

# EDUCATION SYSTEM IN VEDIC PERIOD

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**Abstract:** *The teacher-taught relationship was very cordial and thus like the Father-son relationship during Vedic age educational history of India can be divided into several epics each having a characteristics educational pattern of its own. The chronological limits of these epochs may be considered to coincide with ancient, medieval and modern Indian including post independence era. The ancient India education emerged from the Vedas, because the Vedas are the source of Indian Philosophy of life. Veda means knowledge. During this period education was divided into two kinds of knowledge this worldly and other worldly. This worldly education dealt with the social aspect, whereas, the other worldly education was related to intellectual pursuits for achieving salvation. The main objective of Vedic education was the development of physical, moral and intellectual powers of main and to achieve salvation much emphasis was laid on attention, concentration and Yoga. Education was free of cost and the students led an exemplary life in Vedic system of education.*

**Keywords:** Chronological limits, Worldly education, Salvation, Exemplary life, etc.

## I.INTRODUCTION

The education system which was evolved first in ancient India is known as the Vedic system of education. In other words, the ancient system of education was passed on the Vedas and therefore it was given the name of Vedic Educational System. Vedas occupy a very important place in the Indian Life. The basis of Indian culture lies in the Vedas which are four in number- Rig-Veda, Samveda, Yajurveda, and Athareveda. 'Some scholars have subdivided Vedic Education period in Rigveda period, Brahmin Period, Upanishada period, Sutra (Hymn) period, Smriti period etc but all these period, due to predominance of the Vedas, there was no change in the aims and ideals of education. That is why, the education of these periods, is studied under Vedic period. "Swadesh Pujiyate Raja, Vidwan Sarvatra, Pujiyate" This verse widely quoted in India illustrates the significance of education in India. The education system of Vedic period has unique characteristics and qualities which were not found in the ancient education system of any other country of the world. Accordingly to Dr. F.E. Key To achieve their aim not only did Brahmans develop a system of education which, survived even in the events of the crumbling of empires and the changes of society, but they, also through all those thousands of years, kept a glow of torch of higher learning. In the words of Dr. P.N. Prabhu "Education in ancient India was free from any external control like that of the state and government or any party politics. It was the kings duties to see that learned Pundits, pursued their studies and performed their duty of imparting knowledge without interference from any source what so ever.

The education system that prevailed during the Vedic times has some unique characteristics. Education was confined to the upper castes, and to those who were BRAHMACHARIS. In Indian tradition, a person's life cycle is divided into four stages of which BRAHMACHARI is the second phase. This is the time set aside for learning and acquiring skills. During Vedic

period, most of the upper castes, which were either Brahmins or Kshatriyas had their education in a unique system called GURUKULAM, students had their education by living with their preceptors in forests far removed from cities, towns or villages. The life of students who were called SHISYAS was very rigorous and demanding. Those who failed to live up to these high standards would slimly fall by the wayside. There were legendary acharyas like Sanandeevani and Dronacharya who taught epic heroes like Krishna and Arjuna martial skills, but what makes the Vedic period unique is the existence of sages like Gautama and Jaimini who were founder of different schools of Indian philosophy like Nyaya and Purva Mimamsa. This was a period of intense intellectual activity and speculation, which we hardly find even now. There were of two types of Brahmacharis who attended such Gurukulams they were; Upakurvana Brahmachari who remains a student for a limited time period after which he marries and becomes a household and Naishthika Brahmachari who remains a student and celibate throughout life dedicated to the pursuit of learning.

## II. SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

At the early stages the demand for education among the people was not so prominent. The system of education which was prevalent was altogether different from what is today. Somewhere in the hoary past a band of selfless, devoted persons converted their forest homes into schools, away from the haunts of din and distractions of the material world and engaged with teaching work exclusively with single minded devotees. These institutions were situated in the calm and serene atmosphere of the hills and forest. At the beginning the priest or the Brahmanic class inherited and transmitted the traditions and the folk lore to the succeeding generation. In the early Vedic schools instruction was confined to young Brahmanic and was regarded mainly as a preparation for their future vocation as priests. Learning was almost monopolized by the Brahmins. They formed a very small section of the society. As time passed on, the other two castes, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, were also entitled to knowledge. In the initial stage of the Vedic Education Caste system had not assumed strict rigidity. Even then the Sutras in general were denied the privileges of studying the Holy Scriptures, with the passage of time, the aptitude or fitness of an individual to receive a particular kind of education was kept above all considerations of caste and status. But to give instruction was the exclusive privilege of the Brahmins. This marked the throwing influence of the priesthood. During the period most of the vocations that people in general followed did not require any learning, as such except the informed training that they received at home through observation and imitations. Therefore, the demand for education came from a limited section of the society. So there was no necessity of an elaborate organization of education.

