

A Conceptual and Philosophical Approach Towards Educational System from an Ancient Indian Perspective

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Abstract:

An effort has been made to discover in this paper is the philosophy of educational systems from an Ancient Indian perspective. On this topic, many articles have written by several academics on this subject from a number of perspectives, but a limited number of articles have been written from a standpoint of philosophical, historical, and the Ancient perspective. Resultantly, this article not only aims to fill in the gaps in literature, but also aspires to provide an insight on educational philosophy from the Ancient Indian perspective. In the Indian context, the origin of education can be traced from the Vedic literatures such as the Valmiki Ramayana, the Mahabharata (includes the Bhagavad-Gita) and the Puranas. The foundation of this paper revolves around hermeneutics, which are a qualitative research methodology involving the studying, understanding and interpretation of ancient text. With the help of the aforementioned methodology, authors disclose some ancient lessons on today's educational system. The aim of this paper is to knowing the Educational System of Ancient India. In the ancient times, two education systems i.e. Vedic and Buddhist were developed by them and their sole purposes were self-control, propagation of purity, development of character, personality development, social awareness and preservation of the culture for youth.

Keywords: Ancient Indian literatures, Vedic period, Kautilya's Arthashastra, education

Introduction

The ancient educational system was very unique in characteristics. There was a gurukul (ashram) in vedic time period, It was a kind of school. The system was based on the Vedas and purans. There were two main educational system were working vedic system and Buddhist system. The sansikrat was the enlightening language of vedic and pali was Buddhist educational language. Ancient educational system has been a unique educational system in the world.¹ Educational system Vedic and Buddhist were developed by them and their main purposes were the distinctiveness control, development of their personality, Social awareness, propagation of purity of inner self and the preservation of culture for their youth. Music, dancing, vocational training for women was also part of education in ancient times.

Ancient education system is source of motivation for the other educational system of the world as they promote the values of life to groom the personality of individuals. The knowledge seekers went to the Gurus for enlighten. The age of education was different for different castes. One Veda was taught in twelve years of long period. The session was started with the special rite on the full month of sharvana.

The Vedas are the Holy books for Hindus and for them it is very important to learn them by heart. These books are translated in almost every language of the world. It is said that Vedas are the books of gods to talk to their creature. The correct pronunciation of Mantras (hymns) have significant place not only in Hindu Dharam but also in the History of mankind. The Vedas are somehow same even today. The hymns are being continuously repeated by students of Vedas. Vedas and purans were the sources of knowledge. Their cultural education lies in the

1- Rug veda:

It consists on religious text and was compiled in 1500-1000 BCE it has 1028 hymns which equally divided in 10 mandalas. . It is the foundation of all vedic literature consist mainly of lyrics in praise of different gods, mainly Indra,Varuna and Agni.

2- Yajur Veda:

The factual meaning of yajurveda is rituals. It consists on customs, compromises and sacrifices to be conducted to pacify gods and goddesses. Slaughter ceremonies, the mantras and religious obligations are written on yajur Veda. It also explain the offerings through Agni (fire).

3- Sam veda:

The meaning of Samveda is "song" the verses are in this veda which are sung by the followers. There are seven notes. Which are "Sa" "Re" "Ga" "Ma" "Pa" "Da" "Ni" and these are the basis of classical music which now a days existing in Subcontinent. These verses are actually to give the liberation of soul by stimulating the energy centers (Chakras) in the human body. The music is called the vital form in human soul.

4- Athar veda:

It holds the constructive rituals to accomplish worldly pleasure. The cure of different diseases are also written in this veda that how to get rid of them, how to remove the sins and seek forgiveness, how to attain wealth and power. It has its long lasting affects it also contains the different subjects like Medicine, Science, Mathematics, engineering, technology.²

Objectives of Vedic Education

Education was not only book learning process at that times but inner eye opener for the shishak (Students) the Gurus were appointed to guide them the spiritual and divine life. To make the students cultural, civilized, refined and polished and traditions of society the norms of community were also taught them.

