

EDUCATION AS BUILDING HUMAN BEINGS

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INTRODUCTION

Kabeer, the renowned mystic and popular saint poet of the medieval period, was a giant stalwart of the Guru tradition in India, as well. His characteristic lines ‘Guru govind dou khade, kake lagu pau; Bali hari guru aapne, govind diyo batay’ pays the best respect to those who are privileged to be teachers as well as the gurus of the world. Guru shows the way of life. Guru is God incarnate! Therefore, I salute Guru first!

Education is not a syllabus-bound close circuit of imparting ready-made information or processed knowledge. It would mean learning to think and act, applied to the context. It is the continuous process of growing towards larger dimensions and degrees of life. It is an unending journey of becoming more and more inclusive through interaction with diversities. It is the art of culturing human beings in order to facilitate the spirit of living in harmony with the natural, the human and the divine and at the same time and at the same time to celebrate it in life.

1. THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR TODAY – AN OVERALL PICTURE

1.1. Education in India

The present system of education in India and its wide and popular form are to be attributed to the British rule. Both public and private sectors provide education in India. Central, state and local levels regulate and support the endeavour. The Indian Constitution affirms education as a fundamental right. It is pleasing to note that the literacy and primary education rate has considerably risen today.

1.2. Better financial prospects

The educational sector today is more attractive in terms of its financial returns. For instance, a lecturer of a degree college was drawing just RS 1,000 in 1967. After 35 years, thanks to the 6th pay commission, he or she is drawing RS 35,000, i.e., an increase of 35 times.¹

1.3. Some basic challenges

Approximately one third of the population of the country is illiterate still. There is a very high per cent of drop outs in higher education at different levels. The qualification of a considerable percentage of the teachers is inadequate. Roughly one fourth of the teaching positions seem to be vacant. The national vision of education is not inclusive and effective enough.

1.4. Poor quality of education

The quality of education in India is on the whole poor. Excellence in education is seen only in certain pockets, i.e., some creditable institutions as well as in a large number of brilliant individuals. The general low quality of education in India is certified also in comparison to other major developing nations.

1.5. Educational content is highly theoretical

The syllabus of education in the country is overloaded by theories and concepts. Students have to busy themselves with too much of abstract and imaginary content. Very little of it is applied to the varied situations of life. It is insufficiently oriented to practical life as well as to the job ahead. Most of the problems of the country and of the society are hardly studied and therefore most of the degree-holders are incapable of suggesting a way forward. The educational content needs to be much more realistic and field-based.

1.6. The third national policy of education

Recently the HRD Minister, Mr Kapil Sibbal, announced the commitment of the government to revise the national policy of education, in the context of globalization and the changes in the area of education.²

This is going to be the third revision of the policy in the independent India, after the policies of 1968 and 1986. Will there be in the new policy a due emphasis on the basic information of the diverse religious-social traditions and on the universal human, ethical and spiritual values as well as on the secular ethos of the Constitution? Is it going to address the deficiencies of the present system?

1.7. The dismal picture of education on Bollywood films

Hindi films 'Three Idiots', 'Taare Zameen par', etc present the character of the teacher or the role of educational sector in a bitter taste. They are indeed a mirror to know the impact of education today. Hardly any step seems to have been taken by the educational and administrative sectors, in view of addressing the concerns highlighted in these films.

1.8. Low image of the teacher in the society

The image of the teacher in the Indian society today has considerably fallen and even shattered. The vast majority of the students seem to just use the service of the teachers, as much as they need. For the rest, the teacher hardly matters to them. Scandals, like 'marks for sex' of the Jabalpur University, lack of commitment of the teachers to the students, etc could be a few reasons.

1.9. The teaching profession do not attract the students

Students of exceptional calibre mostly are not inclined to follow the suit of the teachers. The teaching profession seems to have lost its charm and attraction. The number of qualitative teachers is significantly coming down. Is it that teachers today are no more inspiring or very little inspiring? Has teaching become like the 'salt that has lost its saltiness'?

1.10. Teaching a last resort?

A high per cent of teachers today seem to have become teachers because they could not qualify themselves for any other job. The chunk of the teaching staff all over the country seems to be so. Is it that teaching is the easiest job? Is teaching just fulfilling the syllabus? Is this fact a highly discouraging phenomenon?

