

## Boiling the Concepts of Teaching and Teacher from Ancient Indian Context to Modern Corporate Culture: A Critical Study

Dr. Dipankar Patra, Associate Professor of Sanskrit,  
Acharya Prafulla Chandra College  
&  
Dr. Rajib Debnath, Assistant Professor of English,  
Acharya Prafulla Chandra College

### Abstract:

With the evolution of culture and society in India from the classical antiquity to the present-day modern sophistication, the system of education has been the most affected domain to undergo unprecedented changes which in turn have drastically modified the very Indian life itself. The much-discussed Guru-shishya parampara of ancient Vedic time stands at a critical crossroad with the market-driven economy where education is fast losing its spiritual sanctity of heritage and tradition to the emerging trends of commercialization and commodification. In the face of the widespread epidemic which reduces education to a mere product or goods, the role of a teacher and his responsibility too, have gone through the roller coaster of ethico-moral atrophy. The professional sanctimoniousness of a Vedic Guru, strengthened by his upright personal righteousness and a selfless dedication towards the inclusive welfare of the learners, is jeopardised since the advent of colonial rule with English superseding Sanskrit as the primary medium of instruction. Such virtuously loaded terms as 'acharya', 'upadhyaya', 'guru' and 'sikshaka' for one who ignited the torch of knowledge for the pupils are soon being replaced by their modern counterparts such as 'trainer', 'instructor', 'counsellor', 'educator' and 'preceptor' without any moral obligation attached.

**Keywords:** Classical, Vedic, Parampara, Commercialization, Jeopardised.

### Introduction:

When examined etymologically, there are many synonyms far and close for the term 'teacher' in Sanskrit language but all of them contains one common essence and that is to aid or facilitate somebody to learn something instead of a rather narrow idea of mere teaching some external lessons. For instance, the word अध्यापक coming from Sanskrit अध्यापयति means someone who causes somebody to learn. From the classical point of view, it seems that the focal point of contention is not 'what to teach', rather 'how to cause someone to learn'. This ancient view immediately acknowledges the centrality of the learners who play out the lead role in the process of acquirement of true wisdom and the Guru stands as the God inspiring and guiding them. Sarasvati Swami Sangananda (1984, p. 65) observes, "Through complete and unwavering obedience to Guru, the disciple trains his conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind to receive the Guru's instructions. At a higher stage of spiritual sadhana, the disciple does not have any control over his experiences. It is at that time that he needs the guidance of the Guru to show him the way. The disciple must remember that, if he

cannot obey the Guru on the conscious plane, he cannot do so on the unconscious plane. Factually speaking, the higher stage of advancement on the spiritual path is not possible to achieve without developing the quality of total obedience to Guru.”

### **Modern Bankruptcy in Contrast to Ancient Prosperity:**

But this centrality of the pupils in the activity of learning is deconstructed by the recent upsurge of market-driven aspect of education where teacher is at primary hold, who is expected to spoon-feed the students with some information and facts without any actual internalization of them into erudition. With the impending threat of massive privatization of education sector, the mushroom growth of coaching centres is significantly on rise where learning is bought and sold at high price and teachers take care of those select few only who can afford the high levy. Education is now simply a service that generates capital and wealth by making most of the consumers (learners) and what is most unfortunate is the degradation of the role that a teacher plays in perpetrating this heinous social malady. Whereas earlier, since the prehistoric time, learning was hardly constrained to the mere subject matter, recently it stands for completion of the syllabus somehow, and for the marks one obtains without true spirit of inherent self-development. The main goal of the teaching – learning process, as is maintained by the posterity, is “साविद्यायविमुक्तये” or “Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye” (Chaturvedi, 2000, p. 41) which today is in utter crisis because ‘vidya’ today is supposed to be what prepares one for the mad competition for material beatification only. Success is stronger a word now to attract wider number of people than values, giving birth to a mechanical society where formally educated puppets abound but good human beings are scarce.

One can recall here how the great Sanskrit Grammarian Panini viewed the word ‘Guru’ who, for him, was the one annulling the concealment of truth. “Gu” means concealment and “Ru” means annulment. Ironically, the word “guru” is being used by all and sundry to describe anyone who plays the role of a teacher by profession, willingly or unwillingly. Originally in Indian tradition “Guru gives diksha (initiation) in different ways; of these verbal diksa is mantradiksha, cakshu diksa is the initiation administered through eyes, sparsha diksha is initiation by touch and pada diksha is by the touch of Guru’s feet” (Chandrasekharendra, 1991, p. 41). The high position of respect and piety that the ancient sages have enjoyed as guru to their learner-cum-devotees is not simply because of the holiness and religiosity associated in the ancient culture. It is indeed what the gurus deserved by means of their self-sacrifice, compassion and knowledge. It would be a mere oversimplification if it is thought that this is what the customs and practices sustained the primitive tradition since time immemorial; instead, the gurus had to live up to the expectation of a pupil in all forms, particularly his very mode of life lived in pure bliss of an ideal or an icon inspired a sense of deification in the learners. This generation of reverence what propelled them to the path of learning. Swami Chinmayananda (2016, p. 44) commented on Adi Sankaracharya’s Vivekcūdāmanithus, “Selfless-service alone can purify the inner personality and bring about its total integration. Through selfless action, concentration increases and helps to evolve a personality that has a greater share of concentration regarding finer antahkarna”.

