



Educational Philosophy of Guru Nanak

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ABSTRACT Modern education has mostly been responsible for ways and means of earning livelihood, for raising the standard of life, for improving the health of society and for social awakesness but the approach somehow remains materialistic. As such it has not addressed the problem of discontentment, mental unrest, blind race after wealth etc. Guru Nanak has stressed the need of total emancipation. He believes in simple living and sharing one's wealth with others and sharing of other's sufferings. He does not believe in salvation after death which otherwise has been crux of Indian philosophy. This paper focuses on the spiritual, ethical and moral aspects of education put forth by Guru Nanak which is always relevant and required for the overall development of individual and the society.

KEYWORDS

The advent of Guru Nanak is one of the most important landmarks in the history of mankind. He preached oneness of mankind, brotherhood of man, fatherhood of God a Education enlightens the mind with the light of knowledge. Intellectual wisdom takes a man to the true understanding of his place in the world as his role and responsibilities as the crown of creation. In this way the path of intellect does not consist of gathering knowledge and information for its own sake. It consists of making knowledge instrumental to the realization of wisdom (Sodhi 1993). Guru Nanak attached great importance to the cultivation of intellect which is an essential factor in developing integrated personality. Education is to induce social, moral intellectual and spiritual values in the human beings so that one should be helpful, kind, humble truthful, patient, honest, pure and disciplined.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Trilochan Singh (1968) described that Guru Nanak criticized that education which stimulates the mind without giving inner satisfaction. True education helps in spiritual experience. What use is that education which does not help us to get out of our animal existence and which does not awaken the spiritual depth in man, but on the other hand, sharpens his intellect to become clever, selfish, shy or wicked. Ishar Singh (1969) described that Guru Nanak taught to make man fit to live in this world and to meet in a righteous manner, the challenge of this life, He wanted to produce man living in the midst of fast moving currents, growth of science, technology and political ideology to remain steadfast on the stock of spirituality. What was important was the spirit and its process of education. Banerjee (1971) said that learning in school of the town was oriented towards making a student capable of earning wealth, influence and power. Again instead of adopting the whole system of education, Guru Nanak came forth with the plea of changing the values and orientation which he found

so undesirable, and opposed an education that kept one away from truthful living. Khosla (1982) opined that educational philosophy of Guru Nanak has helped man not only to become aware of his spiritual consciousness in the very day-to-day affairs and experiences of life but also to explore the possibility of his spiritual transcendence as the very nexus of his being and growing. The whole philosophy is the transformation of all experiences information and knowledge into wisdom and all human willing, feeling and doing into an expression of creative and constructive genius that promotes spiritual awareness as well as the transcendence. Such indeed, is the strength of the Guru's educational philosophy that they not only visualize spiritual transcendence as the final end of life but also seek to realize it through the whole gamut of education and human conduct. Sodhi (1993) described that Guru Nanak's curriculum encourages spiritual education, higher values like dignity of labour, truthful living etc. It should lead to all round development of the child's personality. Guru Nanak approved of all subjects which contributed to an integrated development of the whole human species and to perform in the universe and therefore sought to orient every bit of learning, every piece of knowledge and information and in fact every chunk of curriculum and every content of education, irrespective of its field or discipline to evolve the dignity in man so that it penetrates the whole of his conduct. Sehgal (2001) Guru Nanak had a double purpose in his preachings – social and spiritual. His social views depicted his reaction to the times whereas the spiritual was the call of his own soul. He advocated a new social order as a reaction against the social conditions and fought against the environments in which he was born and brought up.. Ahluwalia (2003) opined that Guru Nanak, heralded, a new social and stratal order characterized by the values of equality and equity, justice and compassion, tolerance and mutual accommodation and non-violence

Objectives of the Study

Specially the objectives of the study are :-
 To study the importance of values and ethics in education as described by Guru Nanak.
 To study the relevance of Guru Nanak's teachings in the present scenario.

