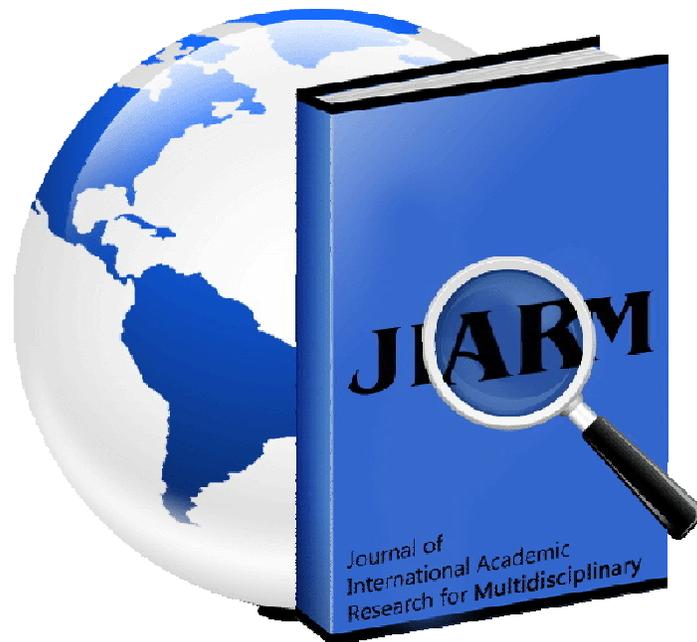


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**CHANGING LIVES THROUGH SOCIAL INNOVATION: A CASE STUDY OF  
KALGHIDHAR TRUST, BARU SAHIB (HIMACHAL PRADESH) INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Value based education is needed to empower citizens to become agents of change for better world societies. Value education is not simply the heart of education but also the education of heart as it inculcates sense of cooperation and fellow feeling among people. Value based education is the real need of the day to produce good upright human beings, who can inspire others to tread on the divine path and serve mankind selflessly. Values based education is the best way to enable society to move forward and bring about sustainable development in the world. Through such education, country will be able to harness the energy of the youth and persuade them to work for the betterment of the world now in turmoil. With increasing social evils like alcoholism, female-foeticide, drug abuse etc. the need of the hour is to have a Drug free society and all mankind should be educated for a better living. For the same purpose Kalgidhar Trust is working in the direction of bringing back India's glory by arresting drug abuse and female-foeticide. The Kalgidhar trust is working on the Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's principles who reportedly said in 1499 that "it is a woman who keeps the race going" and that we should not "consider woman cursed and condemned, when from woman are born leaders and rulers.

**KEYWORDS:** Spiritualism, Value Based Education, Women Empowerment, Employment

**INTRODUCTION**

Human Life has no meaning without awakened active spiritual values. Life is significant precisely because of the capacity we have to strive for the imperative ideals considered vital the long ages. Sages and saints have treasured this pursuit above all others for the purity, strength and nobility it imparts. The same ideals improve the lives of ordinary men and women and give the gift of a strengthened, resolute mind guided by a noble outlook .With the similar objective The Kalgidhar trust has come as a boom for the upliftment of the society which combines spirituality with literacy to impart values-based education to students which is the



real need of the day to produce good upright human beings, who can inspire others to tread on the divine path and serve mankind selflessly

Sant Attar Singh (1866-1927), a revered Sikh saint and visionary of his time envisaged a centre of true education (a blend of scientific and moral education) in the lap of the Himalayas. His devout disciple Sant Teja Singh(1877-1965) a great educationist who laid the foundation stone of Banaras Hindu University in 1914, took upon himself the task of fulfilling the vision of his mentor. In 1959, Sant Teja Singh Ji performed Akhand Paath Sahib (recitation of the holy scripture of Sikh faith) at Baru Sahib. At the conclusion of Akhand Path Sahib, Sant Ji prophesied, "Just as a tiny banyan seed grows into a huge tree, in the same way this place will develop into a great center of spiritual education where high quality scientific education will also be imparted. In due course, roads will be built and all those whose hearts are brimful of love for Guru Nanak (1<sup>st</sup> Guru of Sikhs) and who have toiled to accumulate spiritual capital from the previous births, will be drawn to this place." Bhai Sahib Dr. Vir Singh Ji, a renowned poet and writer, requested Sant Ji to start this spiritual enterprise as soon as possible to spread the message of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

The Kalgidhar Trust had a modest beginning in 1986 with a simple one-room school and only five pupils. The idea was to move away from the cities and help young students from rural areas and deprived section of the society channelize their energies to realize their true potential by emulating the pattern followed by the ancient sages and seers of India in their Gurukuls.

