

## Moral and Ethical Development in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy: A Holistic Approach to Education

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### Abstract

*This abstract examines Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of ethical and moral development with a view to its impact on learning. Unlike traditional approaches, Aurobindo's model includes physical, mental and spiritual evolution and the expansion of consciousness — both his ultimate goal and that which he believes will produce good behavior. The present inquiry considers his notions of the human soul, the psychic spirit, and the role of education in agitating the conscience. This analysis proposes that the structure adopted by Aurobindo aligns with modern theories of moral pedagogy, and characterizes how the vision of Aurobindo is reformative to contemporary practices, which are meant for producing a more holistic moral cultivation.*

**Keywords:** Aurobindo's Philosophy, Moral Development, Consciousness Expansion, Human Soul, Moral Pedagogy, Holistic Cultivation

### Introduction

The instilling of morality and ethics has always been at the front and center of social engineering. Moral development has historically been prioritized in schools through character education, virtue ethics, and social justice-oriented models, among others. The approach that Sri Aurobindo takes by emphasizing the moral and ethical evolution of the individual and society, provides a much different viewpoint based on an inner experience of a higher range of existence rather than one based on social behavior or rational thinking. His unique approach towards education, the principle of integral development, holds ethical and moral dimensions as the essence of evolution in life. For a true paragon of virtue both an inner and outer development is necessary and in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy this is a transformation that is born from the awakening of the soul and not an externally placed imposition. This article describes the place of moral and ethical education in his framework and positions it in the larger picture of his vision for human development and spiritual evolution.

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### **Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Human Being: The Psychic and Moral Growth**

Integral means not just spiritual, but uniting the entire being—physical, vital (emotional), mental, and psychic. His idea of moral and ethical development centers on the "psychic being" — which he considers the deepest spiritual part of ourselves, our individualized divine nature. The psychic being, unlike the Western moral theory on which most Eastern thought has become submerged, is not a rational principle nor even a utilitarian outcome: it pushes us forward from inside and as much against outside social pressure or apparent edification as through it. Being the actual soul itself, the psychic being has an innate antipathy to anything other than truth and compassion and justice. Responding from a space of soul as it becomes conscious in the human being, that higher moral compass.

### **Moral Development as Evolution of Consciousness**

For Aurobindo, ethical evolution is synonymous with the awakening of consciousness. He believed that humans are in a transitory phase, evolving towards higher tiers of spiritual consciousness from distinctly mental awareness. This process is the gradual harmonization of the lower aspects of the being —the physical, emotional and mental viewpoints —with the soul self.

Aurobindo goes on to state that moral advance cannot be achieved through mere intellectual training. Instead, it requires an inner change in which desire and emotion and thought come into harmony with the deeper truth of the psychic being. In that light moral education in Aurobindo's understanding is not the teaching of social codes of conduct or ethical philosophies, but enabling the soul to unfold center stage so as to take effective and complete charge over our living.

### **Comparing Aurobindo's Ethical Philosophy with Contemporary Moral Theories**

Some strands of contemporary moral instruction come from rationalist traditions that concern virtuous decision-making based reasoning and deontological universal laws of ethics, to the point where it is imperative that they carry out some form of Kantian procedure very similarly. From this perspective, moral axioms such as justice and fairness are independent of individual feelings and thoughts and can be derived through sound reasoning.

Though Aurobindo recognizes reason, his thought transcends it. He reasoned that complete moral truth cannot be captured purely by logic; it transcends the limits and domain of the mental plane. To Aurobindo, ethical behavior has to be guided by a higher spiritual consciousness that is beyond reasoning and mental functioning] The psychic being is connected to the divine and consequently serves as a more reliable moral compass than reason or ego ever could.

Utilitarian ethics, promulgated by thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, is the school of thought that centres moral weight on results: more specifically, doing what creates the most happiness or well-being for the greatest number. It is an outcomes-based, not intent- or value-based approach.

