

GURU NANAK'S CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLE

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In our Indian culture, there has always been great emphasis on disciplining the life and serving the humanity. Education has always been related to discipline and service. In the traditional concept of education, the guru has very often, being imposing his will on the disciple in order to lead to a desirable and predetermined result. But in the modern times, recent developments in the field of psychology have refulgent, the higher respect for disciple's nature. In the words of Brubacher, "of course the principle object of value in the whole educational program is the pupil himself. On this point, the dignity of the individual and respect for human personality, there is as wide agreement among philosophies of education as it is possible to get." The disciple is, now, no longer taken to be a moldable matter in the hands of the guru i.e. the teacher alone. The educational process involves great effort on the part of this disciple. Any kind of development is not possible without conscious strive on the part of the disciple and educational system based on humanistic values.

In this respect what is the idea of Guru Nanak and what does he say to achieve self-discipline and not imposed one? We come across a suitable hymn of the Guru in Rag Prabhati:

"Whoever contemplates the Word, his mind is accustomed to serve others.

Stilling one's ego, one is deemed to have practiced worship, penance and self discipline".
(SGGS. P.1343)

CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE

Solid and positive learning requires not only interest but also a sustained effort on the part of the learner. And this positive learning is possible only when one leads a well ordered and disciplined life. According to T. H. Green, "That man is free who is conscious of himself as the author of the law which he obeys." When we look around and study the present day situation seriously, we come to the conclusion that the concept of discipline has, accordingly, undergone a great change with modern developments in the sphere of psychology. Discipline is concerned not merely with outward behavior but with the inner motive of conduct also. According to T. P. Nunn, "Discipline is involved in the control of emotions and powers and it is through it that we get the ability to work. The aim of the discipline is the creation of virtues and development of personality." Modern educationists now recommend that an effort be made to help the disciple to

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inculcate discipline in his daily life for all jobs. Thus, self-discipline is considered to be more significant than the discipline imposed by external orders.

Discipline which Guru Nanak impounded for the transformation of a disciple from a *Manmukh* (self-willed) to a *Gurmukh* (Guru's disciple), from *aagyani* (ignorant) to a *gyani* (scholar) is neither mechanical nor external order. It is rather concerned with inner awakening, enlightenment and self-discovery. It may be termed as inner discipline or self-discipline.

Guru Nanak has attached great importance to such discipline. By doing so the secrets of all the seen and unseen are revealed. Discipline of mind or inner discipline is accepted to be the ultimate goal to achieve the final destination of life i. e. union with God. This goal can be achieved with the help of *Sadhna* (practical discipline).

The Guru has also used the words *Hukam* (divine ordinance), *rehat* (discipline of life), *bhau* (fear of God), *santokh* (contentment), *sanjam* (self control) for achieving discipline, to reach the ultimate goal. The following verses will help us to understand this:

"By true disciplined life eternal peace is attained" (SGGS.P.1343).

"Stilling one's ego, one is deemed to have practiced worship, penance and self-mortification". (SGGS.P.1343)

"Saith Nanak: those that bear fear of God in mind, alone have love in their hearts". (SGGS.P.465)

Those who have attained contentment, alone have rendered services; on truth and truth alone have they meditated". (SGGS. p. 466)

In Japuji Guru Nanak raises the intrinsic questions:

"How to become true the creator? How to demolish the wall of illusion?" (SGGS. P. 1)

He answers these questions himself, in the following words:

"Through obedience to His ordinance and will. Saith Nanak, but His blessing too is pre-ordained" (SGGS. P. 1)

When Guru Nanak looked at the discipline in the universe, he felt wonder struck. He went on repeating his feelings of wonder (*vismad*) about all things i.e. speech, scriptures, creatures, forms, colours, wind, water, fire, movements of planets, wilderness, happiness, attachment, union, separation, hunger, repletion, nearness and remoteness. He declared:

"To see such marvels with wonder am I struck. Saith Nanak: by supreme good fortune only is this mystery resolved." (SGGS. P. 464)

The discipline of Guru Nanak's conception has four aspects- mental, physical, moral and spiritual. Gratuitous discipline of mind and body will bring out the essential goodness inherent in the discipline. In Asa Di Var, Guru Nanak beautifully describes the disciplined person's features and attitudes- *those who are disciplined do the real service. They meditate on holy truth alone.*

They never take a step towards evil. They practice righteousness and do good deeds. They burst the worldly ties and live on a little food and water.

Thus we may conclude that the discipline recommended by Guru Nanak is the discipline of inner self or self discipline. There is no external order or outside formal imposition. Here, the learner is made fully conscious of his own self as well as towards his society. This type of discipline is neither authoritative nor emancipator but implies freedom with commitment as voiced by existentialists of today.