1.11. Teaching in the class rooms or outside?

Justice Markanday Katju observes, 'much of the real education takes place in private coaching institutes and at the residence of teachers who make much more money there than in their institutions'.³ Is it

because proper teaching is not taking place in the class rooms? Or is it that teachers have become increasingly commercially motivated?

1.12. Concerns of the teachers

In the words of Justice Markanday Katju, ‘in many of the staff rooms of our educational institutions, teachers, instead of discussing academic matters, often discuss petty politics, often of a casteist nature, or matters pertaining to their service conditions’.⁴ Why advancing knowledge as well as problems connected to teaching does not occur to the teachers? Are the teachers getting more and more disoriented?

1.13. ‘Teachers’ Day’ a mere ritual

‘Teachers’ day’ is being celebrated since 1962, when Sarvpalli Radhakrishnan became the second president of the country. Honouring a few teachers with an award by the president, publishing a write up or two in news papers exalting the guru tradition of the country and having a programme of paying respects to the teachers of the respective schools are some of the routine rituals of the day. ‘Teachers’ day’ seems to be just one of the formalities of the festival-loving country of ours, with very little outcome.

1.14. Why not a day of re-charging or introspection?

Teachers need to be technically equipped and professionally empowered time to time. But, our country, tragically so, does not seem to feel the need of a day or a few days every year for such a re-charging exercise or even introspection. The morale of the teachers needs to be strengthened as well as the quality of education has to be improved. But, who will bell the cat?

2. CERTAIN IRONIC OUTCOME OF EDUCATION

Shashi Tharoor notes as regards the real outcome of education, ‘education wasn’t just exams; it was what’s left behind in their minds when they have forgotten what they learned for exams!’⁵ But, what is left behind is definitely intended to be positive. But, something contrary seems to emerge.

2.1. Education makes people more individualistic and selfish

To think for oneself is basic to everybody. But, ‘the educated seem to be more self-centred and individualistic’ than others. As a matter of fact, the education and the opportunities they received from the society should make them feel more accountable for the society, as a gesture of paying back what they have received. Education is oriented to making responsible social beings. But, the educated on the whole seem to seek their own career and security and they have hardly any concern for the rest of the society. The creation of a highly consumerist, competitive, intolerant and oppressive high class and upper middle class society is the natural outcome of this dangerous unsocial or anti-social phenomenon.

How could education make people so ungrateful to the society for what they have received? Why does education fail in making socially aware and awakened citizens? How could education make them so introvert, deep down in their hearts? How could knowledge make the educated highly arrogant and indifferent to the masses? Is not the system of education defective somewhere?

2.2. Educated people tell more lies

Telling lies, per se, is a bad attribute, because it is a way of deceiving others. It creates a moral dilemma. But, ironically though, it seems to be an essential characteristic in human beings. All people tell lies. Some people are naturally better at lying than others. A certain survey states that men lie more than women. While men seem to lie thrice a day and women lie twice a day. Extroverts tend to lie more often than introverts, too.

All categories of people tell lies. But, according to a study, 'educated people tell more lies'. The educationally and socially skilled people make better liars than uneducated and simple people. Uneducated and simple people also tell lies. But, since they are more genuine, honest and tactless, they often fail to justify themselves and are highly inclined to get trapped. The educated are smart and successful, because they are capable of presenting lies more convincing than truth itself. Advocates are educated and are known to be liars by profession. They fabricate arguments in order to reach a target of conclusion set earlier. 'End justifies the means' is the logic that guides the destiny of liars.

Education per se is oriented to culturing the human beings. It is supposed to inculcate values. Therefore, the tendency to lie has to be reduced at least in some degrees. But, education mostly creates expert liars. 'Satyamev jayate' is the national motto of the country. But, Indians in general are acclaimed for being naturally exceptional at their capacity for being privately smart and therefore for intelligent ways of lying. No wonder, sugar-coated lies are a commonplace occurrence.

Therefore, while affirming the importance of education, considering the negative role of education in intensifying the ethical tragedy of lie, the fundamental question arises, is education the ultimate value in life? I suppose, teachers could answer this question the best.

The great poetess Elizabeth Wordsworth (Dame) observes, 'If all the good people were clever, And all clever people were good, The world would be nicer than ever, We thought that it possibly could'. But, the clever, by virtue of their cleverness, fabricate lies after lies and cheat good people who considerably are hesitant to tell lies.