Thus Aurobindo finds consequentialist ethics reductive by constraining morality to that which falls outside the human soul. According to him, genuine moral behavior is not motivated by a cost-benefit analysis but involuntary and as an emanation of the soul itself – similar to a flower blooming. The answer is simple — when the psychic being has control, everything anyone does that is ethical or good will obviously coincide with caring for others — and they do not have to rationally weigh actions against consequences.

### **Virtue Ethics**

Aurobindo's philosophy resembles the ancient notion of virtue ethics — being 'virtuous' entails an internal success as opposed to simple rule following or outcomes. According to Aurobindo, virtues spring from the psychic being of an individual — that is, from the divine spark present in all human beings. And this inner influence promotes courage, temperance and wisdom spontaneously. Inner qualities of this kind leads to moral behaviour and not any sort of calculative actions. But to Aurobindo, virtues are more than just pleasant characteristics. He commands the former of these, stating that they need to arise from the influence of the psychic being on one's whole nature. Moral/universal consciousness is the inborn quality of divinity in us, which moral education helps to quickly develop.

### **Educational Implications of Aurobindo's Philosophy**

Instead of a teaching which prescribes ethics, Aurobindo's educational vision allows for an inner development. This is opposed to typical strategies based on logic or directives. Teachers facilitate opportunities for students to reach their higher, psychic self where ethics can arise naturally. In practical terms, this means meditating, being introspective and express yourself creatively. These calm the mind and help one connect within. Educators nurture each student's internal sense of right and wrong by teaching about inner quietness and mindfulness. Aurobindo thought better of this inner compass than any rules imposed.

### **The Teacher as a Guide**

The teacher does not impose what he/she knows; the teacher only facilitates knowledge — assists revelation of truth from inner life. Aurobindo That is to say, the teacher does not use an authoritarian stance but directs inner search. Aurobindo view is in line with contemporary student-centered learning focused on greater independence and personal development. But really his philosophy goes further because he believes the end goal of education is to help students discover a divine nature in themselves and a more harmonious

relationship between actions. It makes the moral education as a realisation process not an implant of ethos emanating from outside.

### **Moving into 21st century learning: Challenges and applications**

There are challenges to applying Aurobindo in contemporary systems. Focusing on inner development might come into conflict with the standardized assessment of skills and performance that our education systems tend to prioritize over spiritual and character development, which are often intangible. Moreover, Aurobindo's method requires educators who possess attentiveness to their own subjective experiences and can help facilitate this exploration. This exerts a special kind of demand on teacher education that requires not only the birth and development of pedagogical curriculum, but also spiritual and ethical aspects as pathways for the making—of such teachers.

### **Applications in Holistic Education Models**

But their variations have taken root — and thrived — in schools, particularly at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry, India. This is a place of integral education, in which every part of the human being is aimed to be awakened — including his psychic entity. Meditation and arts practice, writing and self-reflection are woven into its fabric, inviting students to discover who they truly are. The modern school trends of social-emotional learning (SEL) and classroom/design mindfulness also reflect some of Aurobindo's ideas. Like Aurobindo, these approaches acknowledge that our inner knowing is an essential ingredient to the cultivation of compassion in action, ethically sound behavior and skillful emotional regulation.

### **Conclusion**

The vision for education through a more moral and ethical growth is given by Sri Aurobindo. His emphasis on the awakening of the psychic being and the evolution of consciousness provides a spiritual basis for morality that goes beyond moral theory grounded in reason or social conventions. Aurobindo Educational Philosophy promotes inner growth, self-realization so everyone behaves from their own place of truth where ethical or moral conduct comes naturally as the expression of the soul. Though the educational practices of his time are difficult to replicate given our modern education system's heavy reliance on external measures, his ideas can take us a long way toward designing programs that promote more integrative, spiritually oriented forms of morality. Aurobindo's philosophy continues to provide an imaginative yet applicable framework for content-informed education that will not only articulate social, emotional and ethical aspects of human life but meet the definition of preparation as an enduring thematic task.

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