



Education System in Ancient India

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Abstract

Education is the process of changing human behaviour in a way that is desired. Education serves as a platform of training and preparing the next generation. The education system of India is highly well-liked and varied in comparison to other nations' educational system because of its shift in the development of the educational system from ancient to present. Two educational systems- Buddhist and Vedic were created during the ancient era. They were located in tranquil surroundings, like a forest. Since they have been there for a long time, students view the gurukul as a second home.

The ancient Indian educational system and the modern Indian educational system are compared in this article. In this article, I will introduce and contrast some fundamental ideas about India's educational system from antiquity to the present. India had an extremely advanced educational system in the past, with many universities like Nalanda and Taxila. Numerous subjects, including mathematics, medical science, astronomy, politics, and the art of war, are taught to students at these universities. The Gurukul system served as the foundation for the ancient Indian educational paradigm, which combined topics like philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and the arts with an emphasis on spiritual education, moral principles, and holistic development. In contrast, institutionalized education with an emphasis on official degrees and competitive exams characterizes the contemporary Indian educational system, which was shaped by colonial and international trends. The study's objective is to determine the advantages and disadvantages of both systems, emphasizing how traditional methods might influence contemporary changes, especially in areas like holistic education, teacher-student connections, and value-based education.

Keywords: Ancient Education, Gurukul, Taxila, Nalanda, Vedic education, Buddhist education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Students in ancient education live apart from their parents and study a variety of courses, including politics, economics, physical education, and mental education. They were designed to be able to survive in any circumstance, regardless of how challenging it may be. The teacher and the learner always shared very tight contact and honesty in their understanding. The teacher was viewed as the role model since he was accepted by the community in which the pupil lived. Through daily lectures and workshops and practical labour, teachers provided vocational training and highlighted the dignity of employment. By producing skilled workers who will further industrial development, proper education will be crucial in preparing young people for the future and boosting economic progress. Every university or institution in the present era of education should utilize their teaching methodology to adapt new teaching techniques. The curriculum, overall development, and living standards of students have all changed in the current period of large institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs). The student's main purpose has been to simply succeed and reach its objective.

ANCIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

During the ancient time, two systems of learning were formed, Vedic and Buddhist. Sanskrit was the language used in the Vedic system, whilst Pali was used in the Buddhist system. The Vedas, the Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Dharmasutras were taught throughout the period. Our ancient education began with the goal of developing pupils' inner as well as exterior bodies, starting with the Rigveda. The ancient education centered on instilling ethics like kindness, truthfulness, rules, self-reliance, and honouring all creatures to the students. The majority of the education was given in homes, temples, gurukuls, and ashrams. Teacher is known as a Guru &

the students are known as Shishyas. They were situated in a calm environment such as a jungle. Women who became well-known Vedic scholars were Maitreyi, Viswambhara, Apala, Gargi, and Lopamudra. Education included learning the Vedas and fundamental skills like gathering wood and cooking.

In Brahminic time the methods of study became more and more scientific. Doubts had to be resolved by question, cross questioning and answers method. These approaches were described in a very intriguing manner by leveraging all the accessible sources viz. - artwork, storytelling, and parables. However, the Upanishads highlights that the student's labour, not the teacher's, was the primary component of education. Women were greatly regarded and respected in Brahminic time. They had the utmost extend of independence to create their personality. Women's participation in sacrificial rituals was a noteworthy aspect of the Brahminic era. The caste structure underwent a transformation throughout the Brahminic era. For the very first three classes, the studentship was available. The Brahmanas were got educated in the Veda and the various Sastras. However, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas came to view Vedic studies as inferior. The Brahmanas taught the Kshatriyas the Shatavidyā, the Niti shastra, or the Dhanurveda. The Vaishyas also learned handicrafts, dairy farming, cattle rearing, and agriculture.

