

Changing Dimensions of Teacher-Student Relationships in Contemporary India: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract:

The relationship between teacher and student has long held a sacred and pivotal position within Indian society. In ancient times, the teacher-student relationship established a supportive learning environment where students felt comfortable seeking help, clarifying doubts, and expressing themselves. Such relationships contribute to intellectual, social, and emotional growth, enhancing behavioural outcomes. Historically, this bond was encapsulated by the Guru-Shishya parampara (teacher-disciple tradition), a model built on reverence, hierarchical respect, and the holistic transmission of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality. The guru was not merely an instructor but a profound moral and spiritual guide, and the shishya (student) was bound by duty and devotion. This traditional framework, however, is currently navigating a period of profound transformation. The advent of globalization has introduced Western, student-centric models of education that emphasize individualism and flatter hierarchies, often clashing with traditional norms of deference. Simultaneously, the rapid commodification and privatization of education have begun to reframe the relationship in transactional terms. The teacher is no longer the sole repository of knowledge but is now a facilitator in a world of abundant data. This digitalization fosters more informal and constant communication but also introduces new arenas for conflict, impersonality, and the erosion of established boundaries. The teacher-student relationship in contemporary India has undergone a remarkable transformation. The traditionally rooted Guru-Shishya model of relationship emphasized respect, discipline, and moral guidance. This study examines the profound sociological transformations in the teacher-student relationship in contemporary India, charting its evolution from the traditional Guru-Shishya parampare, where the teacher (Guru) served as a comprehensive moral, spiritual, and intellectual guide. It's a complex, modern-day form. The influence of the Western education system, focusing on student-centric learning and individualism, often clashes with India's traditional cultural norms of respect for teachers and the system. This creates a new dynamic where relationships are more casual and friendly. The contemporary teacher-student relationship in India is a site of significant social negotiation, caught between the vestiges of a sacred, hierarchical past and the pressures of a modern, transactional, and technology-mediated present. A sociological perspective, therefore, is essential to move beyond a simple narrative of "decaying values." It allows for a critical analysis of how these structural changes lead to economic, cultural, and technological changes that are creating a new, complex, and often contradictory set of roles, expectations, and interactions that define the teacher-student relationship in modern India. These relationships play a role in shaping the educational experience, student development, and classroom dynamics. Globalization is rapidly changing the educational landscape; understanding the foundations and consequences of effective

teacher-student relations is crucial for creating equitable, interactive, and productive learning spaces. This dynamic has undergone significant change in teacher and student relationships. The modern education system emphasizes equality, collaboration, and student participation. Teachers are now seen as facilitators or mentors rather than authoritative figures, and learning often occurs through digital platforms beyond the traditional classroom. In the current era of globalization and digitalization, we have shifted toward collaboration, equality, and interactive learning. The students have become more active, independent learners. From a sociological perspective, this change represents the influence of globalization, digitalization, modernization, democratization, and the growth of technology, reshaping educational interactions. The decline of social values also plays a significant role in reshaping student and teacher relationships. Challenges of the digital divide, commercialization of education, and the weakening of social values continue to redefine teacher-student relationships.

Keywords: Teacher-student relationship, modern education, digital learning, globalization, guru-shishya tradition, educational inequality, contemporary India, social change, technology in education, teacher-student relationships, Emotional support, motivation, learning environment, classroom dynamics, and multi-education.

Introduction:

The relationship between teacher and student has long held a sacred and pivotal position within Indian society. In ancient times, the teacher-student relationship established a supportive learning environment where students felt comfortable seeking help, clarifying doubts, and expressing themselves. Such relationships contribute to intellectual, social, and emotional growth, enhancing behavioural outcomes. Historically, this bond was encapsulated by the Guru-Shishya parampara (teacher-disciple tradition), a model built on reverence, hierarchical respect, and the holistic transmission of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality. The guru was not merely an instructor but a profound moral and spiritual guide, and the shishya (student) was bound by duty and devotion. This traditional framework, however, is currently navigating a period of profound transformation. The advent of globalization has introduced Western, student-centric models of education that emphasize individualism and flatter hierarchies, often clashing with traditional norms of deference. Simultaneously, the rapid commodification and privatization of education have begun to reframe the relationship in transactional terms. The teacher is no longer the sole repository of knowledge but is now a facilitator in a world of abundant data. This digitalization fosters more informal and constant communication but also introduces new arenas for conflict, impersonality, and the erosion of established boundaries. The teacher-student relationship in contemporary India has undergone a remarkable transformation. The traditionally rooted Guru-Shishya model of relationship emphasized respect, discipline, and moral guidance. This study examines the profound sociological transformations in the teacher-student relationship in contemporary India, charting its evolution from the traditional Guru-Shishya parampare, where the teacher (Guru) served as a comprehensive moral, spiritual, and intellectual guide. It's a complex, modern-day form. The influence of Western educational models, emphasizing student-centric learning and individualism, often clashes with India's traditional cultural norms of respect for teachers and the system. This creates a new dynamic where relationships are more casual and friendly. The contemporary teacher-student relationship in India is a site of significant social negotiation, caught between the vestiges of a sacred, hierarchical past and the pressures of a modern, transactional, and technology-mediated present. A sociological perspective, therefore, is

