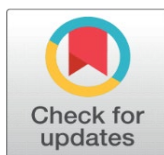


TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN ANCIENT INDIA: EVIDENCE FROM UPANISHADS (C.800 BCE - C.500 BCE)

Chanchal Tyagi ¹ , Pradeep Kumar Misra ² 

¹ Ex. Research Scholar, Department of Education, C. C. S. University, Meerut (UP), India

² Director for Center for Policy Research in Higher Education, NIEPA, New Delhi, India



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Corresponding Author

Chanchal Tyagi,

chanchaltyagi06@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

It is often believed that 'teacher professional development' is propagated, researched, and implemented by western researchers in 19th century. Contrary to these beliefs, a study of ancient Indian text Upanishads (c.800 BCE - c.500 BCE) reveal that teacher professional development practices were a part and parcel of ancient Indian education system. Present research traces a number of evidence from three Upanishads namely Chhandogya Upanishad, Prasna Upanishad, and Taittiriya Upanishad to prove that a majority of modern-day teacher professional development practices were prevalent in ancient India and rishis and munis (teachers in an ancient India) were apt practitioners and beneficiaries of these practices.

Keywords: Upanishads, Chhandogya Upanishad, Prasna Upanishad, Taittiriya Upanishad, Ancient India, Teacher, Professional Development Practices

1. INTRODUCTION

It is often believed that 'teacher professional development' is propagated, researched, and implemented by western researchers in 19th century. For example, [Ponder et al. \(2010\)](#) suggest,

"Since the 1920s, teacher professional development (also known as "in-service training" or "staff development") has exhibited elements of each of the five models proposed by Dennis Sparks: training, individually guided staff development,

observation/assessment, inquiry, and involvement in a development/improvement process” (p.859).

Supporting this claim, [Murphy-Latta \(2008\)](#) observes,

“Throughout the history of American education, numerous theories and issues have been emphasized as important factors in teaching and learning. The need for professional development for school staff came to the forefront in the 1960s”.

Contrary to these beliefs, a study of ancient Indian text Upanishads (c.800 BCE - c.500 BCE) reveal that ‘teacher professional development practices’ were a part and parcel of ancient Indian education system, and a number of teachers were beneficiary of these practices. A number of evidence can be traced back from Upanishads (ancient literature of India) to prove that the culture of teacher professional development and practices was developed in ancient India. Before discussing further about this claim, it will be useful to learn and understand the Upanishads first.

2. THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads that were written between 800 and 500 BC occupy a unique place in the development of Indian philosophical thought. Talking about Upanishads, [Tiwari \(2020\)](#) narrates:

“The word ‘Upanishad’ has been derived from the root Sad (to sit), to which are added two prefixes: Upa and Ni. The prefix Upa denotes nearness and Ni totality. Thus, this word means ‘sitting nearby devotedly.’ This no doubt refers to the pupil’s sitting down near his teacher at the time of instruction. The word in course of time gathered round it the sense of secret teaching or secret doctrine (Rahasya) which was imparted at such sittings. Upanishads are frequently spoken of as Rahasya (secret) or Guhya (mystery) also” (para 4).

Although there are over 200 surviving Upanishads, only 14 are considered to be the most important. The names of these Upanishads are Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhandogya, Brhadaranyaka, Svetasvatara, Kausitaki, Mahanarayana and the Maitri [Violatti \(2014\)](#) Explaining the nature of Upanishads, [Violatti \(2014\)](#) notes:

“The books, [then], contain the thoughts and insights of important spiritual Indian figures. Although we speak of them together as a body of texts, the Upanishads are not parts of a whole, like chapters in a book. Each of them is complete in itself. Therefore, they represent not a consistent philosophy or worldview, but rather the experiences, opinions and lessons of many different men and women.”

These men and women were basically rishis (A rishi is someone who is generally considered to be on a higher plane of learning and understanding due to their hundreds of years of tapas or meditation) and munis (A muni is one who can agitate his mind in various ways for mental speculation without coming to a factual description). These rishis and munis were teachers of those times and mainly living in gurukulas (residential schools) or ashrams (a living place in forests). In ancient times, shishya (students) coming from different parts of the country were living in these gurukulas/ashrams of rishis and munis to get prepared for various fields of life. They were prepared to be future warriors, doctors, engineers, and teachers by these rishis and munis in the gurukulas/ashrams. In this way, these rishis and munis were the teachers in ancient times and were known for their knowledge and intellect. Besides teaching, these rishis and munis were engaged in investigation,

dissemination, and transmission of knowledge. Written texts like Upanishads are a testimony to their intellect.

The evidence given in Upanishads are in form of shlokas (verses) and are written in Sanskrit (language of ancient India). The importance of Upanishadic text lies in the fact that these were written by the rishis and munis and reflects their own thought processes and perception regarding different phenomenon and subjects. Thus, the points of view presented in form of shlokas are actually the point of view and practices of these rishis and munis. Therefore, the evidence given in Upanishads can be taken as a reliable source to understand the teacher professional development policies and practices of rishis and munis (teachers) in ancient India.