Ancient Vedic Education

Vedic education is broadly categorised into two parts, Shruti and Smriti. Shruti are the texts 'that is heard' or product of 'Godly revelation' to the great sages while in meditation. Shruti included four Vedas (1. *Rig Veda*: oldest surviving text, hymns are dedicated to several deities, (Dhanurveda, Aiteraya, KaushitakiUpaveda); 2. *Sam Veda*: earliest book of music, Sama = melody, ragas and raginis, (Gandharva Veda, Tandya, SadavimshaUpaveda); 3. *Yajur Veda*: sacrifices and rituals, (Sthapatyaveda, Taittiriya, ShatapathaUpaveda); 4. *Atharva Veda*: magic agriculture, industry, cattle rearing, medicine, (Ayurveda, Gopatha Upaveda)) and Samhita. On the other hands 'Smritis' are those that are recollected by normal humans. Smriti included Vedas (Brahmanas, Aranyaka and Upanishads), 6 Vedangas (1. *Siksha*: pronunciation of the words, 2. *Nirukta*: origin of the words, 3. *Chhanda*: Sanskrit verses, 4. *Jyotish*: understanding of astronomy, 5. *Vyakaran*: Sanskrit grammar, 6. *Kalpa*: knowledge of rituals) and 4 Upavedas.

Forms of educational institutions: 1) *Gurukuls*- The homes of gurus were called gurukuls, and they were located in rural areas far from towns and commotion. After fulfilling their Upanayana rituals, parents sent their wards at the age of 5 years to 9 years, depending on their caste. Students were directly supervised by their guru and resided under their roof. 2) *Parishads*- Parishads were bigger educational institutions where several teachers were used to teach different subjects. 3) *Sammelana*- Sammelana means getting together for a particular purpose. Scholars were appropriately rewarded.

Method of instruction: 1) *Shravan*- There are two types of hearing: one that defines and connects us to this world, and another that exists outside of it. The first one involves our minds, ears, and intellect. Our hearts and beings are involved in the other. 2) *Manan*- It entails thinking about the reality. The student must think about, consider, and examine what the Guru has spoken. Since vasanas are all performed while the student is awake, he must apply those lessons in his daily life. Manana is not instantaneous since perfecting it requires patience, faith, and a great deal of real-world experience while awake. 3) *Nididhyasan*- Living and breathing the truth is what Nididhyasan means. The outcome of Shravan and Manan is Nididhyasana. when yours listening becomes genuine and your thought and behavior become firm, polished, and sophisticated. It is effortless, impulsive, and natural.

Four ashramsof Vedic Education: 1) *Brahmacharya* (studentship)- Artha and Kama, or all worldly pleasure and wealth, must be avoided at this point. During this stage, one learns several facets of Dharma that must be adhered to in later life in order to achieve Moksha. Every student was required to observe celibacy (Brahmacharya) in his specific path of life. 2) *Grihastha* (family life)- One could have a wife and kids at this stage. He can become wealthy and take enjoyment in everything. Even if he enjoys Artha and Kama, he must nonetheless uphold Dharma. 3) *Vanaprastha* (retired life)- when one gradually distances himself from Artha and Kama, or all worldly pleasures, in order to get ready for the next phase. 4) *Sanyas* (life renunciation)- At this point, a person gives up all worldly pleasures.

The Upanayana ritual: The word "Upanayana" means "to take close to" or "to be in contact with." Before the child was brought to his teacher, an Upanayana ritual was conducted. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas underwent this ceremony when they were 8, 11, and 12 years old, respectively. The event marked the child's entry into school and the passage from infancy to childhood. "Upanayana" in this context refers to connecting students with their teacher. Following their performance, students were accepted into the Vedic schools. Upanayana is an elaborate that involves the teacher, the kid, and the family.

Curriculum of education: 1) *Brahmans*- Vedas Vedanga, Upanishad etc. 2) *Kshatriya*- archery, horse-riding, other welfare arts, administrative principles etc. 3) *Vaishya*- agriculture, trade, craftsmanship etc. 4) *Shudras*- no education. Labours, peasants serving the upper caste people. They prohibited learning the Vedas. But their chief

pursuit of understanding was the Deva- Jana Vidya which meaning music, dancing and instruments playing. These subjects were taught to the Sudras by the Brahmanas.

Discipline: Students were encouraged to keep self-control throughout their lives. Discipline was met with penalties. In order to lower the frequency of interpersonal disputes and indiscipline, schedules were upheld. Each student was expected to follow Brahmacharya, or celibacy, according to his own life path.