essential to move beyond a simple narrative of "decaying values." It allows for a critical analysis of how these structural changes lead to economic, cultural, and technological changes that are creating a new, complex, and often contradictory set of roles, expectations, and interactions that define the teacher-student relationship in modern India. These relationships play a role in shaping the educational experience, student development, and classroom dynamics. Globalization is rapidly changing the educational landscape; understanding the foundations and consequences of effective teacher-student relations is crucial for creating equitable, interactive, and productive learning spaces. This dynamic has undergone significant change in teacher and student relationships. The modern education system emphasizes equality, collaboration, and student participation. Teachers are now seen as facilitators or mentors rather than authoritative figures, and learning often occurs through digital platforms beyond the traditional classroom. In the current era of globalization and digitalization, we have shifted toward collaboration, equality, and interactive learning. The students have become more active, independent learners. From a sociological perspective, this change represents the influence of globalization, digitalization, modernization, democratization, and the growth of technology, reshaping educational interactions. The decline of social values also plays a significant role in reshaping student and teacher relationships. Challenges of the digital divide, commercialization of education, and the weakening of social values continue to redefine teacher-student relationships.

Meaning changing the teacher-student relationship:

This refers to relationships between teachers and students. It means the social, emotional, motivational, mentoring, guidance, supportive, and educational bond between teacher and student. This relationship goes beyond academics. It influences students' personal development, behaviour, and social attitudes. It reflects social values such as respect, authority, equality, and cooperation. Early educational scholars Radhakrishnan and M. K. Gandhi emphasized the spiritual and moral foundation of the Guru-Shishya relationship in Indian education. They argued that education should aim not only at intellectual growth but also at character building, where the teacher acts as a moral and ethical guide.

In the modern education system, however, it has become more democratic and interactive, focusing on collaboration, communication, and mutual learning. The teacher-student relationship is defined as a dynamic, interactive bond of trust, respect, understanding, interdependence, and communication between teachers and students. This relationship extends beyond mere academic transactions, encompassing emotional support, mentorship, and a mutual sense of belonging within the educational environment. In the context of globalization, the student becomes a customer or consumer, and the teacher becomes a service provider. The relationship shifts from one of respect and authority to one of transaction and accountability.

Historical Background: The teacher-student relationship in India

The relationship between teacher and student has a deeply historical and cultural foundation. In ancient times, education was centred around the Guru-Shishya tradition, a system that emphasized spiritual, moral, and intellectual development. The guru (teacher) was considered a guide and mentor who imparted not only academic knowledge but also life values, discipline, and wisdom. The shishya (student) lived with the teacher in a gurukul—a residential learning environment where education was holistic and based on respect, devotion, and service. During the Medieval period, education became more specialized, with the establishment of centres like Nalanda, Takshashila, and Vikramshila, where

scholarly interaction between teachers and students flourished. The relationship remained respectful but began to adapt to structured learning methods and intellectual debates. With the British colonial period, Western education systems were introduced, shifting the focus from value-based learning to formal, institutionalized education. The teacher's role became more academic and less personal. Classrooms turned into structured spaces with fixed curricula and examinations, reducing the emotional and moral dimensions of the teacher-student bond. In post-independence India, efforts were made to blend traditional values with modern methods. However, globalization, modernization, and digitalization have since transformed the relationship further, making it more interactive and technology-driven but sometimes less personal. Thus, the historical evolution of the teacher-student relationship in India reflects the broader social transition from spiritual and value-oriented education to a modern, knowledge- and employability-skill-based system. The "Teacher" Replaces the "Guru": The guru was replaced by the "teacher," who was now a paid professional and an employee of the state or an institution. The relationship moved from the intimate Gurukul to the impersonal classroom. The bond was no longer familial or spiritual but became formal, contractual, and confined to specific subjects and timetables.

