



EDUCATION SYSTEM IN VEDIC AGE

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ABSTRACT:

Learning in ancient India was imparted by the teachers, who were addressed by the term 'gurus'. The gurus imparted knowledge and information to the students, who gathered around them and came to live with them in their house as members of the family. Such a place was termed as Gurukul. The Gurukul was primarily a domestic school or the ashram, where learning of the students was developed by the guru, who gave personal instruction and attention to the students. In this period, education was primarily regarded as the privilege of the upper castes. Learning was an intimate relationship between the teacher and the pupil, called the Guru-Shishya Parampara. The process of learning normally began with a religious ceremony, called 'Upanayana', it was a sacred thread ceremony.

KEYWORDS:

GURUKUL, UPANAYANA, ASHRAM, EDUCATION SYSTEM.

INTRODUCTION:

Education was normally imparted orally. It included memorization of texts like Vedas and Dharmashastras, completely or partially. Later subjects like Grammar, Logic, and Metaphysics were taught and studied. The Maitrayani Upanishad teaches the individuals that the supreme knowledge (gyan) is the result of learning (vidya), reflection (chintan) and austerities (tapas). Through introspection (atma vishleshana), one was to realise goodness (Satva), purity of mind and satisfaction of the soul in phases. During this time, self-education was regarded as the proper method of attaining the highest knowledge. The best example of this can be found in the Taittiriya Upanishad, where Bhrgu, son of Varuna, approaches his father and asks him to educate him regarding Brahmana. The father tells him to find this out through meditation. Therefore, meditation is regarded as one of the most imperative areas of self-education.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is theoretical in nature. The study used primary and secondary source of data. Method followed in this study was content analysis. Various sacred books of Vedas were analysed and sorted to trace out valuable information. Famous writings of many renowned scholars were also taken into analysis. Then sorted information were synthesised to reach a meaningful conclusion.

DISCUSSION:

The Rig-Veda, in the form in which we have it now, is a compilation out of old material, a collection and selection of 1,017 hymns out of the vast literature of hymns, which have been accumulating for a long period. When the Rigvedic texts were thus fixed and appropriated

for purposes of the Samhita, its editors had to think out the principles on which the hymns could be best arranged. These show considerable literary skill, originality of design, and insight into religious needs. Rishis were chosen, who seers of truth. Their works were utilized to constitute six different Mandalas. These Rishis are Gritsamada, Visvamisra, Vamadeva, Atri, Bharadvaja, and Vasistha.

When the highest knowledge was thus built up by these Seers and revealed and stored up in the hymns, there the methods were then necessarily evolved by which such knowledge could be acquired, conserved, and transmitted to posterity. Thus, every Rishi was a teacher who would start by imparting to his son the texts of the knowledge he had personally acquired and such texts would be the special property of his family. Each such family of Rishis was thus functioning like a Vedic school admitting pupils for instruction in the literature or texts in its possession. The relations between teacher and taught was well established in the Rig Veda. The methods of education naturally varied with the capacity of pupils. Self-realization by means of tapas would be for the few. It is believed that these sages, by virtue of their Tapas or asceticism and Yoga, were gifted with the vision of a clairvoyant, capable of knowing about the past, present and the future.

The system of education, which evolved in the Rigveda concerns itself with the acquisition of the Supreme knowledge, religion and Brahma. The aim of the Veda was the knowledge of the Ultimate Truth and the realization of the Supreme.

The students started the recitation of the Vedic hymns in early hours forming. The chanting of Mantras had been evolved into the form of a fine art. Special attention was paid to the correct pronunciation of words,

Pada or even letters. The Vedic knowledge was imparted by the Guru or the teacher to the pupil through regulated and prescribed pronunciation, which the pupil would commit to memory, having listened to it alternatively. Only that knowledge, which was received from the lips of the teacher, was regarded as purely Vedic. Thus, the teaching was oral.

Various subjects were incorporated in the curriculum of Vedic education. Grammar, rhetoric, astrology, logic, Nirukti (etymological interpretation of words) was the main subjects. Vedanga was the synonym of all these subjects taken together- the performance of sacrifice, correct pronunciation, knowledge of prosody, etymology, grammar, and jyotishi or the science of calendar. The study of logic occupied a special place, because knowledge of any other subject was tested on its basis. Debates and discussions were organized for training in logic.

Though the Rigvedic education, being essentially religious and philosophical in character, was imparted only to those who were fit to make quest of Eternal Truth and acquire Supreme knowledge, yet there was arrangement for secular education and vocational training for the masses. The people would receive training in diverse arts and crafts for material gain. Agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry attained to a high norm of progress. Thus, we can safely conclude that secular, social and practical form of education was in existence during the Rigvedic age.

Some special features of the educational system of the Rigvedic age may be summed up as follows-

The admission was made by the formal ceremony Upanayana or initiation by which the pupil left the home of his natural parents for that of the preceptor. In this new home he had a second birth and was called Divya or twice born.

The pupil was eligible to admission to the preceptor's house only on the basis of his moral fitness and unimpeachable conduct.

The discipline of brahmacharya or celibacy was compulsory. Though a married youth was entitled to get education, yet he was denied the right of being the residential pupil.

It was one of the sacred duties of the pupil to serve his preceptor. He pledged devotion to him in thought, speech and deed and worshipped him as his own father or God. Pupils who neglected their duties were debarred from education and expelled from the institution.

Brahman-Sangh was an organization where meritorious students were given chances to fulfil their quest of higher knowledge. These Sanghs may be compared to the seminars of the modern times.

There was equality between the sexes in the field of knowledge. The Rig Veda mentions women Rasis called Brahmanavadinis.

Princes and other leading Kshatriyas were trained

in all the manifold sciences to make them fit for government. Most boys of the lower orders learnt their trades from their fathers. Some cities became renowned because of their teachers. Chief among them were - Varanasi, Taxila from the day of Buddha and Kanchi in the beginning of the Christian era. Varanasi was famous for its religious teachers. Taxila was known for its secular studies. Among the famous men connected with Taxila was Panini, the grammarian of the fifth or fourth century B.C.: Kautilya, the Brahmin minister of Chandragupta Maurya and Charaka one of the two leading authorities of Indian medical sciences. The institutions imparted Vedic knowledge that exists even today. There were also universities like Taxila and Ujjain for medicine and learning including mathematics and astronomy respectively. In the south Kanchi became an important centre of learning.

In the Rigvedic period occupations were not dependent on Varna system. At that time the nature of education was religious; but this sort of education was meant only for those persons who, rising above the mundane interests, were capable of attaining spiritual heights. Ordinary people were still engaged to advance the material well-being of the society. This age is exemplary for its economic, political and religious progress and famous for various arts and crafts, agriculture, commerce and trade. It thus, leads to the inevitable inference that the period must have evolved an elaborate system of vocational, scientific and commercial education.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, the ideal of the Vedic education was lofty. Ample opportunities were provided to the pupil for the development of his personality. The preceptors took personal care of the pupils, which resulted inevitably in a multi-dimensional development. The educational system of Vedic period achieved a pronounced success in connection with character- formation, development of personality, and contribution to knowledge in all branches of learning as well as social well being and material prosperity. The Vedic education was essentially spiritual and religious in character, yet it did not ignore the material aspect, the evidence whereof is available in the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda. Thus it points unmistakably to the future evolution of Aryan culture.

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