3. METHODOLOGY

On the basis of preliminary observations of 14 Upanishads, researcher noted that three Upanishads namely Prasna, Taittiriya and Chhandogya have evidence of teacher professional development practices. Researcher studied these three Upanishads in detail and identified relevant shlokas (verses) for further discussion and comments. The identified shlokas are written in Sanskrit, therefore, along with original text, researcher also produced the text in Roman script to make it legible and readable for international readers.

4. EVIDENCE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN THE UPANISHADS

The modern-day conception of teacher professional development takes place when a teacher, who has been initially prepared for the profession, feel the need to learn further and make efforts for it. In fact, to be dissatisfied with one's knowledge is an essential condition for engagement in professional development activities. These activities start necessarily from awareness of a teacher about one's own ignorance and willingness to learn more. Teacher professional development is aimed to reform one's knowledge in teaching-learning and this is likely to occur through a number of practices including reflection [Gnawali \(2001\)](#) [Tedick \(2005\)](#) self-study, peer group mentoring, continuous learning, consultation from peers and experts, and engagements in discussions and debates.

This study claims that almost all of these modern-day teacher professional development practices were in existence in ancient India and have a mention in different Upanishads namely Prasna, Taittiriya and Chhandogya. The following discussions support this claim.

4.1. EMPHASIS ON CONTINUOUS LEARNING

In a description presented in Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) a father named Aaruni who himself imparts knowledge among the students of his gurukula has a twelve years old son Shwetketu. Shwetketu has acquired initial knowledge at home by his father. Aaruni decides to send Shwetketu to gurukula so that he may become a capable rishi and can carry on the profession of his family that is disseminating knowledge among the young generation. Observing that the age of his son is appropriate for further education, he decides to send him to nearby gurukula. After studying in that gurukula for twelve years the son comes back with quite changed looks and attitude. Describing the changes that have occurred in his attitude and his father's reaction to it, a shloka (verse) of Chhandogya Upanishad narrates:

स ह द्वादशवर्ष उपेत्य चतुर्विंशतिवर्षः सर्वान्वेदानधीत्य महामना अनूचानमानी स्तब्ध
एयाय तंह पितोवाच ॥६.१.२॥

Sa ha dvādaśavarṣa upetya caturviṃśativarṣaḥ sarvānvedānadhītya mahāmanā anūcānamānī stabdha eyāya taha pitovācha || 6.1.2 ||

This shloka tells that Shwetketu went to his teacher's house at the age of twelve. After studying all the Vedas, Shwetketu comes back home at the age of twenty-four with an expression of arrogance on his face. He thinks that now he is intelligent and knows everything. His attitude becomes clear to his father. The father knows that it is harmful for his son to build such an arrogant attitude for his knowledge as it will hamper his further learning and so he decides to make him realize the truth. He asked him a question and was sure that his son would not be able to answer and same happens. The son accepts his ignorance and asked his father to teach him further. As mentioned in following verse 6.1.7, Shwetketu said:

न वै नूनं भगवन्तस्त एतदवेदिषुर्यद्भ्येतदवेदिष्यन्कथं मे नावक्ष्यन्निति भगवांस्तेव मे
तद्ब्रवीत्विति तथा सोम्येति होवाच ॥६.१.७॥

Na vai nūnaṃ bhagavantasta etadavediṣuryadbhyyetadave diṣyankathaṃ me nāvakṣyanniti bhagavāṃstveva me tadbravītviti tathā somyeti hovācha || 6.1.7 ||

“Surely my revered teachers did not know this truth. If they knew it, why should they not have told me? So please explain it to me, sir.’ His father said, ‘Let it be so, my son” Chhandogya Upanishad. 6.1.7 [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#)

These illustrations help us to understand the point of view of ancient teachers who perceived learning as a life-long process. The rishis and munis were of the view that formal education in gurukulas was only an initial preparation, and one has to keep learning on continuing basis to be more knowledgeable, proficient, humble, and most importantly fit for teaching profession. Cited shlokas prove that if one thinks himself/herself perfectly ready for imparting knowledge in society only on the basis of initial education, then he/she has to change his/her attitude first. These teachings clearly reveal that if one would like to become successful in teaching profession, then it is essential for him/her to be never satisfied with the present knowledge and make constant efforts to upgrade or sharpen the acquired knowledge.