Review of Literature:

The teacher-student relationship has been widely studied by sociologists, educationists, and psychologists because it plays a central role in shaping learning outcomes and social development. Several researchers have analyzed how this relationship has evolved with time, particularly in the context of modernization, globalization, and the information technology era. Sociologist Émile Durkheim viewed education as a key institution for transmitting society's collective values and norms. According to him, the teacher represents society's moral authority, shaping students into disciplined and responsible citizens. Similarly, Talcott Parsons explained the teacher's role as a bridge between family and society, helping students adapt to social expectations. Wentzel (2009) emphasizes the central role of emotional support and the quality of teacher-student interactions in motivating students and improving learning outcomes. Teachers who create supportive environments foster greater engagement and active participation, while unsupportive relationships can result in passive, disengaged learners. Freire (1970) analyzes the changing role of teachers in the modern era. He introduced the concept of dialogue in education, where teachers and students learn from each other through interaction. This idea shifted education from a one-way model to a participatory process. Singla (2007) argues that contemporary educational policies, often neglecting this cultural context, have steadily eroded this traditional authority. The "teacher" as a professional has replaced the "guru" as a guide, laying the groundwork for further challenges. Kumar & Sharma, 2018; Singh, 2020 highlight how digital learning platforms, smart classrooms, and online education have redefined teacher-student interactions in India. Nambissan (2016) and Jayaram (2019) have examined how globalization and privatization have changed the educational landscape. Teachers are now evaluated by performance metrics, while students view education as a means of career advancement. This has turned the relationship more professional than personal. Overall, the literature suggests that the teacher-student bond has shifted from a traditional, value-based model to a modern, interactive, and technology-driven one, reflecting broader social and cultural transformations in contemporary India.

Theory Used:

To understand the changing dynamics of the teacher–student relationship in contemporary India, several sociological theories can be applied. The main theories used in this study are Functionalist Theory: Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons's theories. This theory views education as an essential part of society that maintains social order and stability. Conflict Theory of Karl Marx. It explains how inequalities in education exist. It suggests that the modernization of education can sometimes widen the gap between privileged and underprivileged groups, affecting the teacher-student relationship. Symbolic Interactionism of George Herbert Mead— This theory focuses on everyday classroom interactions between teachers and students. These sociological theories help explain the teacher–student relationship in modern India.

Methodology Used:

The present study on “Changing Dynamics of Teacher–Student Relationships in Contemporary India: A Sociological Perspective” is based on a qualitative and descriptive research approach. It explains how modernization, globalization, and technology have influenced educational relationships. Secondary data collected from books, academic journals, research papers, government education reports, and credible online sources on education and teacher–student interaction. Scope of the Study: The study focuses on educational institutions in contemporary India, considering both traditional and modern systems of education, including schools, colleges, and online learning platforms.

Objectives of the study:

To study the evolution of teacher–student relationships in India from traditional to modern times.

- To analyze the impact of modernization, globalization, and technology on these relationships.
- To understand the sociological factors influencing changes in communication and interaction between teachers and students.
- To examine how traditional value systems are reshaped in contemporary educational settings.

Causes for changing teacher-student relationships in contemporary India:

Indian society is getting modern features in all aspects. In the context of change, relationships between teacher and student also changed. The relationship moved from the intimate Gurukul to the impersonal classroom. The bond was no longer familial or spiritual but became formal, contractual, and confined to specific subjects and timetables. The main causes for the changing dynamics of teacher–student relationships in contemporary India are:

Modernization: Shift from traditional Guru–Shishya values to modern, formal education systems. Technological advancement, online classes, digital platforms, and social media have reduced personal interaction. **Globalization:** Exposure to global cultures promotes equality and openness between teachers and students. **Changing Social Values:** Respect is now mutual and based on understanding rather than hierarchy. Globalization and evolving societal values promote equality, open communication, and emotional support in education. **Student Empowerment:** Modern students seek empathy, approachability, and personalized attention from teachers. Students are more informed, confident, and independent thinkers. **Commercialization of Education:** Education is seen as a service or career tool, making relationships more professional. **Institutional Pressure:** Focus on grades, targets, and results reduces emotional bonding. **Parental Attitudes and Societal Expectations:** Pressure for academic success affects

teacher–student interaction. **Generational Gap:** Differences in lifestyle, language, and communication styles between teachers and students. **Law and Human Rights:** Modern Indian laws insist on not punishing students. **Technological Integration:** The ubiquitous use of the internet, social media (like WhatsApp and other social media platforms), and smartphones in the academic process. Increased use of digital tools and online learning platforms is transforming how teachers and students interact. **Educational Policy Reforms:** The National Education Policy 2020 encourages student-centered, participatory learning rather than traditional rote methods.