Intent on reaching out to the unreached, the Kalgidhar Trust started promoting quality values-based education, primary healthcare, social welfare, and spiritual instruction among the deprived rural masses in far-flung areas of North India. Their work has been instrumental in bringing about a silent transformation in the rural environment by improving the socio-economic status of the deprived masses and inculcating spiritual values in them. The rural areas of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and backward hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh are being covered by 70 outstanding schools under the name of Akal Academy. Since government-run schools are not able to impart values-based education to the underprivileged populations in the rural areas, so their emphasis is totally on the rural masses. The Trust currently has over 60,000 students who are ambassadors of peace and goodness, moving into the society and reforming lives. The ultimate objective of this mission is to establish permanent peace in the world by creating good human material through these schools. The organization has also set up a university named Eternal University at Baru

Sahib, which provides higher education in the fields of health, engineering, and other disciplines which will have a direct relevance in improving the socio-economic status of the rural masses in the remote, most under-developed region of Himachal Pradesh. Mass urbanization is taking its toll on the rural masses, and the dreadful results are already showing up in the widening gap among rich and poor. Poverty and illiteracy in the rural population together with the lack of proper healthcare lead to a feeling of helplessness in their lives. The Kalgidhar Trust has identified these basic problems and has taken up the challenge of providing its services to the rural poor.

The Kalgidhar Trust has many other programs like De-addiction Centers (on the pattern of Alcoholics Anonymous), a modern charity hospital, an orphanage, senior citizens' home, and women care centers and women empowerment programs . All these centers are, again, in the backward rural areas. Women empowerment is a key issue in India today & especially in



Northern India & because girls are looked down upon and boys are preferred, leading to large-scale female feticide and thereby skewing the male-female ratio heavily in favor of the former in Northern India. They teach and empower girls and provide them employment in their educational institutions, thus giving them hope and a sense of fulfillment.

The Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centers of Kalgidhar Trust are helping in eradicating vices amongst the rural folk and bringing down the crime rate, conflicts, litigations etc amongst these sections. The alcohol free movement under the pattern of the 'Alcoholics Anonymous' is proving as a saviour against marital discords and exploitation of the womenfolk. For over 10



years The Kalgidhar Society has been providing assistance to people with a variety of social and spiritual afflictions. Patients come with issues of substance misuse, legal problems, relational conflicts, homelessness, unemployment, and most importantly, a need for spiritual awakening and restoration.

The Kalgidhar Trust looks after many orphans, both boys and girls, offering them values-based education alongside students belonging to wealthy families. These orphans are encouraged to live a life of dignity and have a sense of belongingness with the organization.

They are provided the same clothes and the same food as the other children. These orphans live in the same dormitories as the well-off students and no one can distinguish one from the other. They are provided education up to university level and are then employed as teachers in their schools.

The Kalgidhar Trust organizes educational exchange programs in which students from its schools visit the US, Canada, and the UK, etc., and students from these countries participate in summer camps at Baru Sahib. A faculty exchange program is also in place wherein teachers from leading universities abroad visit Eternal University to teach for 6 to 8 weeks. The Kalgidhar Trust plans to expand and branch out into the remote rural areas by building 500 schools by 2020. It is expected that this effort at the grassroots level will result in the socio-economic uplift of the poverty-stricken rural poor.

Also, the Trust runs a Charitable Hospital in the backward district of Sirmaur in Himachal Pradesh wherein more than 30,000 poor underprivileged patients are attended to with primary healthcare and emergency interventions. Four Free Medical camps are held in Sirmaur annually wherein free expensive surgeries are provided to poor beneficiaries who otherwise could never afford it.

## **CONCLUSION**

Value based education is the best way to enable society to move forward and bring about sustainable development in the world. Through such education, we will be able to harness the energy of the youth and persuade them to work for the betterment of the world now in turmoil. The Kalgidhar trust teachings have some important things to say about development. These teachings focus on the development of a sound body and a spiritualized mind in order to become one with the Divine. It is emphasized time and again in the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Scripture of Sikhs) that the seeker after truth must control his worldly desires and egoistic mind, so that he may merge with the Divine essence within and serve humanity treating everyone equally irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Guru Granth Sahib in a very simple way explains the theory of spirituality on how to become Divine: "O man! Shed ego completely, and you are God." In fact, whatever upheavals, including global warming, wars, and other conflicts that plague the world, are due to the egoistic mind of man, bent upon gaining control over others and over nature.

**Holy Script of Shri Guru Granth Sahib:**

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੰਤੋਪੁ ਰੁਪੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਫੁਲੁ ਫਲੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥  
ਰਸਿ ਰਸਿਆ ਹਰਿਆ ਸਦਾ ਪਕੈ ਕਰਮਿ ਧਿਆਨਿ ॥

*ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ੧੪੭*

The Master is the tree of contentment,  
Righteousness is its flower,  
And enlightenment is its fruit.  
It keeps ever fresh, juicy and green by joy in God;  
And is ripened by the practice of meditation,  
And performance of good deeds.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib. 147

As in the above written words of Sikhs Holy scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Good deeds leads to fruit of enlightenment through contentment, rightness and meditation, thus the works being done by trusts like Kalgidhar Trust is worth mentioning as these are not only trying but also saving our young blood from the darkness of Drug addiction.

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