

7th Convocation Address

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By

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RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SIKSHANAMANDIRA

(A NCTE Recognized Autonomous Residential Post-Graduate College under the University of Calcutta)

COLLEGE WITH POTENTIAL FOR EXCELLENCE (CPE)

COLLEGE OF TEACHER EDUCATION (CTE)

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA CENTRE FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN
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Lighting the Lamp Bridging the Ages



Prof. Marmar Mukhopadhyay

Swami Divyanandaji Maharaj, Chairperson, Prof. Dipak Kar, Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Calcutta, Swami Shastrajanandaji Maharaj, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Swami Tattwasaranandaji, my sisters and brothers present today, dear graduating students. God's seamless blessings; I have had many opportunities of addressing such learned gatherings, but none as humbling as this one. This is very special. For, purpose of convocation is to hand over a lamp that would illuminate the path of the graduating students in their professional life ahead. I thank Swamiji for inviting me and giving me this humbling experience.

Convocation

I tried to understand what Convocation is all about. Technically, Convocation is a large assembly of people together for a particular purpose. Need not be a university. Need not be a graduation ceremony. "A **convocation** (from the Latin *convocare* meaning "to call/come together", a translation of the Greek ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia*) is a group of people formally assembled for a special purpose, mostly ecclesiastical or academic¹."

It took different shapes in different countries as it walked through the corridors of human history. Dr: Stephen Gavazzi², Dean and Director of The Ohio State University at Mansfield wrote: "*We celebrate these entrances and exits because students are our lifeblood. The incoming freshmen class comes in with great potential to learn and to grow, to expand their sense of individuality alongside an expanding set of experiences that center on a sense of belonging to their alma mater. In turn, the graduating seniors go out with great potential to demonstrate the skill sets they have developed, to advance their career aspirations while concurrently making important contributions back to society writ large.*

As members of the academic community, we stand in awe of this process. And that's the true meaning of convocation... "

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convocation>

² https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-stephen-m-gavazzi/the-true-meaning-of-convocation_b_1821893.html

In some of the universities, e.g. Oxford University³, Convocation is the main governing body that comprises all graduates, "its only remaining function is to elect the Chancellor of the University" At other colleges⁴, convocation refers to a formal ceremony in which arriving freshmen are welcomed.

In many universities throughout the world (including countries such as Canada, Ukraine, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, convocation is the university graduation ceremony to award degrees to students and honorary graduates. For us, Indians, Convocation is the Graduation Ceremony.

In this address, I propose to submit for our collective examination whether wisdom of ancient Indian education and modern (western) education practised in India are mutually exclusive. Or, it is possible to bridge the ages. Is it possible draw lessons, enrich and empower our contemporary and future education!

Education in Our Scriptures

Teacher Teaches John Latin is a classic statement by John Adams about education. Just four words with huge implications for education.

1. Who is the teacher? What are her/his nature, skills and qualities?
2. Who is John (student)? His nature, tendencies (*Vasana*), skills and attributes? What are the inheritances from previous birth(s) (Karma)?
3. What is the nature of Latin (subject)? Structure of knowledge?
4. What is teaching? What's the process? Is education about teaching or learning? Is there any cause and effect relationship between teaching and learning?

Understanding John: The Satyakam

Major problem of our contemporary higher education is we focus on Latin; John stays out of focus. In higher education, teachers normally deliver their lectures without the 'deep engagement' with students. This is beautifully justified by a professor from University of Houston; "*I am your professor, not your teacher. It is not my part of job to make you learn. At university learning is your job – yours alone. My job is to lead you to the fountain of knowledge. Whether you drink deeply or gargle is entirely up to you*".

"Teachers are evaluated on the basis of learning outcomes, generally as measured by standardized tests. If you don't learn, your teacher is blamed."

