

Why Do Human Beings Need to Celebrate Teachers' Day? A Psychological Reflection

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Every society, every civilization, chooses certain days to remember what it values most. We mark freedom, labour, care. And then, almost quietly, comes a quieter question: Why do we celebrate Teachers' Day? At first glance, the answer seems obvious. Teachers educate us; but that barely scratches the surface. If education alone were the reason, every lesson would be a celebration; if knowledge alone were the reason, every book would deserve its own day!

We celebrate Teachers' Day because teaching represents something deeper: the moment one mind shapes another. Psychology illuminates this beautifully. Unlike many species, human beings arrive in the world profoundly unfinished, so to speak. Our brains remain plastic throughout life, across the lifespan, shaped continuously and sculpted by relationship and experience. That biological fact, neuroplasticity, makes teaching far more than a profession; it makes it a civilizational necessity.

Language, values, self-regulation, reasoning, scientific ideas, even our sense of right and wrong - the very tools with which we make sense of reality - don't arise in isolation. They are passed on. They travel across generations through teaching. That very process makes teaching not just helpful, but foundational. It's how a society reproduces itself.

And yet learning itself isn't the passive absorption of facts. It isn't rote absorption; it's experience-based transformation. It's perception, interpretation, memory, meaning. We perceive, interpret, remember, forget, reconstruct. A real teacher transforms those processes and helps us see differently. A good teacher doesn't simply say, "Remember this." They help reshape how we notice, connect, and understand. Curiosity sparks, meaning forms, motivation strengthens.

That's why Teachers' Day endures. It's less a celebration of information delivered and more a celebration of minds awakened. And once we see that, a deeper question follows: Who truly counts as a teacher?

That question turns us gently to a wider idea. We think first of school and college teachers, of course, but our first classroom is the home. Our first teachers are parents and caregivers. Parents rarely see themselves as psychology teachers, yet every day they model trust, language, emotional regulation and values; those early relationships sculpt the developing brain, long before formal syllabus begins.

By the time a child enters a classroom, learning is already a rich psychological process. Every student carries a different history, different perception, different fears, different strengths - an inner world of experiences, perceptions, strengths and fears. That's why excellent teaching has always been both art and science: helping different minds make sense of the same world. The best teachers don't insist that everyone learn the same way; they help different learners find their own pathways to meaning.

Great teachers know, implicitly, that learning is experience-based transformation. They invite curiosity rather than demand repetition. They turn extrinsic pressures like exams into intrinsic interest, and none of that works without emotion.

We learn most deeply in environments that feel safe. Respected, seen. Classrooms that feel safe, where students feel respected, invite exploration; they don't just produce good marks, they produce confident, emotionally resilient minds. In such spaces, students don't just chase correct answers; they take intellectual risks, recover from mistakes, develop resilience and build self-efficacy.

Over time, that shapes thinking itself: how we reason, solve problems and evaluate evidence. Intelligence, in this light, isn't just test performance or about correct answers; it's adaptability, reflection, judgement, communication and the capacity to keep learning. And perhaps this is where our understanding of "teacher" begins to stretch beyond the classroom.

If we stay with this thread, another truth comes into view: teaching doesn't flow in only one direction. Classrooms often reveal a quiet truth: students also teach. Every unexpected question, every puzzled look that makes a teacher rethink an explanation, every surprising question or new perspective can send the teacher, if they are honest, back to their own assumptions.

Every true teacher remains a lifelong student. That is reciprocal learning - a loop rather than a ladder. The classroom breathes both ways.

And this is where metacognition matters: learning to examine one's own thinking. A thoughtful student asks, "Why do I believe this?" A thoughtful teacher asks the same question. And follow that line far enough, and you arrive at something quietly profound: research.

Every good question is the beginning of research. Every good question is a seed of research. Every doubt holds a hypothesis. Research is curiosity made disciplined; research is curiosity made systematic. Hypotheses aren't so different from children's whys. Statistics is simply humility in numerical form, acknowledging that first impressions can mislead.

In that sense, a good teacher isn't someone who merely gives answers, but someone who models how to ask better questions. The deepest gift a teacher gives is not a polished answer but the courage to keep asking better questions.