4.2. CALL FOR PEERS/EXPERTS SUPPORT

Peer support creates a network of multiple opportunities of professional learning among teachers and tends to increase the efficiency of teachers' activities [Fulton et al. \(2005\)](#) [Wei et al. \(2009\)](#) [Hoy et al. \(1998\)](#) argue that getting support from peers, teachers are ready to bear greater responsibilities, make more efforts to improve their practices, and show more interest in professional development activities. Researchers [Harwell et al. \(2001\)](#) [Bryant et al. \(2001\)](#) also suggest combining the expertise of researchers in professional learning of teachers to make it more conducive and collaborative. In ancient India as Upanishdic texts reveal that rishis and munis were of the view that no teacher knows all and must find ways to attain perfection in realm of knowledge. And to achieve this purpose they consult their peers and experts.

Various references are illustrated in Upanishads that tell us that even the great and renowned rishis and munis of those times were having a tendency to usually

visit some senior rishis or someone who was acclaimed as an expert in that particular area to learn more about the chosen branch of knowledge. Following discussion of muni Narad and rishi Satan Kumar from Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) is quite relevant to highlight this practice.

**अधीहि भगव इति होपससाद सनत्कुमारं नारदस्तं होवाच यद्वेत्य तेन मोपसीद ततस्त
ऊर्ध्वं वक्ष्यामीति स होवाच ॥७.१.१॥**

Adhīhi bhagava iti hopasasāda sanatkumāraṃ nāradastaṃ hovācha yadvettha
tena mopasīda tatasta ūrdhvaṃ vakṣyāmīti sa hovācha || 7.1.1 ||

In this shloka, a visit of muni Narad to rishi Satan Kumar is explained. Muni Narad was a versatile scholar and a profound teacher of devas (angels). Still, he thought himself to be imperfect and felt that he is lacking in different aspects of knowledge. Identifying his ignorance, he visits rishi Satan Kumar to find the answers of his questions and to quench his thirst for further knowledge. After welcoming him, rishi Satan Kumar asked muni Narad about what he already knew, muni Narad replied:

**ऋग्वेदं भगवोऽध्येमि यजुर्वेदं सामवेदमथर्वणं चतुर्थमितिहासपुराणं पञ्चमं वेदानां वेदं
पित्र्यं राशिं दैवं निधिं वाकोवाक्यमेकायनं देवविद्यां ब्रह्मविद्यां भूतविद्यां क्षत्रविद्यां नक्षत्रविद्यां
सर्पदेवजनविद्यामेतद्भगवोऽध्येमि ॥७.१.२॥**

rgvedaṃ bhagavo'dhyemi yajurvedaṃ sāmavedamātharvaṇaṃ
caturthamitihāsapurāṇaṃ pañcamaṃ vedānāṃ vedaṃ pitryaṃ rāṣiṃ daivaṃ
nidhiṃ vākovākyaṃ ekāyanaṃ devavidyāṃ brahmavidyāṃ bhūtavidyāṃ
kṣatравidyāṃ nakṣatравidyāṃ sarpadevajana vidyāmetadbhagavo'dhyemi || 7.1.2||

“Sir, I have read the Ṛig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sāma Veda, and the fourth—the Atharva Veda; then the fifth—history and the Purāṇas; also, grammar, funeral rites, mathematics, the science of omens, the science of underground resources, logic, moral science, astrology, Vedic knowledge, the science of the elements, archery, astronomy, the science relating to snakes, plus music, dance, and other fine arts. Sir, this is what I know.” Chhandogya Upanishad 7.1.2 [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#)

This answer clearly indicates that muni Narad was having vast knowledge and expertise in many areas but still felt that he had to learn something more from an expert. After assessing the present level of knowledge of muni Narad through this answer and by identifying that where he was lacking, rishi Satan Kumar accepted to help him to gain further knowledge. Another verse from Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) details that how some rishis and munis got success in making a concept clear with the guidance of a senior scholar.

**ते ह सम्पादयांचक्रुरुद्दालको वै भगवन्तोऽयमारुणिः सम्प्रतीममात्मानं वैश्वानरमध्येति तं
हन्ताभ्यागच्छामेति तं हाभ्याजग्मुः ॥५.११.२॥**

te ha sampādayāṃ cakruruddālako vai bhagavanto'yamaruṇiḥ
sampratīmamātmānaṃ vaiśvānaramadhyeti taṃ hantābhyāgacchāmeti taṃ
hābhyājagmuḥ || 5.11.2 ||

Above cited verse from describes that these rishis and munis were trying to understand the concept of Vaiśvānara Ātman (a spiritual phenomenon) but failed to do so. Then they talked among themselves to decide what to do next. The rishis and munis give a thought about who can help them and decided to visit rishi Uddalaka, a famous and learned scholar to have a detailed understanding of the phenomenon. Afterwards, they all went to rishi Uddalaka.

