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## *Contents*

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |       |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| ⇒ | From Inheritance to Reimagination: A Study of Indian Diaspora Identity on the World Stage<br><b>Dr. D. Sudha Rani &amp; Madhumitha M.</b>                                                             | 1-5   |
| ⇒ | Metamorphosed Bodies and Fragmented Nations: Corporeal Identity in Kafka and Rushdie<br><b>Dr. Gollapalli Shalom</b>                                                                                  | 6-12  |
| ⇒ | Rewiring the Ancient Brain: Neuroplasticity, Mindfulness, and What Indian Contemplative Practices Show<br><b>Dr. Niharika Sinha</b>                                                                   | 13-19 |
| ⇒ | The Evolution of A. Ramachandran's and His Contemporary's Artistic Style: A Study<br><b>Anam Shakeel &amp; Dr. Lakshaman Prasad</b>                                                                   | 20-26 |
| ⇒ | Evaluating the Translational Nutritional Adequacy of Plant-Based Protein Diets in Comparison to Animal Protein Diets: From Amino Acid Bioavailability to Human Health Outcomes<br><b>Dr. Sangeeta</b> | 27-34 |
| ⇒ | The EMI Illusion: India's Modern Debt Trap<br><b>Anil Kumar Ram, Dr. Irfan Ahmed Ansari &amp; Dr. Sirazuddin Queraishi</b>                                                                            | 35-41 |
| ⇒ | Evolution of Typography in Digital Media<br><b>Ayush &amp; Shamsheer Warsi</b>                                                                                                                        | 42-48 |
| ⇒ | Impact of Recognition and Rewards on Job Satisfaction among Work-from-Home Employees: A Quantitative Study<br><b>Hera Khan &amp; Dr. Meenakshi Shrivastava</b>                                        | 49-55 |
| ⇒ | Traditional Indian Paintings Styles and Their Cultural Significance<br><b>Mehak Raj &amp; Dr. Rajkumar Pandey</b>                                                                                     | 56-62 |
| ⇒ | Women in Bihar Legislative Politics: An Analysis of Political Engagement in the Legislative Assembly (2005–2025)<br><b>Jivendra Kumar</b>                                                             | 63-68 |
| ⇒ | Social Dimensions in Indian Art: A Comparative Study of Raja Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil<br><b>Kaveri Chaudhary &amp; Dr. Lakshaman Prasad</b>                                                     | 69-74 |
| ⇒ | A Study of Sleep Habits and Academic Achievement of Grade XI Students<br><b>Kiran Singh &amp; Arun Kumar</b>                                                                                          | 75-81 |
| ⇒ | The Identity and Struggles of Forgotten Women Artists in Modern Indian Art: With Reference to Nini, Sahifa Bano, Sunayani Devi, and Pratima Devi<br><b>Sameeksha Lakhera &amp; Dr. Sachiv Gautam</b>  | 82-88 |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |         |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| ⇒ | The Evolution and Transformation of Modern Indian Art<br><b>Muskan &amp; Shreya Dwivedi</b>                                                                                                          | 89-95   |
| ⇒ | Regional Resistance and Political Leadership: Rao Tula Ram in the Revolt of 1857<br><b>Shubham Sikarwar &amp; Rahul Sisodia</b>                                                                      | 96-100  |
| ⇒ | Evolution of Logo Design<br><b>Tripti Singh Azad &amp; Arihant Bhatia</b>                                                                                                                            | 101-107 |
| ⇒ | The Impact of Minimalist Design on Brand Recognition<br><b>Shubham Verma &amp; Rahul Yadav</b>                                                                                                       | 108-112 |
| ⇒ | The Strategic Impact of Human Resource Policies on Work-Life Balance and Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Study of the Indian Banking Sector<br><b>Dr. Yogita Sarohi &amp; Dr. Tanu Kalsi</b> | 113-119 |
| ⇒ | A Multidimensional Conceptual Model of Field Hockey Umpiring Efficacy<br><b>Ashok Kumar Yadav &amp; Dr. Akhil Mehrotra</b>                                                                           | 120-126 |
| ⇒ | Construction of Political Opinion: A Semiotic Analysis of Editorial Cartoons in Leading English Dailies of India<br><b>Farhat Jahan &amp; Dr. Rabia Noor</b>                                         | 127-133 |
| ⇒ | Environmental Consciousness in Mithila Culture: A Study of Traditional Water Reservoirs and the Chhath Ritual<br><b>Sudhir Kumar Sah</b>                                                             | 134-138 |
| ⇒ | Navigating the Digital Divide: A Sociological Analysis of AI Integration in Tharu Indigenous Education in the Context of Bihar<br><b>Ambedkar Kumar Sahu &amp; Rafia Kazim</b>                       | 139-144 |
| ⇒ | The Eternal Dialectic: Letters versus Spirit in the Interpretation of the Indian Constitution<br><b>Dr. Saurabh Verma</b>                                                                            | 145-150 |
| ⇒ | Exploring Women's Empowerment and Government Initiatives in India<br><b>Dr. Priti Yadav</b>                                                                                                          | 151-156 |
| ⇒ | Learning Styles in Relation to Gender Groups: A Study of LMS Users of Odisha State Open University<br><b>Tirthajani Panda &amp; Sachidananda Boxi</b>                                                | 157-168 |
| ⇒ | A Philosophical Exploration of Moral Development<br><b>Dr. Aradhana</b>                                                                                                                              | 169-175 |
| ⇒ | A Comparative Analysis of Borrower Satisfaction in Public and Private Sector Housing Finance Institutions in Deoria Nagar Palika, Uttar Pradesh<br><b>Alok Ranjan</b>                                | 176-184 |