Duration of education: In the house of the teacher, the student was required to obtain education up to the age of 24, after which he was expected to enter domestic life. Students were divided into three categories: Vasu (obtaining education up to the age of 24), Rudra (up to age of 36), Aditya (up to age of 48).

Role of teacher: In the Vedic tradition, the teacher, or Acharya, was in charge of shaping the nature and personality of his Ashrama students in addition to providing information, both sacred and secular. The Gurukul system's Acharya was a good teacher, a loving father, and a person with great moral and spiritual values. Because of his personality, he was able to maintain discipline. In addition, the Acharya fulfilled the duties of a householder by keeping vows and conducting the five daily yajnas.

Education in Buddhist Era

It is accurate to consider Buddhist education to be a subset of the traditional Hindu educational system. It has been acknowledged by all that Buddhism, particularly in the original and ancient form, has strong roots in the prior Hindu systems of thinking and living. During the Buddhist era, the monasteries served as educational hubs. There were no other educational institutions outside monasteries. Religious and other forms of education were only available to the Bhikshus. This facility was denied to others. The pupil had to show up in front of the teacher and ask for instruction in order to be admitted. In the Buddhist system, the student never returned to his parents' home to live as a householder after receiving an education. He permanently severed his ties to the outside world and remained a monk.

Pabbajja: It refers to "going out" after being accepted into a monastery, the student was required by this ritual to give up all of his familial and material ties. They could continue to live as monks after being accepted into "Sangha." 8 was the set age limit for Pabbajja. The disciple had to be 8 years old when they joined the Sangha. The new monk prepared for the Sangha life throughout the 12 years they were required to attend school there. Following that, he had to go through the *Upasampada* ritual, which granted a pupil full-fledged participation in the monastery.

Upasampada: The monk had to go through the *Upasampada* ceremony at the age of 20 in order to become an eternal member of the Sangha after completing his 12-year education. This was a democratic ceremony. The Shraman was required to appear in front of every other monk (Bhikshus) in the monastery. Admission to the *Upasampada* ceremony was contingent upon the approval of the majority of monks.

Curriculum: It was mostly spiritual in character. This was the case since obtaining salvation was the primary goal of schooling. Studying religious texts was crucial. The primary subjects recommended for the study were *Sutta*, *Vinaya*, and *Dhamma*. In addition to these, other subjects taught in Buddhist schools included spinning, weaving, printing fabric, drawing, medicine, surgery, and coinage. Reading, writing, and math instruction were prioritized in elementary school. Grammar knowledge was crucial. The child's education mostly focused on teaching them the alphabet, vowels, Sandhis, or combination rules. Religion, medicine, military science, philosophy and other challenging subjects were taught in higher education.

Method of teaching: Initially, the pupils had to pay close attention to the teacher when he lectured on a particular subject. Students were then expected to commit the same information to memory. As a result, oral instruction predominated. During the Buddhist era, the value of dialogue promoted reasoning. Technical learning in Secular Science, Arts, and Crafts was taught using the same approach as Brahmanical education; that is, pupils were taught using both theoretical as well as practical methods. Learned people used to gather together at the start (Pratipada) and end (Purnima) of each month. This kind of group gathering was a crucial component of Buddhist education. Since morality was the foundation of the entire educational system, the assembly's goal was to uphold the ethical norms of all monks (Bhikshus).

Occupational education: Other practical arts that were taught included architecture, arithmetic, painting, agriculture, and animal husbandry, among others. The advancement of medical knowledge was prioritized throughout the Buddhist era. In addition to being skilled in diagnosing and treating the majority of critical illnesses, the Indian Chikitsaks, or medical men, were also adept at performing major surgeries on the stomach, brain, and other organs. Takshila served as the primary hub for medical education, and students may finish the entire course in seven years.