**स ह सम्पादयांचकार प्रक्ष्यन्ति मामिमे महाशाला महाश्रोत्रियास्तेभ्यो न सर्वमिव
प्रतिपत्स्ये हन्ताहमन्यमभ्यनुशासानीति ॥५.११.३॥**

sa ha sampādayāṃcakāra prakṣyanti māmime mahāśālā mahāśrotriyāstebhyo
na sarvamiva pratipatsye hantāhamanyamabhyanu śhāsānīti || 5.11.3 ||

Verse (5.11.3) from Chhandogya Upanishad tells us that Uddalaka understood that they had come to ask him about the Vaiśvānara Ātman. He decided in his mind that “these eminent householders and Vedic scholars will ask me questions, and I may not be able to answer all of them. Therefore, I will direct them to another teacher” Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) Accordingly, Uddalaka decided to suggest them the name of other learned scholar whom he knew and who was having the detailed knowledge about the phenomenon in question. Most importantly, with these rishis and munis, Uddalaka also went to the suggested learned scholar to get more knowledge about the phenomenon.

A similar illustration from Prasna Upanishad [Sharvananda \(1922\)](#) again highlights the significance of consultation with peers or experts as a major practice for rishis and munis of ancient India. Illustration reveals that a rishi named Kausalya visited a senior rishi of his time named Pippiladin order to upgrade his knowledge. Kausalya put a question at which the senior rishi, Pippilad pronounces a shloka:

तस्मै स होवाचातिप्रश्नान्प्रच्छसिब्रह्मिष्ठोऽसीतितस्मात्तेऽहं ब्रवीमि ॥३.२॥

Tasmai sa ha hovaachaati-prashnaanprichhasi brahmanishtho-aseeti tasmatte
aham braveemi|| 3.2 ||.

Shloka 3.2 from Prasna Upanishad [Sharvananda \(1922\)](#) narrates that rishi Pippilad is pleased with the question, and congratulates the questioner, rishi Kausalya. Rishi Pippilad addresses rishi Kausalya as a well learned scholar and says that the depth of his question revealed the depth of his knowledge. Feeling blessed to quench the thrust of knowledge of a learned person like rishi Kausalya; he expresses his pleasure to answer him.

The other interesting observation from Prasna Upanishad is that whenever rishis and munis of ancient times were realizing that they are lacking in any aspect, they compulsorily visit their seniors or the experts to update their knowledge. There is an instance in Prasna Upanishad, where a senior rishi Pippilad is teaching many junior rishis. These rishis are putting their queries before him one by one so that they may enhance their present knowledge and be well versed in given subject. Meanwhile, a rishi named Sukesha raised his query stating that

भवन्हिरण्यनाभःकौसल्योराजपुत्रोमामुपेत्यैतंप्रश्नमपृच्छत ।

षोडशकालंभारद्वाजपुरुषवेत्थ ॥६.१.१॥

**तमहंकुमारमब्रुवंनाहमिमंवेदयद्यहिममवेदिषंकथंतोनावक्ष्यमितिसमूलोवाएषपरिशुष्य
तियोऽनृतमभिवदतितस्मान्नार्हाम्यनृतवक्तुं॥६.१.२॥**

स तूष्णींरथमारुह्यप्रवव्राज।तंत्वापृच्छामिकासौपुरुषइति॥६.१.३॥

bhavnihiranyanaabhah kausalyo raajaputro maamupetietam prashnam
apricchhata; shodashakalam, bhaaradvaaja, purushamvettha ||6.1.1||.

Tamaham kumaaramabruvam: naahamimam vedayamdahimam vedisham,
kathamtonaavakshyamiti, samoolovaaesha parishushyatio anritamabhivadati
ismaanaarhaamyā nritamvaktum ||6.1.2||

Sa tooshneemrathamaaruhyā pravavraaja. Tamtvāa pricchhaamikvaasau
purushahiti ||6.1.3||

These three Shlokas (6.1.1, 6.1.2, & 6.1.3) from Prasna Upanishad [Sharvananda \(1922\)](#) details that rishi Sukesha tells the senior rishi that this question was asked to him by one of his disciples Hirnayabh to whom he could not answer because he was unaware of it. Instead of preaching incorrectly, he told Hirnayabh that he will answer him in future after getting and enhancing his own knowledge first. And this is why he has come to him to sharpen his own understanding and knowledge about that particular concept.

