

SELF-REALIZATION: A GATEWAY TO EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Living is an art, a skill, a technique. One needs to learn and practice the technique of living. As this art of living is not taught in the educational institutions people go through a mechanical routine thus becoming a victim of stress and strain.

True progress and evolution is directed towards one goal alone that is the pursuit towards excellence. A human being attains full stature on gaining self-consciousness. The knowledge of self is very important in life. The process of reflecting, contemplating upon knowledge is mañanai.e reflection.

This paper is an attempt to understand Vedanta: A philosophy which enunciates the eternal principles of life and living. On the basis of teachings by Guru Nanak and Vedanta an attempt would be made to equip people with a clear intellect to meet the challenges of the world.

Key words: Excellence, Sikhism, Vedanta and Virtues

I. INTRODUCTION

The divine law of life is that one shall be pure, free from mental agitation and suffering. The true self is peaceful and blissful. When one stays away from the self and runs after the world, then pain and suffering inflicts the person. Self is the theme of all religions. The problem facing humanity today is that none wants to look within one self. People are enchanted by fascinations of the external world.

The world has no happiness inherent in it. The pleasure and the joy which we get from the world is a reflection of the bliss with one self. The supreme bliss is reflected the world over in every object and being, in every perception, emotion and thought.

The way to ride over monotony and misery of the world and moving towards excellence is to find everlasting peace and happiness is to pursue and reach the source i.e discovering the self within which is the nucleus of true happiness.

The theory of self-realization is that a life of excellence is based on the actualization of human potentialities. In psychology, this is called "self-development." [1]

The essential question to be answered by self-realization philosophy is "Which capacities should be developed?" Often it is said that "we must become intimately, passionately, subjectively aware of everything about our existence. One has to take the leap of faith that full living requires-to make one vulnerable to all that can happen." But can this really be done? [2]

According to Parthasarthy (1978): Self-realization is said to be achieved through 4 types of spiritual practices.

- Karma yoga - without attachment to the fruit of action, acting by offering the fruit of the action to God. In other words, the practice of wholesome actions, actions that are complete, that fulfill all aspects of the present moment, leaving one in a state of fulfillment, i.e. free from desire, until the next impulse arises. The aim of Karma yoga is to surrender the personal view of ahankara ("I am the doer") and to move towards a more universal appreciation of action as service (meeting the need without any claim).
- Raja yoga - psychic control or one pointed meditation that first focuses thought onto one point and then stops thought leaving only the underlying awareness.
- Bhakti yoga - the development of love for God and other beings.
- Jnana yoga - reasoning the mind from gross most to subtle most state culminating in samadhi. This type of Jnana or knowledge is not exactly like book learning. Rather Jnana is discovering one's self and uncovering its mysteries through direct inner contemplation. Ultimately knowledge of relative phenomena dissolves and only the original Life-Force or God remains.[3]

The first step towards God is self-realization, and to achieve that, one should understand the nature of the mind. Sikhism propounds the philosophy of Self-realization. This is possible by "aatam-cheennea" or "AapPashaanae", purifying the self from the false ego:

'Atam-cheene' is self analysis, which is gained by peeping into one's self in the light of the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It is the process of evaluating and analyzing oneself on the touchstone of 'naamsimran' which if practiced, pierces into the self and washes it from within. The filth of too much of materialism goes, the self gets purified and the mind comes in 'charhdikala/higher state of mind'. This means that the self should be assessed, examined and purified, leading to self-realization and the purification of our mind. Once purified the mind helps in ushering in oneness with the Super Power as the Guru says, "Atam-cheenbhaenirankari" which means that one gets attuned to the Formless Lord through self-realization. Indirectly it means that self-realization leads to God-realization.[4]

Guru Nanak says, those who realize their self, get immersed into the Lord Himself. He also says, He who realizes his self, comes to know the essence.

II. ROLE OF VALUES AND VIRTUES IN DEVELOPMENT OF SELF

Values are objective in the sense that self has to discover them. Self conceives them as inalienable subjective qualities of ideal entity or self in which all of them are grounded.

Many moral precepts as mercy, faith, honest living, humility, good conduct, pious work and moral deeds have been emphasized by Guru Nanak.[5]

In Japji, this real self is Sachiaara (apex of self- realization), KivSachiara hove, thereby Sat is being used as the process of spiritual progress. The morally good person rises higher and higher and moves away from his houmai (ego) of life towards the larger self i.eSachiara.

The peculiarity of the human situation according to Nanak, lies in the fact that each person occupies himself with a narrow or limited view point centered in and around selflessness.

Inner development is a fundamental notion in Sikhism. In this journey of self- realization a person develops from various aspects :Khands

Dharma Khand : the situation when socially determined duties are performed to the best of ones ability.