|   |                                                                                                                                             |         |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| ⇒ | Understanding the Elementary Factors of Student Engagement in Visual Arts Education<br><b>Soham Chakraborty &amp; Dr. Prashant Phirangi</b> | 185-191 |
| ⇒ | Teacher as Facilitator, Mentor and Innovator : The Changing Role of Educators in the Indian Education System<br><b>Dr. Gaurav Singh</b>     | 192-196 |

## *Teacher as Facilitator, Mentor and Innovator : The Changing Role of Educators in the Indian Education System*

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### **Abstract**

*In the Indian education system, the teacher's role is evolving beyond traditional instruction to become a facilitator, mentor, and innovator, adapting to the needs of 21st-century learners. As a facilitator, the teacher shifts from being a knowledge dispenser to guiding students in constructing their own understanding through active learning and inquiry-based approaches. This means fostering a classroom environment where curiosity, collaboration, and student responsibility are encouraged. Teachers act as guides, helping students discover knowledge, think critically, and develop life skills rather than passively receiving information.*

*The mentor role is equally significant, especially within the context of government initiatives and reforms aimed at improving pedagogy and addressing diverse student needs. Mentors work closely with teachers to provide support, feedback, and personal guidance, bridging gaps between educational authorities and classrooms. Through constructive feedback and empathetic engagement, mentors empower teachers to handle challenges and adapt to new policies, ultimately enhancing the quality of student learning experiences.*

*Innovation is at the core of contemporary teaching as Indian educators adopt technology, creative teaching methods, and flexible curricula to better engage students. Teachers are encouraged to integrate digital tools, design learner-centered content, and continuously update their skills. This spirit of innovation ensures that education is relevant, forward-looking, and inclusive, preparing students for future challenges and opportunities.*

*In summary, teachers in the Indian education system today are expected to facilitate active and meaningful learning, mentor both students and peers, and embrace innovation to meet the evolving demands of society. By doing so, they play a pivotal role in empowering students to become autonomous learners and responsible citizens.*

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### **Introduction**

Education is the cornerstone of national development and social transformation. In India, the teacher has historically occupied a revered position as a “Guru” — the guide who dispels ignorance and enlightens minds. However, the 21st century has brought with it a new educational paradigm shaped by globalization, digitalization, and rapidly changing societal expectations. The teacher’s role has evolved from that of a mere instructor to that of a **facilitator of learning, a mentor of minds, and an innovator of pedagogy.**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant turning point in redefining the teacher’s role within the Indian education system. It envisions teachers as catalysts of change who inspire curiosity, promote creativity, and encourage lifelong learning. In this context, understanding the multifaceted roles of teachers — as facilitators, mentors, and innovators — is essential to strengthening the foundation of a learner-centered and inclusive education system.