On a different note, a discussion mentioned in Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) between rishi Gautama and his son, Shwetketu, is worth to discuss. Once after his samapvartan (completion of studies) in the gurukula of his father, Shwetketu visited a place named Panchal where in a ceremony of the state he was asked a few questions by the king of the state. But he could answer none. Returning home Shwetketu repeated the questions before his father with an intention to find the right answers. But the father, Gautama himself did not know the answers and accepted his ignorance. Then both of them decided to visit the king next morning and to urge him to share his knowledge with them. The following Shloka from Chhandogya Upanishad illustrates this visit as:

स ह गौतमो राज्ञोऽर्धमेयाय तस्मै ह प्राप्तायार्हा चकार स ह प्रातः सभाग उदेयाय तं
होवाच मानुषस्य भगवन्गौतम वित्तस्य वरं वृणीथा इति स होवाच तवैव राजन्मानुषं वित्तं
यामेव कुमारस्यान्ते वाचमभाषथास्तामेव मे ब्रूहीति स ह कृच्छ्री बभूव ॥५.३.६॥

sa ha gautamo rājñō'rdhameyāya tasmai ha prāptāyārḥāḥ cakāra sa ha prātaḥ
sabhāg audeyāya taṁ hovācha mānuṣasya bhagavangautama vittasya varaṁ
vṛṇīthā iti sa hovācha tavaiva rājanmānuṣaṁ vittaṁ yāmeva kumārasyānte
vāchambhāṣathāstāmeva me brūhīti sa ha kṛcchrī babhūva || 5.3.6 ||

This Shloka (5.3.6) from Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) narrates that Gautama then went to the king's palace. On his arrival, the king welcomed him respectfully. The next morning, when the king was in his court, Gautama went there to meet him. The king said to him, 'Revered Gautama, ask for a boon from me—anything a person might wish for.' Gautama replied: 'Let those things be with you. Please tell me whatever you said to my son.' Hearing this, the king turned pale Chhandogya Upanishad 5.3.6 [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) After much persuasion from Gautama, king decided to teach them.

4.3. PRACTICE OF PEER GROUP MENTORING

Peer group mentoring (PGM) is considered an holistic approach of professional development for teachers [Geeraerts et al. \(2015\)](#) It takes place in groups which are formed on voluntary basis. In the groups, both the mentor and their mentees

participate in formal, non-formal as well as in-formal learning settings [Geeraerts et al. \(2015\)](#) In such settings the participants learn by having dialogue and by sharing their personal experiential knowledge [Heikkinen et al. \(2012\)](#) This dialogue and sharing of knowledge help them to become active learners and provide advanced opportunities of reflection [European Commission \(2010\)](#) and they gain a diversity of thinking, practice and understanding with increased efficiency [Fulton et al. \(2005\)](#), [Wei et al. \(2009\)](#) Besides, in these settings the personal, professional, and social development of participants is ensured by interlocking the mentoring, peer, self-reflection, and expert support systems of professional learning which bring a number of other benefits for the participants too.

Presently where one-to-one mentoring or coaching is being largely practiced by teachers in most of the countries, PGM is widely used in Finland and is attracting the attention of educationists of the world. But this practice is not new to India. References from Upanishads reveal that rishis and munis in ancient times were not restricted to mere one-to-one mentoring or coaching. Instead, these rishis and munis were the active practitioners of Peer Group Mentoring (PGM) and preferred to learn collectively. In an illustration from Chhandogya Upanishad (5.11.3), a glimpse of PGM can be clearly seen. Here a group of rishis and munis were looking to find answer of a problem and decided to approach rishi Uddalaka for further knowledge. Rishi Uddalaka suggests them that a rishi named Ashavapati will help them to understand the phenomenon, in a better way. And to make their own understanding clear about that phenomenon all the rishis and munis along with rishi Uddalaka went to Ashavapati. The following Shloka from Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) details:

तान्होवाच प्रातर्वः प्रतिवक्तास्मीति ते ह समित्पाणयः पूर्वाह्ने प्रतिचक्रमिरे
तान्हानुपनीयैवैतदुवाच ॥५.११.७ ॥

Tānhovācha prātarvaḥ prativaktāsmīti te ha samitpāṇayaḥ pūrvāhṇe
praticakramire tānhānupanīyavaita divācha || 5.11.7 ||

This Shloka (5.11.7) details that after reaching the ashram of rishi Ashavapati, they all requested him to help them by explaining the concept. On their request, he said to them, 'I will give you my answer tomorrow morning.' Ashavapati offered the group of rishis and munis to stay with him for a period of time to imbibe that knowledge completely. And as Shloka narrates, while taking knowledge from Ashavapati, the rishis and munis were very humble and cooperative irrespective of their place and position. A similar reference is also quoted in Prasna Upanishad [Sharvananda \(1922\)](#)

ऊंसुकेशा च भारद्वाजःशैब्यश्चसत्याकामःसौर्यायणी च
गाम्र्यःकौसल्यश्चाश्वलायनोभार्गवोवैदर्भिःकबन्धीकात्यायनस्तेहैतेब्रह्मपराब्रह्मनिष्ठाःपरंब्रह्मा
न्वेषमाणाएष ह वैतत्सर्वते ह समित्पाणयो भगवन्तपिप्पलादमुपसन्नाः ॥१.१ ॥

Om Sukeshaa cha Bhaaradhwaajah Shaibyah cha Satyakaamah Sauryaayaneeh
cha gaamyah Kaushalyah cha Aashwala-ayano Bhaargavo Vaidarbhih
Kabandheekaatyaa-ayanahte haite brahmaparaa, brahmanishthaah,
parambrahmaan-veshamaanaaasha ha vaiatsarvamte ha samit-
paanayobhagavantam Pippalaadamupasannaah ||1.1||.

