

A Brief History of Educational Developments in India

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Towards an Educated Society

By

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1	1
Education in India: Developments and Dichotomies	
Chapter 2	14
Education in Ancient India: The Vedic Period	
Chapter 3	24
The Jain and Buddhist Education Systems in Ancient India	
Chapter 4	40
Education in Medieval India: The New Experiences	
Chapter 5	51
Education in Colonial India	
Chapter 6	77
On Educational Reforms: Commissions and Committees Before Independence	
Chapter 7	98
Edifying the Scenario: Education Commissions and Committees in India After Independence	
Chapter 8	129
Revamping the Society: Educational Development in India After Independence	
Chapter 9	162
Towards Global Standard: National Policy on Education – 2020	

CHAPTER 1

EDUCATION IN INDIA: DEVELOPMENTS AND DICHOTOMIES

Education in India has a very long history. It is rooted in the prehistoric period. The ancient Indian education system was a structure that extended from present-day Kandahar (in Afghanistan) to Kanyakumari (Cape Camorin). The Bharath (original name of India) included the territory from Kandahar to Kanyakumari, which included present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The common features of ancient Indian educational streams spread across all these regions. The locations of many great educational and religious centers of Buddhism (they were called Maha Viharas) are now in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, not in India. The world's first linguist, Maharishi Panini, who formulated the Devanagari script, used in the majority of Indian languages, including Sanskrit, lived in the region now located within Pakistan.

Perhaps most of the information regarding the educational developments in ancient India has yet to be discovered. The ancient centers of education like the Nalanda and Thakshasila were identified by British historians during the middle of the 18th century. They also pointed out the contributions made by Emperor Asoka in the middle of the 1800s. All these great historical events had gone unnoticed by the world until then. Likewise, large segments of information about the educational endeavors of ancient India may yet be revealed to the world. Many educational institutions of ancient India, along with the evidence of educational developments in those periods, might still be hidden under layers of soil, waiting to be excavated.

The educational system and its development in India resemble the structure of a banyan tree, which has a multitude of branches, roots, and twigs, providing a haven for birds, animals, and numerous creatures, even parasites! Moreover, it is like a forest that serves many lives and the whole

of nature itself. The educational developments in India were vast, with various streams of endeavors, programmes, schemes of support, methods of operation, and types of institutions. It is difficult to reach the right definition of India's educational developments within a short time or with an ephemeral script. One can never explain the voyage of Indian education from a silhouette perspective. The educational development in ancient India, which has its beginnings in the prehistoric period, remains an ocean that needs to be sailed out. Once we get to know a small portion, which only doubles the unknown. Ancient India provided educational opportunities in art, architecture, martial arts, weaponry, political administration (Rajathantra), civic life, animal husbandry, horticulture, environment, religious scripts, divinity, theology, and philosophy (Darsan), epics, stories, and many more.

Ancient Indian education is one of the premier and largely acclaimed systems of education in the world. Without having to fear governmental interference and possessing mysterious and spiritual excellence, the ancient Indian education system was competent enough to produce excellent knowledge and stand guard over humanity. Its products ranged from Vedas like the Rig-Veda to epics like the Mahabharata and treatises like Sathapathabrahmana and Arthasasthra. Rig-Veda is one of the most ancient texts in the world that explains religious rituals and sermons; the Mahabharata is one of the greatest epics of the world; Sathapathabrahmana is a treatise of factual explanations of nature's physical phenomena; and Arthasasthra is the book of politics and economics authored by Kautilya. What a variety of productivity!

The methods used by the practitioners of the education system in ancient India for teaching and building knowledge had unmatched competency, and that even makes them covetous of the practitioners of the modern education system. The ancient Indian education system had developed specific approaches and methodologies to build cognitive power in individual learners. Even emperors used to leave their children in Guru's Ashram (an education center) to break the husks of ignorance and get the right education. Gurus (real teachers or preceptors) were considered the most intelligent, spiritual, and moral human beings in the kingdom.

