

Ancient Indian Education System

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Abstract:

Ancient Indian education system is known as the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge and scheme of life and values. In ancient time the pupil learnt everything staying in Guru's Ashram. Two systems of education in ancient India, Vedic and Buddhist were developed through the learning of knowledge and religion. The medium of Vedic and Buddhist period were Sanskrit and Pali respectively. All-round development particularly spiritual, mental and physical, was the main aims and objective of the education of Gurukul system. It was the oldest education system of India and the centre of knowledge, religion, yoga etc. The main concern of Gurukul system was of moral as well as intellectual aspects of life. Education, the real power of all, enables the pupil to realize the true value of life removing the darkness. During Vedic era the main goal of the education system was to acquire wisdom and to keep physical sound as believed that sound mind resides in sound body. The practices of Brahmanical education of Veda, Astadhayi and Sutra literature were the part of learning as text during ancient time. It was obvious that the pupil learnt what Guru taught in Gurukul. At that time gurudakhina was important as the part of completion of education or acknowledgement to a spiritual guide in Gurukul system. The pupil moved door to door to collect food etc for their teacher (Guru). Begging was the usual rule of Brahmacharin as well as practices of living in ancient India. Moreover, the preparation of the brain as well as thinking power was the feature of education system of that time. The present study shows the education system of ancient India particularly Vedic, Buddhist period, the Gurukul system and the relationship between teacher (Guru) and disciple.

Keywords: Ancient, Education, Indian, Vedic, Gurukul,

Introduction: Education is not only a process but also the progression of human being and it consists of the way of human being from infancy to maturity. The ancient Indian education

system stands as a testament to the profound wisdom and holistic approach that characterized the civilization's pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment. Rooted in spirituality, philosophy, and a deep understanding of human nature, this system laid the foundation for a well-rounded education that extended beyond the mere transmission of information. The most important contribution of ancient India to the world is education. The ancient Indian education developed by the Vedas and 'upanisads' was imparted at centre of learning called gurukuls, ashrams etc. Gurukul was a type of institution in ancient India where pupils lived with teacher (guru). The ancient Indian education system determined the subjects and occupations that one could pursue. The education system was divided into two main streams: Vedic and Buddhist. The Vedic system focused on the study of the Vedas, Vedangas, Upanishads, and other religious and philosophical texts in Sanskrit, while the Buddhist system taught the doctrines and practices of various Buddhist schools in Pali.

This paper is formulated to deal with the education system of ancient India and the gurukul, the relationship of teacher and pupils. The paper also tries to establish that the ancient education system was best in India comparing the present education system. The study is a literary work using secondary sources based on literary resources like reference books and internet also.

The education system of ancient India aimed at the holistic development of the individual including the physical, mental, spiritual, and moral aspects of life. It emphasized on values such as truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance, and respect for all creation. In his book 'Ancient Indian Education', the prominent writer, Radha Kumad Mookerji writes "Vedic education is to be studied as an integral part of Vedic Taught and Life. It will be best understood in the light of certain concepts and technical terms in which are concealed and stored up traditions governing the general philosophy and scheme of life of the Vedic age." The ancient Indian education system followed the gurukul system, where students lived with their teachers or gurus in their homes or ashrams and learned through oral instruction and memorization. The gurus taught everything from language, literature, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, law, ethics, art, music, and martial arts. The students also had to perform various duties and services for their gurus as a mark of respect and gratitude. It also taught students to appreciate the balance between human beings and nature and to perform their duties towards self, family, and society. The ancient Indian education system was open to both men and women during the early Vedic period, but later became more restricted for women due to social and cultural factors. However, there were some exceptions such as Gargi and Maitreyi who were renowned

female scholars and philosophers in the Vedic tradition. The Buddhist system allowed women to join monasteries and become nuns. In the book, 'Education in Ancient India', Hartmut Scharfe expresses "The teacher's role was to instruct him in the conduct becoming a Buddhist monk and basic Buddhist doctrine," The ancient Indian education system produced many eminent scholars and thinkers who made significant contributions to various fields of knowledge such as Aryabhata, Panini, Patanjali, Charaka, Sushruta, Kautilya, Varahamihira, Brahmagupta.

Central to the ancient Indian education system was the Gurukul that symbolized the intimate and familial nature of the student-teacher relationship imbibing not only knowledge but also the guru's way of life. The Vedic teaching was related with one particular caste leaving others. This personalized approach allowed for tailored instruction that catered to each student's strengths, weaknesses, and interests. The curriculum of the ancient Indian education system was vast and diverse, encompassing a wide array of subjects. These included the study of sacred scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas, which formed the spiritual and philosophical foundation of Indian society. Additionally, mathematics, astronomy, grammar, logic, and music were integral parts of the curriculum. This multidisciplinary approach aimed to nurture well-rounded individuals who could contribute meaningfully to society in various ways.