Higher education institutions in ancient era:**TAXILA**

Meaning	Land of Prince Taksha (son of King Bharat). Taksha + Shila (rock).
Establishment	Vedic age 6 th century BCE
Location	Ancient Gandhara, present near Islamabad- Rawalpindi (Pakistan).
Time span	1000 years
Status	World's first recorded university.
Structure	Network of 18+ learning institutions. Residential, Gurukul system, monasteries.
Students	10000+ students at peak.
International students	From India, Persia, Greece, China, Sri Lanka, Mesopotamis.
Mode of education	Shruti, smriti, debate, logic, field practice, case study, internship.
Method of teaching	Debate and discussion.
Admission	After age 16.
Eligibility	Merit, discipline, moral conduct.
Fee system	Guru- Dakshina model.
Subject	Ancient scripture, Vedas, Vedanga, Philosophy, Grammar, Linguistics, Ayurveda, Surgery, Political Science, Military science, Espionage (Kautilya), Mathematics, Astronomy, Astrology, Law, Medicine, Ethics, Commerce and Taxation, eighteen silpas or arts.
Iconic work	Panini's Astadhyayi, Kautilya's Arthashastra.
Famous students	Chandragupta Maurya, Jivaka (Buddhist physician).
Famous teachers	Panini (expert in language and grammar, works called Ashtadhyayi), Jivaka (physicians), Chanakya/ Kautilya (exponent of statecraft), Charaka, Katyayana, Atreya.
Administration	Each school headed by Acharya.
Medical system	Surgery, Ayurveda, Herbal Pharmacology, Anatomy, public health.
Religion study	Hindu Brahminical, Buddhist, Jain philosophy.
End	Destroyed by Huns (5 th century CE)
Rediscovery	Excavated 1913 by Sir John Marshall (Archaeological Survey of India)
World Heritage	1980 by UNESCO

NALANDA UNIVERSITY

Meaning	Nal+ Anda = Lotus + Endless
Location	Near Rajgir (Bihar), India.
Timeline	5 th century CE- 12 th century CE (800 years)
Founded by	Kumargupta I
Legacy	World's oldest residential international university.
International reputation	Scholars from China, Korea, Japan, Sumatra, Tibet, Persia.
Library	Dharmagunja. Three buildings- Ratnasagara, Ratnadadhi, Ratnaranjaka.
Capacity	10000 students+ 2000 teachers.

Campuses	10 temples, 8 monastics, classrooms, meditation halls, lakes and parks.
Architecture	Multi storied red brick buildings.
Subjects	Logic, Vedas, fine arts, politics, mathematics, Yogashastra, Medicine, Astronomy and the art of warfare.
Courses	Buddhism (Mahayana), Philosophy, Logic (Naya), Vedas, grammar, Astronomy, Medicine, Surgery, Architecture, Arts.
Admission	Very tough entrance exam. Only 1 out of 10 qualified.
Teaching method	Oral, memorization, debate (Veda), discussion, writing.
Students	Xuanzang (Hsuan Tsang), I-Qing, Aryadeva, Padmasambhava (Tibetan Buddhism)
Teachers	Silabhadra, Dharmapala, Shantarakshita, Nagarjuna, Dinnaga, Vasubandhu.
Buddhist schools	Mahayana, madhamika, yogachara.
Discipline	Rules for monastic life, silence hours, debate court.
Decline	Khilji attack.
Rediscovery	Alexander Cunningham.
World heritage	2016 by UNESCO

VIKRAMSHILA UNIVERSITY

Meaning	Seat of courage/ throne of vikrama
Location	Antichak village, Bhagalpur District, Bihar, India.
Time period	Late 8 th century or early 9 th century CE, (783 to 820 CE)
Founder	Dharmapala (2 nd Pala king)
Purpose	Counter rise of Hindu/ Brahminical learning and strengthen Buddhism
Rank	Second greatest Buddhist University after Nalanda
Campus structure	Main stupa, 108 cells, shared study halls
Dormitories	Individual monk cells, shared study halls
Major departments	Vajrayana Buddhism, Tantra studies, Buddhist logic (Hetuvidya), grammar, Vedas, Sanskrit, tantra yoga, meditation, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine (Ayurveda)
Specialization	Vajrayana and tantra
Famous scholars	Atisha Dipankar, Nagarjuna, Jnanasrimitra
Admission	Only high merit monks, strict oral test.
Teaching method	Meditation, debate, scholarly commentary writing
Code of conduct	Silence hours, meditation routine, ethical vows.
Student life	Simple robes, alms living, meditation, study, teaching.
Administration	Sangha governed with senior Acharya council.
Culture	Buddhist festivals, chanting, dramas on Jataka tales.
Destruction	1193-1200 CE by Bakhtiyar Khilji.