In contrast, today’s structure of education is so materially conditioned that the institutes more or less stand metaphorically like factories where teachers are the labourers and the students

the goods—lifeless and insensitive—to robotically participate in the market economy as job hunters. They are the product of educational industries and so behave like artificial agencies. Often the student community are blamed for their negligence to studies, decline of values and loss of positive faith but hardly is the question raised if the teachers have been able to deliver their part which is so very essential. The pay-and-smile culture has rather become so ubiquitous that the learners are thought to be the means to extract lucre. Teachers in modern time has adopted a corporate mask of Western refinement, sophistication and impression, so much so that their life is no more an ideal of virtue and piousness but a blazing icon of consumerist society. This devaluation is so rampant that ethicality is at ebb and he is now in the new avatar of instructor or counsellor or coach. Eight words for a teacher that Sanskrit language contains cater to the different roles they are supposed to shoulder: शिक्षकः (śikṣakaḥ), अध्यापकः (adhyāpakaḥ), प्राध्यापकः (prādhyaṅpakaḥ), उपाध्यायः (upādhyāyaḥ), महामहोपाध्यायः (mahāmahopādhyāyaḥ), देशिकोत्तमः (deśikottamaḥ), आचार्यः (ācāryaḥ) and गुरुः (guruḥ). Together they encapsulate the ability and responsibility of a teacher to deal with the student in four major ways: first, being an expert at the subject, building a profound understanding of the subject matter, inspiring the students by his sheer personality and finally leading them from darkness (ignorance) to light (ultimate knowledge of the soul). The three words शिक्षकः (śikṣakaḥ), अध्यापकः (adhyāpakaḥ) and प्राध्यापकः (prādhyaṅpakaḥ) embody skill and experience by which students get encouraged to step beyond the domain of syllabus even out of curiosity. The Sanskrit terms that one can associate with that role of the teacher as role model for the students are देशिकोत्तमः (deśikottamaḥ), and आचार्यः (ācāryaḥ). This quality takes the personage of the teacher to a higher level of being inspirational and motivational for the learners. It demands not only subject skills but also some special attributes of behaviour and character which will wield a strong constructive impact on a student's life all through and will be worshipped ever. Radhakrishnan (2015, pp. 595-648.) quotes, “He, who is possessed of supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control, like spirited steeds controlled by a charioteer”.

## Conclusion

The recent hike in the cases of suicide by the students traumatized by the phobia of examination, rising trends of delinquency among the adolescents, increasing addiction towards drug, growing incidents of sexual abuse, and proliferative adoption of dishonest means in the exam hall testify to the fact that sense of values and strong moral character building remain neglected in the blazing towers of educational institutes. The ancient system of imparting lessons with no high-rising building with modern amenities and technological ease has been so inwardly powerful that it not only took care of the bookish knowledge but also ingrained a life-long resilience as to cope with any challenges of existence. In this context, National Education Policy 2020 which is lately made operational tends to address the issue quite gravely by emphasizing the necessity of perfect harmonization between body and soul, spiritual and material, corporal and psychological. The consumerist lifestyle in contemporary time when has gnawed upon the deep vitals of ‘rootedness’ to a large extent, the policy makers are finally realizing that it is only by following the footprints of the ancient sages and masters that the glory in Indian education can be restored.

### References:

1. Chandrasekharendra, Saraswati Swami. (1991). *The Guru Tradition*. Mumbai: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan.
2. Chaturvedi, B.K. (2000). *Vishnu Purana*. New Delhi: Diamond Books.
3. Chinmayananda, Swami. (2016). *AdiSankaracharya's Vivekcūdāmani*. Mumbai: Chinmaya Prakashan.
4. Radhakrishnan, S. (2015). Katha Upanishad. *The Principal Upanishads*, (25<sup>th</sup> Edn.). Great Britain: Harper Collins Publishers.
5. Sangananda, Sarasvati Swami. (1984). *Light on the Guru – Disciple Relationship*, Bihar: Bihar School of Yoga.