What does education produce -- clever people or good people? I suppose, mostly clever people and not good people! This is in fact disorientation of education. What are the possible measures for striking a balance? Can education stop producing liars and bad people? When does education succeed in producing a considerable percentage of good people?

2.3. Education adds to the creamy layer

Educated people, as a result of their education, manage to get job in high-ranking sectors and secure substantial envelopes. They conveniently seem to join the class of the creamy layer. They enjoy themselves in an exclusive close circuit of life. They join the class of the rich and thus substantially contribute to widening the disparity between the rich and the poor. They do not seem to be interested in sparing anything from their comfort zone of life. They do not show any interest in supporting the uplift of the masses in any way.

Ironically though, the educated seem to push the ladder away after having climbed up the roof with its support. How does education make them unsociable and irresponsible beings? Is not education helping them belong to the class of oppressors? Is not education failing in terms of the overall development of the society? Is not then the very purpose of education defeated? Is not education doing a disservice to human beings by making them what they are not supposed to become?

2.4. Education fails to teach basic human values

A large majority of the educated young people do not appear to be grounded in a solid system of values. Consumerist tendencies are very strong in them. Enjoying life by way of food, sex and amenities of life seems to be their motto. They seem to have lost the basic sense in the art of dressing as well as the way they conduct themselves in life. Their public behaviour is so funny, showy and boisterous. There is very little regard for the senior generation, including the teachers. Fabricating stories to suit their purpose is a commonplace thing.

Most of those who have got educated in schools, colleges and universities practice hardly any sense of etiquette in public life. Often the great number of the educated youngsters gives the impression that they are not educated at all. Very many of them seem to have got derailed from the value-track of life. No wonder, there is a higher grade of suicides and mental break down in the psychological and sociological graph of the society. A substantial per cent of them do not seem to have any commitment in life.

While granting some margin for the generation gap as well as the influence of modernistic thinking, do we not see a topsy-turvy of education itself? Doesn't it follow that education has failed to teach them the basic human values of life? If education does not lay a solid value-foundation in their life, how could the entire educational engagement be justified?

2.5. Education in a religious country pathetic in ethical values

India is world-acclaimed as a religious country, as if an absolute truth. Almost all the religious traditions of the world are in India. No country can ever compete with India in terms of the ritual beliefs, traditions and practices Indians are habituated with. The number of places of worship in the country makes a world record, even outnumbering many times the educational, medical and social facilities as well as rendering insignificant basic needs, like toilet. The amount of time people in India engage themselves for the religious cause defeats all calculation. The religious sentiment flows in the form of cash, gold and silver, beyond all measures. All the same, the religious traditions and practices have not taught the followers of religions the basic ethical and spiritual values of life. Recently, Mr Jairam Ramesh underlined the need of toilets in comparison to temples and some people even reacted from a fix of blind, emotional and fanatic faith.

Has not education added to the heavy failure of religions in sharpening ethical consciousness in the students? Has not education bypassed teaching fundamental lessons of life, like the sense of being humane, being socially sensitive, keeping public hygiene, caring for public property, loving beyond the set boundaries, serving all communities, thinking inclusive and living harmoniously? Has not education by and large contributed to a disoriented and under-cultured citizenry and society? Has not education contributed to the ethical bankruptcy of the society and the country?

2.6. Education leaves people in their weak integrity

Sociological thinker V. Raghunathan in his book 'Games Indians Play' elaborates twelve characteristics as a mark of our 'Indian-ness'. They are – 'low trustworthiness, being privately smart and publicly dumb, fatalist outlook, being too intelligent for our own good, abysmal (extremely bad) sense of public hygiene, lack of self-regulation and sense of fairness, reluctance to penalize wrong conduct in others, mistaking talk for action, deep-rooted corruption and a flair for free riding, inability to follow or implement systems, a sense of self-worth that is massaged only if we have the 'authority' to break rules and propensity to look for loopholes in laws'.⁶ The weak sense of integrity that is reflected from these features is obvious.