Methodology

Conceptualization of thoughts of Guru Nanak in the present context of education for the removal of traditional myths and disbeliefs which are a great hindrance in attaining knowledge. Comparative study of interpretation of the teachings of Guru Nanak by various scholars formed the basis of the research

work and which necessitated the extensive reading of various books. The endeavour of the study has been to consolidate and systematize the ideas of Guru Nanak's educational philosophy and to present a consistent and coherent account of the philosophy.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF GURU NANAK
VIDYA VICHARI TA PARUPKARI (AG, P.356)

"That education is worth, which is applied to the welfare of the humanity"

The educational philosophy of Guru Nanak revolves around idealism, naturalism, pragmatism, realism and humanism. He believes in pragmatic way to solve social problems. He was an idealist and believes in spiritual development for ultimate salvation of mankind. He believes in action and dignity of labour and workers for the betterment of individuals and the society. He was humanist as he worked for mankind and lived for mankind. The philosophy or idealism of Guru Nanak is unique and different form many other western idealists. Guru Nanak differs from the western philosophy of education and he talks of earthly things as these exist in actuality and reality also and not only in ideas. He is concerned with the social, cultural, economic and political problems in the light of their relevance to spiritual development through inner experience. Intellectual development is essential but only a step towards perfection. The ultimate valuable aspect is spiritual emancipation.

He believed that the spiritual knowledge can be attained by bringing faith in Him. Religion is the path of the soul towards what is conceived to be the God; it is soul's apprehension of the God and its sense of union with Him. The characteristic attitude of religion is that of reverence and worship. Nanak said:

"Mannai Surat hovai man budh"
meaning thereby

"By bringing faith in Him, one gets enlightenment of spirit".
(A.G. P-3)

to Guru Nanak Spiritual knowledge forms the basis of education which further leads to ultimate reality. It is only possible through faith in almighty. It is the faith in him which develops the spirit which leads to the development of emotions and hence the intellect. Guru Nanak's vision of education can be understood in three parts.

1. Bringing man, nature and god at one platform;
2. Submission to the will of God and imbibing the quality of unity in diversity;
3. Acquiring the concept of 'Sewa' meaning dedicated work in the service of mankind.

Based on these parameters Guru Nanak enunciated the following aims of education:

Spiritual Emancipation. Every human being has a divine spark in him. The aim of education is to ignite his spiritual nature to attain enlightenment or self-realization. Guru Nanak held the view:

"Achara Vichar Sarir Ad Jugad Sahj Mandhir" (A.G.P-686)
meaning thereby

"He, who is the embodiment of pious deeds and meditation, his soul, till eternity, abides in celestial bliss and contentment"

Formation of Character and Infusion of Piety. Nanak believed that true education is based on mortality guarded by passion without prejudices. He advocated character based on enlightenment of Dharma, gem of divinity, truthful living and spiritual art of life. One cannot attain true knowledge without overcoming the evils like greed, lust and vanity. He lays great emphasis on the need to overcome evil impulses and vices like

concupiscence anger covetousness attachment and pride.

According to Nanak the mark of an educated person is that he contemplates over the higher values of life and inculcates them in his life.

*"He alone is a wise man,
Who gains practical enlightenment of life.
Through meditation, over the divine virtues".*

Even if a person has read a huge number of books and acquired degrees, is not an educated person if he suffers from selfishness, greed and ego.

Cultural, Emotional and Aesthetic Development. Music is the soul of life and it is the soul of Sikh religion. Guru Nanak is alive to the education and enrichment of emotions. For cultural, emotional and aesthetic development he emphasizes the traditional study of music and literature. Recitation in congregations was considered educative and provided aesthetic enjoyment through literary and musical elements besides holding before the common people the cherished ideals and traditions of land.

Physical Development. Guru Nanak was fully conscious of the importance of physical fitness of the body.

"Sport and play are the minds amusement".

He upheld the dignity of labour and a life of action. He travelled on foot for years together which lent strength and vigor to his body. He made social activity and manual labour, the key to highest wisdom and exaltation.

Social and Civic Training. He propounded that education should aim at the inculcation of civic and social virtues and promotion of social efficiency and happiness. For him the essence of wisdom is the service of humanity.

"If one dwells on (the essence) knowledge,

One becometh a benefactor of all".(A.G. P- 7-8)

Guru Nanak enjoined upon us to have such education which could contemplate better social order, uplift the downtrodden and remove the gap among the masses. He gave equal status to women in society by saying that women gives birth to kings, so why to curse her. He stressed the need and importance of community get-together and community dining for the feeling of brotherhood in society thus removing the wedge between rich and poor as well as high and lows.

