

Imam-Al-Gazzali (As an educational thinker)

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Abstract

Imam-Al-Gazzali was one of the greatest philosophers, thinker and educationists. His philosophy of education had stress upon the development of personality in which one should know oneself. He wanted such type of education which would help a person to know himself and his relationship with his God and world. Therefore, education must contribute to the all-round development of each individual-mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility and spiritual values. All human being must be enabled to develop independent critical thinking and form their own judgment. We find Al-Ghazzali forestalling Descartes method of doubt, Hume's Skepticism, Kant's criticism of pure reason and the spiritual empiricism of some of the philosophers of religion of our own times. Al-Ghazzali has been referred to by some historians as the single most influential Muslim after the Islamic prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). Within Islamic civilization he is considered to be a Mujaddid or renewer of the faith, who, according to tradition, appears once every century to restore the faith of the community. His works were so highly acclaimed by his contemporaries that al-ghazaali was awarded the honorific title "Proof "of Islam" (Hujjat al-Islam). Thus Al-Gazzali even today stands in the front rank of educationists. He 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 recognize the reality and that is granted to the Messengers of God only by Almighty Allah.

Keywords: imam-al-gazzali, philosophers, Hume's skepticism

Introduction

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn 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 a Persian, theologian, philosopher and mystic. Al-Ghazzali was born in A.D. 1058 in Tarban, 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. But he had the opportunity of getting education in the prevalent curriculum at Nishapur and Baghdad. He acquired a high standard of scholarship in religion and philosophy and was honoured by his appointment as a professor at the Nizamiyah University of Baghdad. Al-Ghazzali was one of the original thinker not only in the history of muslim philosophy but also in the history of human thought. He has been sometimes acclaimed in both East and West has the greatest religious authority of Islam after the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) and is by no means unworthy of this dignity. Al-Ghazzali has been referred to by some historians as the single most influential Muslim after the Islamic prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). Within Islamic civilization he is considered to be a Mujaddid or renewer of the faith, who, according to tradition, appears once every century to restore the faith of the community. His works were so highly acclaimed by his contemporaries that al-Ghazzali was awarded the honorific title "Proof of Islam" (Hujjat al-Islam). 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 the Shafi jurist al-Subki stated that, "if there had been a prophet after Muhammad (pbuh), Al-Gazzali would have been the man"

Imam-Al-Gazzali left this perishable world on 19 December 1111.

His Philosophy

He 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 recognize the reality and that is granted to the Messengers of God only by Almighty Allah. 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 Education Philosophy

Al-Gazzali has prounded 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 (Paighamber). Educational ideas of Gazzali 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 anchances 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.
- **Far-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 the 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

Al-Ghazzali's aim of education was the development of character 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 God, reliance on God and thankfulness to him. In short it can be said that aim of education should be character building of the individual so that it can differentiate between good and evil and avoid following the evil path. The same ideas very proposed by Jhon Herbert about 700 year after the demise of AL-GAZZALI.

The distinguishing feature of Islamic education is the place it gives to the Holy Quraan and Hadith [sunnah.] The holy Quraan 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-GAZZALI makes it clear that intellect is the source and fountain head of knowledge as well as its fountain. Knowledge springs 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 prophets.

Curriculum

The concept of curriculum given by AL-Gazzali was flexible and dynamic. According to him Religious and worldly education should go side by side. Ghazzali included industrial education, textile, agriculture, tailoring, hair cutting besides religious education in his curriculum. This indicates that his educational ideas were progressive. Imam-AL-GHAZZALI 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".

Conclusion

This 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 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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