- (1) Physical and intellectual growth
- (2) Religious and spiritual learning
- (3) Prominence leading knowledge & experiences
- (4) Sublimation of instinct
- (5) Conservation and spread of culture
- (6) Endorsement of social efficiency happiness
- (7) Growth of character and personality
- (8) Immediate and ultimate answer

The word '*VEDA*' means 'Knowledge' i.e. the sacred, spiritual knowledge'. This word is derived from '*VID*' which means 'to know' It is a collection of literature which had mature in course of many countries and were orally handed over from one generation to another.³

Fundamentals of Ancient Education:

(1) School hours:

In the ancient school system the duration of school was 7-8 hour per day. The students had to come to school on time. The gurus are fully aware of their duty and they teach the Vedas to the students like religious responsibility. The students had their curriculum.

(2) Close Contact:

The teachers were the spiritual fathers of the students they enjoyed a very strong bond. The close connection of students and teachers are the best example you can find in the history of education. The guru is everything for the students if the pupil is ill the guru is doctor if he is poor the guru is responsible for his food cloth and

he had to feed him. They consider him like his own child. These students also regarded their teachers as their parents.

(3) Emphasizing Discipline:

The students had to observe severe set of laws and regulations. The discipline was also very important in the educational life. The obedience was essential as it was the part and partial of religion. A student was asked to give up all the bad habits; lust, annoyance, greed, backbiting, vanity, conceit, arrogance.⁴ They were prohibited to play gamble, gossip, lie, to hurt the feelings of others, they were not allowed to dance singing a song, they had no permission of touching the other sex or killing the animals.

(4) Low standard relationship of teacher pupil:

The relationship between the students and the teachers were very low in the schools and colleges. The individuals were given more attention. The numbers of students were very low but under definite circumstances the enrolments increased, the teacher required to cooperate with students. There were sharp boys as monitors in class who kept discipline in absence of teachers.

(5) Respect the Child's Personality:

The punishment had no place in their Asharam. The students were treated very politely by their teachers. They were very sympathetic with them, teachers talk to them with love and respect, the self-respect of students were not crushed by the gurus.⁵

(6) Providing Free Education:

Education was freely completely. The student was never asked to pay fees. There was perfection of complete autonomy. The outsider was allowed to interfere in the educational matters. The school system was very simple, no politics or benefits were permissible. The student had to pay nothing in return of his education. The wealth was not much important than talent was, if student had desired to offer a cow, goat, horse or vegetables to his gurus according to their financial conditions in their community.⁶ They can but they were not compelled to do so. Teachers serve them as they are the ladders to their students.

Salient features of Ancient educational system for Modern Education:

The study of the Vedas has been restricted to some professionals in these days that have not even a secured a proper place in community. Vedas are the roots of modern educational system. The Veda is actually about the religion of Hindus and to recognize the god. According to the Hindu dharma this is completely based on truth.

The Ancient educational system is working as the ladder for modern system.⁷ There are still many elements of Ancient Education which can be find out the proper place in Modern Education both theoretically and practically.

1. Idealism:

In this modern era we are already proud of our culture and civilization of our forefathers and the legacy they gave to us. In ancient times our ancestors gave much importance to their religion, customs, traditions, character building, spiritualism, philosophy rather than wealth, materialism, and scientific materials. The era of this present modern world gives us an admiration to our prosperity, power violence, our assets and traditions and diplomatic relationships whereas we rely in reality and facts, non-violence and degradation. We still believe in idealism and wish to lead an ideal life.

2. Discipline in relationship of Teacher pupil:

The act of discipline and the friendly, cooperative and gracious relationship between teacher and pupil of Vedic age has been known to the world. Now days, we can see that the educational atmosphere has become so poisonous due to indiscipline manners which has become the unsolvable issue.⁸ The matter of discipline should be developed with the ideal relationship of teacher and the pupil, which based on friendly and cooperative relations.

The courses of studies were conducted in Sanskrit language. There were many subjects which were taught there like; humanity, promotion of peace, universal toleration and brotherhood, which should be the important part of today's courses of studies.