This is why research methodology and statistics matter beyond the classroom - not for calculation alone, but for disciplined curiosity. They teach us to define questions clearly, seek evidence, tolerate uncertainty and revise views when evidence demands.

This is particularly important because the world in which teachers work has changed dramatically. Information, once scarce and difficult to access, is now available almost instantly. A

student can search for a definition, watch a lecture or ask an artificial-intelligence system to explain a concept within seconds.

In such a world, the teacher's importance does not diminish; rather, the nature of that importance changes. When information is abundant, the ability to judge information becomes precious. The question is no longer simply, "Do I know?" It is increasingly, "How do I know? What is the evidence? Is the source reliable? Could there be another explanation?"

Here, psychology meets research methodology in a particularly meaningful way. Human beings are not perfectly objective observers. Our perception is selective. Previous experience influences what we notice and how we interpret it. Memory is reconstructive rather than a flawless recording of the past. Emotions can colour judgement. Motivation can influence what evidence we seek, while familiar beliefs may feel more convincing simply because they are familiar. Our thinking is extraordinarily powerful, but it is also susceptible to biases and errors.

Research methodology, at its best, teaches us to respect precisely these human limitations. We formulate a question, define what we mean, gather evidence, compare possibilities and remain prepared to revise our conclusion. Statistics extends the same lesson.

Behind its formulas lies a profoundly human principle: *do not be too certain merely because something appears obvious*. A sample may not represent a population. A correlation may not establish causation. An impressive difference may not necessarily be a meaningful one. An isolated experience, however powerful, may not establish a general truth.

These are not lessons meant only for research laboratories or university examinations. They are lessons for citizenship and for life.

Perhaps, therefore, one of the greatest responsibilities of a twenty-first-century teacher is not to manufacture certainty but to develop in students the capacity to live intelligently and thoughtfully with uncertainty. A teacher need not have an immediate answer to every question. Sometimes, "I do not know; let us find out" may be more educational than an authoritative but unexamined answer.

It demonstrates intellectual humility- the willingness to recognise the limits of one's knowledge without losing the motivation to know more.

And students have an important place in this process. A question from a student can expose an assumption a teacher has never examined. A disagreement can demand a better explanation. A question for which there is no ready answer can send the teacher back to books, research papers or data.

In such moments, the conventional distinction between teacher and learner becomes beautifully blurred. The teacher teaches, but also learns how to teach; the student learns, but also teaches the teacher where another question needs to be asked.

That reciprocity deserves a place in our understanding of Teachers' Day.

It does not diminish the dignity of teachers to acknowledge students as their teachers too. On the contrary, it elevates teaching from a position of authority to a relationship of growth. Metacognition - our capacity to reflect upon our own thinking - belongs to both sides of the classroom. A student

learns to ask, “Why did I think this way?” A teacher must sometimes ask the same question. Education becomes most alive when both retain the freedom to examine their assumptions.

And this brings us back to the word **teacher** itself.

Our parents are often our first teachers, long before we know that learning has begun. Through observation and imitation, children learn language, emotional expression, attitudes, habits and ways of relating to others. A parent's response to failure may become a child's early lesson in resilience; the way disagreement is handled at home may become an early lesson in conflict resolution.

Psychology has long demonstrated the importance of observational learning: we learn not only from what people tell us, but from what we repeatedly see them do.

Later come school teachers, college teachers, mentors, friends and colleagues. Sometimes even an adversary teaches us something about ourselves. Failure can become a stern teacher. Experience teaches through consequences. And, as every reflective educator eventually discovers, students themselves become teachers.

Why, then, should our gratitude on Teachers' Day stop at the classroom door?

To widen the meaning of Teachers' Day is not to dilute the honour accorded to professional teachers. The formal teacher occupies an irreplaceable place in society. Rather, widening the idea allows us to understand *why* that role is so important in the first place. Teaching represents a fundamental human relationship: one person contributing to the growth of another.