This Shloka explains that six rishis named Sukesha, Sataykama, Gaargya, Kausalya, Vaidarbhi, and Kabandhi with an intention to know 'Bhram' visit a learned and renowned rishi named Pippilad. With a humble expression, these rishis requested rishi Pippilad to solve their problem and help them in getting the true knowledge about 'Bhram.' Following Shloka from Prasna Upanishad details [Sharvananda \(1922\)](#) further:

तान्ह स
ऋषिरुवाचभूवएवतपसाब्रह्मचर्येणश्रद्धयासंवत्सरंसंवत्स्यथथाकामंप्रश्नानपृच्छतयदिविज्ञा
स्यामःसर्वहवोवक्ष्यामइति॥१.२॥

Taanha sa rishi ruvaa cha bhoova eva tapasaabrahmacharyena shraddhayaa
samvatsaramsamvatsyathaya thaakaamam prashnaan pricchhatayadi
vijnaasyaamah, sarvam ha vovakshyaama iti ||1.2||.

After arrival of these rishis, rishi Pippilad welcome and call them as devotees of knowledge and praises their determination to learn further. He allows them to stay with him for some time and started to answer their queries one by one.

4.4. PARTICIPATION IN GROUP DISCUSSION/DEBATES/CONFERENCES

It is evident from many pieces of research that teacher learning is not only individual but 'social' also [Lieberman and Pointer-Mace \(2010\)](#) [Lieberman and Miller \(2008\)](#) [Hall and Davison \(2007\)](#) which takes place in form of interaction among the groups and networks of practitioners. Real learning is derived from teacher interaction [Gupta \(2014\)](#) and professional debates, discussions and conferences are seen to provide a plenty of such opportunities where teachers meet and share their newly acquired knowledge. These avenues of debates and conferences are usually theme-based, and their importance lies in the fact that through them teachers can "continue their professional development by presenting research, receiving feedback and investing in professional relationships reaching beyond their institutional and national borders" [Smith \(2003\)](#)

In ancient India, Rishis and munis were very good practitioners and followers of discussion and debate technique. These rishis were well aware of the power of these techniques and using it effectively for professional development purposes. Upanishads are replete with such references. These references present shastrarth (debate) as a common practice among the community of rishis and munis. A Shloka in Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) states,

प्राचीनशाल औपमन्यवः सत्ययज्ञः पौलुषिरिन्द्रद्युम्नो भाल्लवेयो जनः शार्कराक्ष्यो बुडिल
आश्वतराश्विस्ते हैते महाशाला महाश्रोत्रियाः समेत्य मीमांसां चक्रुः को न आत्मा किं ब्रह्मेति
॥५.११.१॥

Prācīnaśāla aupamanyavaḥ satyayajñāḥ pauluṣirindradyumno bhāllaveyo
janaḥ śārkarākṣyo buḍila āsvatarāśviste haite mahāśālā mahāśrotriyāḥ sametya
mīmāṃsāṃ cakruḥ ko na ātmā kiṃ brahmeti ||5.11.1||

This Shloka depicts that five renowned rishis once met to reveal the truth about: Who is our Self? And what is Brahman? These rishis are known as Pracheenshala, Satyayka, Indradyumna, Jana, and Budila. To decide the issue, they were engaged in shastrarth. Notably all of them were well versed in their fields of knowledge and

decided to carry out a debate to get the answers of posed questions and improve their professional knowledge.

Similarly, a number of references are also available to argue that the culture of group discussion was quite prevalent in ancient India. Most importantly, these discussions or debates were occasionally organized at bigger level which we now see in form of seminars or conferences of today. Following Shloka from Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) is helpful in this context:

त्रयो होद्गीथे कुशला बभूवुः शिलकः शालावत्यश्चैकितायानो दाल्भ्यः प्रवाहणो जैवलिरिति
ते होचुरुद्गीथे वै कुशलाः स्मो हन्तोद्गीथे कथां वदाम इति ॥१.८.१॥

Trayo hodgīthe kuśalā babhūvuḥ śilakaḥ śālāvatyāścaikitāyāno dālbyah
pravāhaṇo jaivaliriti te hochurudgīthe vai kuśalāḥ smo hantodgīthe kathāṃ
vadāma iti ||1.8.1||

This Shloka tells that a discussion is being held among an assembly of scholars and rishis and munis to investigate the meaning and importance of udgītha 'Om.' In the assembly, there were three scholars named Shilaka, Dalabhaya, and Pravahana, who have a claim to have mastery on the concept and can help others to get clarity on this issue. Shloka states, these three scholars identifying their ability, humbly take grant from the other participants of the assembly to discuss the concept and proceed. They said that they had mastered the art of the udgītha and if the assembly wishes, they can discuss the udgītha' [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#)

