



Aligarh Journal of Interfaith Studies(AJIS)

International Peer Reviewed, , Open Access Journal
ISSN: (in process) | Impact Factor | ESTD Year 2020

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A Holistic Vision of Education: Three Kinds of Knowledge

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

Article History:

Published Online:

Published

Keywords:

Education, holistic
education,
spirituality,
science,
technology,
morality,

In this Paper, it is argued that There are three spheres and layers of human life and three kinds of Knowledge: First sphere is the material physical life. Second layer of human life is his Intellectual life. Third is the sphere of spiritual life. Thus there are these three layers and dimensions. First is the level of knowing; second is the level of understanding; third is the level of seeing. This may come through education of Ideology, Ethics and Spirituality, a 'holistic Education System in which all these three basis dimensions of Man are fulfilled and developed.

The Present Educationall System: Science and Technology Oriented. No one can underestimate importance of Scientific Education. It has great contribution. But the Paper points out limitations and drawbacks of lop-sided Science-Technology based educational system.

The purpose of the Paper is to argue the case of a new holistic system in our educational institutions where science and technology and all the professional courses are taught, but along with ideology-morality-spirituality and call for the 'spiritualization of knowledge and



education’.

There are three spheres and layers of human life and three kinds of Knowledge

First sphere is the material physical life man encounter with the external universes through senses. This is the sphere of sensory knowledge. Knowing the physical realities of external nature or the animal and human bodies, their workings and discovery of the laws governing them and how that knowledge can be used for betterment of physical conditions of the human life and the natural resources. The collection of this knowledge is called ‘Science’. This makes us to know and gives us what is called in Persian ‘*dānish*’-knowing or simple knowledge.

Second layer of human life is his Intellectual life. Man is not only ‘body’ but also Mind’ only comfort of body and material wellbeing do not satisfy Man. He also hankers for ‘intellectual Perfection’. He wants to peep into super-sensory metaphysical realities. He also wants those Science which can guide him. Thus, Educational System may give due importance to Philosophy, Humanities and Ideology. Sciences makes Man know what is and develop technology to serve Man, Philosophy, humanities and Ideology enables Man to know what should be done and ‘guide’ Man. That is why Dr Shariati, the Iranian thinkers has classified all branches of knowledge into two, those Sciences and branches of Knowledge which serve Man and those Sciences and branches of knowledge which Guide Man.



Third is the sphere of spiritual life. Man does not only consist of body and mind; he has also the 'soul' and the 'spirit'. He is not satisfied with only material comfort; or even by just intellectual knowledge but yearn to see those realities and to move towards the Ultimate Perfection and to get absorbed in the Supreme Beauty and Bliss. This is source of the Spiritual life of Man.¹

What is the Holistic Education System

Thus there are these three layers and dimensions. First is the level of knowing; second is the level of understanding; third is the level of seeing. This may come through education of Ideology, Ethics and Spirituality. First category is Science-Education which result in knowledge *dānish*; second consist of Education of Humanities and Philosophy and ideology which may give 'framework' and 'insight' what in Persian may be called *beenish*'. The third is the Education of Applied Ethics and Spirituality which may result in 'illumination' and transformation; in Persian we may call 'irfān' Usually the first category of branches of knowledge are which serves man *ulūme khidmatguzar*, second category is which guides man *Ulūme Rāhnuma*, the 3rd category is which makes Man *ulūme insane sāzī*. What we mean by a 'holistic Education System in which all these three basis dimensions of Man are fulfilled and developed.

The Present Educationall System: Science and Technology Oriented.

Major part of our Education system is based on preparing ground for advancement in Science and Technology. Science in its most general sense means the sum total of human contemplation on the universe the product of the collective efforts of humanity within a special system of logic.



No one can underestimate importance of Scientific Education. Its greatest contribution is that it results in mitigation of hunger, poverty and disease, results in welfare, well being, comfort and longevity and good quality of life. It insures our physical health and longevity, it makes life more comfortable, it makes life easier.; it results in welfare of all, it mitigates dangers to environment, both our social and environmental. This 'knowledge and Education' gives great power to Man. It results in innovation in Technology. The benefits of Science and Technology are evident. Science is involved everywhere. From the cradles and equipment produced for the infant, to the buses a boy uses to go to school and the medical facilities and advances that are needed by elderly, the mobiles, TVs, Computers etc. Victory in wars, art of killing and winning battles. and art of survival and living, all is based on the sciences and technological knowledge and education. Many of public decision are based on this kind of knowledge and are enabled by such Education. In our word which where technology rules, children can only advance materially if they are scientifically literate.

