

Indian Ethos, Values, and Skills for Professional Development of Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical training and technical training used to take the priority in the professional development of teachers. With the changing environmental conditions, the present professional development of teachers started focusing on Indian ethos, values and skills. The present paper focuses on the Indian philosophical foundation emphasising on dharma (duties), seva (service) and guru shishya Parampara (the bond between teacher-student) that fosters the holistic knowledge of the student community. The New Education policy (NEP-2020) also emphasising the inclusion of Indian knowledge system in the academic curriculum. This paper emphasis on tripartite framework namely on ethical grooming, value-based leadership and acquisition of technical skills.

Keywords: Ethos, values, skills, dharma, knowledge

Teaching is considered as one of the noble and respectable profession. It has given high value since ancient times. In Indian culture, teacher has been given a position equivalent to God- “Acharya Deve Bhava”. Students have been sent to guru-ashramas once the child reached 7 years of age. It is the responsibility of the guru (teacher) to provide food, shelter to all the students with the primary responsibility of making him a good human being by inculcating all morals, values and skills. As per Indian mythological texts we identify lord Rama as well as lord Krishna have stayed in guru-ashrams (traditional schools), also received wisdom and knowledge through their gurus (teachers). Gurus also used to support the kings in their administrative responsibilities like Rishi Vasista with King Dasaratha and Kripacharya and Dron acharya with Kauravas. The Kings used to seek their suggestions for taking critical decisions and whenever they are in dilemmas.

The present environmental conditions have been changing the role of a teacher. The present role of a teacher is limited mostly to the completion of the syllabus and making the students ready for jobs. The policy makers of New Education Policy 2020 have planned recall the India’s foundational educational values that is rooted with Indian ethos and mould the students employable along with making them a complete human being. The dominant part of any teachers’ training was focusing on instructional tools, pedagogical instruments, curriculum delivery and classroom management and was given little attention on ethical foundation, spiritual charge and awakening the learner’s hidden potential.

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PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN EDUCATIONAL ETHOS

Indian ethos is defined as the core belief that has built the social and spiritual framework which defines how people live according to the principles of spirituality. The heritage of Indian ways has been shaped by many cultures including Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhist, Jain, Bhakti and Sufis etc; it is an ever-changing picture that is based on diversity and plurality. The concepts below represent recurring ideas that are evident throughout the entirety of Indian civilization regardless of culture, region, etc.

The Primacy of the Inner Life

The Indian educational always insists that true knowledge is not simply based upon information gained about the outside world but has also changed the individual that has acquired it. The distinction made in the Mundaka Upanishad between para vidya (higher knowledge — knowledge about self and the reality that bears witness to the self) and apra vidya (lower knowledge — knowledge acquired through experience) suggests a vision of educational attainment that embodies both intellectual and existential development. An educationally complete person will have contained more than just academic accomplishments; they will be individuals whose growth has resulted in the ability to be both productive through their work and virtuous in their character development.

This focus on personal development has great implications for teachers. The teacher, in this vision, cannot give away that which they do not have for themselves; to help the student grow in wisdom, the teacher must first develop it for themselves. In this way, the growth process for the teacher has less to do with gaining additional techniques and more about developing one's own wisdom, character, and humanity — which Tagore referred to as developing the 'inner lamp' in the teacher.

Holism: The Indivisibility of Knowledge, Values, and Being

Indian philosophical thought does not divide knowledge into rigid discipline boundaries nor the person into three separate compartments: cognitive, emotional, and spiritual. Rather, ancient Indian ideals of education; through such terms (ordinarily used to describe how knowledge is acquired) as brahmacharya (the disciplined pursuit of knowledge), vidyarambha (the formal beginning of acquiring knowledge), and gurukula (the house of the teacher where residential learning occurs) — were holistic; focusing on the development of the whole person (body, mind, emotion, will, and spirit), within a community of learners sharing values and purpose.

The contemporary discourse concerning education includes social-emotional learning, character development or education, and whole-child development; all of which share a concept similar to the holistic vision of the Indian educational tradition. However, the Indian educational tradition adds that developing the whole person is not an enhancement or something to be added to the intellectual aspects of a cognitive education; rather, it is part of the foundation of a cognitive education — that achieving intellectual excellence and developing moral integrity cannot be viewed as two separate developmental achievements because they are both parts of one integrated developmental process.

Education as Service: Seva and Nishkama Karma

Teaching as a form of seva or selfless service rather than personal gain is the third foundational component of Indian education. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that actions should be done without

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wanting benefits; therefore, teachers who devote themselves to the growth of their students without expecting anything in return will pave the way for true learning to occur.

The Bhagavad Gita provides a definitive statement regarding the union of skill and spirit: kaushalam, or true professional excellence, is not just a mechanical function but also an act of selflessness, as it has a spiritual component and is an extension of yoga. Teachers must develop their skills with the understanding that doing so is equally spiritually enriching.

CORE VALUES OF THE INDIAN TRADITION FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The Indian philosophical tradition offers a rich repository of values that speak directly to the ethical demands of the teaching profession.