³ History of Convocation and Congregation

https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/199663/Convocation-and-Congregation.pdf

⁴ The University of Rochester,¹⁸ University of Pennsylvania, Duke University, Georgetown University, Boston College, Carnegie Mellon University, The University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Cincinnati, University of Florida, California State University, Los Angeles, California State University, East Bay, Miami University, The University of Minnesota, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Dakota, Simpson College, Stanford University, Dartmouth College, Mount Holyoke College, The College of William and Mary, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Scripps College, The College of St. Scholastica, The University of West Georgia, Marymount University, The University of Arkansas, William Paterson University, University of Southern California, Chapman University, and Johnson & Wales University

Indian Gurukulas is almost the ideal example where Guru knew his disciple in and out. Guru Dronacharya taught all kinds of *Astra Vidyas* to all five *Pandavas*. But gave special training to Arjuna on Archery, Bheema on Club. When a child approached Guru Gautam for admission to his Ashram, he could not tell his *Gotra*. Guru Gautam asked him to go back and find out his *Gotra* from his mother and comeback. Innocent child happily went back, asked his mother and returned back to the Ashram. He reported what his mother told, "I have got you serving many men. I don't know your *Gotra* (বহু পরিচর্যা করি পেয়েছি তোর। গোত্র তব নাহি জানি তাত)." When other disciples laughed at the boy, Guru Gautam got up from his seat, affectionately picked up the child on his lap and told, "But, I know your *Gotra*, my son. Truth is your *Gotra* (তুমি সত্য কুলজাত)." He re-christened the boy Satyakam. This understanding of the students is the key to the teacher-student relationship. Let us see nature of students (human beings) from specific to .

Nature of Students (Human Beings)

There are several sources where nature of human beings has been described. One viewpoint can be his/her origin. Another is the structural viewpoint – what constitutes a human being? The western theory of evolution of human beings is the biological evolution from single cell organism to the current form of man/woman through several stages of development, immediately preceding is the ape and chimpanzees. While the western theorists have preferred biological evolution as the process, Indian view point is more metaphysical – evolution of the mind and consciousness with body as the host. This evolutionary theory also promises rising to the cosmic consciousness, supra-cortical consciousness, in medical terminology (Swami Jitatmananda, 1991).

Another view regarding origin of man/woman is that of Lord Brahma, the Creator of this universe, wished, "*Ekoham Bahushyama*" (I am One, let me be many). That should imply all of us are children of Brahmadeva. Kahlil Gibran in his legendary poetic work *The Prophet*, told the parents, "Child is through you" implying 'from God'. This contention is more forthright in

शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्रा
आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः⁵

"Children of immortal bliss" — what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name — heirs of immortal bliss — yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth — sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter."⁶ Thus invoked Swamiji the human consciousness in Chicago.

Thus, every human being is an incarnation of God; indeed, a constituent of the Total Consciousness. Swami Vivekananda argued, unless each one is part of the whole and in continuous communication, how else can one transfer the thought to another?

⁵ *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, Chapter II, Verse 5

⁶

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Complete_Works_of_Swami_Vivekananda/Volume_1/Addresses_at_The_Parliament_of_Religions/Paper_on_Hinduism

This role and place definition of human beings in the total cosmic design is consistent across all religions. According to Islam, human being is the God's viceroy on earth. According to Sikhism, God is the soul of man, his eternal nature; Man is God's workman on earth is the contention of Christianity (Ghai, 1996). Now, attribute of God is Perfection. Perfection implies completeness (*purattwa*), the attribute of *Brahman* or God. Ishopanishad starts with a beautiful poetic definition:

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

"Om Purnamadah, Purnamidam, Purnat Purnamudachyate
Purnasya Purnamadaya Purnamevavashisyate".

[That (the Absolute Self) is full. This (the world we experience through our mind and senses) is full.
If This fullness is taken away from That fullness, what remains is full.

English rendering by Swami Jyotirmayananda]

Thus, in a way, the nature of human being is seen in terms of potential perfection.

The second framework for understanding nature of human beings is by its structure. Two important references from the angle of education are *Charak Samhita* and *Kathopanishad*. One dimension is that human beings are multi-plane configuration. They live simultaneously in physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual planes. Here, the word spiritual refers to the spirit that has guided the humans throughout the history of civilization to explore and conquer nature – nature external to the physical frame of the human being as well as his/her own internal nature.