Limitations and Drawbacks of The Science and Technology based Education:

Scientific Knowledge and Education has resulted in great advancement of civilization and man and brought immense benefits for mankind. But the passage of centuries, Great World War, supremacy of technology to the extent that Man has become tool of Machine have also made us realize that mere dānistan , mere scientific knowledge is not enough, we need other kind of Education or a construction of our Educational System as much

*Science -oriented Education has given us power not peace,
ability not love, has given us instruments and great means, but
not purposes to know in which direction to use these means*



purposes, ¹ Science -oriented Education gives speed; not direction, physical material power, not ethical spiritual power, in other words, gives power not benevolence. Science Education gives us ability to know 'what is'; but does not give us insight into what should be done. Insight into what must be done. Science has resulted in outer revolution but no inner revolution has taken place and Man is basically a beast as he was during barbarian Age. . Science shapes nature but has failed to shape man. Science -oriented Education enhances outward security but does not give inward security and Man is tormented from within resulting in suicides, breaking of families, crimes and tendency of violence tin modern times, increasing day by day. ²

Apart from these benefits of Scientific Knowledge, it can be argued that scientific knowledge and Scientific Education results in the development of Scientific Temper. Before making this claim we should know what is meant by scientific temper and is it natural and inevitable result of Education of Sciences. Do thousand of students who are educated in this mould of Science oriented education system develop what is called Scientific Temper' or majority learn Sciences without developing Scientific Temper? There are different views. One view is that scientific temper is away of thinking and way of life based on observing, questioning, not taking anything for granted, not believing in any thing unless proved, hypothesizing, testing every thing etc, it is developing a critical approach. It is said it is an attempt which is inclined to use logic for believing in any thing or in doing anything, refusal of believing in anything without testing and trial. (1) To have an open mind. (2) To reject superstition and credulity; (3) to develop tolerance. (4) It is also said

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discussion and argument constitute Philosophical temper. But it is still vague and can be debated whether all these constitute 'scientific temper', and whether the progress of Science necessarily lead to all of these or whether all scientists, even well-known and top scientists have all these, whether all the students who are taught science in the universities have all these qualities or some of them develop into fanatics, even terrorists. Then how scientific temper in the above meaning can be considered result of this kind of education.

Science or Scientific Education can not result in the consideration of ultimate purposes, beauty, goodness and Truth. Only Philosophical and ideological knowledge and Education result in that. Science Education may make man capable of inquiry a, not capable of being good. Literacy and education in the meaning of school and college education is vital for improvement and development in the first sphere of material physical life. It makes ground for perfection in the second sphere but is not enough. One element is added which is more vital for perfection of man that is awareness and framework

Religions held 'holistic Concept of Knowledge

As against this lop-sided modern materialistic concept of knowledge and education, the concept of knowledge held by all revelations and the holy literature consider knowledge as a tool for all round perfection of man, which include the material progress as well as the spiritual perfection. In the ancient Indian tradition, basically '*veda*' is the knowledge, he the transcendental knowledge of knowing the reality, which include worldly and scientific knowledge also. Man seeks that knowledge which is 'a divine vision', which also brings spiritual power and worldly strength. This is the holistic concept of Knowledge, ²In the

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very beginning, in *sukta* (Hymn)1 of the *mandal* (Book)1, in 2nd *asloka* we read:

“Agni! Lord of light and Power... May He bless us with the divine vision, knowledge and power in this world (Rig Veda, Translation Dr Tulsi Ram).

