

# ***Electronic International Interdisciplinary Research Journal ( EIIRJ )***

**Impact Factor : 0.987**

**ISSN : 2277-8721**



***Reviewed Online Journal  
(Bi-Monthly)  
Mar-April ISSUES***



**Chief-Editor:**

**Ubale Amol Baban**

[www.aarhat.com](http://www.aarhat.com)

## REVIVE SIKH PRACTICES FOR CONTINUING AND ADULT EDUCATION

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### INTRODUCTION

Continuing education is education provided for adults after they have left the formal education system, consisting typically of short or part-time courses. Adult education is a vital component of the lifelong-learning field, covering the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities, general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training. Here I want to include those who never entered any school premises. In India only 22 % children enjoy the school campus environment. If we want to manage total quality in education we have to initiate with innovative practices independently i.e. without government empathy. In education 'Total' is 'All'; education for everyone. In our educational system we are far away from TOTAL with only 69.95% literacy. This is literacy and education is too much far away. Are we trying to reach everyone? 'Continuing education and Adult education' is the answer! Second is Quality; "High degree of excellence in meeting the requirements of customers (learners)". Just forget about 'high degree of excellence' for the time being and concentrate on the other issue i.e. the customers; we lack customers, as half of our school-going children are working as labourers away from the schools. Are we doing something? Again 'Continuing education and Adult education' is the answer! Third is Management; process to accomplish goals. We cannot accomplish goals with less number of customers i.e. students and less number of managers i.e. teachers. Though we are trying with continuing and adult education but see the facts:

### CONTINUING/ADULT EDUCATION AND CHALLENGES:

Punjab has 69.95% literacy rate which includes female literacy of 63.55%. According to National Family & Health Survey report-3 designated by the (MOHFW), released on 11 Oct, 2007, Punjab presently improved with 74% literacy rate and the state has an all India rank of 12 on literacy scale among the Indian states. If we also consider Union-Territories, Punjab slips down to 18<sup>th</sup> position. The number of dropouts continues to hover between 48-44 per cent in the higher classes and ranges between 25-23 per cent in the primary classes. If we try to enroll all the left out children and try to re-enroll all the dropouts, the financial situation of government agencies parents and school-managements is the biggest obstruction in this implication, especially when percentage of adult education to total education in Total Budgeted Expenditure of Central & State Governments (Plan & Non-Plan) (Revenue Account) has been decreased from 2.96% to 1.98%. According to S.Y. Shah, there has been an increase in expenditure on Education and Adult Education during the last fifty years. While the percentage of Education expenditure to all sectors increased from 7.92 to 13.78 during 1951-1998, in the case of Adult Education, the

expenditure declined from 5.30 to 0.31 per cent. Now in the plan layout by union government allocated only 0.21% for adult education from total allocated budget of education. While discussing the reasons for non-utilization of funds Professor Shah observed that several States - Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu kept a large chunk of adult education funds outside the Government account in separate banks. It was further pointed out that out of the 21 agencies entrusted with the work of evaluation during 1985-90, as many as 14 agencies did not submit the report. The third review of CAG conducted during 1995-96, which examined the implementation of Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) in five districts of Punjab showed that the state Government did not release its share. If the civil society could take the initiative by constituting a non-official Working Group for reviewing adult education programmes, working out financial requirements and drafting a detailed report for consideration of the official Working Group, then some of the important issues could be brought to the notice of the Government and possibly included in the Five Year Plan document. Keeping in view the massive task of imparting basic literacy to 304 million non-literates and providing post literacy and continuing education for 120 million neoliterates, a systematic exercise for estimating the requirement of funds for adult education needs to be undertaken. But here my point is this; that by reviving Sikh Practices we can implement this massive task and can bring out the missing 'TOTAL' for the educational system of Punjab.

### **SIKH GURDWARA PRACTICES:**

Literal meaning of Gurdwara is 'Guru's door' and the word Guru is derived from two syllables—'Gu': darkness or ignorance; 'ru': complete annihilation. Hence the Guru is one who completely dispels the darkness of mind. However Gurdwara is a place of worship for Sikhs. In the Gurdwara no ritual is performed. Gurdwara is a place usually for congregational-worship of God, and not of Guru, in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Important feature of Gurdwara is its being a public place without any distinction of caste, class, status, sex or religion. Historically speaking this place was known as Dharamsal; as initiated by Guru Nanak. Guru Arjan Dev gave the new noun i.e. Gurdwara in place of Dharamsal. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha a prominent/authoritative Sikh scholar while defining a Sikh Gurdwara writes, "A Sikh Gurdwara is a school for the disciple, a spiritual preceptor for the seeker of self-realization, a hospital for the patients, ill/sick people, a free community-kitchen for the needy/starved people, a super-strong fort for the protection of women-dignity, a tavern for the travelers/passengers? During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dharamsal along with religious function, was also the centre of learning, corresponding to Maktabas/Madrasas attached to mosques or Pathshalas/Gurukuls attached to temples or Monastic-schools attached to Monasteries.

