



Questions to ask to know Teachers' Worldview

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There is a hierarchy of value propositions that constitutes a framework on the basis of which individual teachers make decisions. There are a lot of philosophers that have given definitions of worldview.

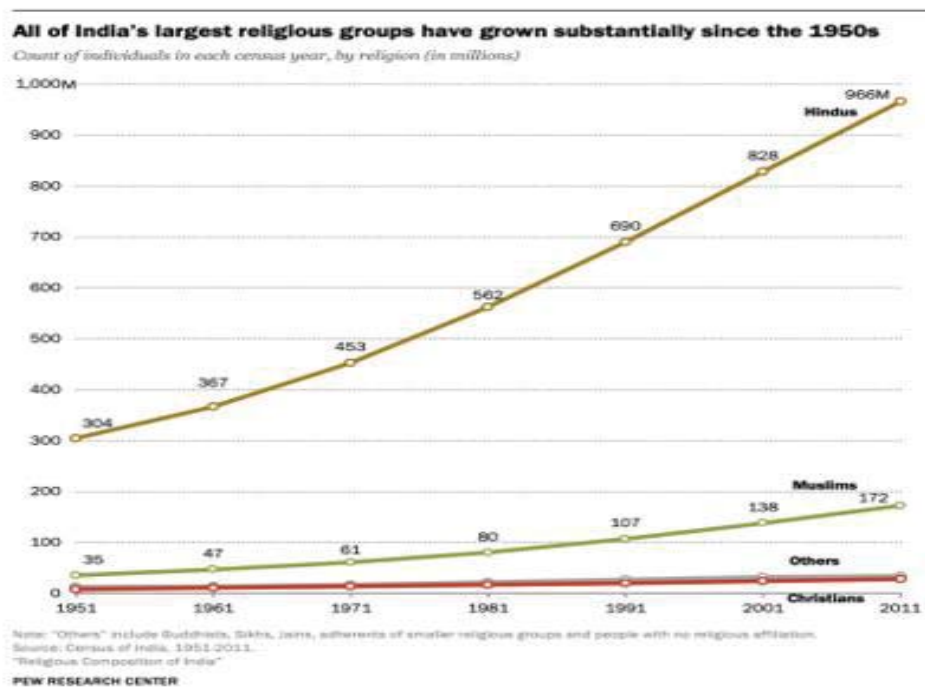
The biggest question that a person can ask is how well we define our own self. This holds true for the teacher and the student. Since none of these individuals exist in a vacuum, it is expected that each will come with their own presuppositions and baggage to the table. As they interact with each other, there will also be a trade of ideas and propositions that could be more favouring one direction, namely the teacher to the student. Thus, it becomes imperative to ask what worldview the teacher holds as it will have a significant impact on the recipient and the learning environment created. Looking at worldview in terms of the teacher and student relationship allows us to measure the impact of how effectively can self-awareness and self-esteem be built in a students' life. What constitutes these in the mind of the teacher would also determine the outcomes achieved or the perception of success. In today's time truth is considered to be subjective rather than objective. Given this as the background, how does one develop a worldview that is standardized in essence, allowing one to effectively navigate the plethora of propositions and truth claims contrary to one's own? "Who am I", "where have I come from?", and "What is my purpose?" are some questions that the teachers have to deal with? The conversations that ensue and the experiences provided is what the



identity of the person is shaped by. Given that the individual's worldview as well as that of the society is constantly changing with time, geography, technological advancements and other influences, it is important to pause and check them at regular intervals.

Indian Context: Worldview questions to be explored:

1. Who is an Indian?



India is diverse in terms of culture and religion among many other parameters. It is because of this diversity that the people of India have more experience in socializing with people coming from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds.²⁴ According to the graph given by the census of India 1956 – 2011 there has been approximately a 3.5-fold increase in population. 94% of the world's Hindus live in India. According to the TimesNow News,

²⁴ NA. Kramer Stephanie. Religious Composition of India [Internet].2021 September, Available from <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/population-growth-and-religious-composition/>



India has 53 temples per one lakh population.²⁵ How does a predominantly pantheistic or multi-god environment influence the perspectives that a teacher has as she interacts with students and what perspectives should she consider or acquire in order to teach students about self? This answers to this question are crucial for an Indian teacher. The follow up questions that we can ask are: Do you know the background of your student? What perspectives do you keep in mind when you talk to your student?

2. How do you decide what is right?

According to a Transparency international report, the corruption perception Index for 2023 states that India ranks 93 out of 180.²⁶ A scale of 0 to 100 was used to rank 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople. Teachers and students are being exposed to this corruption on a daily basis and most have to deal with a lot of unjust acts either personally, directly, or indirectly. The lack of awareness about the judicial systems, the workings of the law and even its expectations by the people could fuel feelings of distrust in the system. The lack of objectivity internally and externally would cause suspicion to be the default view of society at large.

²⁵ Ghosh Debosmita (2023, Feb15). 'India has 53temples per on lakh population, Tamil Nadu tops the list.' TimesNow.<https://www.timesnownews.com/spiritual/india-has-53-temples-per-one-lakh-population-tamil-nadu-tops-the-list-article-97940463#:~:text=While%20some%20temples%20in%20the,lakh%20temples%20in%20the%20country>.

²⁶ NA (2024, Jan 31). 'India ranks 93 out of 180 countries in corruption perceptions index 2023'. The hindu.<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-ranks-93-out-of-180-countries-in-corruption-perceptions-index-2023/article67793578.ece>.