In the Philosophy of Upanishad, knowledge and philosophy is *darsana*, *that* is both the direct experience of outer as well as inner, the material as well as metaphysical realities.³ In *Shrimad Bhagwat Gita* Sri Krhnaji have elaborate discourses about the nature of knowledge, everywhere holistic knowledge is aimed. At the very out set, in the 2nd Chapter, *Samkhiya Yoga*, which means the ‘yoga of integral knowledge, Sri Krishn says: in *Shrimad Gita*, *asloka* 14-16

14: O, son of Kunti (Arjuna) the objects that are perceived by the senses are subject to birth and death, they give rise to pleasure and pain, to heat and cold; they are transient. There foe O, Bharata, endure them heroically”;

15: O best among men, anyone who is balanced in pleasure and pain and who is not agitated by senses and their contact with the objects, only such a hero is fit for Liberation”

16: There is no existence for the unreal, and the Real never` ceases to be. Thus the knower of the Truth have ascertained the nature of what is real and what is unreal”⁵

It is not denied that knowledge of senses has no utility, but unless there is holistic vision of reality ‘ it will bring power, but along with it pain also. But ‘the ‘balanced’ is the best and we should not forget that real knowledge is to know ‘what is real’ and what is unreal.

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The Qur'an al-Kareem also calls the real knowledge *al-furqan*' which differentiates. It includes differentiating the real with unreal true with false and good with bad and evil. The name of the Qur'an , which is from the root of 'reading is *al-furqan*, the 'differentiator' and 'al-huda', the guidance. Knowledge is not only material knowledge but also the ultimate 'truths' conveyed by God through the prophets. The Qur'an says:
He it is who hath sent his Messengers with the guidance and the religion of truth) ⁶

In another *ayah* (verse) it is declared:

And We have revealed to thee the Reminder that thou mayest make clear to people that what is sent to them, and that they may give thought" ⁷

"And Allah reveal unto thee the Book and the Wisdom and teaches thee that which thou know not. The grace of Allah towards thee hath been infinite" ⁸

According to the Qur'an rational knowledge is a great bounty and grace of God. It includes the worldly knowledge as well as the spiritual knowledge the Qur'an says:

Whoever is given knowledge is given abundant good" ⁹
Whoever is given wisdom has indeed received abundant walth; but none except the men of understanding are mindful."¹⁰

Can those who possess knowledge and those who donot possess knowledge, are they equal, how undiscerning are you.) ¹¹



It calls man to ever pray:

O' God! Increase me in knowledge".¹²

Some thing which has made man superior to the angels.¹³

The Qur'an considers knowledge of the phenomenal world also, not an illusion but real and useful . The Quran calls it a blessing for which man should be thankful.

The Hadith literature which contains sayings and life of Prophet Muhammad is full of the emphasis on knowledge; again it means both the science, technology, Philosophy and theology. There is no distinction. In one of the *hadith* recorded in *Sahih*, which are most authentic collections of *hadith*, the Prophet said that all kind of knowledge is a lost property of a believer in God. He should adopt and take, it from wherever he finds. It is obvious that the knowledge which a believer can take from unbeliever is not the knowledge of religious precepts

This tradition is quoted by Abu Huraira and recorded in *Tirmidhi shareef.*)¹³ ,

In *Sahih Bukhari* it is recorded on the authority of Ibn Masood that he Prophet said:

There shall be no envy but emulate two: the person whom God has given wealth and the power to spend it in the service of humanity and truth and the person whom od has granted knowledge of the things and he taches it to others" ¹⁴

Muslim thinkers in the classical period had this holistic concept of knowledge , though it is a pity today all Muslim countries have a competition in implementing the lop-sided material system of Western education *wahi dugdugi baja rahe hain*. Imam Ghazzali said in his masterpiece book *al-Ahya al Uloom*, and also in *Mishkat al Anwar* that there are various grades of knowledge. First grade is knowledge by



senses, knowledge of the 'things, This brings power. The higher grades is knowledge based on deduction and reflection which brings intellectual perfection. . That is Philosophy. But the higher grade is intuition , the knowledge gained through *mukashifah*, which is the essence of spirituality and through it man gains knowledge of the ultimate.¹⁴

This is holistic concept of knowledge which was held by man for ages, based on the revelations of the illumined souls the prophets, This holistic vision of knowledge has been held by all religions. From the Holy Veda, Upanishad, Gita the Bible, the Dhammapada, the Quran the Hadith , Nahjul Balagha sayings of Imam Ali (a.s.), by classical thinkers of all faiths, irrespective of Shankara and Ghazzali.