3. The Method of Teaching:

The method of teaching in ancient time, the Shravan (Listening), the Manan (meditation) and the Nididhyaana (realization) were very popular and common. The knowledge, questioning and its answers, dialogue, discussion in lectures and the method of debate were very common in those days.⁹ These types of methods should be still used in our educational institutions properly and there are certain trainings in which the teachers were trained to get the education of how to teach the students on the basis of ancient style of teaching.

4. Simple Life of Students:

In the Vedic time period, the pupil or learners were very simple and they lead a very decent life. They were not aware of today's fashion and the life style of this generation, their motto was to get themselves educated and to learn the social norms of the society. The new production wanted to lead luxurious life style which has been given up the principle of simple life style and high thinking of morale.¹⁰ Therefore, it should be realizing the importance of the ancient life style and specially their educational institutions in order to make the life of the pupil and learners healthy and smooth both mentally and physically.

The major plan was fundamental and the development and growth of child in Ancient Indian educational system. It should be the main point in our modern educational institutions. They emphasized the intellectual development and propagation as well as their spiritual point of view, because it provided their pupil a complete peaceful, calm, clean, attractive and proper natural environment far away from town and villages where nobody's, interference to disturb their learning process.¹¹

5. Principle of Equality:

The learners either a rich or a poor, a prince or a common man were treated in a same way. And in this modern time, this principle of equality should be applied in our educational institutions. After all, now days this type of practice is difficult to find out because of this materialistic world in which almost all private, government and professional educational institutions ignored and neglected this principle of equality for all the students at a same time, practically.

6. Education for Self-sufficiency:

The ancient schools pursued the standard of education for self-sufficiency. The educational institutions were not very big space. The learners made to produce their food materials themselves under the help of their guiders. The modern education focused on organizing the students for their future life on professional basis. Professional courses have been integrated in order to professionalize the education.¹² But so much effort is required to be done in that course in order to attain this preferred plan.

7. Universalization of education:

Education was free and universal. The students were not demanded any fee, they were not compelled to pay any fee; it was up to them after attaining the knowledge or completing their degree if they want they can pay. The education was completely free; these arrangements were made to spread the education. After all, it can be said that the education of Vedic time period has its significance and valued our in Modern time.

Main Characteristics of Educational System:

In Vedic time period, the learning had a well-known space in the world. It had been measured as an important factor for a community. According to Aryans, the education was the only mean to obtain wealth in the fields of bodily, psychologically, spirituality and socially growth.¹³ Education was obligation for everyone to become a cultured person. If someone is uneducated he was considered as uncultured and animal like thing. Education was a tool to present new ways of knowledge to us. Education shows our hidden qualities, inner beauties and guides the people to attain Salvation.

1. Knowledge, an awareness:

Education is not only knowledge but awareness. Education is a man's third eye. The meaning of this saying is that the education is a tool which opens the inner eye of man. Education is a spiritual and a divine light. Education is necessary for the developments of all sphere of human life. The education leads to the expansion of a personality character building. The word "Veda" derived from the word "vid" which simply carries the meaning of knowledge.¹⁴

2. Purpose of Education:

The vital endeavor of education in Ancient Indian was not only knowledge but as training for existence in this globe or for further life. But for absolute understanding of ourselves is to free our soul and spirit from the chains of life both the present and the future.

During that time of period, education had an idealistic approach, where the gurus gave the pressure on the worship of God, spiritualism, mysticism, character building, improvement of behavior, creating an aptitude for the growth of culture and civilization and for the nation and society.¹⁵

However, the instant plan of education was to prepare the different castes and sects of people for their actual life through the professional education for achieving the examination and getting a degree. The aim was ethical, sacred, religious, moral and

spiritual. As the discipline is concerned it was not external at all but also self-discipline.