In depicting the structural nature of human beings, particularly from the angle of education, role of sense organs has been highlighted by several western and Indian thinkers. Senses have been defined as the gateways of knowledge. Indian literature mentioned eleven such senses, *Indriyas*. However, Swamiji (1999), in *Raja Yoga*, drew our attention to the fact that sense organs are active only when powered by the mind. That is why, even with wide open eyes we fail to see when we are engrossed in a beautiful piece of concert, for example. It is not the eyes that see, eyes see only when mind energizes the eyes. Metaphorically, an electric bulb by itself does not emit light; it glows only after receiving the power by putting on the switch. Thus, Indian philosophy attaches great significance to mind.

Education and Its Purpose

Swamiji's definition of purpose of education as "manifestation of perfection already in man" perfectly fits in with Indian idea of human being as child of immortality, potentially perfect. Swamiji's contention of purpose of education represents the best in this paradigm. The International Commission on Education for the 21st Century also conforms to Swamiji's definition when it emphasizes on Learning 'to Be' and not 'Become'.

Education, in India, has been defined in several texts. It has been defined in terms of the process, relationship between the teacher and taught, as well as in terms of its impact. Firstly, knowledge,

Vidya, is classified into two broad categories, namely *paravidya* and *aparavidya*. *Paravidya* is the direct knowledge through experience and perception (often extra-sensory) achieved through *sadhana* – *revealed knowledge*. *Aparavidya* is the indirect or *paroksha gyan* achieved through secondary sources often through sensory mechanism. What we learn in schools and colleges are classified as *aparavidya* or *paroksha gyan*. Further, *paroksha gyan* has been termed as Vigyan and *pratyaksha gyan* as *Gyan* in the Gyan-Vigyan Yoga in Gita (Chapter 7). Having looked at the nature of Vidya, let us now turn to the process, how does learning happen?

Shikshaballi in the *Taittiriopanishad*, depicts education as:

Atha Atividyam. Acharya Poorva roopam, Aanthevasyuttara roopam, Vidya sandhi, Pravachanam santhanam. Iti atividyam.

Now about Quality Education. “*The teacher is the prior form; the pupil is the later (Posteriori) form, knowledge is their junction; instruction is the connection*” (Radhakrishnan, 1998). It does not accept the contemporary view of transfer of knowledge from teacher to student as education. Teacher is advanced learner. The conjunction brings the teacher and students closer for a common journey.

This view gets further strengthened in *Shantipath* in *Kenopanishada*:

ॐ सह नाववतु ।
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

- 1: “Om, May God Protect us Both (the Teacher and the Student) (during the journey of awakening our Knowledge),
- 2: May God Nourish us Both (with that spring of Knowledge which nourishes life when awakened),
- 3: May we Work Together with Energy and Vigour (cleansing ourselves with that flow of energy for the Knowledge to manifest),
- 4: May our Study be Enlightening (taking us towards the true Essence underlying everything), and not giving rise to Hostility (by constricting the understanding of the Essence in a particular manifestation only),
- 5: Om, Peace, Peace, Peace (be there in the three levels - Adhidaivika, Adhibhautika and Adhyatmika).”⁷

This, in a way, professes for learning together; does not see Guru as the storehouse of knowledge; instead only as *purva-rupam* or an advanced learner. It implies learning together, growing together and in today’s language creating of a learning community.

The second formulation is the multi-channel learning paradigm professed in the *Hastana Satak* of the great epic *Mahabharata*:

⁷ http://greenmesg.org/stotras/vedas/om_sahana_vavatu.php

आचार्यात् पादमादत्ते पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया ।
सत्रह्यचारिभ्यः पादं पादं कालक्रमेण च ॥

A quarter of the learning accrues from the teacher, quarter from *self study* and talent; one quarter is derived from *interaction with peers* and rest with time *through experience* (emphasis, added by author). Once again, quality education is to be achieved through what we call today as multi-channel learning.

On the issue of method of learning with quality, four stages to quality learning is worth noting.

1. You learn when you listen to the teacher,
2. You learn when you study,
3. You learn when you teach,
4. You learn when you apply.

