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IMAM-AL-GAZZALI: AS AN EDUCATIONIST

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Abstract

The present paper tries to highlight that how Imam Al-Gazzali influenced the educational system of his time with his revolutionary ideas. Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad famously known as Al-Gazzali was one of the greatest Philosopher, Educationist, Theologian, Persian, Mystic and Thinker. He stands even today in the front rank of the educationists that this universe has produced. After Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) if there is any most influential Muslim scholar it is Imam Al-Gazzali and the individuals like him appear only once in a century. In his educational philosophy he laid much stress to the personality development in which one should learn one self. He was in favour of such education which will help an individual to know his relation with Almighty and the world prevailing around. Thus he laid emphasis upon the all-round development of an individual, be it moral, aesthetic, religious, physical etc. Imam Al-Gazzali was the man who was in favour of vocational education. Educational philosophy of Imam Al-Gazzali was followed by many western scholars be it Rousseau, Herbert Spencer or Aristotle. He was one of the greatest philosophers similar to the Western philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hume and John Lock. According to Imam Al-Gazzali revelation is important to recognise all the realities and it is granted to the Prophets only by Almighty Allah.

Key-Words

Theologian, Mystic, Influential, Revelation, Vocational Education.

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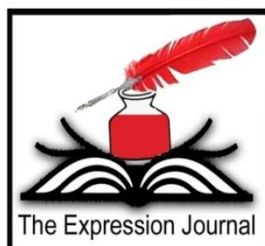
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Introduction

Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazzali shortened as Al-Ghazzali in Arabic or Ghazzali in Persian and known as Algazzelus or Algazzel to the Western medieval world, was an educationist, scholar, Persian, theologian, philosopher and mystic. Al-Ghazzali was born in A.D. 1058 in Tabran, a town in the district of Tus, which lies within the Khorasan province of Iran. His father died when he was still at a very young age. Al-Gazzali had the opportunity of getting education in the traditional curriculum at Baghdad and Nishapur. He was appointed as a professor at the Nizamiyah University of Baghdad. Al-Ghazzali is considered to be one of the original thinkers not only in the history of human thought but on the history of Muslim philosophy. He has been sometimes acclaimed in both East and West as the greatest religious authority of Islam after the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) and is by no means unworthy of this dignity. After Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) if there is any influential Muslim scholar it is Al-Ghazzali then and is also considered to be a Mujaddid or renewer of the faith, who, appears only once in a century to restore the faith of the community. Al-Gazzali was awarded the honorific title "Proof of Islam" (*Hujjat al-Islam*) by his contemporaries. Al-Ghazzali wrote more than 400 books and the notables being the *Kimyaye saadat* (The Alchemy of Happiness), "The Revival of Islamic knowledge" (*Ahya-e-uloom Islam*) and "Incoherence of philosophy" (*Tahafat-ul-filasafa*). Such was the stature of Imam-Al-Gazzali that the Shafi'i jurist al-Subki stated that, "If there had been a prophet after Muhammad (PBUH), Al-Ghazzali would have been the man". Imam-Al-Gazzali left this perishable world on 19 December 1111.

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His Philosophy

Al-Ghazzali's was one of the greatest philosophers similar to the Western philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hume and John Lock. He has advocated that revelation is essential to recognise the reality and that is granted to the Messengers of God only by Almighty Allah. Al-Ghazzali's major contribution lies in religion, philosophy and Sufism. He provided rational basis for the Islamic beliefs and integrated Sufism and individual beliefs, to give a holistic picture of Islam in helping to reunite Muslims of the world. People criticize him for the lack of use of reason in Islam.

His Educational Philosophy

Al-Ghazzali has propounded his philosophy of education on the basis of his personal experience. His philosophy is very much similar to the philosophy of Plato. He used his personal experience and concluded the reasons, which he calls sixth sense, which can lead us to truth. Divine revelation (Ilham) is superior to reason but is endowed to only selected individuals called prophets (Paighambar). Educational ideas of Ghazzali are deeply affected by his religious philosophy and research. According to him Human mind is like a clean slate and the teacher can transform it with the passage of time. John Locke also held the similar views.