- GianKhand: acquisition of wisdom or knowledge.
- SaramKhand: attainment of emotional harmony and unity of self.
- Karma Khand : it is developing spiritual energy and strength for self - lessons, spiritual warriors and service to mankind.
- SachKhand: achievement of the self as a universal point of view. It is based on the doctrine of Kar(action) vekhe(consciousness), nihal(bliss).[6]

The self has no consciousness of being different from others and this is reflected in its functions and actions. The actions which hinder the progress of self are Kam, khrodh, lobh, moh and ahankar. All these must be harnessed and regulated in terms of the ideal, if the self is to proceed smoothly on its quest.

The ideal can be attained in natural way(sehajsubha) i.e emancipation in the natural way during life itself not by physical torture to achieve self- regulation. Sheikh Farid says, " heat not thy body like an oven, burn not thy bones like firewood; what harm have thy head and feet done.

Sikhism does not permit the running away from the social. Nanak was against the recourse to forest(sanyasi) and proclaimed," the household and forest are alike for one who lives in poise". The withdrawal from involvement means the end of the process as well as the destruction of the development and fulfillment behavior for individual and for the members of community. Guru Nanak directs men to lead the life of the householders, not to usurp what belongs to others and cleanse the mind of evil.

Self has to realize hukum as internal to itself but, by virtues of its being universal, it transcends the subjectivity of this or that particular. Guru Nanak says let your mind be the farmer and your deeds the farming, and let your body be the farm, water it with effort. Let the word be the seed and contentment the furrowing and let the fence be humility.if one disciplines the mind and with ones deeds contemplates the true one, then he is detached.

- **Universal brotherhood** includes equality and altruism and service. Every Sikh is required to work and pray for this universal brotherhood by praying for and seeking the good of all which is described as " Sarbat da bhala". Realization of human brotherhood through social service(seva).

Guru Nanak is of the view that one of the most important effects of devotion and contemplation lies in the attitude of the person towards social service. He says, when one dwells on the Guru's word, ones mind flows out to serve others and one practices contemplation and self control by overcoming Ego.[5]

Daswandh the voluntary contribution of one tenth of ones income for the organized help, serves the dual purpose of organizing help for the needy as well as for providing opportunity to the members to participate in the organized social service and thus weld them together in closer ties.

The importance of the virtues is emphasized in Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak in one of his compositions declared that devotion without virtues is impossible. The Gurus regard virtues as essential qualities to endear the self to the divine.

- **Wisdom** is a fundamental virtue which plays a key role in the ethics of the Sikhs. Mat, mun, budh and Vivek are some of the terms used to convey the ideal of wisdom. According to Guru Nanak there are three steps to gain wisdom.

I: hearing

2: reflecting

3: contemplating

Kabir says if you have the wisdom, destroy your evil and discipline your body. Open mindedness alone is the correct attitude of receptivity, which is truly a progressive view of wisdom.

Another virtue which is of great importance in Sikhism is **truthfulness**. It helps a person to acquire peace and poise. There is transcendence of ego in truth.

- **Justice** is referred to in terms of social equality. The ethical requisite of respect for the rights of others is epitomized in the declaration of Guru Nanak that, to deprive others of their rights ought to be avoided and is considered as a taboo. According to him a just man would not exploit others even if he has the means and opportunities for doing so.

- **Humility** is another virtue which has both personal as well as social importance. When viewed from the personal angle it consists of having a humble estimate of ones merit, as that attitude alone is expressive of ones merit. Humility is necessary part for the realisation of the ideal self. Guru calls humility possessing persons as nearer to the ideal.

- **Contentment** is a virtue which plays an important role in the ethics of the Sikhs. Sikhism has sought to project a comprehensive approach to life, inclusive of activity. It is indicative of emancipation from fear or misgivings about salvation. Contented people are free of fear and despair. They are men of hope as they have trust in the message of peace given by the guru. [7,8,9]

III. CONCLUSION

Virtues thus treated in a general way are moral characteristics to be cultivated by all. The attitude of a person on this ethical-spiritual path ought to be one in which the person's ego is not permitted to puff itself up or glow with the idea that he/she possesses these virtues while others do not have them.

So the need is to go within. Rehabilitate the inner personality with inner reflection. As the body needs daily cleaning the mind and intellect need constant rehabilitation. Introspection, the process of self- observation needs to be practiced which helps one become aware of the life activities to guide it in proper direction. The spiritual study and reflection helps to develop a strong intellect and a pure mind. All bliss lies within. Look for it and one shall find it to be enlightened. The path towards excellence is within oneself. Direct your energy and strength to the Self within to attain absolute peace and bliss.

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