The four-stage learning indicates firstly, that any one source is not enough. Secondly, it offers a taxonomy of learning – as one moves from listening to application, indeed one moves from lower level of cognition, namely knowledge to comprehension (study and teach) and application, as depicted in the modern pedagogical literature (Bloom's Taxonomy).

Quality in education has also been depicted in terms of learning outcome, mastery learning, and its impact; Outcome-based Education in contemporary educational discourse. There was no board examination, no external examination. Gurus decided when their disciples completed their (mastery) learning. Emphasis was exclusively on learning output and outcome.

On impact of education and long term outcome, most oft-quoted and apt is *Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye* (education is that which liberates – liberates from the bondage of *agyan* and *avidya*). Another depiction of impact of education is

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद्याति पात्रताम् ।
पात्रत्वाद्धनमाप्नोति धनाद्धर्मं ततः सुखम् ॥

(true/complete) knowledge gives discipline, from discipline comes worthiness, from worthiness one gets wealth, from wealth (one does) good deeds, from that (comes) joy⁸.

Third impact of education is to be able to differentiate between *paravidya* and *aparavidya* (or *avidya*).

Based on my limited understanding of Indian wisdom, I formulated a four stages to Educatedness⁹ (Figure 1).

⁸ <http://blog.practicalsanskrit.com/2009/07/knowledge-leads-to-happiness.html>

⁹ Mukhopadhyay, Marmar (2005), *Total Quality Management in Education*, New Delhi: Sage.

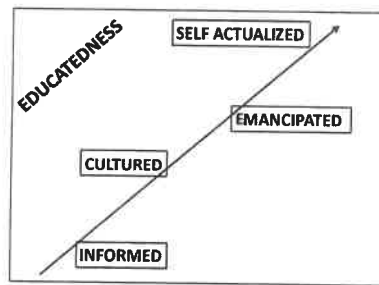


Figure 1: Educatedness

Thus, Indian educational system provided comprehensive understanding of students, teachers, teaching-learning processes and learning outcomes. In fact, one of the emphatic areas of learning outcome is change of behaviour in terms of personal conduct. I'll revert back to that as I conclude my submissions today.

Having seen India's very own educational system, we must check today and tomorrow of education. Those of you who are graduating today in 2018, your career will spread over the next 35 to 40 years. You'll superannuate, if that concept and practice remains valid till then, after 2050. Technology, demography, politics and policies, economy and economics, and many other factors would have completely changed. There would be plethora of disruptive innovations that would change the face of the world. How would the earth look like in 2030, 2040, 2050? How would the classrooms look like? How would your students be? How would you be as an educator?

How would your students be? The 21st Century Learners

These are 21st Century learners; the Facebook and WhatsApp generation; they are students of Google Guru/ mother, and children of World Wide Web. Because of technological advances, they have access to best of the learning resources in text, video, images, multi-media, etc. from best of the universities in the world through more than 170 Open Education Resources in the world. They will access learning resources anywhere, any time on a simple hand held device like a smart phone. They would have significantly better alternatives of accessing knowledge than what even best of the teachers can give them today. Because of continuous interaction in the social media, students are more up-to-date; they are more curious.¹⁰ Their skills of learning to learn are changing. A few student attributes of great significance are:

1. They are more aware; more focused; more decisive; they want to decide the course of their education.
2. They are digital natives; comfortable with technology; technology enabled life management, technology-enabled learning; social connectivity.
3. They expect genuineness, e.g. say 'sorry' when you expect from them for similar behaviour.
4. They are ambitious; want to make a difference; take risks (not happy just with a job).

¹⁰ In one of my WhatsApp group, there are 37 participants – mostly primary school teachers except a few teachers from higher education and educational technologists. I analysed 1000 transactions, and realized how much learning occurs through social media interaction. Irrespective of our relative positions in academics, all of us are learning.

5. They know where to find information.
6. They prefer smart work over hard work.
7. They want freedom to behave the way they want.
8. They have a “can do” attitude. Hope of Success (HoS) overrules their Fear of Failure (FoF)
9. They are open to Change.
10. They are friendly, sociable, collaborate, connect easily; They want equality.
They learn faster, but differently; have more information than the teachers. They form self-learning groups. You have to be prepared for such students. Your current preparation may or may not be enough. Here are three brief cases.