Pedagogical methods within the ancient Indian education system were deeply rooted in experiential learning and the oral tradition. Students engaged in active discussions, debates, and dialogues to develop critical thinking skills. The art of memorization and recitation played a significant role in learning and passing down knowledge. Complex philosophical concepts were often conveyed through allegorical stories and parables, making them accessible to learners of all ages. One of the remarkable aspects of the ancient Indian education system was its inclusivity and accessibility. Education was not confined to a particular social class or gender. Students from various backgrounds, including different castes and socio-economic strata, were welcomed into the Gurukuls. This egalitarian approach challenged societal norms and contributed to a more inclusive and enlightened society.

The ancient Indian education system made space for notable women scholars who defied traditional gender roles and made significant contributions to various fields. Gargi Vachaknavi, Maitreyi, and Lopamudra are a few examples of women who participated actively in philosophical debates and intellectual discourses. Their presence serves as a testament to the

system's willingness to embrace diversity and promote gender equality in education. Integral to the ancient Indian education system was the emphasis on character building and ethical values. The scriptures and texts that formed the core of the curriculum imparted not only knowledge but also timeless principles of righteous living. Students were guided to develop qualities such as compassion, empathy, humility, and self-discipline, which were deemed essential for leading a meaningful and purposeful life.

The legacy of the ancient Indian education system continues to resonate in various aspects of modern education. The emphasis on holistic development, critical thinking, and ethical values finds parallels in contemporary education. The Buddhist education system was a form of monastic education that emerged in ancient India based on the teachings and life experiences of Lord Buddha. It aimed to provide a holistic development of the students' personality, intellect, morality, and spirituality. The Buddhist education system was open to all people regardless of their caste, gender, or social status. The students had to voluntarily present themselves to a teacher or a monk who would accept them as disciples and initiate them into the Buddhist order. The students had to take an oath stating, "I take refuge with the Buddha. I take refuge with the religion. I take refuge with the order". The main centers of learning were the monasteries or viharas, where the students lived with their teachers and followed a strict discipline and routine. The monasteries were also places of worship, meditation, and community service. Some of the famous monasteries that became renowned centers of Buddhist education were Nalanda, Taxila, Vikramshila, and Valabhi.

The Buddhist education system used various methods of teaching and learning, such as oral instruction, recitation, memorization, discussion, observation, experimentation, and practical application. The teacher or the monk was the main source of knowledge and guidance for the students. He taught them the basic principles and doctrines of Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Three Jewels, the Five Precepts, etc. He also taught them various subjects such as logic, grammar, philosophy, psychology, ethics, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, art, literature, etc. The teacher also encouraged the students to ask questions, express their opinions, and challenge their assumptions. The students were expected to respect their teacher and learn from his example. The Buddhist education system aimed to produce students who were well-rounded in both knowledge and character. The students were expected to develop a clear understanding of themselves and the world around them. They were also expected to cultivate virtues such as wisdom, compassion, kindness, generosity, honesty,

self-control, etc. The ultimate goal of the Buddhist education system was to help the students attain nirvana or liberation from suffering and ignorance.

The ancient Indian education system and the present Indian education system have some similarities and differences. The ancient Indian education system focused on the holistic development of the students, comprising both inner and outer self that would prepare them for life. The present education system is more oriented towards career and professional success, but it also aims to develop the personality and skills of the student. The ancient Indian education system was based on oral transmission of knowledge from teachers to students, using hymns, symbols, and stories. The students had to memorize the texts and recite them in front of the teachers. The present education system is based on written transmission of knowledge, using books, notes, and digital media. The students have to read, write, and understand the texts and answer questions in exams. The ancient Indian education system had a broad and diverse curriculum, covering various subjects such as philosophy, religion, literature, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, law, etc. The students could choose their field of interest and specialization according to their aptitude and inclination. The present education system has a more standardized and uniform curriculum, following the guidelines of the central and state boards of education. The students have to study a common set of subjects till a certain level, and then opt for streams such as science, commerce, arts, etc. The ancient Indian education system used Sanskrit as the medium of instruction for most of the subjects, as it was considered the language of the gods and the scholars. However, there were also other languages such as Pali, Prakrit, etc., that were used for some subjects and regions. The present education system uses English as the medium of instruction for most of the subjects. The ancient Indian education system had different types of institutions such as gurukuls, ashrams, viharas, universities, etc., where the students lived with their teachers and learned from them in a close and intimate relationship. The students had to follow strict rules of discipline and conduct, and respect their teachers as their parents. The present education system has different types of institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, coaching centers, etc., where the students attend classes with their teachers and learn from them in a formal and structured relationship. The students have to follow certain rules of attendance and performance, and respect their teachers as their mentors.

The education system of ancient India has its own merits and demerits, and ancient education system was superior to improve the quality and relevance of education in India. From above discussion it is clear that the pupils learned different subjects that are important from the

significance of life and spirituality The gurus taught everything from language, literature, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, law, ethics, art, music, and martial arts. The Vedic teachings as well as Buddhist were for the disciple to attain wisdom.

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