#### **1. The Evolving Landscape of Education in India**

The traditional Indian classroom was primarily teacher-centered, focusing on rote memorization and examination-oriented learning. The teacher was viewed as the ultimate

authority and repository of knowledge, while students were passive recipients. This model, though effective for content delivery, limited critical thinking and creativity.

In recent years, however, educational reforms have emphasized **constructivist and experiential learning**, encouraging teachers to guide students in constructing their own understanding. The integration of digital tools, project-based learning, and outcome-oriented assessment frameworks has further expanded the teacher's role. Moreover, the growth of inclusive education has made it necessary for teachers to address diverse learning needs through flexible and empathetic teaching approaches.

Thus, the teacher's role is no longer confined to instruction; it now encompasses facilitation, mentorship, and innovation — each of which complements the others in shaping holistic education.

## **2. Teacher as Facilitator**

### **2.1 Concept and Philosophy**

A facilitator is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a **guide who enables learning**. The concept of the teacher as a facilitator draws from constructivist educational theories by Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey, which emphasize active participation and discovery-based learning. The facilitator encourages learners to question, analyze, and collaborate to co-create knowledge.

In the Indian context, facilitative teaching aligns with Gandhian and Tagorean educational ideals that promote learning through experience, cooperation, and reflection. The NEP 2020 also underscores the importance of **active learning, multidisciplinary thinking, and flexibility**, all of which require facilitative teaching methods.

### **2.2 Role in the Classroom**

As a facilitator, the teacher:

- Designs interactive and inquiry-based learning experiences.
- Encourages peer collaboration and group discussions.
- Promotes problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking.
- Uses formative assessments to guide learning rather than merely evaluate performance.

For instance, in science education, instead of lecturing on theories, a facilitator may engage students in experiments and real-world problem-solving tasks. In language learning, the facilitator promotes communicative activities rather than memorization.

### **2.3 Impact on Learners**

Facilitative teaching empowers students to become **independent and reflective learners**. It shifts responsibility for learning from teacher to student, enhancing self-confidence and motivation. This role also fosters democratic values in education, where every learner's perspective is respected and valued.

## **3. Teacher as Mentor**

### **3.1 Understanding Mentorship in Education**

Mentorship goes beyond classroom teaching. It involves **guiding, supporting, and nurturing** students' academic, emotional, and moral development. The teacher, as a mentor, becomes a trusted advisor who helps learners navigate personal and professional challenges.

Mentoring also plays a key role in **teacher education and professional development**, where senior educators guide novice teachers in pedagogical strategies, classroom management, and research skills.

### **3.2 Policy and Institutional Frameworks**

Several Indian government initiatives emphasize mentoring as a crucial element of teacher development:

- **National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA)**: Aims to build competencies among teachers and mentors.

- **DIKSHA Portal:** Provides digital resources and mentorship networks for continuous learning.
- **PM e-Vidya and NIPUN Bharat Missions:** Highlight mentorship as essential for ensuring foundational literacy and numeracy.

These frameworks envision a mentoring ecosystem where experienced educators guide peers, while teachers mentor students — creating a supportive and collaborative educational environment.

### 3.3 The Human Dimension

The mentor's relationship with students is rooted in empathy, understanding, and encouragement. Mentors identify students' strengths, address weaknesses, and help them set achievable goals. They also play a crucial role in promoting emotional well-being, particularly in the post-pandemic context, where students face heightened anxiety and uncertainty.

Effective mentorship cultivates **values, character, and resilience**, making students not only academically capable but also socially responsible citizens.

## 4. Teacher as Innovator

### 4.1 The Imperative of Innovation

In an era dominated by technology and change, innovation in education is not optional—it is essential. Innovation allows teachers to reimagine the teaching-learning process in ways that make education relevant and engaging.

Innovation in teaching encompasses:

- **Pedagogical innovation:** Using creative strategies like flipped classrooms, experiential learning, and gamification.
- **Technological innovation:** Integrating ICT tools, AI-based learning platforms, and virtual labs.
- **Curricular innovation:** Designing flexible, interdisciplinary content that connects theory with practice.