Case I: 21st Century Students of Education

I met about 78 students of education mostly from B. Ed. at Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira, and 42 students pursuing B. Ed. through distance education with NSOU. I had asked in both the cases students to come to the class with their mobile phones and laptops with internet connectivity. I was to deal with OER as the theme of my session.

All students had smart phones. Few had laptops with internet connectivity. But none used laptops. *All used smart phones.*

I asked, ‘What’s OER?’ In both the places, students looked blank. I asked them, “Would you please check on the net?” Students enthusiastically launched their attack on the internet. Five minutes sharp. Both the halls were agog with buzzing among students. Instead of calling for silence, I allowed them, and enjoyed the lively buzzing. Occasionally, I asked them more questions to probe further. Some discovered learning material in text, some in video, multimedia, images; they shared their findings among themselves with lot of excitement. In 20-25 minutes, they were knowledgeable about a subject that they had never heard of, and I didn’t speak. In Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira I invited them to present. They did remarkably well and with confidence. I guess some of them may be here today.

Case 2: 21st Century Learning of Educators

My session was on Visioning for Excellence of Universities in two HRD centres. 44 university teachers from various universities in Jamia Millia Islamia and 42 teachers from various colleges affiliated to Calcutta University participated. Their experience ranged between one and eight years. Agenda was to examine the vision, mission and values of Top 10 Universities in the world like, Harvard, Caltech, Oxford, etc. and compare with visions, missions and values of Indian universities. Approach was same as in case 1. Process and results were also same. Participants used smart phones keeping aside laptops, accessed relevant material on the net, buzzed among them without my instruction; some formed impromptu groups.

There was an important departure here. I told them that I have all those vision and mission statements on my slides that they searched; I scrolled my slides as evidence.

I asked then, “Would you have learnt better if I would have presented; or you learnt better by exploring yourself?” Response was unanimous, “We learnt better by exploring ourselves.”

"Would it be true if you did this with your students?" Response was divided. Some gave a confident "YES". Some said, 'probably'. Some kept quiet.

Case 3: Self-Organizing Learning System

A group of 17 rural primary school teachers wanted to learn assessment of learning outcome and Outcome-based learning in our village cluster. I was invited to conduct the workshop. I could not go. I was asked to come on Skype. I turned down on some pretext. I asked them to review NCERT document on assessment of learning outcome available on the net. I had sent an URL on a PPT presentation on Outcome based Education and assessment of learning outcome. I advised them to see each slide and discuss, and then move to the next slide. The workshop of the teachers went for nearly three hours without any external expert.

Common parameters are:

1. Younger generation of learners are technology savvy;
2. They prefer hand held devices over laptops;
3. Human beings and human groups are self-organizing learning system;
4. Teaching is not the necessary condition for learning.

That's about understanding new age Satyakam or John.

21st Century Classrooms

21st century classrooms will be different from the 20th century classrooms - differ in their look, furnishings, and processes. 20th century classrooms are basically theatres for the teachers to act on the stage, and students to be the audience for teachers acting. With the change of the characteristics of 21st century learners, they will no more be the passive audience occasionally clapping for good acting and delivery of dialogues, or leaving the theatre for a dull, boring drama. Classrooms will be interactive not only between teacher and student, but more importantly among small groups of students within and outside the classrooms. There is nothing like Tabula Rasa. Students would have seen a video, read a textual material authored by best of the scholar in the world before coming to the class. Your challenge is to teach knowledgeable students. The interaction may go beyond the classrooms; students exchanging notes on their mobile devices with their peers in other institutions within and outside the country.

One way presentation technology will be obsolete. They'll be replaced by interactive technology (Smart boards). Current generation Smart boards are likely to be replaced by a new generation portable lightweight devices that can create effect of Smart boards. Just as there will be visible installed technology, there will be many more invisible technologies present in the classroom. Just as foldable mobile phones are right here, projectors that fit into the jeans pocket are also in the market. Entire campus is Wi-Fi enabled. Students would carry their mobile phones into the classrooms. Even in the second decade of the 21st century, there have been many instances where phones are carried to the classroom while it is banned by the schools and colleges. As it is banned, and teachers are not equipped with the skill of making effective use of mobile phones with the students, these are often used for mischievous purposes.

