



IDEALS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS IN PERSPECTIVE OF NEO-HUMANIST EDUCATION

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“The noblest form of social service is to educate the public and create a sense of consciousness in them.”

-----P.R. Sarkar

Abstract

Teacher is the most important of all factors that influence quality education. Today's knowledge-based education is creating a gap between outer life and inner life. For this, neo-humanism is the best support as it promises to elevate human life through education. Hence, the present study aims to explore the concept of neo-humanism and ascertain the roles and responsibilities of teachers in this respect. Documentary review was done for data sources and analytical approach was used to treat them. The study reveals that spiritual practice, spiritual principle and spiritual mission are the three stages of neo-humanism. According to P.R.Sarka, teachers should arouse the desire for knowledge and teach social skills and restraint in social life alongside. And thus, elevation of human life is possible.

Keywords: Teacher, Quality Education, Neo-Humanism, Knowledge, Social Skills.



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Introduction

Quality education depends upon many factors like curriculum, infrastructure, teaching-learning materials and methods, educational technology and the teacher. Among these factors, teacher is the most important because he/she directly operationalizes the process of education. As teachers play the central role in any education system, their up gradation is of utmost significance, which can be done through effective teacher training. Both the development and quality of the nation depend largely upon the quality of her teachers, and for this, the teacher is said to be the backbone of the nation. But today it is found that teachers give undue emphasis on knowledge-oriented education which aims at the intellectual development of the students. This makes the educational process one-sided resulting in the development of lop-sided personalities. Thus, education is becoming materialistic, and the moral, religious and the spiritual value-traditions are being given up. As a result, there are a

crisis of character and a disharmony between the outer life of actions and the inner life of emotions. In order to tide over the crisis, neo-humanism is the best and only support that shows the path for elevation of human life through education.

Background Study

A few relevant readings have been consulted to prepare the base for the study. Seshadri (2004) in a rather reflective vein raises the question as to what it means to be a teacher and attempts to provide an orientation to answering queries in respect of problems of teacher obligations and accountability. Conceptual clarifications are offered, and the obligations towards knowledge and the challenge of the time are laid bare. Ahlawat and Yadav (2014) have identified teacher commitment and engagement as one of the most critical factors in the success of education. The phenomenon of teacher commitment has attracted research attention in different parts of the world. They have studied the effect of various factors like age, gender, experience and type of school on role commitment of secondary school teachers. Experience and gender produced differences in role commitment as per the results. Werakul et. al. (2014) has developed a training program to enhance ethics in caring the elderly and to study the effect of the training program. The program used a non-formal model of education in which ten elements of neo-humanist moral principles were used for evaluation. The program was suitable because universal love will be a sustainability of ethics in caring the elderly.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives----

- (a) To know the concept and features of neo-humanism; and
- (b) To identify the responsibilities of teachers in perspective of neo-humanist education;

Rationale of the Study

(i) Education aims to awaken true potential of the student by promoting creativity for sustainable development in the society. But in the era of digital technology special care must be taken for the impeding factors of creativity. T.S. Eliot rightly says,

“Where is the life, we have lost in living
Where is the knowledge, we have lost in information
Where is the wisdom, we have lost in knowledge.”

Cultivation of knowledge and wisdom with the use of digital literacy must be promoted by teachers for developing the society.

- (ii) Disruptive behavior, criminal offence, atrocity on girl students and women and many other immoral activities are on the rise which must be stopped; teachers can orient the entrant teachers in such a way that they will change the negative attitude of students, if any, towards girls and women.
- (iii) UNESCO Commission Report---Education for the 21st Century---Learning the Treasure Within, puts emphasis on enabling teachers to acquire intellectual and emotional qualities that a nation wants to be developed by them in their students.

At such a backdrop the study of teachers' ideals, role and responsibilities in perspectives of neo-humanist education seems to be really very relevant in the present context of the time and status of teachers.

Sources & Method

Documentary review was assorted to for the data sources of the study. Both the primary and secondary sources were consulted for the purpose. And the analytical method was adopted to treat the same.