## III. CURRICULUM

The beginning of education was marked by the 'Upanayana' a ceremony which was generally performed at a prescribed age level. The age limit was varying from caste to caste. It was eight year, eleventh year and twelfth year, respectively for Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The studentship lasted usually for twelve Years. The then prevalent system of education was not merely theoretical. It was related to the realities of life. Various branches of learning were incorporated in the curriculum. The subjects of teachings were Philosophy, Grammar, Astrology and Logic. In the teaching of languages, emphasis was laid on proper pronunciation and grammar. Along with theoretical aspect of the Curriculum, the practical aspects of education was given due importance. There was proper Co-ordination between the timed

practical aspects of the curriculum. Through different subjects and attempt was made to make the student capable of experiencing the supreme truth himself and to would the society accordingly. The pupil's residence in teacher's house helped them to develop social contacts. It was considered as sacred duty on the part of the pupils to collect fuel-wood, supply water and do other household odd jobs for the teacher in this way the pupils were receiving instructions related to domestic life and also learning the concrete lesson of the dignity of labour and social service. Besides, the pupils of ancient Indian were receiving valuable training in the occupations of animal husbandry, agriculture, dairy farming etc. by grazing the Cows of the Guru and serving him in various ways. The students' life was considered as the laboratory for the educational experimentation. As the pupils were residing in the house of the Gurus. They were begging alms for their own subsistence and also for the preceptor. This practice of begging alms by the pupils was to inculcate in them noble sentiment of humanitarian virtues. The motive behind this system was to sublimate the unruly passions and ego in the pupils, which enabled them to face the realities of life and helped in social integrations. It was considered a concrete lesson in the cultivation of virtues of self help and the sense of gratitude and duty towards the society. In the curriculum religious instruction was given much importance and religion permeated the whole scene of educations. Though the curriculum in vogue was essentially spiritual and religious in character, yet it did not ignore the material aspect.

#### **IV. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

It was a pupil centered education. No single method of instruction was adopted, though recitation by the pupil followed by explanation by the teacher was generally followed. Besides question-answer, Debate and Discussion, Storytelling was also adopted according to need. There was no classroom teaching, however monitorial system was prevalent and senior pupils were appointed to teach juniors. Travel was regarded as necessary to giving finishing touch to education so the methods of teaching generally practiced during Vedic period were mainly Mankik (oral) and other method was passed on Chinton/thinking and reflection. In the oral method the students were to memorize the mantras (Vedic Hymns) and Richayas (Versus of Rigveda) in order that there might not be changed wrongly and they might remain preserved in their original forms. Under the oral methods these prosodic were thoroughly taught on which Richayas happened to be based. Special emphasis was laid on the various lines of a particular verse, their pronunciation and meanings. In this oral method correct pronunciation was specially emphasized. For this instruction in grammar and pronunciation was compulsory for all. Thinking method was another part of the teaching method. Through this an attempt was made to preserve the Veda mantras (Vedic Hymns) and Richayas (Vedic Veses). Manan was higher method of teaching than thinking. Through Manan the meaning of Vedic mantras the meanings of Vedic Mantras were developed and preserved in one's own mind. This method was used to encourage the highly intelligent students by guiding them to make research, similarly in ancient days, Manan (Reflection) was a method specially adopted for highly intelligent students.

#### **V. TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONS.**

There existed small schools run by the teacher himself. The pupils were residing in the house of the Gurus. The moral fitness and unimpeachable conduct of the pupils were main criteria for admission in the domestic schools of the Gurus. Their mode of living was strictly guided by the prescribed disciplinary rules. The teacher was accepting very limited number of students. The



students were very polite and submissive in their behavior and held in high esteem. To obey the teacher was their duty the teacher had also tremendous sympathy and love for the students. The chief aim of the teacher was all round development of the personality of the students. The teacher was also commanding great respect in the society. He was honored and respect at all places. Starting from the kings and emperors to the most primitive tribes in the hills, all were paying great tribute to the teacher. Therefore, in the past the teacher-taught relationship was very cordial and intimate. The teacher was regarded as the main source of inspiration for the student. He was a model before the students. He was the symbol of purity. The teacher was also under obligation to fulfill his duty towards the pupil. Not only he loved the pupils as his own children but also he was giving full attention on the teaching. The teachers were discharging their duties and responsibilities exclusively with selfless and single-minded devotion.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In Vedic era education had the prominent place in society. It was considered as pious and important for society. Education was must for everybody for becoming cultured. Relationship between Guru and pupils were very cordial during Vedic and post-Vedic period. By means of education efforts were being made to infuse-Satyam Shivan and Sundaram inside the students. A great importance was attached to Veda in education system, self study Swadhyaya was considered more important during that period. The Vedic period favored women education. The ancient Indian education system was successful in preserving and spreading its culture and literature even without the help of art of writing. It was only because of the destruction of temples and monasteries by invaders that the literature was lost. The cultural unity that exists even today in the vast sub-continent is due to successful preservation and spread of culture. The education system infused a sense of responsibilities and social values. The ancient education system achieved its aims to the fullest extent.

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