For the up-lift of the society Guru Nanak placed the idea of social service before the Sikhs. The three cardinal principles of his teachings are:

- (a) To earn one's livelihood by the sweat of one's brow
- (b) To share one's earnings with the needy
- (c) To meditate over the name of God

Guru Nanak has described five stages of mental and spiritual development of the individual in 'Japji'. These educational stages mark the development of scientific outlook, artistic vision, creative attitude and spiritual strength and help realize the Divine Truth. These stages show that education is successively information knowledge, wisdom and trust or practical realization of God's vision and reality.

Value system of Nanak is the basis of the educational thought of his work. Values according to him are those which one should accept, respect, regard and appreciate. Conversely, dis-values or lower values are those which need to be shunned. To understand the difference between good and evil, it is essential that the mind is enlightened with knowledge and education.

Through wisdom does one realize what one reads?. Through wisdom does charity comes into one 's mind. Says Nanak, this is the true path, all else leads to the devil (A.G.P-1)

Every one has got his own value system which is normally based on the old beliefs myths customs and the traditions which are followed by them blindly without reasoning and which become a part of our ritual exercise. One may find some solace through these rituals but real happiness can be obtained by rising above the blind faith, by self awakening and by acquiring divine knowledge.

Lower Values. He advocated renunciation of the following lower values **Indulgence in lust, greed and anger.**

A person who indulges in lust greed and anger can never remain happy. Lust and greed make a person to always remain on tenterhooks as one wants to get more and more of everything which ultimately make one slave of material things. He or she try still harder to acquire but when things don't fall in line they became angry and their anger make them aggressive. They sometimes adopt illegal, unethical and illogical ways and even start committing crimes for attainment of their desires.

Usurping of other's wealth & women, indulging in back-biting.

People who are not satisfied with what they have, start keeping an eye on others wealth and women. It makes them restless. They try to find ways and means to acquire others wealth and women and in the process have strained relations with others and thus can never lead a peaceful life.

Exploitation of weaker and the helpless.

A lust and greed compels a person to grab things which are otherwise due to others. When he succeeds in his evil designs he feels pleasure and starts committing crimes against humanity.

Ignorance and lethargy

A lethargic and ignorant person can neither do any good to himself nor to the society at large. Such a person is no better than an animal who cannot look beyond eating and reproducing.

Falsehood

False people do not listen to others. They boast of their wisdom, their wealth and their strength. They always create problems not only for themselves but also for the people who happen to be their contacts.

Bribery, prostitution and stealing

Some people fall prey to bribery prostitution and stealing as a means of satisfying their lust and greed through easy but unethical means. They are deprived of God's grace. In the older days of life they are left alone to fend for themselves. No body like them or help them during the sun set of their life.

Violence and killing of living beings

Violence and killing of living beings make a person stubborn. No amount of education, reasoning or counselling are sufficient enough to persuade such people. They cannot do good to others. They are like a stone which cannot be made wet from inside by pouring tonnes and tonnes of water over it.

Gender Equality and Importance of Women. Guru Nanak has highest praise for women and also has indicated their importance in raising the future humanity in the following verses:

From the women is our birth; in the woman 's womb one grows; to the woman one is engaged; to the woman one is wedded. One befriends with woman and starts one 's life.

When woman is dead and another woman is sought and with woman we are attached and raise a family. Why call woman

evil that gives birth to kings? From the woman is born a woman, without woman there is none.

There is only One, the eternal, who is not dependent upon woman. That person, who always praises the One, is very fortunate. That person's face glows in the court of God.

(A.G.P-473)

Guru Nanak made a serious attempt to uplift the status of women in the Indian society.

He raised his voice against sati and Purdah system as he considered these the signs of inferiority. He appointed women preachers and introduced the institution of widow marriages.

Conclusion

Guru Nanak gave a philosophy which is complete in all its respects. He has conveyed the real meaning of education. Guru Nanak was the advocate of education which promotes brotherhood, togetherness, kindness and which liberates a man from the disparities on the basis of caste, creed and colour which goes beyond the boundaries of nations and thus has a universal human approach.

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