COMPARISON BETWEEN ANCIENT AND MODERN EDUCATION SYSTEM-

	ANCIENT EDUCATION	MODERN EDUCATION
LOCATION	Forests, open areas, under the tree, gurukuls, promoting peace, simplicity, close relationship with nature, some universities like Nalanda, Taxila.	Typically located in urban, institutional settings, bound by rigid timetables, infrastructure limitations, Buildings made of concrete. Buildings are known as schools, colleges, universities.
FOCUS	Overall development, critical thinking.	Career readiness, specialization.

APPROACH	Holistic approach, spiritual and individualised approach.	Technology integrated, career-oriented, standardized.
TEACHERS	Religious teacher. They are Buddhist and brahmanas.	Professionally trained with high academic degrees.
TEACHING	Instruction based.	Discussion based.
STUDENTS	Mostly among the upper classes	Everyone has the right to education.
LEARNING	Student passive.	Student active.
SUBJECTS	Vedas, philosophy, grammar, linguistics, economics, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, arithmetic etc...	Social science, humanities, science, arts, computer, technology etc....
TEACHING METHOD	Shruti, smriti (memorising information). Guru-shishya Parampara, experiential learning. In the past, learning was practical and highly internalized, with an emphasis on discussion, reflection, and memorizing.	Classroom based, structured curriculum, Lecture method, laboratory practice, technology-based learning, multimedia content, power point presentation etc..
EDUCATION RESOURCES	Veda, Upanishads, shastra, Purans, Aranyakas etc...	Books, libraries, digital library, internet, research paper, journal etc..
AIM OF EDUCATION	Pursuit of Moksha, ethical virtue, spiritual liberation.	Toward economic utility, career placements, employability and global competitiveness.
VALUE	Moral values, spiritual growth.	Competitive, secular.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

The NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on incorporating India's ancient systems of knowledge (IKS) into contemporary education. It views the country's legacy of holistic, value-based education, such as the Vedic and Gurukul systems, as a guiding principle for promoting critical thinking, morality, and national pride. It goes beyond colonial educational systems by incorporating classical sciences, arts, and philosophy, reviving institutions like Nalanda, and encouraging experiential learning and independent thinking through multidisciplinary study. An education system based on the Indian ethos that, by giving everyone access to high-quality education, directly contributes to the sustainable transformation of India, into a vibrant and egalitarian knowledge society, making India a worldwide knowledge superpower. The five guiding principles of NEP 2020 are Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability. It will equip our young people to tackle the various national and international issues of today and the future.

RELEVANCE OF ANCIENT EDUCATION IN MODERN EDUCATION

The holistic approach (mind, body, and spirit), emphasis on morals and values (self-realisation, discipline), individualized mentorship (guru-shishya), indigenous wisdom (yoga, logic), and community focus of the ancient Indian educational system are what make it relevant today. Initiatives such as the National Education policy (NEP 2020) aim to integrate these timeless values for a balanced and globally competitive future. The current system now has a way to live sustainably and well thanks to the ancient system. People in today's culture are losing their sense of direction and command, and the ashrama system is still relevant because it can guide every man and instill in him a feeling of knowing and a way to adjust his life, which leads to soul emancipation.

Today's society is different because of the internet. On the one hand, we are pleased that our nation's standard of life has significantly increased due to technical breakthroughs. We are unsure, nevertheless, if this approach has enhanced people's quality of life. Every day, we face a plethora of challenges. Our children lack the necessary drive, originality, and inventiveness, and they don't perform exceptionally well in their chosen industries. What do we hope for from our antiquated educational system that dates back thousands of years in such a scenario? It is often believed to have much to offer in regards to philosophical discussions, religious endeavours, and contemplation of higher forms of existence.

II. CONCLUSION

It is vital to strengthen current education with its growing degrees of academic requirements. The research reveals that ancient educational systems rooted in Vedas featured several yogic procedures. In general, to relax the mind and increase learning, asanas, chant of mantras, and meditation were done. The discussion above emphasizes how crucial the traditional educational system is in the modern society. People are unable to benefit from ancient wisdom since there is insufficient infrastructure in the modern world to deliver this education.

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