Learners followed the fascinating social life of the ashram with the Guru. They, both the learner and the preceptor, walked together, ate together, played together, and slept under the same roof. They used different types of languages for communication, verbal and non-verbal cues, actions, and lifestyles. They were together, knowing and nurturing nature. It was a powerful and serene life of reciprocal learning experiences. They were actively reciprocal in social gardening, acquiring knowledge, exploring wisdom (Jnana), and learning life. The entire scheme of education was both nature-centric and human-centric.

The picture of the Indian education scenario had metamorphosed a lot, along with the water that flowed in the river Ganges (River Ganga). Sadly enough, the facets of the growth of the education system in the country in its golden era have not been documented positively for a long period. After the 9th–10th centuries AC, the education system fell into a period of silence and darkness. Later, British India established a national system for the country during the 18th–19th centuries. The gap between these periods wiped out many of the contributions of the ancient Indian education system.

The paths along which the education system of India has expanded down the centuries turn out to be somewhat ironic for our understanding. The early Vedic times had an almost perfect stream of education, with its rivulets being able to provide all types of learning to people from all sects. But by the later Vedic Era, education began to bow before the caste hierarchy. At the end of the Vedic era (which educational historians named the *Brahmanic* period), the education system in India was circumscribed by the caste system. Access to education was denied to the people belonging to certain castes, which were relegated to the lower rungs of the caste hierarchy. At the same time, we learn with surprise that the ‘Ramayan’ (Ramayana) and the Mahabharata, the most renowned products of Indian education and literature, were not authored by upper-caste persons. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are believed to have been authored, respectively, by Valmiki and Vyasa, and they did not belong to the upper castes! They belonged to the communities of forest dwellers and fishermen, who were considered the lower-class castes during the stints. At the same time, these great epics remained with the Brahmins—the upper caste groups—as the intellectual property of their

segment! How did all this happen? The irony is too complicated to be explained with the presently available historical interpretations. Either the historical findings we have are wrong, or many points need explanations regarding the education system before and after the emergence of caste as a reigning social factor.

Streams in Indian Education

The development of education in India can be streamlined based on its character and method of development from period to period. In the most ancient period, education was a process of individual efforts. The Gurus (teachers) had set up their Ashrams (holy abodes) in remote areas of the country. People who sought education had to seek the individual Guru. The Gurus developed and used their methodology, curriculum, and practices for imparting education to their disciples. Of course, there were some similarities in the approaches of all these individual gurus as well as in the curriculum and methods of instruction that they had practiced.

In a silhouette view, education in the Vedic period was imparted by the individual Guru to the individual learner. The center of education was the ashram or residence of the Guru. So, in a sense, it was a system of education from the individual to the public, not from an institution but from a residence. The centers of education were recognized by the name of the Guru, not by the nomenclature of any institution. The disciples were joined with the Guru and not with any institute for obtaining an education. Most of the time, an ashram had only one guru.

This ancient system functioned without any support from political units like emperors, kings, or local rulers. The Gurus never considered education a means of making a living. The financial interest was zero. To them, imparting knowledge was a divine responsibility.

The education was knowledge-centered, not life-centered. At that time, education was not a guaranteed pathway to attaining a job; neither was the act of giving education considered a 'job.' This most ancient education system, possessing these types of features, can be considered **the first stream in Indian education**. More specifically, the education system that prevailed with individual Gurus without any type of

governmental interference or financial support can be called the “**First Stream of Indian Education**”.

We can list the characteristic features of the First Stream or Phase of the Indian education system as given below:

- All efforts to impart education were carried out by individual academicians, and such individual academicians were called Gurus.
- The aspects of education like curriculum, methods, and evaluation were solely planned and practiced by the individual Guru.
- The Kings or any type of government units never interfered in the process of education, either in planning, curriculum, or funding.
- Learners were to go to the Guru’s Ashram to avail education. Education was from the Guru and not from the institution.
- The learner (*Sishya*) was recognized by the Guru’s title, not by any education center. *For example, if Maharishi Kashyap was the Guru, the learner was recognized as a Sishya (learner) of Maharishi Kashyap.*
- The duration or completion of the course was to be determined by the Guru only. However, learners were allowed to leave the ashram based on their decision.
- The education was knowledge and skill-oriented.