3. Instruction methods:

It was a center of learners for education. There were many method of instruction for teaching. There were several methods which were adopted. Teachers were appointed to read in front of student and then explain them. Narration (story telling) was also adopted as it was the simplest method for learner. There were no classrooms but there were monitors, the senior students were nominated as the juniors of teachers and they were responsible to take care of class and maintain the disciplining in the absence of gurus. Thinking and reflections was the base of education in ancient times.¹⁶ There was also oral method of instruction students have to memorize the hymns of Veda and the next day they had to recite in front of class. Special emphasis was on right pronunciations.

Another part of the teaching method was philosophy. This method was prefer to give confidence to the bright students. They guided them to make research. Similarly in the ancient days, especially the method of Manan (Reflection) was adopted for highly intelligent and sharp students. The educational foundations had been administered and organized by Brahmans, the highest caste of Hindus, and all the books which were taught to students were written in Sanskrit language. Therefore, the medium of instruction was also Sanskrit language.

4. The 'Upanayana' Ritual:

This word "upnayana" literal meanings "to take close to, or to being in touch with" education was considered very holy thing that there was witnesses a ceremony which was celebrated in honor of teacher. It was called "upniyana" and the ceremony was performed only for Brahmin, Khashtari, Vaish students at the age of 8, 11, 12 but the Shudara's were side apart.¹⁷ It was the signal for students to come into the educational life from childhood. Upanaya means to create ba cooperative relation between the student and the teacher. But with the passage of time, this ceremony was confined to the Brahmin class only.

5. Celibacy or Brahamacharya

It was compulsory for every student to observe celibacy in his precise path of life. The conduct of transparency was regarded as the supreme importance. There were restrictions in getting education that only a unmarried can get education. There was a special uniform for the student called girdle (makhla) its quality also according to the caste or sect of the student or learner. Brahmins, who was the upper class of Hindu caste system, wore a girdle of moonj that is grass, the second class of Hindu caste system was kshatriyas, who wore string gut-taanta and the third class of Hindu caste system was vaishyas, who wore a girdle made of wool.¹⁸ These clothes were made up of silk and wool etc. Those students were not allowed to make use of fragrant, cosmetic or many other types of stimulating things etc.

6. Alms System:

It was a duty of every student to tolerate the accountability of both teacher and himself. For this purpose they have to beg the alms and it was not considered bad because at that time it was the responsibility of student to earn livelihood. This practice was to induce modesty among them. Begging was compulsory and unavoidable.

7. Status and Service of the Teacher:

Teachers had a very high status in the society. They were respected by the every person of community. The kings were also under their commands. They were honored by the people. They were regarded as they were the gods.¹⁹ Teachers were also very humble with students they behave like they were their parents and they treated their students like their own. The relationship between students and teachers was very cordial; the disrespect of the teacher was considered a sin. It was the duty of students to maintain water and different daily chores of the gurukul.

8. Individual development:

The development of a child personality and his character was the main purpose of their education. Every teacher devoted himself to be an integral part in the development of each student. The teacher focused the physical and intellectual

improvement of his student. And the most attention was devoted to the individual development of every student, but there was no provision for the education of the incapable, especially those who were lacking in mental and moral qualities.

9. Equal Opportunities

In that era, the education was free for all of those who want to get education on their desires, wishes and needs because there were no differences among their caste, sect, creed, or colour etc.²⁰ All the students of that community received education on an equal basis without any discrimination.

Conclusion:

The ancient system of education in India was consisted of indigenous system, curriculum and social organization. The ancient education was also furnished by the indigenous teachers or pundits through the vernacular scientific and religious curriculum with the role of a simple teaching method. The Patshalas, Mendars and Gurukals were used as training centers for indigenous or vernacular education. The course of study of the schools consisted of both spiritual and secular scientific subjects of that time. Most of these foundations were set up in the houses of elites, who practiced to hold these institutions with financial aids. In these institutions Pundits (Brahmans) and Gurus were appointed as teachers to deliver religious and cultural knowledge to the children. They were also appointed at homes for the religious or basic education of girls and boys and paid or awarded with gifts, money or land by the rulers and parents. The indigenous schools were handled by the major communities of Hindus and the elites as well. Thus, it was a unique system of education which continued for a long time and produced many religious as well as modern scholars of their time in the ancient India.

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