Irrespective of your liking or disliking of technology, and lamenting or reminiscing the olden days and classroom processes, disruptive innovations will take over and turn the classroom

processes beyond recognition. If 21st century classrooms and 21st century learners change, can the 21st century teachers remain in the 20th century. Your 20th century knowledge, skills, attitudes and values will be far too inadequate. Teachers have to develop new set of skills in managing learner centred classrooms and personalized instructions. Learned Teachers are very 20th Century phenomenon; 21st Century would celebrate Learning Teachers. For, every student must succeed and excel to the best of her/his capacity. Every student must produce evidence of learning. Although new generation students are digital natives and possess high quality digital tools, they do not produce digital contents. Students are not allowed to bring their mobile devices to schools and colleges; teachers are asked to switch off the devices. 21st century teachers have to change this to welcome the technology devices in the classrooms and make best use of it for enhancing student learning. What's important is ensuring quality learning and producing evidence of learning; launching Outcome-based Education.

Hope we see the multi-channel learning far more strengthened; and learning as a joint venture of teacher and student.

Outcome-based Education

You are entering the world of work at the dawn of new developmental phase in education. Instead of crying and lamenting for poor quality, policy is to ensure quality. Outcome based education, successfully practised in many countries is being seen as the possible response to this challenge of quality.

Outcome-based education is an educational system, rather process, designed to ensure pre-specified learning outcome for maximum number of students; an ambitious 80x80 Mastery Learning. Learning outcome is evidence of learning. What can a student do to prove that she/he has achieved the learning goals and objectives? Learning outcomes are at multiple levels:

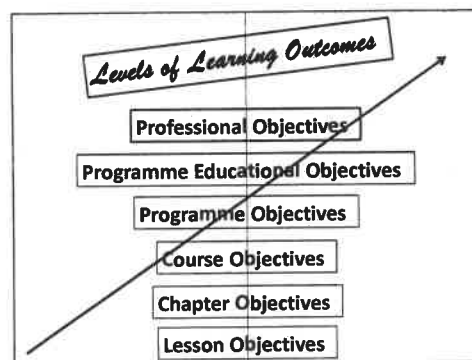


Figure 2: Multiple Levels of Learning Outcome

More explicitly, you will be challenged can our students

- Recall/recognize a fact, a figure, a principle when needed?
- Explain a concept, a principle & give examples?
- Solve a problem applying knowledge gained at different situations?
- Compare & contrast processes, events?
- Judge consequences of a policies, actions?
- See or propose a possible solution, create a model?

Do your students display global outlook, sense of social and national responsibility, cosmopolitanism and inclusiveness, skills of learning to learn, oral and written communication skills, capability to work in teams, access and process information, and draw conclusions.

Gurus in ancient Indian tradition set criteria for completion of study; they were allowed to leave Guru's Ashram (ঔক্ষ গৃহ) only when they gave evidence of learning at mastery level.

Teacher Professionalism

My final point is about teacher professionalism. Teaching, for some, is an occupation; for some it's a vocation; for yet some others, it's a profession; and for few it's a passion. If you cannot transcend to passion, teaching must be a profession. Profession is made of competence, performance and conduct. It is the conduct that differentiates between two equally qualified persons in two professions. Conduct refers to values and ethics of a profession. For example, reading, researching, writing, self development, etc. are part of ethics and values of a teacher. According to Swami Atmapriyananda, teaching should be a passion.

In olden days, as the disciple completed his studies (also read as ঔক্ষ গৃহবাস) departed Gurukulas, Guru exhorted his disciples on certain Do's and Don'ts. End to end, all his instructions are about conduct. Let me quote from Taittiriya Upanishad Section II¹¹.

"Speak the truth. Practice virtue. Let there be no neglect of your (daily) reading. Having brought to the teacher the wealth that is pleasing to him, do not cut off the thread of the offspring. Let there be no neglect of truth. Let there be no neglect of virtue. Let there be no neglect of welfare. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be no neglect of study and teaching. Let there be no neglect of the duties to the gods and the fathers.