Dharma — Righteous Conduct and Professional Ethics

Dharma, in the Indian vocabulary, is arguably one of the most intricate and ambiguous concepts available. At its core, dharma is defined as the moral and social order upon which both the cosmos and mankind rely for their continued stability — to act correctly in accordance with one's own nature, role, and situation. In regard to the school teacher, dharma covers the entire spectrum of professional ethics — from honest assessment of student performance to impartial treatment of all students, to acting with integrity in their professional conduct, and finally to remaining committed to the overall educational mission.

The relationship of dharma to teachers is beyond the legal and regulated definition of professional obligation, as well. A teacher's responsibility to act appropriately does not stem merely from compliance with rules; rather, it emerges from the internalization of righteousness as a personal value system. Consequently, dharma provides a framework for addressing the ethical issues faced by teachers each day; such as: how to treat students in an equitable manner despite the variety of student backgrounds; how to maintain academic integrity when institutional organizational pressure exists to inflate grades; how to balance authority of the teacher while respecting the autonomy of the learner; how to exemplify intellectual integrity in an academic environment full of misinformation. Therefore, a teacher who is grounded in dharma not only possesses the individual idea of character that is required for success, but also has the necessary skills and knowledge needed to navigate each of the pre-determined daily ethical issues that he or she will undoubtedly face.

Seva — Selfless Service as Pedagogical Vocation

The idea of seva — selfless serving — has roots in Indian traditions, both in the Bhakti saints' devotional traditions as well as some social reformers such as Swami Vivekananda and Gandhi's much-lauded "a welfare for all." When applied to education, teaching and learning become very different activities because the ways in which we look at and relate to each other change from something that simply rewards us (the teacher) to something that contributes or adds value to each of us and, therefore, all of us together (the teacher being one of many contributors, not necessarily the most significant).

As Vivekananda said, "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." This view of the teacher is consistent with the seva approach, because it shows how the teacher is not an active participant in the development of the student but rather a supporter of the student by eliminating obstacles that have prevented the student from developing his/her own abilities. To do this requires someone who possesses great respect for the dignity and potential of the

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student, who can focus on providing the care and attention to his/her students that extends well beyond what one would expect from a professional teacher.

Mentorship Grounded in the Guru-Shishya Model

Learning based on a gurukul model is sustained and personalized through relationships and support provided by one-on-one relationships with mentors over time, as opposed to the typical, episodic and impersonal nature currently prevalent in teacher education systems and programs. While full-time residency with a gurukul model may not be practically possible or desirable in our current educational institutions, some components of the gurukul would still be able to be transferred and adapted into traditional educational settings, including:

- 1) A relationship that is long-term (sustained) and based on the knowledge of the experience of both the mentor and novice of one another;
- 2) Developmental individualized feedback to teachers who have been thoroughly known by the mentors as to their strengths, challenges, and learning styles;
- 3) Mentors who are expected to model Professional Values, as well as teach, to those that they would mentor. The National Education Policy 2020 has placed a significant overall emphasis on the importance of mentoring to support the professional development of teachers and provides an opportunity to return to this model of development for teachers through policy changes.

INDIAN ETHOS AND THE VISION OF NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandates that the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree be revised to become a four-year degree that integrates an in-depth study of subject matter and teacher's training and instruction through a conceptual framework of philosophy, as well as providing opportunities for hands-on application in classroom settings. Central to the NEP's vision for the professional development of teachers in India is its belief that "teachers are inspired and rooted in Indian traditions of learning and also connect with and are involved in the best of the world's educational thinking." Therefore, this NEP policy aligns perfectly with the argument put forth in this paper, which is that to develop a successful teaching profession in India, it must be based on a creative synthesis of the wisdom of India's educational heritage and contemporary education.

The holistic approach to education and the development of the individual, including their cognitive, physical, social, emotional, ethical, and aesthetic capacities, contained in this policy is directly aligned with India's long-held view of the indivisible nature of knowledge, values, and being; hence the NEP's conceptualization of the teacher as 'guru' who guide and support their students in their total development, versus as an instructor who simply transmits curriculum content, represents an ancient understanding of the role of the teacher as a guide to the whole child that has characterized Indian education philosophy for thousands of years.

CONCLUSION

This article has illustrated that the teachings within India's civilizational tradition contain a wealth of available but untapped resources that can contribute to teacher professional development in the 21st century. The principles behind dharma, seva, as well as the constructs included in the guru-shishya relationship; the advanced definitions of communication, sensitivity to individual learners, and contemplative practices that have existed throughout the

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centuries — all of these relate directly to the needs and goals of modern teachers and what modern teacher education is trying to accomplish.

Teachers' educators in India face several challenges in terms of creating and developing creativity at institutions as well as having the guts to create programs that truly honour India's past history. Since we are seeking to create a teacher who is "free minded in a free body in a free nation," as said by Tagore, and who has the illumination of India's own wisdom to be able to light the way for the next generation, meeting this challenge is vital for the educator's own benefit and for the renewal of one of mankind's oldest and most respected professions.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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