

VEDIC EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

There was a Vedic education system in ancient times in India; it has tried to analyze how this system was in this research paper. Teacher and student relations were deep in this education system. Students had to live in Gurukul for taking full education.

Keywords: Vedic Education, India

Introduction

History of Indian Education starts from the Vedic Times. Vedic education laid down the foundation of Indian education laying down the meaning and ideals and specifying the agencies. It was carried on with further improvements through post Vedic period, the period of Brahmanas and the period of Dharmasastras. This system was the Hindu system of education.

The Vedic Education:

The ancient Indian education was even more developed by the Upanishads. While in the field of religion the Upanishads were more introvert and monistic, they continued the tradition of the Vedas, This tradition was oral. In the words of Radhakumud Mookerjee, “For thousands of years, even up to the time Kumarila (8th century A.D.) it was considered a sacrilege to reduce the Veda to writing, for learning was not reading but realization, and knowledge was to be in the blood, as an organic part of ones self. Another point to be noted in this connection is that sabda or word by itself has its own potency and value, apart from its sense, and its intrinsic attributes, its rhythm.

Agencies of Education:

According to ancient Indian philosophy knowledge may be gained by three steps, Shravana or hearing, Mana or Mediation and nididhyasan or realization.

Shravan or hearing was further categorized into six types –

1. **Upakarama**, a formal ceremony performed preceding the study of Veda,

2. **Abhyasa**, recitation of the texts,
3. **Apurvata**, a ready grasp of the meaning,
4. **Phala**, a comprehension of the outcome,
5. **Arthavada**, the reading of elucidatory books, and
6. **Upapatti**, attainment of final conclusion.

Describing the condition of education in ancient India P.N. Prabhu has said, “Education in ancient India was free from any external control like that of the State of Government or any party politics. It was one of the king’s duties to see that the learned pundits pursued their studies and their duty of imparting knowledge without interference from any source whatever. So also education did not suffer from any communal interest or prejudices in India.” There were three agencies of education.

1. **Gurukula** : This, as the name indicates, was the family of the teacher and his residence where the students used to stay during the period of study. Gradually, the Gurukul as were extended to include a number of buildings. However, the institution was built up around the family of the teacher. The primary duty of the student was to serve the teacher and his family. The students were like sons of the teacher and the whole institution lived like a family.
2. **Parishad**: These were bigger educational institutions where several teachers used to teach different subjects. This may be compared to a college.
3. **Sammelan**: Sammelan literary means getting together for the particular purpose. In this type of educational institutions scholars gathered at one place for discussions and competitions generally on the invitation of the king.

Discipline

The Vedic system of education very much emphasized the importance of the discipline in the attainment of knowledge. This, however, was self-discipline. In fact, it was self-control which was realized by observance of rules of the Brahmacharya ashram. These rules will be discussed in details in sequence. The Parishads or the local academies were initiated by the king. Therefore, the scholars and the aspirants of knowledge gathered at the parishads with a perfect academic order. There was hardly any need for insisting upon rules and regulations as these were laid down by scriptures. No one questioned the scripture’s command concerning discipline. Therefore, discipline was self-imposed as a part of self-culture.

Centers of Vedic Education:

Since the very beginning there were two forms of Vedic education: Verbal self-study, and meditation. Vedic hymns were preserved for hundreds of years. Vedic Rishis used to cause their sons and grandsons learning hymns by heart. The families of the Rishis were the pathshalas where their sons and grandsons studied. The shape and form of the rituals developed gradually and various methods and systems were introduced, resulting in the admission of other children also as disciples. These were considered as good as their sons. This spiritual education was aided by the ideal background of practical knowledge.

Education in Post Vedic Age:

Post-Vedic period extends between 1400 B.C. to 600 B.C, or from the end of Rigvedic period to the beginning of Buddhism and Jainism. In Vedic period austerity and sacrifices had a prominent place. With the spread of Vedic culture. The sacrificial rituals dominated and the Brahman priests gained the highest position in Indian Society. The priests were divided into four categories to carry out the ritual duties as follows:-

- a. Hotri. They were also called 'Hota' and they used to recite the prayers of Indra, Agni, Varuna, etc. In their invitational prayers they visualized the Gods.
- b. Udgata. These priests recited only the 'Mantras' of 'Soma Yajana'
- c. Adhwarya. These priests performed different practical duties of the rituals.
- d. Brahman. These priests looked after all the activities of the rituals.