### **KHALSA SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES:**

In the walled city of Amritsar there were 215 Dharamsals during 19th century and had their curriculum based on 3R's supplemented by religious education i.e. skills of reading and reciting scriptures, music (gurmat-sangeet) and art. These were meant for young ones and for adults too. After the annexation of Punjab, whilst both building and teacher for these Dharamsals were available, there was a great decline in number of pupils, as the parents preferred that they should learn something which makes them fit to earn their livelihood. The British Government

and Christian-missionaries, who were encouraged by it, had introduced a new system of education in India. Taking this as the deterioration of culture, the response of the Sikh Community rose in the form of Singh-Sabha Movement. As a result of this a number of Khalsa schools and colleges were established during 20th century in Punjab with the aim to promote new education, female education, Punjabi language and religious education.

In the post independence era, though the growth of Sikh institutions had started declining, but the Sikh public schools were on the rising. This was a new phenomenon among Sikh institutions while the people were fond of the quality education imparted by the public schools run by the Christian-Missionaries. The Sikh intelligentsia was keen to overhaul the Sikh educational system. Dagshai Public School is said to be the first of this kind but the movement gathered momentum after the setting up of Guru Harkrishan Public School by Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Managing Committee in 1965. Presently Chief Khalsa Diwan is running a chain of Guru Harkrishan Public Schools in and around Amritsar. SGPC, Amritsar is also running as many as over 65 schools, 16 degree colleges and 6 professional colleges in Punjab.

On the similar lines but effectively in the rural area Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, Khiala, district Jalandhar presently under the dynamic leadership of Sant Baba Malkiat Singh of Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Santpura, Jabbar, Jalandhar is running 4 colleges, one CBSE school, one research and development center; in December 2014 recognized as private university by government of punjab and planned to establish institute of medical sciences & research, institute of dental sciences & research, institute of para-medical sciences. The society also constructed bridges, roads in the rural areas with the help of public, it also running dispensaries and hospitals to provide health facilities to the people of remote areas.

The Sikh community has been struggling to provide modern education to its young ones for the last 100 years. It is quite clear from the above description that from the times of the Sikh gurus the Gurdwaras are not merely the place of worship but also the educational centers. But presently this important aim of Gurdwaras i.e. educating the masses is totally ignored by the local Gurdwara committees. Cicero rightly says, "What greater or better gift can we offer the republic than to teach and instruct our youth?" The year 1999 was celebrated as tri-centenary foundation of Khalsa Panth and the year 2004 was marked 400th year of Sri Guru Granth Sahib's installation, also celebrated 300<sup>th</sup> year of Sri Guru Granth Sahib's Guruship. What do we imagine if all these celebrations go without the making of any programme of mass literacy and mass education?

### **APPALLING SITUATION OF PUNJAB:**

The latest survey by Harvard University and World-Bank report says — primary school education in Punjab has been neglected for long. Of the 12000 primary schools, nearly 1000 are closed on account of non availability of teachers, a little over 2500 schools have been reduced to single teacher institutions and more than 7000 are merely two teachers- two room schools. Deficiencies in building, playgrounds, boundary walls, toilets, electricity, drinking water etc. are appalling. Punjab has 1.5 lac sanctioned posts of teachers and over 29006 posts of teachers have been lying vacant. The figures were put forth by the government in the Punjab Assembly

recently in 2013. Another 10000 posts of government aided private schools are frozen. The supervision and inspection machinery is defunct because all the 228 educational-blocks are without regular BEO's, over 60% schools are without heads.

According to the first report on religion data the literacy rate of Sikhs in Amritsar is 58.8%; lower than the Sikh literacy national average of 69% and the females are down with 53.7% literacy. The condition of mazhbi Sikhs is the worse with only 33% literacy; females here have worse situation with only 23% literacy. Till today 'literate' in India means, 'the one who can write his/ her name instead of putting his/ her thumb impression? We have to change the definition of literate, it should be at least like this, "The one who can be able to read, understand and write".

### **OVER CAPITALIZATION:**

Another aspect i.e. per capita income of Sikhs generally is higher than other social groups but the enrolment in higher education is very low. Watch the situation from this angle and it shows, over capitalized agriculture sector in Punjab. Sikhs have good hold on agriculture sector and most Sikh farmer; bigger or smaller have invested nearly Rs 20000/- crores on farm machines. We can call it over capitalization because most investments made by small farmers are not need based; rather this huge sum is invested to attain a social symbol. Take the example of 'Tractor'; a normal tractor has 35 h.p. engine, but in Punjab farmers are using the tractors with a capacity more than 35 h.p. This is all because, they want to show "the might"; a social symbol. Economically speaking, if a '35 h.p. tractor' works for at least 1000 hrs /year then it can be called an 'earner'. Otherwise it will be a 'guzzler' and in Punjab it's a guzzler because a tractor works only for 270 hrs./ year a clear cut over invested agriculture sector. Sikhs are more careworn about inessential investments and less concerned about the most essential area of their social-life i.e. Education.

