

Teaching And Learning: A Two-Way Process

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The tradition of holding our teachers in reverence is steeped in traditions of the East. It grew out of an acknowledgement that learning is not something to be hoarded; it is to be passed on. The wisdom that the sages of old acquired was synonymous with knowledge in as much as it meant not just scriptural knowledge or assimilation of information but knowledge gained from experience of life's lessons. Since life embraces all without distinction, its lessons become a shared experience. In this experience the teacher and student enter into a relationship in which both are students *and* teachers of one another. There is no room for superiority.

In its origins, all teaching was ultimately spiritual. The advent of modern science has tended to blur the lines of congruence between knowledge and wisdom. Acquiring 'knowledge' is now synonymous

with acquisition of power. Aren't we confusing knowledge with information?

Being well read or well informed need not necessarily put you above those who have been denied access to information and education. Some highly educated people do share their knowledge but often, it is an act of condescension. We sometimes forget that "education" etymologically is a "drawing out" from within. Far from being a social concern, it sometimes degenerates into a financial enterprise.

Some of us may on this day loathe the teachers in our lives who seemed to delight in pointing out our mistakes and correcting them. But it is because of their vigilance and concern that many of us have learnt from our mistakes and become better at what we do.

The guru-sishya parampara of ancient times was a great tradition that enabled

holistic education and made possible for teachers and students to find dedicated time to grow in their relationship in the teaching-learning process. Today's education system may not afford forging of such long term bonding; however, we do remember our teachers and we might even make the time to send a personal note

to a teacher who became a significant role model in our childhood. Some of us will think of sending a bouquet of flowers to the teacher, who, from among many, touched our hearts, not so much by what they taught us, but by empowering us to be fully human.

A personal visit from a past student is known to have warmed the hearts of many a retired teacher. Beyond examinations, unit tests, the measurement of ability, the grades and percentages that indicate only how effectively we can reproduce information stored in the

hard-disks of our brain, we somehow remember only those teachers who went beyond them. These are the teachers who transcended the 'self' and whose words and deeds are etched in our memory only because in so doing, they enabled and empowered us to transcend ourselves.

These are the teachers who made us realise that the signpost is not the road. They showed by example that the journey itself was as important – or even more important – as the destination. Refusing to be identified only with the journey, or the goal, they walked with us in spirit as we negotiated the many twists and turns of life, leading us with compassion and inspiring us to never give up.

In the course of teaching, teachers too learn from students just as students learn from their teachers. And when teaching and learning become shared experiences, it becomes evident that it is a two-way process.

Today is Teachers' Day