Importance of Knowledge:

According to Al-Gazzali it is the knowledge which brings humans closer to God and also enhances worldly respect, status of the individual, self-respect and takes him to the higher position.

Al-Gazzali divided knowledge into two types which are Useful knowledge and Useless Knowledge.

1. **Useful Knowledge:** It is further divided into two
 - **Farz-i-Ain (Compulsory Knowledge):** This knowledge is Obligatory for all (Muslims) and contains the knowledge of Islam.
 - **Farz-i-Kifaya (Optional Knowledge):** This knowledge is optional and depends on the will of the individual.
The study of the former is obligatory for all Muslims because they are means of purification of soul which is the ultimate end. The study of the latter is not binding on every Muslim if there are sufficient people to study these sciences to satisfy the needs of the community.
2. **Useless Knowledge:** Although no knowledge is useless, but still the knowledge which has an undesirable effect is termed as useless knowledge such as if it harms somebody like magic, if the chance factor is involved like Astrology etc.

Aim of Education

Imam Al-Gazzali's aim of education was based on Islamic ideology. Main aim of education according to Al-Gazzali was that it should be useful for both i.e., for individual and for the society. In simple terms it means that the aim of education should be character building of an individual which includes the promotion of moral and ethical qualities such as obedience, humility, simplicity abhorrence of vice like pride, love of wealth and lying means, complete surrender to the will of

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God, reliance on God and thankfulness to Him. In short it can be said that that aim of education should be character building of the individual so that it can differentiate between good and evil and avoids following the evil path. The same ideas very proposed by John Herbert about 700 years after the demise of Al-Gazzali.

Imam Al-Gazzali also laid emphasis upon Islamic education which gives highest place to the Holy Quran and Hadith (Sunnah). The Holy Quran is the complete and final revelation so that it suffices for man's guidance and salvation and there is no other knowledge except based upon it and pointing to it that can guide and save man. Al-Ghazzali makes it clear that intellect is the source and fountain head of knowledge as well as its fountain. Knowledge springs from it as the fruit from the tree, light from the sun and vision from eye. True knowledge, in al-Ghazali's view, is knowledge of God, His books, His prophets, the kingdoms of earth and heaven, as well as knowledge of *shari'a* as revealed by His Prophet.

Curriculum:

Imam Al-Gazzali was against the curriculum of his time as he himself studied various curriculums of his time and reached the conclusion that too much time is spent on religious education and worldly education is kept at bay. He emphasized that worldly education is equally important and should not be ignored, thus he gave a definite place to worldly education in his curriculum. Moreover Gazzali was in favour of vocational education that is why he included industrial education, textile, agriculture, tailoring and cutting in his curriculum. This emphasizes that educational ideas of Gazzali were progressive. Moreover, Gazzali did not ignore philosophy and logic in his curriculum. Imam-Al-Gazzali has also laid great stress on physical education of the child because physical health is required for mental health of the student. Imam-Al-Gazzali was in agreement with "sound Mind in a sound Body". Thus concept of curriculum given by Gazzali was flexible and dynamic.

Methods of Teaching and Techniques:

Imam Al-Gazzali's methods of teaching were based on psychological principles. The methods of teaching adopted and recommended by Imam Al-Gazzali are accepted and used all over the world. He was of the view that teaching lessons should be based on Minimum level of Learning/ should be based on previous knowledge of the students as it helps to know the ability, aptitude and knowledge of the learner. John Herbert and Pestalozzi also recommended the same principle after his demise. Some other teaching methods adopted by Imam Al-Gazzali were simplifying the lessons, moving from simple to complex etc.

Women Education:

Ideas of Imam Al-Gazzali were bit different on women education comparing him to modern educationists. He was in favour of elementary education for women and was in favour that they should be taught home science, so that they can play their due role in their societies. He was not in favour of higher education for women. Rousseau had similar ideas later.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be safely said that Imam-Al-Gazzali had given thinking to the educational philosophy and problems in his days. Al-Gazzali made major contribution in religion, Sufism and

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philosophy. He discussed in detail the issues pertaining to reality, truth, knowledge, human nature. His point of view and suggestions are very much similar to those which are now a days presented by western educational thinkers.

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