Prominent of the rituals influenced post Vedic education system. The general aim of Vedic education was to serve the means of 'salvation' i.e. 'Moksha'. Even in Brahmanic age, this very aim remained intact. But it naturally got more connected with rituals. The ritual system and activities, with their practical knowledge, took place of 'self realization and austeric-meditation' in the Brahmanic age. Vedic students began to lay stress on it. This new development had adverse effect on spiritual meditation, yet it led to a substantial improvement in education. It resulted in the discoveries of various new spheres of knowledge. Physical Science, Handicrafts, Geometry, Arithmetic and Astronomy, etc. were improved to a great extent. Shaping of materials, selection of place, construction of Alta (Vedic) and their measurement, proportional shaping and decision of suitable time and place for the rituals were responsible for this learning. Physiology was also introduced side-by-side. Practical and useful subjects in Post-Vedic

period increased the importance of Brahmanic education. Brahmanas, Aranyakas and 'Upanishads' were mostly developed in Post-Vedic period through these sources.

Education in Brahmanas

Vedas are divided into two parts, namely, Samhita, the collection of Mantras and Brahmanas in which these mantras have been explained. The main aim of Brahmanas was to give details of the sacrifices (Yajnas). Brahmana-Books have been sub-divided into three Sections-Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads. The spiritual aspects of sacrifices are dealt with in Aranyakas and they are useful for Vanprastha, Ashram, when people spend their lives in lonely forests. Higher spiritual study of these books was possible only in places distant from the humdrum of life. But Brahmanas were useful for common people. Upanishads were the last part of Vedic literature, they are called 'Vedanta'.

In Vedic Samhitas- Rigveds, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda were followed by Brahmanas. Some scholars have found the seeds of Vedangas in the Brahmanas.

The Brahmanas and Aranyakas vary according to the branches of every Veda. Aitereya and Kushutki are the two Brahmanas of Rigveda, out of which Aitereya is very prominent. In the same way Aitereya Aranyaka and Sankhyayana are the two Aranyakas of Rigveda. Samaveda has many Brahmanas and Tashandhi is considered to be the best among them. It is also Panchvinash Taittiriya Brahman and Tattariya Aranyaka are related to black Yajurveda, whereas the famous Shatpatha Brahmana is related to Shukla Yajurveda. It is considered to be the most important after Rigveda. Gopatha Brahman is related to Atharvaveda. It is considered to be a new work on Brahmanic literature.

Education is Dharma Shastras

The First of the four ashramas is Brahmacharya ashrama. It starts with the Upanayana ceremony. Brahmacharya means the leading of the life according to Brahman. In this Ashram the student of Brahmachari spent 25 years with his teacher studying the Vedas and leading a life of self-control. The education and control of the Brahmacharya prepared a person for future life. Certain rules and observances are prescribed for all brahmacharins. They are of two kinds, some are prescribed for all brahmacharins. They are of two kinds, some are prescribed for a very short time and some have to be observed for all the years of studenthood. The first kind of observances were generally concerned with studies. The second kind of observances i.e., those which have to be observed throughout this period were concerned with the daily routine and general discipline of the persons in this stage of life. Of the two the later were definitely more important. These are principally achamana, gurususrusa, vaksamyama (silence), samindadhana. The smritis have laid down detailed rules about these observances. The rules centre principally around agniparicarya (worshipping fire), bhiksha (begging for food), samdhyopasana, study of Veda and its methods and duration, avoidance of certain foods and drinks and other matters like singing, etc., gurususrusa (including honouring him and his family and other elders), and the special vratas of the brahmachari. The rules about brahmacharya ashrama.

Conclusion

Vedic education in India was only for Brahmin and Kshatriya. But this education system was very important because they were fully educated. Students were taught education from Gurukul, Ashram, Sammelan and in other ways, prominently in the four Vedas - Rigveda, Samveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda, along with this art of warfare in this game, along with social sciences, psychology, anthropology, Physiology, other education was given. But this education could only be done in Gurukul and Ashram.

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