



SRI AUROBINDO AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

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Abstract

Day by day the centre of education is being shifted from subject to child theoretically but when it comes to implementation the centre has shifted from child to examination. This system of education is really becoming a nightmare for children and their parents. To come out from this precarious condition one must try to understand the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. This paper deals about the fundamental principles of constructivism and the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

Keywords: Knowledge, Education.



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INTRODUCTION: Knowledge is a commodity and child is a machine. We want to stuff all information to the child's mind as soon as he goes to school. We load child's mind with all factual information without any chance of understanding. Child comes to home overloaded. H/she gets nightmare about examination. Everyday newspapers say around 95% children are stressed and they are getting depression. At school teachers are dominating, at home parents are dominating, child is sandwiched. H/she has no other go. From the time h/she starts to go to school his blooming smile vanishes and he is really confused. The first generation of objectivism, second generation of behaviourism could not give proper reply to this issue. There is a cry for solution. So, the third generation of constructivism has come into the picture.

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge (epistemology) that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. The basic characteristics of constructivism are:

- Learning is not a passive receptive process but is instead an active meaning-making process required to solve meaningful problems.
- New learning depends on learner's previous knowledge, which may sometimes interfere with the understanding of new information.

- Learning implies the reorganization of prior conceptual schemes.
- Learning is facilitated by social interaction.
- Meaningful learning occurs within authentic learning tasks.

Sri Aurobindo, a great philosopher of his age, was deadly against the prevalent education of his times. As per him, "Education to be true must not be a machine made fabric, but a true building /living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of human being."

His main principles of education are:

- Nothing can be taught but everything can be learnt
- The mind should be constantly consulted in its growth.
- Work from being to becoming, present to future and near to far.
- Molding an individual as per the parents' wish is a barbarian behaviour to a growing soul.

Defining true education, Sri Aurobindo wrote, "There are three things which have to be taken into account in true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation / people and universal humanity. It follows that.....right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people/ nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member." So, the true education should take into account not only individual but also the nation and the humanity. Same aspect of education is advocated by Novak (1993) as Human constructivism and Vyagotsky as social constructivism .

Social constructivist scholars view learning as an active process where learners should learn to discover principles, concepts and facts for themselves, hence the importance of encouraging guesswork and intuitive thinking in learners (Brown et al.1989; Ackerman 1996). In fact, for the social constructivist, reality is not something that we can discover because it does not pre-exist prior to our social invention of it. Kukla (2000) argues that reality is constructed by our own activities and that people, together as members of a society, invent the properties of the world. Sri Aurobindo holds that intuition must be corrected by a more perfect intuition and never by logical reasoning. Great spiritual truths can be realised by intuition alone. He believes supermind as intuition and intuition connects the two hemispheres of being and becoming.

Sri Aurobindo preferred integral teaching, which involves training of all aspects of the educand's mind and personality. Starting with sense training it develops the memory and

judgement, the observation and comparison, analogy, reasoning, imagination, language, grammar and meaning of the logical faculty . As per Sri Aurobindo,” Every child is an inquirer, analyser, and merciless anatomist.” His free progress system is based on certain principles. These are:

- The structure is oriented towards individual needs, interests and abilities.
- The aspiration, experience of freedom, self education and experimentation relating inner needs with the curricular provisions, discovering the higher lines of life and the art to encompass.
- Each student is free to study any subject he chooses at any given time under sympathetic guidance.
- Promotion of individual endeavour.
- Promotion of discussion between teachers and taught, taught and taught.

Furthermore, it is argued that the responsibility of learning should reside increasingly with the learner (Glaserfeld, 1989). Social constructivism thus emphasizes the importance of the learner being actively involved in the learning process, unlike previous educational viewpoints where the responsibility rested with the instructor to teach and where the learner played a passive, receptive role. Von Glaserfeld (1989) emphasized that learners construct their own understanding and that they do not simply mirror and reflect what they read. Learners look for meaning and will try to find regularity and order in the events of the world even in the absence of full or complete information. The learning environment should also be designed to support and challenge the learner's thinking (Di Vesta, 1987). While it is advocated to give the learner ownership of the problem and solution process, it is not the case that any activity or any solution is adequate. The critical goal is to support the learner in becoming an effective thinker. This can be achieved by assuming multiple roles, such as consultant and coach. A further characteristic of the role of the facilitator in the social constructivist viewpoint, is that the instructor and the learners are equally involved in learning from each other as well (Holt and Willard-Holt 2000). This means that the learning experience is both subjective and objective and requires that the instructor's culture, values and background become an essential part of the interplay between learners and tasks in the shaping of meaning. Learners compare their version of the truth with that of the instructor and fellow learners to get to a new, socially

tested version of truth (Kukla 2000). The task or problem is thus the interface between the instructor and the learner (McMahon 1997). This creates a dynamic interaction between task, instructor and learner. This entails that learners and instructors should develop an awareness of each other's viewpoints and then look to their own beliefs, standards and values, thus being both subjective and objective at the same time (Savery 1994).

Social Constructivism views each learner as a unique individual with unique needs and backgrounds. The learner is also seen as complex and multidimensional. Social constructivism not only acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner, but actually encourages, utilizes and rewards it as an integral part of the learning process (Wertsch 1997). This particular aspect is very well explained in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as he considers an individual as, "a growing soul with a being, a nature and capacities of his own." Thus the aim of education as per Sri Aurobindo is to realise these capacities and grow, into fullness of physical and vital energy and utmost breadth, depth and height of his emotional, his intellectual and his spiritual being."

Social constructivism or socio-culturalism encourages the learner to arrive at his or her version of the truth, influenced by his or her background, culture or embedded worldview. Historical developments and symbol systems, such as language, logic, and mathematical systems, are inherited by the learner as a member of a particular culture and these are learned throughout the learner's life. This also stresses the importance of the nature of the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of the society. Without the social interaction with other more knowledgeable people, it is impossible to acquire social meaning of important symbol systems and learn how to utilize them. Young children develop their thinking abilities by interacting with other children, adults and the physical world. From the social constructivist viewpoint, it is thus important to take into account the background and culture of the learner throughout the learning process, as this background also helps to shape the knowledge and truth that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process (Wertsch 1997). Sri Aurobindo spoke in similar lines as an individual learns as per his own needs and interest which is created by the Prarabdh of last births. He speaks two individuals never comprehend two identical events/ objects identically. This is due to their past Karmas.

Thus from this discussion, it is clear that Sri aurobindo was a constructivist from core. These principles are practiced in his educational institutions. So, it will be easier for the teachers and teacher educators to get training on theory and practice of constructivism from those Institutions and implement the principles to make Indian teaching- learning situation better. When learners will be given importance definitely they will enjoy learning. Learning will not be a burden for them and their problems will be solved.

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