India is notoriously one of the most corrupt countries of the world, and in some aspects, the most corrupt. Sharad Yadav, Leader of Raastrey Janata Dal Party, once said, 'corruption is in our blood'. 'Compromise' is the watchword of the country. People in India are capable of compromising anything. It can accommodate everything, even the worst of the evils and give the evil-doer a clean chit. Adulterating things is counted as a means to maximum profit and therefore success. 'Chalegaa', 'chaltaa hei', 'theek hei yaar', etc are a few of the symptomatic commonplace maxims. Transparency is not understood as a value. Attempting integrity is a sure way to failure in life. These mainstream tendencies and practices seem to be some of the national traits of Indians.

What does education do to change the worldview or improve the sad predicament? Does not education add to the junk? Why education is incapable of strengthening the moral fibre of the students? What is the percentage of students who become citizens with basic integrity of life? What answer the teachers of the country have with regard to this anomaly?

2.7. Education does not promote civilized public habits

The uncivilized habits in public are a clear proof for this dilemma of the Indian character. Tearing off a page from a library book, skipping classes without permission of the teacher or the school authorities, leaving the school and college campus dirty, etc. are certain uneducated ways among students and teachers. Writing their names on the walls of Taj Mahal or lifts and at bus stops is a market-level behaviour seen among very many educated boys and girls. Jumping the red lights and queues, overtaking from the left, covering the road with vehicles from one side, not honouring the zebra crossing and traffic signals, being un-courteous even to an aging pedestrian or a child to cross the road, not caring for the closed gate at railway crossing, etc. are some blatant public habits of uncivilized nature. These misdeeds are most committed by educated people.

Polluting the air through noise, running the tap full blast while shaving, illegitimately occupying others' seats in the train, disturbing others through microphone at night by violating the Supreme Court verdict and choking and dirtying public places are symptoms of illiterate behaviour of the so called educated. Mostly the educated are responsible for irrational behaviours, like taking marriage processions to the road and even at the late hours of the night and taking religious processions at festivals and blocking the traffic and leaving the road a carpet of garbage. That is why V. Raghunathan states 'we are largely a less-civilized people than most other major nationalities and hence we need to take a fresh look at ourselves'.⁷

How could it not occur to the educational system in India that awakening a sense of civilized behaviour in the students is central to education? How could educational system be so deaf and dumb to the sociological mess of the country? What is that bookish education for if it does not produce any fruit in day-to-day life?

2.8. Wrong models from the elder generation make education fruitless

Whatever religious instruction and good education one may receive, good example of the seniors, especially of those placed in high pedestals, is the best teacher. There are very many teachers who in their person are opposite to what they teach in their classes. A considerable per cent of teachers do not reflect in their person what they teach. Only a small number of teachers stand out as good models. However best education the youngsters may get from their class rooms, most of the models they see in the political, administrative, commercial, social, corporate, religious and educational fields are sharp counter-witnesses. The youngsters imbibe successful ways as per the standards of the world. Even innocently they are more negatively influenced by the society than positively.

No wonder, the time-consuming, energy-consuming, expensive and laborious process of education get badly defeated by the scandalous behaviour of the senior generation in the society. It seems to be a tragic vicious circle. Is there a way out? If there is, what is the way out?

2.9. Sin of Omission of the educated

Doing and not doing are two poles of life. Popular thinking places more emphasis on commission and less on omission. But, actually, the sense of omission is more serious than the sense of commission. Only a small minority of people engages or commits. Vast majority of people are accustomed to evade or omit. Raghunathan refers to this symptom of social malady as he quotes in his book the German Pastor Martin Niemoller, who made a famous statement about the inactivity of German intellectuals, following the Nazi rise to power and the purging of their chosen targets, group after group -- 'First they came for the communists and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me'.⁸

This statement perfectly applies to the Indian mindset of fatalism in a more severe manner. Fatalism seems to be ingrained in the Indian psyche and it is reflected in the day to day actions of people, as if they are genetically encoded to be like what they are. Have the gods of the religious country genetically doomed their devotees or predestined them?⁹ Unlike most other nations, there is a high degree of passivity, sense of omission and lack of self-regulation in India.

The silence of the educated is more serious than the noise of illiterate crimes. Their sense of omission is in fact sin of omission. Is education of this great country seems to be infertile with regard to making the educated rise above the fatalist mindset? How is that the educated turn out to be incapacitated and passive in becoming the brain for the illiterate and the exploited and the voice for the voiceless! How is that educated people do not get awakened to the problems of the society? How on earth the educated do not get trained in becoming leaders of the society, in the right sense of the word? How could the tragic outcome of Indian education be justified? What is the way forward for such a phenomenal and symptomatic education?