Seen psychologically, this relationship touches almost every dimension of human functioning. Biology gives us a brain capable of plasticity. Perception determines how experience is interpreted. Learning allows experience to alter behaviour and understanding. Memory carries some of those changes across time. Motivation gives direction and persistence to effort. Emotion gives experiences personal significance. Thinking enables questioning, reasoning and problem-solving. Intelligence helps us adapt when familiar answers no longer work. And metacognition allows us to examine the very mind doing all of these things.

A good teacher encounters all of them - not as separate chapters in a psychology textbook, but as a living human being sitting in the classroom.

Perhaps this also explains the peculiar durability of our memories of teachers. We remember because memory and emotion work together. Years later, we may forget the exact question that appeared in an examination or the definition we memorised the night before it. Yet many of us remember a teacher who encouraged us when we doubted ourselves, corrected us without humiliating us, challenged an easy assumption, or saw an ability in us before we could see it ourselves.

The teacher who steadied us in self-doubt or sparked a new direction gets woven into our identity. A memory of “you can do it” becomes an inner voice. That's self-efficacy taking root. Emotion gives memory significance; repeated encouragement can contribute to self-efficacy - the belief that we are capable of meeting a challenge. Sometimes a teacher's sentence survives long after the lesson in which it was spoken has disappeared from memory.

Teachers, in that sense, become part of the invisible architecture of identity.

And gratitude allows us to recognise that architecture. Gratitude here isn't just politeness or courtesy; it's an orientation that reminds us that growth is shared. It's a corrective, a reminder that our achievements have histories and collaborators. It corrects one of the easiest errors in the story we tell about ourselves: the illusion that our achievements are entirely our own.

Every accomplishment has a history. Somewhere behind a confident adult may stand a parent who patiently answered endless childhood questions, a teacher who refused to give up, a mentor who opened an opportunity, or even a student whose difficult question forced that person to think again.

So, why do we celebrate Teachers' Day? Because we acknowledge that none of us becomes ourselves alone. Because it interrupts our forgetting. It calls us to notice the human relationships through which knowledge, values, confidence, curiosity, method and ways of thinking travel from one human being to another.

That may finally bring us to the question with which we began: **Why do human beings need to celebrate Teachers' Day at all?**

Perhaps we need it because human beings are remarkably capable of becoming accustomed to what is valuable. What is repeated becomes ordinary; what becomes ordinary is easily taken for granted. A commemorative day interrupts that familiarity. It asks us to stop and notice. Teachers' Day makes visible, if only for a day, the relationships through which knowledge, values, confidence, curiosity and ways of thinking travel from one human being to another.

But that still leaves one step. If gratitude is genuine, how should it shape our daily lives - not just one ceremonial day?

Perhaps the answer lies in what we do after the flowers have faded and the speeches are over. Gratitude becomes meaningful when it changes behaviour. The finest tribute to a teacher is not merely to remember what we were taught, but to allow that learning to influence how we think, how we treat others and how willingly we continue to learn.

But the psychological meaning of the day should survive beyond 5th September.

When a student asks a difficult question, let us not silence the question or curiosity merely because we do not immediately possess the answer. When evidence challenges or unsettles a cherished belief, let us have the courage to reconsider it. When we succeed, let us remember those who contributed to the journey, those who steadied us. When we teach, let us remain willing to learn. And when we disagree, let us distinguish between defending an opinion and searching for truth.

Then Teachers' Day becomes more than a ceremony. It becomes not a ceremony but a practice, a way of being.

A bouquet will eventually wither. A greeting card will be put away. Speeches will end, photographs will be taken, and classrooms will return to their ordinary routines. But curiosity can remain. Gratitude can remain. The habit of asking for evidence can remain. The humility to say "I may

be wrong” can remain. And the willingness to learn from parents, teachers, students and life itself can remain.

Perhaps that is the tribute a true teacher would value most.

Not a generation that merely remembers the answers it was given, but one that has learned how to question, to examine evidence, to think, to care, and, above all, to remain a student for life.

In other words, the true measure of education isn't recall; it's the disposition to keep inquiring, to weigh reasons over hunches, and to let empathy guide judgement. That's the kind of lifelong learning that keeps a society thoughtful and humane.

That, I think, more than flowers or speeches, is why human beings need to celebrate Teachers' Day.