CONCEPT OF DISCIPLE (CHELA)

A true seeker has a continuous quest to acquire knowledge and get education. He sets out in search of a genuine Guru (i. e. a true Guru). After the meeting a true Guru his darkness is dispelled. The disciple of Guru gains and apostate loses.

Guru narrates the general position of a disciple who spends a lot of getting education, but does not care for devotional study. The Guru says:

"Reck not loss of wealth, shouldst thou in devotion to the soul lord be engaged.

Even with dedication of heart and sacrifice of head,

With the Creator seek shelter." (SGGS. P.934)

When the seeker finds out a true guru he becomes his disciple then, when he is initiated, the disciple reposes full confidence in the guru and offers him his full devotion in a spirit of self surrender and obedience. He always takes the guru to be his perpetual guide who can transform him from an ordinary person to a super person. Guru Nanak says:

"A hundred times each day am I a sacrifice to my master, who into gods has turned mere men, without a moment's delay." (SGGS. P.462-63)

In others words we can say that he desires transformation and believes that the guru knows what kind of change is required and can bring it about. The devotee accepts the guru's benevolence and returns it with self- surrender. He does his work with complete dedication and full concentration, and who acts on guru's instruction is imbued with the True Name, which is highest achievement. Guru Nanak says:

"Such service the disciple renders, that he surrenders the soul to him to whom it belongs.

He who is pleasing the master, becomes acceptable.

Such a disciple obtains honour in the Master's court." (SGGS. P.661)

Guru Nanak puts a question to himself, *"If somebody (i. e. the guru) tells you about the Master, O' Nanak what will you pay to him?"* and replies himself, *"After cutting my head, I shall make it a seat and offer him to occupy and shall serve him without head."* Guru Nanak at another instance asks his disciples, *"If thou desire to play the game of love with me, then come thou in my lane, placing thy head on the palm of thy hand. Put thou thy feet on this road. Lay down thou*

thy head and mind not the public criticism." It is clear from these statements that Guru Nanak was of the opinion that disciple must be ready for any kind of sacrifice for his Master.

The disciple is advised to satiate the hunger of mind and it can be done only by disciplining the mind with the name. Guru Nanak says, *"With the feed of being imbued in the fear of the true lord, by realizing 'One' God and reflecting on the Name, the mortal's ego is stilled"* He with the help of his guru contemplates upon the higher values of life. Guru Nanak says:

"He alone is a wise man, who deliberates over God's virtues;

Through pondering over the merits, one is blessed with knowledge.

Rare is the person, who is the bestower of virtues in the world.

The true way of life is obtained by guru's instruction". (SGGS. P.931)

By regular *sadhna* and constant faith a disciple overcomes the evils, and then he can easily discipline his mind. According to Guru Nanak, "If the disciple overcomes his lust and wrath and self conceit, slays the five thieves through the guru's word and armed with the sword of wisdom, grapples with the mind, then his desire is nipped within his very mind.

The disciple of the guru obtains good character based on the name. According to Guru Nanak the general condition of the people is such that they claim that they are noble but morally they are not so. He says:

"Attractive in talk are we, yet of unworthy deeds;

Our hearts impure and black, yet white our aspects.

Still emulate we those who standing always at the lord's door waiting in service." (SGGS. P.85)

There ought to be a kind of sweetness in the speech of a devout Sikh. In this respect Guru Nanak saying, *"The disciple of guru makes sweet his unrefined speech"*, is worth noting.

He believes in the concept that Almighty God is the giver to all, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. *"He alone is the Provider of all."* With this conviction the disciple develops his individual personality to socialize himself to keep in harmony with the material and moral frame work of the colleagues, in other words the *sadh- sangat*. Such a disciple who jointly works for the society with the help of *sadh- sangat* strives for an efficient social set up. This is achieved by meditating the holy name. As Guru Nanak says:

"Those who, pondered on the name have earned merit through hand penance-

O Nanak- bright are their countenances and in their company many others are emancipated." (SGGS. P.8)

Guru Nanak never advised his disciples to renounce the world. He preached married, domestic i.e. *grahistilife*. As such the disciple of the guru should not renounce the domestic life. Guru Nanak says, *"Abiding with the members of his family, the Lord conscious practices righteousness. He crosses the ocean of the world along with his family."*

When God conscious is spiritually elevated, he disentangles himself of ignorant attachments regardless of how painful is the process, and learns to enjoy the emotional energies which are free from any subjugation. He then leads life like a lotus flower or a duck which floats care-free against the streams current and becomes not wet.

GURU [TEACHER] - CHELA [TAUGHT] RELATIONSHIP NEEDED FOR DISCIPLE'S DISCIPLINE:

Over the last few decades, the standards of discipline are fast deteriorating in the school environment too. School is just not what it used to be anymore as very few schools are able to maintain the same standards of behavior. May be the teachers' do not have that same confidence and commanding personality as they used to. Or maybe work pressures have increased to such a degree that all the teachers can think of is completing the curriculum on schedule. Quite obviously, most of them seem to lack the dedication to go beyond the call of duty and the syllabus and contribute to the all-round development of the child. Now question arises what kind of Guru [teacher]-chela[taught] relationship needed for Discipline.