But due to historic reasons the modern West discarded this holistic vision of knowledge and only knowledge was reduced to science and mathematics, and in our days to Technology and professional courses. The whole giant educational system and educational business is revolving around that.

Towards Holistic System of Education: Ideological and Moral-Spiritual Training Should be Incorporated in the Syllabus

Now that Man entered the period of post-modernity and has transcended that, it is time to revert to the pristine model of knowledge and education, -i.e. the holistic concept and the holistic model. We should again revert to this pristine concept of knowledge and education held by all religions, and train a generation in our colleges and universities who have holistic concept and a holistic vision, who master the 'means', but never lose sight of the goals.

But how to do it? What is the practical way?



We suggest that side with science, in the educational system 'ideology' a 'morality and spirituality has to be imparted. As pointed out earlier, by Ideology, we do not mean 'political ideology' in which this world is usually used. Third is the level of seeing. This may come through education of Ideology, Ethics and Spirituality. By Ideology we do not mean political ideologies in which sense this term is usually used, but the knowledge of Concept of Man, word view, Philosophy of History and a view of ideals and the Ideal Life. By Ideology we do not mean political ideologies in which sense this term is usually used, but the knowledge of Concept of Man, word view, Philosophy of History and a view of ideals and the Ideal Life.

Its education may consist of knowing the meaning of life, such topics as:

1. What we are: concept of Man
2. What is the distinction between Man and other
3. What is the essence of Man and what is the essence of life.
4. From where we have come: the worldview.
5. Where we are going: the Goal of Life.
6. How the History has proceeded: the Philosophy of History.
7. Relation between Science and Religion
8. What is the Scientific, rational and spiritual temper
9. How we should look over things.

These are common topics of higher Philosophy, High Religion and Spirituality.

We believe that from 9th Class to graduation (Bachelor level) a Course of Ideology, Ethics and Spirituality should continue for 7 consecutive years. Then the students may be allowed to go and opt for



any discipline for higher Education. This kind of Education from 16th years of age to 22nd year of age will kindle creativity in all fields by giving vision and zeal and a mission for life. A man with a Mission is different from ordinary men. A new generation may be brought. The students may become top doctors, Engineers, bureaucrats, Managers attorneys, businessman, industrialist etc but at the same time being an accomplished Man with a vision of ideals and the ideal life. This system of Education may transform society.

Spiritualization of Education is needed.

What is needed today is the 'spiritualization' of Education'. Science gives us power; faith gives us love, science makes instruments; faith constructs purposes [33] science gives speed; faith gives direction. Science is power faith is benevolence. Science shows what is; faith inspires insight into what must be done. Science is the outer revolution faith is the inner revolution. Science shapes nature; faith shapes man. Science gives outward security and faith gives inward security. Science gives security against the onslaught of illness, floods, earthquakes storms; faith against worry, loneliness feelings of helplessness feelings of futility. Science brings the world into greater harmony with man, and faith brings man into greater harmony with himself. Allama Irbil has said: Humanity needs three things today - a spiritual interpretation of the universe,

This 'spiritualization of Education is different from 'religionization of Education', which is happening in any countries. The difference is religionization brings sectarianism, spiritualization brings outlook of universal brotherhood, religionization is bringing prejudice, spiritualization brings catholicity and tolerance, a religionization involves imposed unity , spiritualization brings approach of celebrating diversity in unity and unity in diversity, religionization brings fanaticism and extremism, spiritualization brings tolerance and moderation, religionization brings militancy, spiritualization brings peace, the net



result of the first may be Engineer Osama bin Laden and MD doctor Zwaihiri, and the net result of the second may be Swami Vivekananda , Tagore, Iqbal and mother Teresa

The dialectic is that religiosity may tend to close the minds, and teach intolerance, emotionalism irrationalism, but the spiritual Education makes a Free Man. It is though this that the education may become a mean of stunning, success, as well as the guidance and 'distinguisher'. This is the holistic concept of Knowledge and necessity of reconstruction of the Educational system which renowned thinker Dr. Syed Hossain Nasr and lately, Professor Syed Ali Mohammad Naqvi are advocating in their works..²⁰



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