3. THE PERSON AND MISSION OF THE TEACHER

3.1. The stone-cutter who was 'building a temple'!

Let me narrate 'the story of three stone-cutters', which I heard some time ago. I think, the story does a god job in scanning the mindset of the teachers. There was a gentleman who was known for his positive and interactive disposition in life. Once, after a heavy day in the office, he went out for a stroll. Before long, he reached a place where he saw some men breaking stones. He asked the first man he met, 'friend, what are you doing?' The man shouted at the gentleman, 'can't you see what I am doing? I am breaking stones.' Realizing that the man was in a bad mood, he moved on without showing any reaction.

As the gentleman reached another man, he asked the same question, 'friend, what are you doing?' He answered in a helpless tone, 'Sir, I have a wife and three children. I am earning my livelihood and that of theirs'. The gentleman nodded, 'I do understand and appreciate it'. Having said this, he moved on.

The gentleman reached the third man. At the very sight, he was fascinated by seeing him hammer the stones gently with a smile and shake his head, as if humming a tune. He asked him the same question, 'friend, what are you doing?' The man replied with a broad smile, 'Sir, I am making a temple'. The

gentleman, enthusiastically exclaimed, 'Is it so? Great indeed! I wish your dream come true and your effort blossom up very soon'.

As the gentleman went on, he couldn't help reviewing the instance. The first man was angry with himself, with the world, with life, with the stone and even with the wayfarer. The second man was badly weighed down by the compulsions of his life. The third man was really enjoying his work to all details.

Besides, the world of the first man was as small as the piece of stone he was breaking. The world of the second man was as big as his family. The world of the third man was as large as a temple, which he believed, will be the dwelling place of God.

Moreover, as regards the spirit of work, the first man was almost displaced in his life, where as the second man was on the track of his duties. But, the third man, rich with a very large and other-oriented perception of life, was relishing his work, with his mind and soul immersed in it. His positive disposition not only motivated himself in his work but also was boosting and soothing as well as a joy for others.

3.2. The teacher who 'builds human temples'!

The above story, though simple, speaks volumes! I think, the story is a perfect mirror to the battalion of those people who are called and are privileged to be 'teachers'. I see three types of teachers.

The first type is a set of 'displaced teachers'. Having been unable to find a space elsewhere or having found themselves incompetent in other areas or thinking that teaching is the easiest career, they approach teaching as a work. But, since they have not been tuned to the skill of the trade, they are full of complaints -- about the educational system, the syllabus, the administration, the students, the premises, and the like. They are literally displaced and misplaced. Obviously, it is for the students and the educational institutions to pay for the dull end result. Without doubt, they need to be put into their right track, but not necessarily teaching.

The second type of teachers is there for earning a living. They perform their teaching duties fairly well, but their primary interest is the returns of their work, for them and for their families. Teaching is only a means for their livelihood. There is hardly any creativity or initiative. Evidently, they need improvement towards the sacred demands of the work in hand as well as towards the right motivation and focus of the same.

The third type of teachers means business. In fact, they are there because they are teachers, in the right sense of the word. With interest and creative initiatives, they put their heart and soul into educating the children. Palpably, they are on their right track. They enjoy teaching and teach the young girls and boys as if they are 'building human temples'. No wonder, they not only inspire and motivate the students, they leave a print in the mind of the students that is impossible to remove. Proudly so, they are not only builders of human beings, but they contribute their mite to building nations and societies that are humane and full of wellbeing.

Regret to observe that the third category of 'genuine teachers' is the smallest in number in the world of educators. The first category forms the second largest section, while the second category composes the largest group. It is heartening to note that the third, though the smallest, is the ideal and the most effective in the educational sector. It is unpleasant to note that the second and the largest group of teachers are mediocre and lukewarm, with hardly any impact worth mentioning. It is highly shocking to realize that the first category is not only a burden to the educational area but also is fatally harmful to it.

3.3. A question posed to the Teacher!

Oh! dear teacher, do you see yourself in the large crystal clear mirror that is placed right in front of you? Where do you find your space? In which rung of the gallery are you seated? Have you really taught anyone so far? Or are you vegetating as a teacher? Have you found a niche in the inner recesses of any of your students? Or are you a failed teacher? Do you relish the job of making human temples as a sacred mission? Do you recognize the divine quality of a teacher in you? Do you deserve the great attribute 'teacher'? What is your fate?

