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The Concept of Teacher in Traditional Education

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Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include teaching, training, storytelling, discussion and directed research. Swami Vivekananda said "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already present in man". So education is something which is there within us it's just how much we strive for it and how much we desire to learn something new.

Since ancient times India was a pioneer in the field of education. We can find many examples of traditional education in our Puranas and Upanishads. This paper examines the position of a teacher in the traditional education system as mentioned in Upanishads and how modern it is.

In modern education, new thoughts are emerging especially in Europe and USA, as people are thinking that the present education system is not yielding the desired results. Education centers are turning into **Crime breeding centers** as there are many examples of involvement of children in crime and shoot-outs. Hence the concepts of Home Schooling, Apprenticing, Mentor etc. are gaining importance.

Four parts in Education

Classroom teaching plays a major role in present education system. More than 90% of the time is spent by a child inside classrooms.

But, our Traditional Education System says "Only 25% of learning should be in Classes" – आचार्यात् पादमादत्ते The next part (25%) is **Self-learning** – पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया The third part (25%) is **Peer learning- Group Study**: पादं स्रब्रह्मचारिभ्यः Learning with students of the same age and interests. In Peer learning the student will not have any hesitation in asking the doubts with his/her friends while that is not same with the teacher. The final part (25%) is **Experience**: पादं कालक्रमेण च - A Student will learn by gaining experience with the passage of time.

These are all the fundamental aspects of Traditional education. The new thoughts of education are almost on these basic aspects.

Importance of a teacher

आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद A pupil learns, only when he has a teacher (Acharya)

Here Archarya is the one who professes knowledge, who can motivate and guide the pupil to learn that knowledge and implement in life.

आचार्याद्ध्यैव विद्या विदिता साधिष्ठं प्रापदिति । (छान्दोग्योपनिषत्)

Only the knowledge gained from Acharya becomes effective because it is based on experience as the Acharya knows the strengths and weaknesses of a pupil and can teach accordingly.

Approaching an Acharya

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया । उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ (भगवद्गीता)

A student should be humble, curious, and inquisitive and should be ready to spend time with his teacher. This is called Gurukula concept and this is where we can see No schooling and

Apprenticing come into play. This is where the main difference lies between modern education and traditional education. The Mundaka Upanishad also says, तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ।

Teacher as a Mentor

The story of Satyakama in the Chandogya Upanishad, illustrates how a teacher assesses the requirements of a student and prescribes a task which would help him in finding himself. So also the story of Upakosala. In both instances, the task assigned may seem very much unconnected with education, but it is a way of learning that the Upanishads have proved effective.

This proves the significance of Acharya in Education. The modern version of this is the concept of **Mentor** instead of Teacher.

Teacher as a Facilitator

The main duty of a Teacher is not only to teach but to guide and motivate the student to learn independently and not to spoon-feed them.

In the Taittiriya Upanishad, Varuna didn't teach his son Bhrugu immediately on being approached but ordered him to perform the required penance to learn the knowledge. When the son failed subsequently, the father advises him for further penance and guides him. Finally Bhrugu gains the knowledge of The Brahman on his own.

In Kathopanishad, Lord Yama praises Nachiketa for his questions and felicitates him to attain knowledge.

Humility/ Sincerity of a Teacher

Humility is not considering oneself more important than others. It is to think that the needs of others are also important. It is admitting one's own mistakes and learning from them. A person who is humble will make the effort to listen to and accept others. The more you accept others, the more you will hold those people in high esteem and the more you will listen. A word said with humility means the same as a thousand words.

Sincerity is defined as being "real" inside and outside. Since our actions and words reflect inner feelings, a healthy personality would require that the former is in sync with the latter. In other words, what one does or says must be in harmony with how one feels. A sincere person always allows his inner feelings to be mirrored in his interactions with the outside world.

There is a famous saying that 'Lying teachers will produce lying students.'

An episode in the Prashnopanishad illustrates the importance of this quality in a teacher.

अथ हेनं सुकेशा भारद्वाजः पप्रच्छ । भगवन्, हिरण्यनाभः कौसल्यो राजपुत्रो मामुपेत्यैतं प्रश्नमपृच्छत । षोडशकलं भारद्वाज पुरुषं वेत्थ । तमहं कुमारमब्रुवं नाहमिमं वेद । यद्यहमिममवेदिषं कथं ते नावक्ष्यमिति । समूलो वैष परिशुष्यति योऽनृतमभिवदति । तस्मान्नार्हाम्यन्ततं वक्तुं स तूष्णीं रथमारुह्य प्रवव्राज ।

Sukesha the son of Bharadwaja asks Sage Pippalada that the prince of Koshala Kingdom Hiranyanabha asked about the Person who has 16 facets. As I did not know the answer I told him the truth that I was not aware of that person. Thereafter he left.

We usually tend to lie or tell something which is not true to children instead of admitting our ignorance. Sincerity is a quality developed by the person who, by nature, tends to live in society in an affable, stable and balanced way. It is a question of each teacher showing themselves as they are, telling the truth, inspiring confidence in themselves, and being congruent with their words and responsible for their actions, honest and honourable.

Teacher and Punishment

Punishment plays an important role in the learning process for a student. Punishment is defined as anything that attempts to correct a harmful behaviour. Punishment works by instilling fear and aims to force students to conform and obey, but it does not necessarily help to educate them. However, a punishment instilled upon a student with best intention becomes beneficial. Following is the traditional view of punishment.

सामृतैः पाणिभिर्घ्नन्ति गुरुवो न विषोक्षितैः । लालनाश्रयिणो दोषाः ताडनाश्रयिणो गुणाः ॥ (पातञ्जल महाभाष्यम्)

If a teacher beats a Child it's from the hands of wisdom & nectar and not with poisoned hands. It's not for harming students, it's for their development.

But Gowthama Dharma Sutra Says शिष्यशिष्टिरिवधेन - Punishing has to be not by violent means, but by other means.

The **Upanishadic pedagogy** has all the features of the Modern Education and it's very heartening to note that this evolved System of Education which has withstood all the vagaries of time and is in vogue even today at least in some of the Traditional Gurukulas.

It would be prudent for the country to embrace this Education System which is certain to bring in positive changes in the present system and make it worthy of emulation by the whole universe.

Key points and other sources of Upanisads

1. This is an interesting article indeed. It makes a strong case for the value of listening to the Indian commentarial tradition, which may seem self-evident but to many western scholars, particularly in previous generations, is far from it. He shows the ways in which western editors could have definitely benefited by a respectful reading of the commentaries. This article is thus useful not only as a source for understanding how the Upanisads have been transmitted to us, but also in the way it addresses important methodological issues.
2. An influential and erudite late nineteenth century look at Upanisadic philosophy and how it bears upon the rise of Buddhism. Dated, of course, but still remarkably interesting—covers a wide range of topics.
3. The state of the art as far as Upanisad translations go. This invaluable work is highly accessibly and absolutely indispensable for both the beginner and the expert. The important thing about this edition for the non-Sanskrit reader is the inclusion of detailed annotations
4. This collection of essays has one in particular that is valuable for a study of the Upanisads, "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest" (first published in *Indo-Iranian Journal* vol.4, no. 4, 1960). This essay traces out the history of the "brahmodya" or contest-dialogue from the earliest Vedic texts up to the late Vedic period. While not about the Upanisads, per se, it can't be beat for the clear way it lays out the tradition of the verbal contest and its ritual, metaphysical implications. Also of interest in this collection is "The Basic Concept of Vedic Religion", a very concise and clear outline of basic Vedic religious ideas first published in *History of Religion*, University of Chicago, vol. 15, 1975.

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