Slowly, the first phase of education was carried onto the second stream, where the individual Gurus continued with their educational efforts. But by that time, the Gurus had started to reach out of their ashrams to the learners, catering to their necessities. The Gurus started to serve students at their dwelling places. The specialization of different disciplines had also started by that time. *Rajathanthra* (Governance and Administration), *Dhanasasthra* (Economics), and *Ayodhan* or *Dhanurvedhya* (Martial Arts and Weaponry) were the preferred specializations. The Gurus began to charge some kind of financial remuneration for imparting education. This could be in the form of regular household items, valuable objects or materials, an official position or designation, or even large areas of land. Slowly, the Kings and/or government units started to monitor the

curriculum, plans, and practices in the education system. Education began to lose its status as an individual practice under the Gurus. The institutionalization of education started slowly, even though the Gurukuls continued to exist. The Jain Sikshan Kendras of the religion of Jainism and Viharas of Buddhists were opened to serve society as centers of knowledge. The learners started to be known under the names of particular institutions, like a vihara. The governments started to intervene in the education imparted in the Viharas, both in the academic as well as financial areas. A compendium of teachers under one roof was organized in many regions, some of which later developed into universities such as Thakshasila (Taxila). So, the system of education that prevailed with partial intervention by the government can be called the **“Second Stream of Indian Education”**. This stream existed up to the beginning of the medieval period.

The Second Stream of Education was not that well organized, so they failed to make a progressive follow-up, resulting in an eventual scattering of the entire scheme of educational practices. It was a sad degradation that hardly left behind any leftovers or energy for resuscitation. Following that degeneration, there was a long silence in the educational development of India. This important area needs more research so that any unidentified educational development of these periods, if at all any existed, could be revealed.

The beginning of Islamic rule caused the Indian education scenario to experience a wake-up call. The invasion by Islamic rulers paved the way for an entirely different system of education to take root. The religion-centric Islamic education system came into vogue, supported by government machinery. The government became an agency for providing facilities for the development of educational facilities. Though the government had very little role in formulating the curriculum or methodology, it monitored the educational functions and highly influenced the educational institutions. The non-Islamic realms of India also developed with the advent of certain vernacular educational systems. Also, the centers of education had come under the control of the government machinery. This stream of education, which prevailed for three or four centuries, can be termed the **‘Third Stream of Education in India’**.

The next stage of education was designed by the Christian missionaries and the British Indian Government. Whatever the drawbacks, it was the European invasion that gave India a formal system of modern education. The government began to actively organize aspects of education. Both the government and private parties started running educational institutions. But the designs of educational practice—the curriculum, methods, textbooks, and so on—were planned by the government, which became the supreme authority on educational programmes. These developments in the educational sector that took place under the sole supervision and regulations of the government can be called the **Fourth Stream of Education**. Though India became independent in 1947, the education system continued just as it was designed and practiced by the Colonial Government. After independence, the government of India and state governments became the supreme authorities over educational practices.

During the 1990s, the stream of education faced drastic changes, with India signing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (popularly known as the GATT Agreement) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), two international trade agreements. Following the signing of these agreements, the government declared an Open Door Policy in education. Being the agreements of neo-economic policies that led the world to the era of Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization, both GATT and GATS created wide repercussions in India's social, economic, and educational sectors. Many restrictions on the running of educational centers were removed with the signing of the GATT and GATS, offering huge opportunities for private entrepreneurs to enter the educational sector. Private sector investments were encouraged in all segments of education, from kindergarten schools to institutions of higher education. As a result, the country experienced an overnight mushrooming of education institutions. Private investors started several schools, colleges, and universities. Autonomous educational institutions have now become common throughout the country. These institutions are developed with their financial inputs and design their curriculum, methods, evaluation systems, and practices. Slowly, the government began to step back, at least partially, from making investments in educational establishments and eventually even from formulating and implementing

the curriculum. This stage could be termed the **Fifth Stream of Education in India**. The characteristics of this stream could be summarized as follows:

- Responsibilities in the education sector are shared by governments and private parties.
- Huge financial inputs from the private sector into the educational establishments.
- Financial and academic autonomy given to private institutions.
- Open Door Policy in Education.
- The paradigm shift of social concepts in education from the priority of 'social well-being' to that of 'economic well-being.'