Concept of Neo-Humanism

As P.R. Sarkar has approached, neo-humanism has three stages of development which are--- (i) spiritual practice, (ii) spiritual principle and (iii) spiritual mission. Spiritual practice, which is the first stage of neo-humanism, aims at enhancing the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the practitioner. Social service is an important part of it which influences the society positively. Spiritual principle (or essence) impacts mainly the mental and spiritual realms, both individual and collective. Practice of rationality and adherence to the principle of equality will strengthen both individual minds and the collective human mind. An individual fulfills his/her spiritual mission when his/her existential nucleus (soul) merges with the "Cosmic Existential Nucleus". Neo-humanism asserts that this supreme status ensures the future of not only the human world but also of the animal and plant worlds as well.

According to neo-humanism, love for the Supreme i.e., devotion is the most valuable asset of humanity which results in universalism. Any kind of dogma and any form of exploitation must be eradicated, because they are very harmful for the individual and the society. Neo-humanism does not treat human being as rational animal rather considers human life as an ideological flow.

According to neo-humanism, the impetus (inspiration or motivation) for human movement – human dynamism - may be either of two conflicting principles: the principle of selfish pleasure (átma-sukha tattva) or the principle of social equality (sama-samája tattva). The second principle is really beneficial to the humanity at large.

As per P.R. Sarkar, like nationalism, internationalism also is not the solution for global peace because, like provincialism and communalism, nationalism is also detrimental to the minds of students as their education may be nationalistic, not humanistic; rather the world government can ensure peace on earth. He is of the opinion that the very word internationalism admits the existence of separate nations resulting in conflicts among the nations.

Ideals of Ideal Teachers

An ideal teacher should be a man of intelligence, moral stability, objective judgement, and responsibility. He/she must possess an integrated personality with good mental health. He/she must be progressive and dynamic in his outlook, thought and conduct. A good teacher must always embrace high ideals of life, and he should have a sense of humour; and a sound physique and self-confidence. More, a teacher has always to be regular, punctual and sincere about his duty and fair in dealings with his students, irrespective of caste, religion, gender, economic status and physical features. An ideal teacher should know the art of effective teaching with the help of audio-visual aid and know how to do action research and be aware of the latest educational experiments. A good teacher must have sound knowledge of child psychology and educational psychology, and knowledge of organizing different co-curricular activities. Above all, he should have an urge for knowledge. As R .N .Tagore says in his ‘Creative Unity’, “A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another unless it continues to burn its own flame”. For P.R. Sarkar, “Teachers must possess such qualities as personal integrity, strength of character , righteousness, a feeling for social service , unselfishness, an inspiring personality and leadership ability ; they are samájá gurus.”

But unfortunately, there are some teachers, as per P.R. Sarkar, who hurt the feelings of the students by uttering some caustic words. To cite examples as given by P.R.Sarkar, “The plough suits you better than the pen, my boy,” or “You had better join your father at the potter’s wheel,” or “Your intelligence is like your appearance”. “The unprofessional behaviour of a handful of teachers may be the reason why the whole teaching profession has become an object of ridicule”, says P.R.Sarkar. Not only that there are some teachers who

actively take part in politics, and they utilize their influence as said by P.R. Sarkar. Some teachers among us, though the number is very few, have been and are being deviated from the ideal path. They try to avoid their normal duty and utilize their profession for monetary benefit. Not only that, sometimes, few teachers' names become associated with some amorous and alcoholic affairs. Such teachers do give room for the bad comments to be made about the whole community. Almost all the teachers are exerting much labour for the benefit of the learners; but, for the counted few deviated teachers, the blame falls on the whole teacher community.