### 4.2 Indian Examples of Educational Innovation

India has witnessed several innovative teaching practices:

- **Smart classrooms and digital boards** under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
- Use of **AI and mobile learning apps** in rural and urban schools.
- Project-based learning in **Kendriya Vidyalayas** and **Navodaya schools**.
- Integration of **local culture, environment, and community-based learning** in state education boards.

Teachers who adopt innovation not only enhance student engagement but also prepare learners for **21st-century skills**—communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

### 4.3 Challenges in Innovation

Despite progress, challenges persist:

- Lack of infrastructure and digital access in rural areas.
- Limited training opportunities for teachers.
- Resistance to change among traditionally trained educators.
- Heavy administrative workload reducing time for creative teaching.

To overcome these, there is a need for **institutional support, continuous professional development**, and recognition of innovative teachers through incentives and awards.

## 5. Integrating the Three Roles

The three roles — facilitator, mentor, and innovator — are not isolated; they are **interconnected and inter dependent**. A teacher who facilitates learning naturally mentors students through guidance and feedback. Similarly, an innovative teacher uses new ideas to make facilitation and mentorship more effective.

This integrated approach leads to:

- Enhanced student engagement and participation.
- Holistic development — intellectual, emotional, and ethical.
- Stronger teacher-student relationships.
- Improved learning outcomes and community impact.

#### 6. Challenges Faced by Indian Teachers

While the transformation of teacher roles is aspirational, several systemic and contextual challenges hinder its realization:

1. **Overcrowded classrooms** limiting personalized facilitation.
2. **Outdated curricula** that focus on exams rather than skills.
3. **Limited access to digital infrastructure**, especially in rural and government schools.
4. **Inadequate teacher training** and professional development programs.
5. **Workload and administrative pressures** reducing time for innovation.
6. **Socioeconomic disparities** affecting student readiness for active learning.

Addressing these issues requires policy support, investment in teacher capacity-building, and community involvement.

#### 7. Policy Support and Government Initiatives

The Government of India has recognized teachers as the cornerstone of educational transformation. Policies and programs that support the teacher's evolving roles include:

- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** – Advocates for flexibility, multidisciplinary education, and continuous professional development.
- **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023** – Promotes experiential and competency-based learning.
- **Nishtha and Diksha Platforms** – Build teacher capacity and encourage peer mentorship.
- **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) and Innovation Mission** – Encourage innovation and STEM-based learning.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** – Integrates technology and inclusivity in classrooms.

These initiatives aim to transform teachers into empowered professionals capable of fostering creativity, empathy, and innovation among learners.

#### 8. The Role of Higher Education Institutions

Universities and teacher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of educators. Institutions such as **Allahabad University** have the responsibility to:

- Embed innovative and experiential pedagogy in B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs.
- Encourage research on teaching methodologies and digital pedagogy.
- Organize seminars, workshops, and exchange programs for skill enhancement.
- Create mentorship networks among faculty and students.

Higher education institutions thus become **laboratories of educational innovation**, where new teaching paradigms are conceptualized, tested, and implemented.

#### 9. The Future of Teaching in India

The teacher of the future will be a **knowledge navigator**, guiding students through a sea of information rather than dictating it. With AI, online learning, and global connectivity, the teacher's role will emphasize **human values, ethics, creativity, and empathy**—aspects that technology cannot replace.

Future-ready teachers will:

- Continuously learn and adapt.
- Integrate global best practices with local needs.
- Balance technology with human interaction.
- Serve as role models of lifelong learning.

The shift from instruction to facilitation, mentorship, and innovation will redefine the identity of Indian teachers as nation-builders in a global knowledge society.

#### ➤ Conclusion

The transformation of the teacher's role in India from an instructor to a facilitator, mentor, and innovator represents a paradigm shift in educational philosophy and practice. A facilitator inspires curiosity and autonomy, a mentor nurtures character and confidence, and an innovator reimagines possibilities through creativity and technology. Together, these roles ensure that education remains **holistic, inclusive, and future-oriented**.

To sustain this transformation, India must invest in teacher development, digital infrastructure, and institutional autonomy. Recognizing and rewarding teachers' innovative efforts will motivate them to continue shaping the minds and values of future generations.

Ultimately, teachers are not merely employees of the education system—they are **architects of human potential**. In embracing the roles of facilitator, mentor, and innovator, they reaffirm their timeless mission: to illuminate the path of learning and nation-building.

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