What will be the next stream in the Indian educational scenario? More liberal changes could be expected in the educational sector. The central and state Governments will withdraw more from financing the education sector, particularly that of higher education. Survival of the fittest will be the philosophy of the education institutions. Students will focus on quality and productivity while selecting institutions. If the system is to continue in this manner, students will become customers, and institutions will become sellers of educational products—the degrees!

Challenges in the Development of Education

India's educational scenario had experienced many ups and downs over the centuries. It is quite shocking to assess that a society that spread the light of education to the whole world at a time has become a huge repository of illiterates later! The state that created a whole period that saw the greatest contributions of knowledge, later on, became a State of fallacies! The country of the greatest epics and Vedas become the land of caste discrimination! The great nation that spoke of *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam* (The World is one Family) through her literature and philosophy, got divided in two different countries by external and internal forces and got scattered in her educational stamps! The country in which the first University in the world was established is now struggling even to develop a world-class university! The State that had boasted, in ancient

times, of world-class institutions which hosted more than ten thousand students from all over the world, is now sending millions of students abroad for quality education! The ironies that are inherent in the Indian educational system are manifold! But the sector remained active and dynamic in the past and the present. It is always in flux!

The biggest challenge faced by India at present is the huge number of illiterate people. There are parents who are less and less motivated in giving an education to their children. The caste system still interferes with the functioning of educational establishments. Finding financial support for educational institutions from the public sector alone is one of the major challenges that the country has to confront. Any expansion in the educational sector needs huge funds. The government alone will not be able to find financial sustenance for all these developments. This leads to the intervention of the private sector in the educational scenario. International collaborations are also to be expected in the educational sector.

Dichotomies in Indian Education

The education scenario of India has been wrought with contradictions. India, the country that possesses a long heritage and ethos on education, the country that regarded education as a divine responsibility, the country that observed '*Vidya*' or '*Jnana*' or Knowledge or Wisdom as divine property, is now forced to make 'education' a commodity to be sold brazenly in a 'knowledge market.'

"Sale Education" has become a fact, at least to a certain extent. Many institutions these days, literally 'sell' education as a consumable good to be traded for profit. 'Pay and Use' has emerged as a practice in some educational institutions. And, many of these educational institutions, from the primary level to that of higher education, focus less on quality and more on profit. Common people cannot afford the exorbitant fees collected by these schools. On many occasions, institutions that charge expensive fees may fail to render quality service. The fees for the school education of children in private sector institutions of some cities may even deprive families of financial assets. The culture that had regarded education

as a mark of social well-being has now tangibly changed to economic well-being, particularly in the new private investment sector.

Modern India offers opportunities for obtaining a school education in almost all regions throughout the country, even in the remote woodland habitats of particularly vulnerable tribal communities. The numbers and quality of institutions may not be satisfactory. One may hardly believe that in some states like Kerala, the village and urban government schools are getting close down due to a shortage of enrollment of students! It is surprising to know that public sector schools are functioning even with a 1:2 teacher-pupil ratio only because the government intends to protect the public sector institutions! The scarcity of students in government schools happens not because of any reluctance of sending children to schools, but rather because the parents were fascinated with private sector schools even at the cost of paying hefty tuition fees. The reason for the attraction of private sector schools is said to be because of the higher quality possessed by the private sector.

Investing massively in the school education of the children is a basic characteristic of financially sound middle-class parents. At the same time, on the other end of the spectrum, we can still find many villages in the country that do not have even the basic essential number of schools to accommodate all the deserving children. And, some parents never take a genuine sense of responsibility for the education of their children. These parents are hardly ever motivated to send their children to schools, even if the education is completely free.

In certain areas of the country, some parents still refuse to send their children to school even if the expense is zero, whereas, in some other areas, the parents opt for a paid schooling system for their children, looking for higher quality education! The school fees in India vary from zero to one or one million per year! The government schools or government-aided schools in the public sector charge no fees or very low, reasonable fees only, while the self-financing or unaided schools in the private sector usually charge high rates of fees. Another factor to be observed here is that many parents send their children to school only because of the availability of the free noon feeding system. They hardly care for education, only for the meal that the child would get, which they find hard to earn.