4.5. ADVOCACY FOR REFLECTIVE THINKING

According to [Dewey \(1938\)](#) we do not learn from experiences; we learn by analysing and making judgments about these experiences which is a process of reflective thinking. Learners who think reflectively become aware of and control their learning by actively accessing what they know, what they need to know and how they bridge that gap [Sezer \(2008\)](#) Presently there is much emphasize on reflection as a powerful tool of professional learning for teachers [Burden \(2010\)](#) [Farrell \(2007\)](#) [Farrell \(2004\)](#) Researchers [Paterson and Chapman \(2013\)](#) [Farrell \(2007\)](#) [Farrell \(2004\)](#) believe that by reflecting on their practice teachers become more responsible and take charge of change of tradition, and become more capable to intentionally employ the new ways of teaching [Posner \(1993\)](#) But much before these researchers, this practice was popular among rishis and munis of ancient India. In fact, they were the originators of this practice as evident from the following Shloka of Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#) which carries a discussion between rishi Sanatkumāra and muni Nārada:

यदा वै मनुतेऽथ विजानाति नामत्वा विजानाति मत्त्वैव विजानाति मतिस्त्वेव
विजिज्ञासितव्येति मतिं भगवो विजिज्ञास इति ॥७.१८.१॥

yadā vai manute'tha vijānāti nāmatvā vijānāti matvaiva vijānāti matistveva
vijijñāsitavyeti matiṃ bhagavo vijijñāsa iti ||7.18.1||

Sanatkumāra, "When a person learns to think well, then he can know deeply. Without thinking well, one cannot know deeply. One knows for certain when one think deeply. But one must want to know how to think well.' Nārada replied, 'Sir, I

want to know how to think well” Chhandogya Upanishad 7.18.1 [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#)

In other words, Sanatkumāra explains the importance of reflection in learning. He says that human beings learn specifically when they reflect. Without reflection there is no learning. Reflection on vidya (knowledge) refines it. And this is why professionals should make attempts to reflect to learn in a better way. This Shloka is a testimony that rishis and munis of ancient India were the reflective practitioners of vidya (knowledge). Besides practicing a number of ways to enhance and reform their knowledge, they usually employed the techniques of Samadhi (meditation) and tapasya (austerity). These two techniques helped them to reflect about their professional practices and worldly matters in a better way.

4.6. PROMOTION OF SELF-STUDY

Self-study is an explicit strategy to keep oneself up to date about the ongoing developments in one's field. Reading is aimed at acquiring new knowledge and insight and makes the reader more thoughtful. So, it has been considered an important form of CPD by many researchers [Evers et al. \(2016\)](#) [Adagiri \(2014\)](#) [Geijsel et al. \(2009\)](#) [Kwakman \(2003\)](#) In ancient India, self-study was a part of culture in gurukulas/ashramas. At those times, ashrams or gurukulas, gurus (teachers) and shishya (disciples) were thoroughly engaged in self-study. Self-study was the part of their daily routine. Self-study has been given so much importance that not only for teachers and students, self-study was prescribed as essential even for the 'ghrihasti' (householders). In a Shloka of Taittiriya Upanishad, [Sharvananda \(1921\)](#) arishi states:

ऋतं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । सत्यं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । तपश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
दमश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च ।
शमश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । अग्रयश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । अग्निहोत्रं स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । अतिथय
श्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । मानुषं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । प्रजा च
स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । प्रजनश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । प्रजातिश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च । सत्यमिति सत्य
वचाराधीतरः । तप इति तपो नित्यः पौरुशिष्टिः स्वाध्यायप्रवचने एवेति नाकोमौद्गल्यः ।
तद्धितपस्तद्धितप ॥९.१॥

ritam cha svadhyayappravachane cha. satyam cha svadhyayappravachane cha.
tapaksh cha svadhyayappravachane cha. damaksh cha svadhyayappravachane cha.
shamaksh cha svadhyayappravachane cha. agrnayaksh cha svadhyayappravachane
cha. agnihotram cha svadhyayappravachane cha. atithayaksh cha
svadhyayappravachane cha. manusham cha svadhyayappravachane cha. praja cha
svadhyayappravachane cha. prajanaksh cha svadhyayappravachane cha. prajatiksh
cha svadhyayappravachane cha. satyamiti satyavacharathitarah. Tapaititaponityah
paurushishtih. Svadhyayappravachane evetinakomaudhgalyah. Taddhi
tapastaddhitapah. ||9.1||

Attaching the greatest importance to self-study, rishi says that along with fulfilling each and every personal duty of physical world, a human being must always make attempts to be engaged in self-study regularly and should communicate it with others. Here he describes self-study as the greatest 'tapa' means tasks of highest value. Similar thought is expressed by a different rishi in following Shloka from Chhandogya Upanishad [Lokeswarananda \(2017\)](#)