Most Indians say they are members of a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Class; Jains are a notable exception

% of Indian adults who identify as ...

	Brahmin 4%	Other General Category 26%	Scheduled Caste 25%	Scheduled Tribe 9%	Other/Most Backward Class 35%
General population					
Hindus	4	24	25	10	36
Muslims	0	46	4	3	43
Christians	0	22	33	24	17
Sikhs	1	45	47	1	4
Buddhists	0	2	89	5	4
Jains	0	76	3	1	16
Men	4	27	25	9	34
Women	4	26	24	9	35
Ages 18-34	4	25	25	10	35
35+	4	28	24	9	35
No formal education	2	19	27	10	39
Primary through secondary	3	29	24	9	33
College graduate	10	34	18	4	32
North	7	28	30	10	24
Central	5	12	26	5	51
East	3	30	22	13	30
West	2	36	23	14	24
South	2	30	25	3	39
Northeast	1	38	13	25	21
Urban	5	32	22	5	33
Rural	3	24	26	11	36
Recent financial hardship	3	24	27	10	35
No financial hardship	4	29	23	8	35

Note: Those who see their religion does not recognize a caste system, say they are not a member of a caste or did not answer are not shown. "Recent financial hardship" includes those who say they did not have enough money to pay for food, medical care and/or housing in the 12 year. All survey respondents, regardless of religion, were asked, "Are you from a General Category, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Class?" By contrast, in the 2011 census of India, only Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists could be enumerated as members of Scheduled Castes, while Scheduled Tribes could include followers of all religions. General Category and Other Backward Classes were not measured in the census. Source: Survey conducted Nov. 31, 2019-March 23, 2020, among adults in India. See Methodology for details. "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation"

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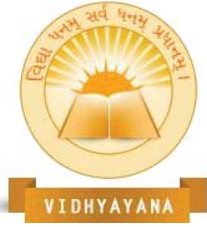
Understanding right and wrong, setting up a standard for the students and adapting to a changing moral landscape is the role of education. Education prepares students to become trustworthy, committed and truthful citizens of the country as these would be the traits that are valued by the institutions that they are most influenced by.

The follow up question would be: What are the standards by which you evaluate truth claims? In the end the teacher has to inculcate a habit of mind within the student by which they can critically evaluate morally ambiguous situations thus allowing them to navigate the novel experiences they would encounter in the future.

3. Why am I in the state I am today?

A fundamental belief present in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism is that of Reincarnation.²⁷ According to this belief the body that a soul possesses after death is based on a person's karma. This karmic level is gained by good deeds performed by the person over

²⁷ Terry Wolf. "what is karma, really?". Yoga Journal. <https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/what-is-karma-really/>



previous lives or the cumulative karmic debt incurred over the duration of its existence. Keeping this belief in view how does a teacher view a student? Is a student's behaviour a result of his karma and are the parents a result of his karma. Various presuppositions or stereotypes associated with attitudes, habits, behaviours, professions and traits are held by students and teachers which are rooted in the caste system. The teacher's perception of themselves impacts their self-worth and self-esteem. It even influences the view of their position in relation to their peers, employers, students and society at large which in turn impacts their relationship with their students.

Article 15 of the constitution in India states that no one should discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, sex, race, caste, or place of birth. The government of India has provided a very clear standard on which any system including the Education system should be based.

4. Can I be an agent of change?

Indian culture is a family-oriented culture where the family plays an important role in a person's decisions. Indian students are used to 'herd mentality'. It is easier to follow a crowd or follow what others say rather than take decisions and own one's failures or consequences. Every stressful situation makes people follow instructions rather than take actions based on critical thinking needed during such a situation. When we talk about innovation, it has been noticed that Indians need to break out of herd mentality and let creativity lead the way to innovation.

Following a crowd snuffs out individuality and originality and we expect the education system to teach the students how to take responsibility for actions and understand the systematic steps of instruction to do so. They should know how to problem solve as well as inquire regarding the problem. Having the strength and courage to go against the flow makes a good leader. Indian youth need encouragement to lead and stand against the normal flow of patterns and ideas. It is the role of the education fraternity to provide experiences for the student to develop ownership for their decisions. The inability to do this results in the student feeling unable to believe that they can effect change. Since it is likely that the teacher came



from a similar system and mind set, one would need to ask them if they believe that they could effect change or that their work is a step in that direction. Teachers have to lead the conversations and lessons keeping this in mind. A teacher is seen as an agent of change. The society as well as the community as a whole is transformed when a teacher stands against injustice and corruption present in the system. The students are able to find strength and motivation seeing their teachers lead them in a direction of bringing change in their own community. The follow up questions would be: What resources do you have to effect change? Are you in a position in which you could affect significant change?

Conclusion

The diversity in India makes learning interesting and creative. Students get to interact with teachers and students coming from different cultures and religious background. It is the role of the teacher to make sure that the students develop a feeling of love and tolerance towards each other. The worldview of a teacher plays an important role in how the teacher views each class along with the lesson plans to be planned. Many teaching methods can be employed and used but the basis of all these is the attitude that a teacher possesses. By asking these questions as discussed above one can know the worldview of the teacher in an Indian context. What one sees and experiences in their environment on daily basis, becomes the standard for them to question things around them. In the present article we can say that teachers are asked to reflect on questions that question their beliefs and attitude towards others. Reflecting on each of their beliefs and knowing the rationale behind each of them would help the teacher set up a proper system of planning experiences and classroom interactions or scenarios that are more meaningful and purpose-driven.



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