Changing Dynamics in the Teacher-Student Relationship:

The contemporary teacher-student relationship in India is no longer a predefined, stable script. It is an unstable and constantly negotiated dynamic. Teachers are caught between the cultural expectation to be an all-knowing guru, and students are caught between the cultural expectation to be reverent and the modern encouragement to be a critical consumer. Would you like me to now draft the conclusion for this paper

From Sacred Bond to Transactional Contract: The most significant dynamic shift in the teacher-student relationship is from a sacred, holistic, and hierarchical bond to one that is increasingly transactional, fragmented, and contractual. The teacher-disciple tradition, built on reverence, spiritual guidance, and the teacher's absolute authority, has been fundamentally challenged. The modern relationship is no longer fixed; it is a fluid, often tense, negotiation of roles shaped by three powerful sociological forces, such as the commoditization of education, technology, and globalization.

The Impact of Commercialization of Education: The privatization and commercialization of education have reframed it from a social good into a service to be purchased. This had a direct and profound impact on teacher-student power dynamics. The teacher is no longer perceived as a guru but as a service provider. Erodes the teacher's traditional authority. The relationship is less about respect and more about accountability. This dynamic creates new conflicts. Teachers report feeling pressured to give higher grades, while students feel empowered to question teaching methods and evaluations.

The Impact of digital Technology: The digital revolution and the rise of social media have democratized information and dissolved traditional boundaries. The teacher is no longer the sole repository of knowledge. The teacher's role shifts from being the expert with all the answers to being a facilitator. Social media has dismantled the formal boundaries of the classroom.

Globalization of education: Globalization has imported Western pedagogical models that often clash with India's traditional cultural norms, creating a new kind of classroom conflict. The global model emphasizes student-centric learning, which encourages students to be active, critical, and questioning. This directly conflicts with the traditional Indian teacher-

Erosion of Automatic Authority of the Teacher: Teacher authority is no longer automatic or reverential as in the Guru-Shishya model. Due to commodification, students and parents who pay high fees feel empowered as "consumers. This gives them the confidence to question, challenge, and hold teachers accountable, treating them as service providers rather than superiors.

Role Confusion and New Conflicts: Teachers are caught between conflicting roles. They are a friendly facilitator or an accommodating service provider. Students are also confused. How to behave. This confusion is a direct source of conflict. A teacher expects traditional respect, and the student simply sees it as exercising their right. The relationship is valued based on its utility.

The Negotiated Relationships: Overall, the contemporary teacher-student relationship is no longer a fixed script. It is now a fluid, ambiguous, and constantly negotiated social interaction, with new rules being created and contested every day.

Effects of Changing Teacher-Student Relationships: Traditionally, teachers were seen as unquestionable authorities. Today, the relationship has evolved into a more collaborative and mentoring role, where teachers guide rather than command. The modern education system promotes student-centered learning. Online learning platforms, digital classrooms, and AI tools have redefined interactions. With growing formality and digital dependence, the emotional and moral bond that once characterized teacher-student relationships has weakened. In contemporary India, respect toward teachers is still valued but has become more conditional and situational. The relationship has become more egalitarian. Teachers treat students as individuals with unique learning needs, supporting diversity, gender equality, and mental well-being in classrooms. Sometimes leads to disciplinary challenges, as boundaries between teacher and student roles. A healthy, respectful, and friendly teacher-student bond enhances motivation, academic performance, and emotional stability among students.

However, the challenge remains to balance modern educational practices with the respect, empathy, and moral connection that once formed the foundation of the teacher–student relationship in India.

Conclusion:

The teacher–student relationship in contemporary India reflects the broader social changes taking place in the country. From the traditional guru-shishya model rooted in respect, discipline, and moral guidance, it has evolved into a more interactive, collaborative, and technology-driven association. This shift mirrors India’s transition toward modernization, globalization, and digitalization in education. While these changes have promoted equality, inclusivity, and innovation in learning, they have also led to a decline in the emotional and value-based connection that once defined education. In contemporary India, the relationship between teachers and students has undergone a significant transformation due to social, technological, and cultural changes. Earlier, teachers were regarded as moral guides and authority figures who commanded deep respect, symbolizing the guru-shishya tradition. Today, this dynamic has evolved into a more democratic and interactive form of learning. Teachers are now seen as facilitators and mentors who encourage open dialogue, critical thinking, and collaboration. The widespread use of digital technology and online education has also redefined this relationship, offering flexibility and accessibility but reducing personal emotional bonding. Today, the teacher is viewed not merely as an authority figure but as a facilitator, mentor, and guide who encourages questioning, creativity, and independent thinking. This shift has been supported by sociological changes such as increased literacy, urbanization, and the growth of digital education platforms that redefine classroom interactions.

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