### **ANOTHER STUDY ON GURDWARA FACTOR AND ITS FINDINGS**

The function of education is to prepare the disciple to have deep insight for understanding everything. The Sikh Gurus believe in that educational process which brings concentration and leads to the education of the spirit along with the emotional and intellectual development. On the contrary it is a distressing fact that in the so- called capital of Sikhs i.e. Amritsar, in the age of ICT, we still have 42% illiterate Sikhs. In the next phase of study it is observed that there are as many as 552 non historic Gurdwaras and 25 historic Gurdwaras belong to the Sikhs in Amritsar city. And one Gurdwara owes only 754 Sikhs (approx.), including non visitors. In the context of historical Gurdwaras it is too clear that these are hardly 2 to 2.5 kms. away from any Sikh residing in the city area. Even though they don't want to pay obeisance regularly in these Gurdwaras and want the type of Gurdwara of their own in the nearby locality.

A simple study of these 552 non- historic Gurdwaras shows that there are 4 major types of Gurdwaras in the area i.e. 25% Gurdwaras based on caste/sect; 20% Gurdwaras belong to various saints/babas; 8% Gurdwaras constructed in the memory of dead personalities and 47% Gurdwaras belong to various Singh Sabhas. Interestingly, these Gurdwara committees have 0%

cooperation with each other regarding maryada as well as regarding celebration of different occasions. Here another question arises- do such Gurdwara managements have any agenda, such as imparting education, before them? The answer is-simple no! The survey shows that there is no such agenda, even on the papers, before them.

Though the strong tradition of imparting education is there in Sikhism, still these Gurdwara managements are doing nothing in this direction. The survey provided two main reasons for this- the first is managements own educational background; majority of office bearers of these managements are non- professionals and even some of them are without basic education. The second is the 'reason behind the establishment of these gurdwaras'. Mainly these Gurdwaras were established due to the social and psychological reasons. The main management of historical Gurdwaras in Punjab/Haryana i.e. SGPC has majority of its members and office bearers from Jat community. So while establishing the local Gurdwaras these managing committees have only caste consideration in their mind and they have no such agenda, like educating the masses, before them.

A study during the past 4 years shows that non- historic Gurdwaras in the area are increasing at an alarming rate i.e. 23 Gurdwaras per year, At the same increasing rate, in the coming 20 years approx. 460 Gurdwaras would be more in this area i.e. 84% increase in the present situation. On the other side i.e. educational sphere, we have only around 117 government-recognized schools in the city of Amritsar in comparison to 577 Gurdwaras. If the Sikh community realizes, there would be enough Gurdwara resources for a literacy drive, and wouldn't they get fantastic future results?

### **SUM-UP AND SUGGESTIONS**

Don't give a man a fish, they say, teach him how to fish. The Punjab Government, however, has thought it wise to continue with subsidies on power and atta-dal, but discontinue free education it was giving to girls from class 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, a scheme launched in 2010.

Here no suggestions is given to demolish the already established Gurdwaras; but, if the community would not build any more Gurdwaras in the future course; and try to divert these would have been Gurdwara funds and properties for adult and continuing programmes, amazing results could be achieved.

Lets estimate, the approximate least property of a Gurdwara would be Rs. 40,00,000/-(it includes 300 yard plot + 2 rooms set + furnishings) and per month expenditure of a gurdwara including electricity/water bills, daily ceremonies, salaries, maintenance etc. would be Rs. 10565/-. (approx.). At the same rate we can arrange Rs. 17, 04, 59,900/- annually only against the interest of the total property of would be 460 gurdwaras. It is enough money for a perfect literacy drive. Plan outlay 2014-2015 reads: 'In keeping with priority of the for social sector programmes, an allocation of `51,828.00 crore has been provided by the union government for Department of School Education & Literacy and `16,900.00 crore for Department of Higher Education. An allocation of `111.00 crore has been made for Adult Education ( `11.10 crore for

NER and Sikkim. This allocation, inter-alia, includes allocation of `100.00 crore for Support to NGOs/Institutions/SRCs for Adult Education and Skill Development’.

And if we divert the ‘would be gurdwara properties’ coming up in twenty years, we can generate Rs.17 crores approximated annually from one city i.e. Amritsar city and it is 15.3% of total national budget for adult education.

And if we also divert the flow of surplus money from the overcapitalized farm- sector towards education, we can resolve the problems of physical resources and higher education too. And there is no need to take the shelter of private giants as Punjab Government has done in its ambitious Adarsh-School Idea; a public-private mode to impart quality education to the rural poor across the state. And now after two years uncertainty looms large over this rural education project.

Already established Gurdwara managements should take up this issue seriously and try honestly to implicate. It is very clear that the community can afford all these projects including establishment of Continuing Education Centres (CECs), its implication and awareness drive for the masses with financial assistance. Then there will emerge not mere literate but a 100% educated society.

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