Guru- chela relationship is bilaterally voluntary. *"The disciple of the guru comes and goes at his own will and pleasure without any shyness, and shedding off impurity, burns away his blemishes."* The development of the guru- chela relationship starts with the prospective disciples' quest. He sets out in search of a guru. For him, the selection of a true guru is exceedingly important. In this respect Guru Nanak advises:

"Adopt such a guru who in the mind confirms truth;

Inspires utterance of the unutterable and by the holy word brings about union."(SGGS.P.686).

In the present system now it's the duty of managements or the governments to adopt or find such teachers.

The guru, being a fully illumined mind, free of all preconceived notions and impressions, and one who can unload the contents of his mind at will, can make detached observations. Having experienced divine liberty himself, he is not in conflict with himself. He can see the inner struggles of his students, and through guidance dispels their *avidya* [ignorance], and he to his students imparts knowledge, wisdom and insight.

The proper guru is the one, who can immediately appreciate level of his disciples, and he can see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. In short, he transfers his soul to the disciple's soul. He doesn't tell you "stop worrying", nor does he counsel you to "accept your fears." He teaches by a different kind of precept. He takes the world as well as its suffering, as if it were a dream. In the great battle ground [*Kurukshetra*] within, the guru [Krishna] accompanies the disciple [*Arjuna*] as his charioteer and urges him on to slash the bonds of false attachment. Pain and death will take care of themselves if the disciple takes care of his own mind, for *"conquering thus thyself, mayst the conquest of the world."*

The teacher-taught transaction occurs between two unequal parties and that if so the disciple will always remain stunted. The *guru* sees to the growth of the *chela*[taught] through the special process of the “counter- questioning”. The *chela* asks questions and the *guru*, by posing counter questions, brings home to him absurdity of his questions. And the *guru* continues this process until the question has been formulated properly. This entails, for the *chela*, a progress towards, “oneness” with the *guru*. For example, Guru AngadDev was firstly a *Sikh* of Guru Nanak and then was elevated to the high office of guruship after following the *guru*'s instruction into practice. Thus the “unequals” end up and “the co-equal” relation comes into practice.

For Guru Nanak one cannot gain knowledge without the guidance of the *guru*. *Guru* is the source of inspiration. The mind is kept under control i.e. get liberation from bondage of worldly things, if one gets knowledge with the help of the *guru*.

“The water is contained in the pitcher; the pitcher cannot be shaped without water.

Similarly the mind is controlled by knowledge and there can be no knowledge without the guru.”
(SGGS. P.469)

So, if a teacher chooses to wear the *gurus* image, he will have to begin with self-discipline; provide his student with an atmosphere of benevolence and abiding interest; accept the responsibility entailed in making active intervention; and be prepared for a prolonged dependency. He has to have a natural way:

“Call a teacher truly educated only when he contemplates education in a natural way.”
(SGGS.p.937-38)

And drive its essence:

“He contemplates education and drives its essence.” (SGGS.p.938)

When we go through the *gurbani* we find that in *Guru-Chela* relationship, the *Guru* always remains the ideal applicator of human values for a *chela*. The human values stroll spontaneously in *Guru-Chela* relationship.

“Then alone the Pandit is said to be educated,

If he with calm disposition reflects on the Lord's Knowledge.”(SGGS. P. 937-38)

It has to be emphasized that the *Guru-Chela* relationship does not represent another worldly relationship such as parent-child relationship. It is a relationship sui-generis i.e. relationship between the soul of the *chela* and the soul of the *guru*. If we observe the *Guru-Chela* relationship from the time of scriptures till date then we realize that initially *Guru* was a prophet, and then become a preacher, then a teacher in the class room, then a facilitator and now with constructivist approach *guru* become a producer, who remains behind the screen. Similarly, the *Chela* was a disciple in the initial stage, and then become a supporter, and then a student studying in the class room, then a customer and now *Chela* is going to become a user only.

So a *Guru* behind the screen never ever becomes an Ideal for the *Chelas*. If we want to manifest the human values in generations then we have to re-establish the *Guru-Chela* relationship to its old height. To inculcate HUMAN VALUES there is a need to establish the HUMAN TOUCH in *Guru-Chela* relationship. It is possible only if a *Chela* go to school for the *Guru* and not just for AC rooms & buses, smart boards & classrooms, media lab, splash pool, dining halls, and play grounds etc. Just as spring is to the trees, so is the advent of the *guru*, an inspiration to the human race. It's time to change the role of a *guru* i.e. from behind screen to on screen. Then this superb relationship with a super HUMAN TOUCH will surely elevate the Human Values like discipline in a spontaneous way.

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