Major Role of Teachers

These days teachers have to play multiple role—facilitator, stimulator, manager, researcher and inter-cultural communicator; he has a role in the society. The function of a teacher is two faceted---within the classroom and outside the classroom. Actually, he/she faces the two worlds--- the world of the development of individuals, and the world of the wide range of society. These two are integrally related with each other. So the individual affects the society, and the society affects the individual in turn. As per the latest UGC suggestions, three equally important activities are there for a teacher---teaching, research and extension work. According to P.R. Sarkar, a teacher must awaken the thirst for knowledge among the students instead of forcing them to study merely to give the right answer. The teacher must foster the development of social skills and create a learning environment that will encourage young people to learn to live together and to become responsible citizens. Of the four pillars of education as shown by the Delor's Commission Report, at least two i.e., learning to Be and Learning to live together seem to be very significant and appropriate here. P.R. Sarkar says that teachers have an extremely important role to play and so, their professional standards must be very high.

Key Responsibilities of Teachers

In his/her day-to-day work, a teacher can make huge differences in learners' lives, directly through the curriculum he/she teaches, and indirectly, through his/her behaviour, attitudes, values, relationship with and interest in his students. The Report of the University Education Commission (1948-49) states that three major purposes are served by the educational activities of the teacher. These are ---transmission of the intellectual and ethical heritage of humanity to the young, enrichment of his heritage and extension of the boundaries of knowledge, and development of the personality of the learners. In consideration of these

services, the teacher is a 'torch bearer' of the society. As P.R. Sarkar says, it must be the teachers' responsibility to impart knowledge, teach restraint in social life, and give instruction about all the various aspects of collective endeavour.

Present Status

Teacher does have an important place in the society because he has always played a vital role in shaping the destiny of it. In ancient India the teacher was treated as the preceptor (Guru) and the student as disciple (Sishya), and the relation was that of the parent and the ward. The teacher was called the spiritual leader and was treated as the role model, living library, and storehouse of knowledge. In the Muslim period also the teacher (Maulavi) enjoyed a very high status in the society. But in modern times, the teacher's importance and status have declined to some extent in comparison with the past. Now-a-days, the teacher is not the only source of knowledge due to the availability of multi-channels of learning like newspaper, magazine, book, tele-conference, internet, etc. Hence, the teacher is not always considered the role model by his/her students, and the relationship between both has been a little bit commercial. The view of P.R.Sarkar in this context is mentioned below

“The salaries of teachers in every country should be on a par with, if not higher than, the salaries of public servants in the judiciary and the executive. It should not be forgotten that the sages of the past used to receive temple endowments, gifts of land and regular sacerdotal fees from the kings. They did not have to go from house to house as tutors to support their families, because the government was directly responsible for solving their mundane problems. While it is true that such sages provided food and clothing to their students, the money for this came from the public and was donated out of reverence.

Simply raising the salaries of teachers, however, does not automatically mean that they will have the opportunity to create ideal men and women, because today in most countries of the world (where teachers generally have the opportunity to live fairly well) teachers nevertheless do not have the right to formulate educational policies. Rather educational policies are generally formulated by professional politicians, most of whom have perhaps no experience in education. If teachers are to be held responsible for building ideal men and women, they must also be given the right to formulate educational policies, instead of being mere teaching machines.”

Conclusion

The teacher of a modern school has to play a very significant role in value oriented education. He should not forget the basic human values. He should be the living embodiment of all the human beings. By translating the proverb, "Example is better than precept" into practice he should follow a moral code of conduct. He must create an atmosphere of love, trust, and security. The National Policy of Education (1986) observes, "The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers." This statement shows how importance the government of India attaches to the teacher. Not only that, the 5th September is observed every year as Teachers' Day. Teacher has always been vital in the society and will remain so in the days to come as well. In order to retain our position of honour in the society, we have to continuously upgrade our professional skills and follow a code of conduct for our duties and responsibilities. Thus, all the three stages of development of neo-humanism i.e. spiritual practice, spiritual principle and spiritual mission will be possible to achieve, and we will find an elevated human life through education. What P.R.Sarkar says about the meaning of education is very much appropriate here, "The real meaning of education is trilateral development - simultaneous development in the physical, mental and spiritual realms of human existence. This development should enhance the integration of the human personality. By this, dormant human potentialities will be awakened and put to proper use. Educated are those who have learnt much, remembered much and made use of their learning in practical life. "

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