Speak that which has been purified by truth and behave in the way in which your mind considers to be pure.

Be one to whom the mother is a God. Be one to whom the father is a God. Be one to whom the teacher is a God. Be one to whom the guest is a God.

Whatever deeds are blameless, these are to be practised, and not others. Whatever good practices there are among us, they are to be adopted by you, not others.

Even with regard to the life of the teacher, we should be discriminating. We must not do the things which are open to blame even if they are done by the wise.

Whatever Brahmanas there are (who are) superior to us, they should be comforted by you with the seat. (What is to be given) is to be given with faith, should not be given without faith, should be given in plenty, should be given with modesty, should be given with fear, should be given with sympathy.

¹¹ English rendering by Radhakrishnan, S. (2007 18th Reprint), The Principal Upanishads, Harper Collins, New Delhi

Then, if there is in you any doubt regarding any deeds, any doubt regarding conduct, you should behave yourself in such matters, as the Brahmanas there (who are) competent to judge, devoted (to good deeds), not led by others, not harsh, lovers of virtue would behave in such cases.

The Brahmanas have spontaneity of consciousness which expresses itself in a love for all beings. Their tenderness of sentiment and enlightened conscience should be our standards.

Then, as to the persons were spoken against, you should behave yourself in such a way, as the Brahmanas there (who are) competent to judge, devoted (to good deeds) not led by others, not harsh, lovers of virtue, would behave in regard to such persons.

This is the command. This is the teaching. This is the secret doctrine of the Veda. This is the instruction. Thus should one worship. Thus indeed should one worship”.

Conclusion

Many of these exhortations and statements made above may appear theoretical and not feasible in modern days. Any such statements are true for some, but not for some others depending upon your choice of burden between Learned Helplessness and Learned Optimism. You carry a great pride and privilege on your head of being educated at Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira, not one of the many. But one and only one. Institutions are known by their students. You are the architects of reputation of your institution. Carry the flag on your strong shoulders. Whenever you are in confusion, please remember Swamiji

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत,
क्षुरासन्न धारा निशिता दुरत्यद्दुर्गम पथः तत् कवयो वदन्ति ।

Arise! Awake! Approach the great and learn. Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so the wise say—hard to tread and difficult to cross.

Instead of travelling on the beaten track take inspiration from Paramhansa Yoganandaji

“The pathfinders of the world calmly continue to pursue their goals and demonstrate that the impossible was, instead, inevitable.”

Wake up. Move ahead. Be a pathfinder.



Sikshanamandira at a glance

- Established in 1958 by Srimat Swami Vimuktanandaji Maharaj (one of the architects for actualizing the educational vision as was envisaged by Swami Vivekananda), as a Residential Teachers' Training College for male students sponsored by the Govt. of West Bengal and affiliated to the University of Calcutta.
- Recognized by the National Council for Teacher Education (as per the NCTE Regulations, 2014 the present intake capacity for the B.Ed. course is 100 for a year) in the year 2002-03.
- Declared as a College of Teacher Education (CTE) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India in the year 2001.
- Accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 2007 with 'A' grade.
- Upgraded into a post graduate College by the NCTE (as per the NCTE Regulations, 2014 the present intake capacity for the M.Ed. course is 50 for a year) in the year 2008.
- On the recommendations of the University Grants Commission, the University of Calcutta conferred the status of an **Autonomous College** in favour of this institution in 2008.
- M.Phil. Programme** in Education was initiated in the year 2012-13.
- Post-graduation Diploma in Guidance and Counselling Course** started in the year 2013.
- Started **Swami Vivekananda Centre for Multidisciplinary Research in Educational Studies (SVCRES)** a Research Wing under the University of Calcutta in 2014.
- Re-Accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 2015 with an 'A' grade.
- Extension of Autonomous Status for another six years conferred on 2015.
- Started **Post-graduation Diploma in Yoga Education and Certificate Course in Communicative English and Writing** on 2016.
- Awarded the status of **College with Potential for Excellence (CPE)** by the UGC on 2016.