

A LITERARY REVIEW ON MENTORING IN THE EASTERN WORLD**S. P. Molligoda*¹, B. S. M. M. Sooriyaarachchi² and S. M. Palathiratne³**

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ABSTRACT

Mentorship denotes a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. Mentoring has become a worldwide talking issue in the present day scenario. For a particular individual, mentoring can be done in various ways and at diverse stages. This is widely used parlance in many fields and it has been penetrated in to wide spectrum of subject areas namely; higher education, management, administration, economics and others. Thus, it is not confined only to a particular domain and it is not possible to give a specific demarcation. This is not totally different from counseling, but it embraces multipronged nuance of meanings and in other ways goes beyond the apparent meaning too. Many Western philosophers hold dissecting and propagating views on mentoring, but on the other hand the mentorship

was an integral part of the Eastern philosophy, since times immemorial. The main objective of this research paper is to probe and thoroughly investigate in-to various spheres of mentoring in the Eastern world. For the present review study; texts of Indian philosophy, main *Samhita* of *Ayurveda*, other available resources in various languages, published articles in peer reviewed journals, related material available online, dictionaries and encyclopedia were referred to compile, analyze and interpret data in a methodical and rational manner. Primary distinction observed between the philosophy of mentoring in the West and the East is that the, ancient people of the East consider the spiritual aspect of the mentor more than those

of the West. In a nutshell, the bipod of mentorship can stand at success, only if both the mentor and mentee are enriched with the proper attributes and above all a will to dedicate for a common goal.

KEYWORDS: Mentoring, Eastern, Philosophy, *Samhita*, *Ayurveda*.

INTRODUCTION

Every person needs mentoring at a certain point of his life. Condition of the mentoring depends on the issued person's mentality and also on his state of education or acquaintance. In a university educational system, they conduct mentoring in two different ways as; professional and personal. Specially mentoring is aimed for undergraduates in universities but postgraduates also necessitate it. At present mentoring has spread beyond its usual boundaries. Nowadays mentoring has spread its wings to be an integral part of academic curriculums. At present it has been established as an academic mentoring program in many universities throughout the world, especially under career guidance units. Proper mentorship causes professional and personal development. Personal development always strengthens the professional development. Personal development and professional development are like the two wings of a person's success. Often a personally developed individual can easily create a professionally developed individual. Personal development and professional development are inter-related and inter-dependent. Mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide and supervise a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The mentor may be older or younger than the person whose being mentored, but he or she must have a certain degree of expertise, experience or knowledge that he can impart to the mentee, which the latter does not possess. A mentor may share with a mentee information about his or her own career path, as well as provide guidance, motivation, emotional support and also become a role model. A mentor may help in exploring careers, setting goals, developing contacts and identifying resources.^[1] As per the Oxford English Dictionary mentor means; an experienced person in an organization or institution who trains and advises new employees or students.^[2] Mentoring is a system of multi-structured guidance whereby one person shares his knowledge, skills and experience to assist others for progress in their own lives and careers. Mentors need to be readily accessible and prepared to offer help as the need arises, within agreed bounds. Moreover, mentoring is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less experienced person's professional and personal growth.^[3]

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Compile and investigate data about mentoring in the Eastern world
2. Explore the significance of mentoring in the West and the East.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present review study; texts of Indian philosophy, Main *Samhita* of *Ayurveda*, other available resources in various languages, published articles in peer reviewed journals, related material available online, dictionaries and encyclopedia were referred to compile, analyze and describe data in an orderly manner. The comparative method was applied to contradistinguish mentoring in the East and West.

RESULTS

Mentoring is a trusting relationship over a prolonged period of time between a young person and a caring adult who provides assistance to the young person as he/she goes through life, offering guidance and support. Mentoring takes place in a school, university, institution, community-based or faith-based organization.^[4] The word mentoring is defined in English as; sharing knowledge, skill and life experience to guide another towards reaching their full potential, it is a journey of shared discovery, positive and supportive relationship, encouraging young people to develop their potentialities.^[5] In the United States advocates for workplace equity in the second half of the twentieth century popularized the term "Mentor" and concept of career mentorship, but the word mentor is believed to be inspired by the character named "Mentor" in the ancient Greek epic poem named *Odyssey*, written by the author Homer.^[6] In addition other significant mentorships of the West include the role of an "Elder" who is regarded as a community leader and also a man with great experience and knowledge. Such elders were given specific titles according to each culture such as; "Senator" of ancient Rome, "Oday/Oloye" of the African tribes and "Sheikh" of Arabian culture and each of them also served the purpose of a mentor in socio-cultural and religious domains to a particular tribe, community or region.

