

Mentor's Energizer

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Community Project by the first batch of B.Pharm students mentored by Prof. Sachin Shinde

ATTENTION ALL



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The Bahá'í Academy wishes to thank our mentor of the month, Prof. Sachin Shinde, for sharing his insights.

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Toward Rectitude of Conduct

What are the qualities necessary for managing one's affairs with rectitude of conduct and how do they relate to the power of example as a teaching modality? When this question is asked of teachers, the answers are numerous and varied: trustworthiness, truthfulness, respect, kindness, a burning love for humankind, the desire to be of service, an abiding sense of morality, etc. All of these virtues, and more, lay a strong foundation for walking the straight path. Ultimately, no matter how long the discussion, rectitude of conduct comes down to this—we can't teach it if we aren't committed to practicing it in our own lives. If we tell a child not to hit others while spanking him; if we tell someone that they must be punctual while we, ourselves, are perpetually late; if we demand truthfulness from others, but bend the rules by lying, our efforts to influence others for the better will not be fruitful. That being said, walking the straight path is an ongoing endeavor, managing our affairs with rectitude of conduct is a daily effort, practicing the skills of discerning truth and avoiding situations that may deviate from our moral purpose takes determination and dedication. As situations and conditions change, we are continually called upon to make moral choices. We can successfully do so based on principles and to act according to those principles. Our lives are on display. Our students pay more attention to what we do than what we say. Because of this, we must stand in the light, find the path and be willing to get up more times than we fall. As we share our own struggles with our students, friends and family, and our example of diligent striving to live by our principles, the light shines a little brighter to show the way to others.

Meet The Mentors

Meet Prof. Sachin Shinde, mentor at SMBT College of Pharmacy, Dhamangaon



How has the experience of taking the mentor-ship training affected you?

It was a great experience to take the mentor-ship training at the Bahá'í Academy, Panchgani. I really felt a deep sense of happiness after completion of entire training of Module 1. All Academy workshops have been effective from many angles which are more important to one's educational success than one's IQ, school and colleges setting or economy. As a mentor, you influence everything-- from your student's learning level to his/her test scores, etc., thus resulting in a WIN-WIN situation for both.

What are some of your positive experiences about being a mentor?

My experience about being a mentor is that it brought changes in my life style, rectitude of conduct, and contribution to society through social work and education. After implementing the Bahá'í Academy's prog. at my college, a positive environment and atmosphere has been created that encourages learning.

What kinds of transformations have you seen in your students?

I have seen similar values in my students and amendments in their life and overcoming different barriers which create obstruction for their social growth and development. My role as a mentor benefits my students immensely. This includes better attitudes and behavior, better school and college attendance, completing more home assignments, higher EQ, and higher grades.

Do you have any advice for other mentors?

Yes. I would like to suggest other mentors to take this good work ahead and make some extra ordinary efforts for worldwide implementation of good human values in themselves and others as well as society. All you need to do is follow some simple ways to encourage learning.

Social Transformation and Education

When we talk of transforming the society, creating an awakened and ethical society, there are certain fundamental beliefs that we have to set right first. For instance what are the principles for building a new society? What are those values according to which we want to transform the society? So this is the basic question that we first have to sort out because that constitutes the foundation. Secondly, we have to think what is the role of individuals in such a transformation? And what is the role of social structures and institutions in such a transformation. There are different theories, different approaches to social transformation. In one approach it is believed that if you change individuals society will change automatically. If you upgrade individuals society will change. In that connection, there are programmes which are launched, for example, to give skills to individuals so that poverty will go; but is poverty only due to lack of skills, or it is more than that? If you just develop ethical values in individuals, will society become ethical automatically? If individuals are like cells of the human body is a human being a combination of the cells alone, or is he more than that?

The other theory is based on the belief that if you change the social structures and the institutions, society will change. In that connections people make revolutions. Usually there are political revolutions with a vision to transform society. And normally the values that they follow make the revolutions happen, but after that new set of issues emerge that were not envisioned before; the changes they had envisioned do not last. This has happened in the past, and today also it is happening in the world.

The philosophy that the Bahá'í Academy follows is that neither the first one which is focused on individual change alone, or individual up gradation alone, will bring about the desired social change-- the awakened society, the ethical society for example-- nor only addressing the change in the structures of society can meet the challenge of transformation. There should be a combination and interaction of both: that means individuals should be upgraded and transformed while at the same time institutions should be transformed; institutions should be created which will make it possible for a new society to emerge. And if this is the aim then what is the role of education as the moving force behind all this transformation?...

(Excerpts from an address by Lesan Azadi at the National Seminar on "Education for an Awakened and Ethical Society", MIT, Pune, Nov. 2014)



B. Pharm students study a community's social reality after completing their module on building moral capabilities.

Back issues of the Mentor's Energizer are available on the Academy website

What does it mean to have a moral purpose?

People pursue different purposes in life. These purposes may vary from material gains and pleasures, academic achievements, acquiring name and fame or lead a peaceful and quiet life. While each purpose may have its own merits, a question to think about is whether these purposes constitute good enough reasons to be the central focus of one's life.

To have moral purpose in life does not contradict having a dignified and comfortable life or pursuing scientific and academic pursuits. Rather one's moral purpose can provide impetus and a more meaningful direction to other aspects of life. In the programme of Education in Universal Human Values it is suggested that a worthwhile moral purpose for one's life may be, first, to grow spiritually and intellectually and, secondly, to contribute to the betterment of society. In that context education should provide the means and environment to empower the individual to accomplish the same.

How are these two aspects of moral purpose achieved?

To grow spiritually and intellectually is possible through daily effort to acquire knowledge, to control one's animalistic nature and to practice moral and spiritual qualities that are within the human heart. To be able to control one's animalistic nature and selfish temperament is a happy endeavor as we achieve freedom from the struggles of animal life. To contribute to the betterment of society depends, first, on our spiritual and intellectual growth, and secondly, on developing the necessary abilities, skills and healthy attitudes followed by taking initiative that is disciplined and focused, and creative. Our moral purpose has, as its foundation, our beliefs, our principles and our values. And, this moral purpose flows through every aspect of our lives.

Belief: Take time to think about what you believe. Take time to reflect on what is important to you. What is the reality of man? Why are you here on this planet at this time? What virtues and capabilities do you have that you'd like to deploy them for betterment of the world? How do you want to react, make decisions, and demonstrate your belief? Write a statement of your belief to remind yourself of your moral purpose.

Integration: Whether you are working, taking care of your family, praying, studying, earning a degree, serving the community or enhancing your health, there is always a need to live by your moral purpose. Our moral purpose isn't something we pay attention to when all of the really "important" stuff is done. Our moral purpose underlies every thought, feeling, word and deed.

Opportunity: Each goal we set in each area of our lives is an opportunity. Each choice we make from the job we do, the person we marry, the hobbies we practice, the school we go to, the friends we make, is an opportunity to contribute to our moral purpose. We're destined to develop virtues and attributes if we work at making the right choices.

Ask reflective questions: Bring yourself to account each day by reflecting on your thoughts, words and actions. You might ask yourself: Today, were my thoughts, words and deeds praiseworthy and in harmony with my moral purpose? What brought me joy? Did I do the right thing even when it was difficult? How did I promote unity and wellbeing? Did I focus on the positive? Once you've reflected on what has been, meditate on what could be to make tomorrow better. Moral purpose isn't about being frustrated by our own imperfections; it's about celebrating our progress.

Next month: How do we combat complacency?