades ago. The dream of human unity - of one world, one earth - is becoming a reality, with space and time transcended through technology. But psychologically there are still divisions. The quest now perhaps has to be inward.

What Jonathan Livingston Seagull¹ wanted from life was so different from what others around him had wanted. Yet was it so very different from what each one of us seeks - Freedom, Perfection, Delight... the Joy of Progress and Self-exceeding? Society and education try to tie us down to the ordinary round of life, but the seeker in us wants to fly... it knows that the ordinary can be so much more, that the quality of life need not be what it is now, that there are worlds of knowledge and discovery awaiting us.

It is this quest that sparkles in children's eyes when they first come to school and look up to their teachers. What can education offer them to keep this spark alive?

According to The Mother, "It is an invaluable possession for every living being to have learnt to know himself and to master himself. To know oneself means to know the motives of one's actions and reactions, the why and how of all that happens in oneself. To master oneself means to do what one had decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen to or follow impulses, desires or fancies... The finest present one can give to a child would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself."²

How can this be done in the school? "Education to be complete", the Mother says, "must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Usually, these phases of education succeed each other in a chronological order following the growth of the individual..."³

Integral Education addresses itself to this task through a thorough training of each part. It asks for a shift from information and content

to the training of the instruments of knowledge and action.

In the words of The Mother, "The three lines of education - physical, vital and mental - deal with that which may be defined as the means of building up the personality, raising the individual out of the amorphous subconscious mass, making it a well-defined self-conscious entity."⁴

This entails, at the Physical level, not only games, exercises and sport, but:

- A conscious control and discipline of all the functions of the body
- A total, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body
- Rectification of defects and deformities, if there are any⁵

Resulting in Harmony, Strength, Balance, Endurance, Health and Beauty – a sound foundation for the pursuit of any physical endeavour in life.

At the Vital level, not only lessons in value education, but:

- A thorough training of the senses – as it is the senses that carry and interpret the information to the mind and the vital, and determine our response to people and situations.
- Character development and its transformation through:
 1. Self-observation and self-reflection
 2. Developing in oneself the will to progress and to perfect one's character
 3. Leading to a gradual mastery and transformation of one's character

At the Mental level, Integral Education would mean not only imparting of information, but:

1. Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention.
2. Development of the capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness.
3. Organisation of ideas around a central idea or a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life.



4. Thought control, rejection of undesirable thoughts, so that one may, in the end, think only what one wants and when one wants it.
5. Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coming from the higher regions of the being.⁶

And lastly, a step-by-step training of the 7 mental faculties of:

- Concentration
- Observation
- Memory
- Judgment
- Reasoning
- Imagination, and
- Intuition

But one need not stop here. For, education to be complete, must also evoke the inner being – a dimension completely ignored by modern education. While physical, vital and mental education prepare the outer personality and capacities to their fullest, psychic education provides to the human life a certitude that no circumstance, no crisis can shake. Through psychic education the individual develops a power of attitude over circumstances and life. Thus, it is an education that unlocks the eternal source of knowledge, love and creativity in the human being and prepares him for a life of integral perfection – in whatever field or profession he or she chooses to take up in life.

Along with the training of the outer being, the evocation of the inner being is most important for a true and complete education – a dimension completely ignored by modern education. The Mother says, “With psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of life, the reason of our existence upon earth, the discovery to which life must lead and the result of that discovery: the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle.”⁷

Thus, Integral Education addresses itself to that deep-seated urge in the child – and in each one of us – for Freedom, Perfection, Delight... the Joy of Progress and Self-exceeding. And it provides to the child the means of realising this vision, and soaring beyond the ordinary, in the quest towards an ever increasing knowledge and mastery.


The teacher’s role is crucial in this process. When asked, ‘how can a teacher help the stu-

dent to know himself’, The Mother replied: “The attitude of the teacher must be one of a constant will to progress, not only in order to know always better what he wants to teach the students, but above all in order to be a living example to show them what they can become. ... The teacher should be the living example of what he asks the students to become.”⁸

And this is the reason that Integral Education can be practised even within the existing system and structures. As The Mother says, “It is not so much the details of organisation as the *attitude* that must change.”⁹

The consequence is an individual who is in touch with the truth of his being and consecrated to putting it into action. This in turn is reflected in the larger collectivity and helps even the collective to come in touch with its own truth and purpose of existence. The ripples that emanate from the soul ultimately result in a society that is free from the corrupting influence of the soul-less forces that presently control it.

Thus, Integral Education is an adventure of knowing oneself and mastering oneself, that begins from the individual but impacts the society. We invite your participation in this adventure... We are on the threshold of a new world. The door is open... you have only to step in.

 **Compiled by Anuradha**

¹ See Richard Bach, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull: a Story How to Bring up a Child?*, p.24

² *Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education*, p.96

³ *Ibid.*, pp.121-22

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.100

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.114-15

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.122

⁷ *Collected Works of The Mother*, v.12

⁸ *Ibid.*