

## Pāthaśālā – Jñānānanda Śālā

I clearly remember those early days when we used to go to Pāthaśālā every day. It used to be a great joyous and pompous place for me. I used to enjoy every bit of it. I enjoyed daily prepping, homework, studying, teasing and making fun and what not. Today, I realise that I was a pseudo-introvert at school and a pseudo-extrovert at home; but both at Pāthaśālā. At Pāthaśālā, I could learn the best of philosophical principles and keep on introspecting and at the same time having a blast with so-called-best-buddies. My parents were very worried about me because of my below-average performance at school and they were very relieved when it came to my performance at Pāthaśālā. May be that kept their hopes high regarding my cognitive and behavioural skills.

One day, I visibly remember that I was asked to memorize one stanza from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' Poem in the English class at school and at Pāthaśālā, one stanza from Sakala Jñeya Jñāyaka Prayer. And the next day, at school, I was handed a stick which kind of felt very hard at once and then taken away abruptly, I think that's called scolding. But, at Pāthaśālā I got a gift for reciting the whole prayer in a go.

The teachers, fellow students, seniors, juniors (except some non-teaching staff) never knew who I was at school but at Pāthaśālā I was a king. The environment, the ambiance, the aroma of the Pāthaśālā was my territory and I loved being a part of it. Even today when I meet everyone from Pāthaśālā, their eyes tell me the worth of my existence.

But, something has changed today, when I visit any Pāthaśālā. It's neither the place nor the books but it's the teachers, students and that whole process of learning has shifted many bounds. The teachers have lost that zest and zing of teaching, students lack interest and the process of learning has shifted to the process of mugging up.

Why and how did this happen? Are we so accustomed that we consider Pāthaśālā a mere petty activity? Or have we over-burdened the students with

the thought that School studies are more important than life–studies? Has money over taken values or sheer thought process? Or is it our own captivating involvement towards our–routine, that we hardly care what’s necessary for our children. Were our parents not worried about our future? And took so much pain and suffered many nakharās, yet sent us to the Pāthaśālā for an overall development.

If we think Pāthaśālā is–was–will be the best where students can grow, understand and eventually learn to live; then serious steps should be taken to revisit, understand, enlighten the purpose and purport of Pāthaśālā; and only then we can, hence, update our practices with the need of the hour.