Historically significant systems of mentorship in the East, include the *Guru-Shishya* (Teacher-student) tradition of the East.^[7] In this unique *Guru-Shishya* tradition or *Parampara* the student usually undergoes formal education and mentorship while being a resident at the teacher's house and this happens to be a full-time program, where the teacher guides the student in each and every aspect of life. Each *Guru-Shishya* tradition has variability in the specific *Sampradaya*, *Akhara* and *Gurukula* that they belong to. Even today, in India the

resemblance of *Gurukula* system can be seen in many fields for example the *Gharana* system in Hindustani classical music is a tradition with great significance and acceptance. Such *Guru–Shishya* traditions were an essential component in the teaching of *Veda* or *Vedanga* (Includes *Vyakarana* and *Jyotisha*) or *Upaveda* (Includes *Ayurveda* and *Gandharvaveda*) in ancient India. Even during the post-*Vedic*; *Upanishad* period the *Guru–Shishya* tradition was firmly established and this is evident due to the fact that the word *Upanishad* itself means; sitting down near a *Guru* and learning from him. In addition, the age-long Indian cultural practise of initiating a child in specific *Bala Samskara*; specifically those as *Vidyarambha*, *Upanayana* and *Vedarambha Samskara* denote particular epochs of mentorship. In Sri Lanka the word mentoring is used as awareness or advocating in close manner.^[8] As per Sanskrit and Sinhala languages the word *Upadeshaka* gives a similar meaning as mentoring. The Sri Lankan version of the *Guru–Shishya* tradition is known as *Guru-Gola Parampara* and it encompasses a system of mentorship between the teacher and student, seen most notably among those who practise Sri Lankan indigenous, ancestral or traditional medical systems. When discussing about Eastern knowledge, Sanskrit is the root for most of the written materials. According to Sanskrit it entails beyond the definition of counsellor and given the term *Apta* or axiom. It is quite evident that from the above given fact, *Apta* should be able to solve any problem either physical or psychological. It is obvious that people who are involved in these diverse oriental fields are of immense importance as, not only in subject knowledge that the mentor should excel in but also the spiritual aspect. He or she should be constantly and invariably a counsellor. Therefore, mentor should always be a catalyst or a guiding star or a trailblazer. So he should remain steadfast with the student from the beginning of this process of mentorship until the student achieves the required and expected level of proficiency.

According to Indian philosophy *Apta* person is defined as those enlightened and refined persons who are absolutely free from the predominance of *Rajas* and *Tamas* by virtue of their power of penance and knowledge and who are always in possession of an uninterrupted knowledge pertaining to the past, present and future (also known as authorities). They are also branded as gentlemen (*Shishhta*) and enlightened persons. Their words are true beyond doubt. How could such persons, free from *Rajas* and *Tamas* may tell a lie.^[9] According to *Chakrapani*, the greatest commentator of *Caraka Samhita*; elimination of defect arising from the predominance of *Rajas* and *Tamas* is known as *Apti*. One who directs the whole world to the performance of virtuous acts and abstinence from sinful acts is known as *Shishhta*. One

who has well understood, all what is there to be understood is known as *Vibuddha*. Thus the three epithets; *Apta*, *Shishhta* and *Vibuddha* imply that the eminent sages are always true beyond all doubts because how could such enlightened sages, absolutely free from the influence of *Rajas* and *Tamas* utter a lie? (The fact that one is free from *Rajas* is in itself a proof of the elimination of the defects arising out of *Tamas* as well, because one who is free from *Rajas* can never have *Tamas* at all). This fact was perfectly explained by *Acharya Caraka*. He explained that eternal union between these two *Manasika Dosha*, so *Tamas* cannot manifest its actions without *Rajas*.^[10] According to Eastern view *Apta* does not have any space either to attach or hate a disciple. The spiritual guidance of the *Guru* empowers the disciple to attain the *Chaturvidha Purushartha* and subsequently achieve the ultimate goal of life; *Moksha*. Meanings of the words; *Guru* and *Acharya* are also similar to the meaning of mentor. *Guru* means venerable, respectable person or a teacher.^[11] *Acharya* is the person who instructs the student in the *Shastra* and conducts the necessary ceremonies and he also is regarded as a spiritual teacher. Beyond that he can be introduced as a consulter, resolutor, counsellor, advisor, planner or designer.^[12] The word *Upadyaya* also has a similar meaning, it means teacher or preceptor (who illuminates by teaching apart of the *Veda*, *Vedanga*, *Upaveda*, etc and he is distinguished from the *Acharya*).^[13]