3.4. Teachers -- A Critique

How many teachers are able to find a space amid the chosen ones of the students? Is it because they do not consider it a value or they do not want it or are careless about that? Or is it that they do not have the academic calibre or that they do not have the human qualities required for the same? Why, after years and even decades of close acquaintance with the students, a vast majority of the teachers get derailed from the lives of the students? Why a large number of teachers get easily erased from the minds of the students?

Why, after elaborate and tireless teaching of lessons and lessons of the syllabus, most of the teachers fail to teach 'that lesson', which is the most fundamental in human life? Why, after passing millions of students to brilliant lives, lakhs of teachers get worn out as 'nobodies'? Why, after promoting the students class by class, above 90 per cent of the teachers do not get promoted as 'gurus'? Why, teachers fail to live in the hearts and minds of the students and fail to guide the destinies of their lives in the 'class rooms' of life? What is that basic factor that blocks a teacher from being a 'genuine teacher'? This is a question that stares at every teacher, especially the one who fails in being a real teacher!

3.5. Inspiring Models of Great Teachers!

At this juncture, it is my great pleasure to recall to my mind a few teachers I am privileged to have had in my lifetime, as an exceptional and esteemed treasure. I do not venture to take their names now. To call them mere teachers would be too little for them, because they were 'great teachers' or better, 'gurus'. The very thought of those 'gurus' brings before me, even now, their moving picture that awakens in me spontaneously a sense of deep admiration and reverence. They literally taught me lessons of life. But more than that, they 'touched' me, at the core of my heart. I salute them for what they have been to me!

Those 'gurus' have extensively contributed to the making of what I am today. Even this very write up, I believe, has to be credited into their account. They will ever live in my heart till the end of my life and enjoy the credit of all that is good in me, in some way or other. Perhaps you are interested to know, why only those few are the 'chosen ones' and not others who would number, say a fifty if not a hundred? Though other teachers did teach me very well various syllabus-bound things, they failed to obtain a space in the niche of my heart! A real teacher is he or she who rises to the privilege of being a 'guru' and dwells in the hearts of the students, for all times!

3.6. Teaching is a calling and a mission

Unlike many teachers think, teaching is not a profession. It is not a job. It is not a career, either. It is a 'calling' of a superior character. If it is a job, it is higher than all other jobs. It is a mission of culturing human beings. It implies assisting the young minds to get informed, to understand, to assess, to think for themselves and to apply into their lives and that of others.

Teaching is a personal engagement with the students in view of cultivating their character in a value-based way. It would mean meeting the students in person and travelling with them in their search for life, as a trustworthy companion. Teaching is sharing with the students the lessons of life the teacher has learned for himself or herself. Further, teaching entails facilitating the young hearts to experience life for themselves, cross the boundaries, feel with the other and love him or her beyond measure.

3.7. Teaching is learning

The most fundamental misunderstanding that exists among teachers is that ‘teachers are a breed who knows everything and is meant to teach and teach’. No wonder, such teachers literally fail to teach and even teach anything worthwhile. A teacher, first and foremost, is a learner and a humble learner. Such learners constitute the type of teachers who teach and teach much, in the process of learning.

OV Vijayan as a young Marxist went to a village to teach. He says, ‘I went to teach, but I began to learn’¹⁰ The teacher has to keep learning with the students. He or she has to learn the students, as well. In fact, the teacher, if attentive enough, learns more from the students than from books.

There is an interesting episode in the stories of Mahabharat. The gopis were passionately longing for Krishna, while he was deeply in love with Radha. Uddhav was sent to teach gopis lessons of moderation. To his utter shock, he came back totally changed in his outlook. Well, the teacher has several lessons to learn from the little angels whom they want to teach! Learning from children is an art, yes, the art of living especially for grown ups.

Besides, many a teacher stop learning when they are through and through with the syllabus. This is a dangerous phenomenon. On-going learning has to be a regular habit of the teacher. The process of teaching requires unlearning various hard-learned lessons and re-learning them. Old perceptions and concepts are to be replaced by new ideas and viewpoints.