तथैतद्ब्रह्मा प्रजापतयै उवाच प्रजापतिर्मनवे मनुः प्रजाभ्यः आचार्यकुलाद्वेदमधीत्य
यथाविधानं गुरोः कर्मातिशेषेणाभिसमावृत्य कुटुम्बे शुचौ देशे स्वाध्यायमधीयानो
धर्मिकान्विदधदात्मनि सर्वेन्द्रियाणि सम्प्रतिष्ठाप्याहिंसन्सर्वं भूतान्यन्यत्र तीर्थेभ्यः स खल्वेवं
वर्तयन्त्यावदायुषं ब्रह्मलोकमभिसम्पद्यते न च पुनरावर्तते न च पुनरावर्तते ॥ ८.१५.१ ॥

Tadhaitadbrahmā prajāpatayai uvācha prajāpatirmanave manuḥ prajābhyāḥ
ācāryakulādvedamadhītya yathāvidhānaṃ guroḥkarmātiśeṣeṇābhisamāvṛtya
kuṭumbe śuchau deśhe svādhyāyamadhīyāno dharmikānvidadha dātmani
sarvāindriyāṇi sampratiṣṭhāpyāhiṃsansarva bhūtānyanyatra tīrthebhyāḥ sa
khalvevaṃ vartayanyāvadāyushaṃ brahmalokamabhisampadyate na cha
punarāvartate na cha punarāvartate || 8.15.1 ||

In this Shloka, the rishi suggests his disciple to be a life-long learner and remain engaged in self-study even after samapvartan sanskar (Graduating ceremony). Giving the final preach to his disciples, he tells them that now on they have to fulfil all their worldly duties, but it does not mean that now further on they should give up their study. Rather now, they have to take care that after fulfilling all their duties humbly, they would keep spare time to study Vedas, the greatest knowledge of that time. He suggests them never to be lazy in self-study and be an active practitioner of life-long learning. In a way, continuous self-study to keep improving personally and professionally was a well-established practice among teachers of ancient India.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

All the above-mentioned references make it clear that teachings of Upanishads are a foundation for modern conception of teacher professional development practices that are based on the assumption that initial preparation is not enough, and one needs to keep learning in many ways to be successful in teaching profession. Above cited Shlokas from different Upanishads reveal that even eminent teachers of that times (like muni Narad, rishi Uddalaka, rishi Pippilad, etc.) were not thinking that they are perfect in realm of knowledge and were always making efforts to learn more for betterment of their professional knowledge. Interestingly, they were having self-awareness about their own strengths and weaknesses and were active enough to take needed initiatives to learn further for self-development. Modern day conception of self-supported teacher professional development is founded on similar principles.

The cited examples also suggests that when the teachers in ancient India felt difficulty at any point in their practice or were unable to get right answers, they usually went to someone else for guidance and help. The rishis and munis whom they consulted in hour of need were actually their peers and their consultation with these rishis and munis is exactly similar to peer group mentoring practice of today. Further, cited Shlokas also reveal that discussion with peers was an established practice in ancient times as it provided practitioners ample opportunities of collaborative learning and enabled them to clear their doubts. The other noticeable take is that the rishis and munis were engaged in solving their problems collectively and experienced rishis were always available to support and guide less experienced ones. Cited Shlokas also highlight that these rishis and munis were eager to learn from colleagues or the experience done without any ego or hesitation. Commenting on these practices, [Saxena \(2007\)](#) observes that such concourses provided a forum for both the rishis and munis and their disciples where they can discuss, share, and further develop the truths which they had realized in their hearts or reached by their minds. These concourses also provided the rishis with valuable insights into field of

knowledge and learning which they could incorporate in their syllabi while disseminating knowledge among their disciples.

Cited Shlokas also details the rishis and munis were practicing teacher professional development in various forms and their practices are somewhat similar in nature and appearance as we see in form of current practices of professional development of teachers. Needless to mention, the credit for evolving the perception of professional development of teachers and developing appropriate practices for this purpose may be given to rishis and munis of ancient India. In fact, the five models of teacher professional development proposed by Dennis Sparks: training, individually guided staff development, observation/assessment, inquiry, and involvement in a development/improvement process” [Ponder et al. \(2010\)](#) and the most prevalent CPD practices of today i.e. self-study, attending seminars/conferences, peer group mentoring, and learning from experts were quite prevalent in ancient education system and are sufficiently recorded in Upanishadic literature. Therefore, on the basis of recorded evidences in Upanishads (c.800 BCE - c.500 BCE) it can be aptly concluded that teacher professional development practices basically originated in ancient India and rishis and munis (teachers of that time) were apt practitioners of these practices.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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