According to *Ayurveda* the ideal preceptor should possess the following qualities. He should be wise, skillful and well-grounded in scriptures, equipped with practical knowledge, whose prescriptions are infallible, who is pious, who has all the necessary equipment for treatment, who is not deficient in respect to any of the sense organs, who is acquainted with human nature, and the rationale of treatment, whose knowledge is not overshadowed (by the knowledge of other irrelevant scriptures), who is free from vanity, envy, and anger, who is hard working, who is affectionately disposed towards his disciples and is capable of expressing his views with clarity. A preceptor possessed of such qualities infuses medical knowledge to a good disciple as the seasonal cloud helps bring about good crop in a fertile land.^[14] The great commentator *Chakrapani* comments on these points and mentions, one cannot gain any practical experience from a preceptor who does not have any equipment necessary for treatment. Further if he shows too much of knowledge of other irrelevant scriptures may sometimes result in overshadowing of medical perspective. Therefore, he opined that an ideal preceptor required being free from such confusing concepts as are of foreign to medical science. But he welcomes if such concept serves as an aid to medical perspective and an ideal physician should certainly derive help from them.^[15] As per the

Vaidyaka Shabdasindhu, *Guru* is the person who is very reliable and who makes good solutions to any kind of problem.^[16] According to the view point of Eastern philosophy, student should also be enriched with a certain set of qualities. These are as follows; the student should obey the mentor and be devoted to him and pay due regards to him, act without ego, speak the truth, resort to such food and regimens as are conducive to the promotion of intellect, refrain from envy and carry no weapon with him.^[17]

DISCUSSION

Main difference observed between the philosophy of the West and the East is that the ancient people of the East consider the spiritual aspect of the mentor more than the West. The role of mentorship in the East would most often follow a holistic approach, individually guiding each and every life aspect of the mentee especially as evident in ancient India. Thus, the wide majority of the mentees in the Eastern oriental tradition respects his *Guru* at a near divine level and will therefore obey his word with maximum dedication. In a field like *Ayurveda* the role of the *Guru* or mentor is of supreme importance because according to the authentic *Ayurveda Samhita*; the student should learn the science of *Ayurveda*, most preferably from the words as expounded by the mouth of the teacher and should gather practical experience in the treatment procedures by carrying out them first in the presence and supervision of the teacher. There are some qualities which are common and mandatory for mentoring in any spectrum of area called interpersonal skills such as; collaboration, creative thinking, tolerance, taking responsibility, problem-solving, positive reinforcement, creative thinking, flexibility, encouragement, leadership and communication. Interpersonal skills are of utmost importance for mentoring as the mentor and mentee, who does not possess them invariably makes up a barrier that hinders proper communication among each other. According to Burton G. and Dimbleby R. in essence; the interpersonal social skills are the range of verbal and non-verbal behavioural patterns learnt that enable to manage encounters with other people.^[18] Communication is the effective expression of thoughts and ideas, hence allowing students a room to express their own ideas brings active learning. There can be mentees who are driven by fear of failure and conservative in their approach, so if the students are not able to respond it means somewhere, there is an issue with the way of communicating. It is a must to create a commitment for a common purpose. Collaboration between the mentor and the mentee improves communication and reduces misunderstanding. It fosters creativity in finding solutions to problems and enhances motivation which makes the task more enjoyable. Most importantly it generates a sense of collective achievement.

CONCLUSION

A literary research of this nature throws new light on the whole gamut of mentoring and when indulging in such studies, one can gain an insight into these subject matters comprehensively. It is very succinctly mentioned here that mentoring is gaining popularity as never before. By delving deeper into the subject we could comprehend the complexities and ramifications of mentorship and only through pragmatic approach that we could arrive at a proper conclusion about mentoring. This research paper also makes an attempt to discuss the pros and cons of both Western and Eastern philosophies of mentoring. Furthermore, the bipod of mentorship can stand at success, only if both the mentor and mentee are enriched with the proper attributes and above all a will to dedicate for a common goal. In conclusion, the mentor is a distinguished person, who is armed with an assortment of eminent skills and characteristics, which enables him to be a compass of positivity for a mentee, to guide his/her ship of professionalism through the sea of obstacles, to arrive at a fruitful land called absolute proficiency with universal success.

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