The world of data and approaches needs constant self-assessment, examination and re-examination. The teacher has to be up-to-date with dynamics of education as well as elevated as to his or her human tuning. This is unavoidable for placing the students on the track of learning, interiorizing and thus of becoming enlightened and cultured.

3.8. Teaching is facilitating transformation

Treating the patients is a science as well as an art. A seasoned nurse knows the art of giving even the most painful injection to the patients. She engages in a friendly and warm chat with the patient. While relishing light moments with them, she does her job, so much so that the patient wouldn’t know when the needle pierced him or her. Similarly, a skilled and experienced teacher imparts values and lessons of life in a spontaneous manner. The students wouldn’t feel the pinch of learning. Such an approach is vital to the transformation the teacher intends to facilitate in the students.

The process of teaching is oriented to transform the lives of the students. The teacher facilitates the students and in that process he or she reaches them. He or she has to enter into a relationship with the students. The teacher not only teaches ideas but oneself – one’s perceptions, attitudes, values, experiences, dreams and commitments. He or she has to be transparent, like a glass. The teacher has to make it easy for the students to see him or her through. The teacher himself or herself is the teaching proper. Only then teaching becomes transformative.

3.9. Teaching means getting relieved of the ‘Gururin’

Receiving and giving are two sides of the coin of life. Everyone receives and gives from birth to death. Normally, one receives more in the younger days and gives more in the elder days. Growing up is to be measured against the measure of giving.

Paying the Gururin back is the golden returns of education. Students have received from the teachers so much that it cannot ever be measured. One would never be able to duly pay the teachers back for what one has received. No doubt, students have to be taught to recognize the ‘Gururin’, i.e., the obligation of having received knowledge and lessons of life from the teachers. But, teachers were students once and their being teachers is the best opportunity to pay the ‘gururin’ back. Being a good teacher, even better than the teachers they had, is the challenge before this sacred job.

Getting relieved of the obligation could have practical implications, as well. The teacher has to pay the ‘Gururin’ back to his or her teachers by ‘investing a portion of his or her earning for supporting a poor child for schooling’. Such a noble gesture will certainly inspire his or her students to do likewise to set apart a portion of his or her earning for supporting a poor student for schooling when he or she is on job, if not while studying. The teacher who ventures into such humanitarian way of paying his or her ‘gururin’ back will not only set a good model for others, but will ‘teach definitely better’. This is a sure way of promoting social harmony as well as living human and spiritual values in life.

3.10. Teaching is ‘building human beings’

A builder is a designer. He or she conceives an idea and develops it into a shape. He or she is a planner who sketches the draft of the idea. He or she is an engineer or artist who fashions the end product as a fine piece of artefact. What is to be built is a temple out of human ingredients. What makes the builder, the engineer and the artist eligible for building the human temple is a sense of reverence for the human person in the students. This concept applies to the teacher and to his or her dynamics of teaching.

Teaching would mean equipping the young students to search, research and find a large, multi-faceted and all-inclusive world. It implies empowering the students for learning to interact, inter-relate and co-exist peacefully with other persons and communities and nations. It would mean making the students capable of living their lives not only for themselves, but deeply committed to reconstruct the nation and the society at large. Teaching would mean assisting little human beings to become greater human beings who are humane.

Teachers have to be role models. ‘Every reform needs examples more than advocates’¹⁰ Young people look for examples. Teachers need to be role-models, as good human beings, good citizens and persons who have a sense of mission in life.

Teaching implies ‘building human beings’. Teaching means building ‘builders of homes and families, neighbourhoods and communities, nations and the larger human society’. That is how teaching becomes the noblest job. That is why teaching is a mission, par excellence.

CONCLUSION

‘Wiping the body after bath has to start with the head’. Otherwise, the process of wiping will never be complete or effective. Change has to start from the top. Teachers have to change first. The great Metro-man, Sreedharan, retired and the condition of the metro system in Delhi has very much loosened. Teachers

have to remain glowing role models in being ever-learning and innovative teachers. They have to be well-informed, enlightened, value-based and socially responsible. They have to be civilized citizens and cultured human beings. They need to be large-hearted, open-minded, empowered and transforming leaders. They are moulders of good human beings and of a culture of interaction and thus of a civilized nation and of a harmonious society at large. What is required is to have more and more teachers who are qualitatively equipped and morally empowered.

End Notes

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