It could be observed, regretfully, that India might be the only country in the world with schools where teachers arrive by 12 and leave at 2pm! Just two hours of teacher service. This is not just a random statement about some isolated village schools lying in some remote area. But hundreds of 12 o'clock to 2 p.m. schools are a reality in many of the government schools in some states of India, particularly in certain North Indian regions. And it will not be an exaggeration to say that the country even has schools where teachers for some subjects do not even reach the school for 'teaching.' Ironically, a country with so many opportunities for schooling in many regions has a scarcity of schools. In short, the country does not have equality of educational opportunities.

Another interesting observation is that India may be the only country in the world where a foreign language is the medium of education for young children in pre-primary and primary classes. Parents choose English-medium education for primary school children, discarding the child's instinct to learn in their mother tongue. Often, it is just a case of parental pride to have their children speak and even think in a foreign language and fail to grasp the mother tongue! The creamier layers of the middle-class societies of the country, knowingly or unknowingly, spoil the instinct and interest of children to acquire education in their mother tongue. The actions of such parents are against any of the learning theories, but they believe that they are 'educating and educating' their beloved children! The parents are paying a lot to educate their children in private English medium schools. Most of the state education ministries in the country hold up these approaches through their State Education Policies.

The other dichotomy is that the parents who are ready to pay huge amounts for the education of their children from the primary to high school levels seek free higher education from the government centers, which have no tuition fees. As far as higher education is concerned, government or government-aided colleges are becoming the best choice for everyone. Many of the government institutions in the higher education sector occupy high ranks, but at the school level, high ranking is rarely occupied by the government sector.

The students who studied in private schools, where they are spending huge amounts on primary and secondary education, gain direct

entry into higher education institutions run by the government, where education is almost free. The regretful contradiction is that many of the students who study in government schools hardly get admission to government higher education institutions. They are forced to join the paid higher education system, where education is running under the 'Pay-and-Use' scheme under the nomenclature of 'Self-Finance Education,' but the quality in many of these institutions often runs very low. In short, those who pay for their school education get a free higher education, while those who get a free education at the school level are forced to pay for their higher education. The marks obtained for the school examinations, the scores gained in entrance examinations, and the performance indices during schooling are considered for admission into government-run higher education institutions. Those who can pay high fees for quality school education as well as for the coaching classes of entrance examinations can bag higher marks and indices. But students from government schools are rarely able to break into this circle. Then, "entrance coaching" is another big business, demanding huge investments from the parents. There is a city in the state of Rajasthan named Kota, which is well-known for hundreds of entrance coaching centers for students who aim to enroll into higher education institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), IIM, and so on. Though originally a city of historic fame, 'Kota' has now become a city for entrance coaching by entrance coaching!

Many efforts are taken by Independent India for the development of education, from preschool to the university level. It has created some envious pace-setting school education systems like the Navodaya Schools. But at the same time, even after many decades of independence, many of the village children are still denied educational opportunities. D.S. Kothari, one of the great Indian Educationists, remarked thus, "Education *without textbooks is like Hamlet without the Princess of Denmark*," and he acclaimed high-quality textbooks for school children in the country. But his country often failed to supply textbooks on school subjects to deserving students, a minimum necessity of education. What an apologetic, unrequited dichotomy!

Of course, India has made illustrious developments in many facets of education, from pre-primary to higher level. The country has world-class schools, state-of-the-art facilities, and the most sought-after

higher education centers like IITs, IIMs, AIIMS, AIISH, AIISER, and so on. But these are limited to some segments and some people. The numbers of such institutions are very low in the country. Like in several other aspects, India has traveled many miles to reach proper educational development. The drawbacks of the education sector need to be rejuvenated. Continuous organization of new educational ventures and refurbishment of the existing systems are necessary to overcome these dichotomies.

The country has a lot to learn from its history in terms of planning and promoting a suitable education system. Both the central and state governments must recognize that a well-knit and well-maintained school education system and a high-quality higher education system are the minimum requirements of any developed state. The education institutions are to be maintained with a well-disciplined and well-designed academic atmosphere. And above all, India also needs education that builds Indian citizens with strong faith and knowledge of the greatest contributions of ancient India, Indian knowledge, and the great Indian culture. Education in India must promote the Indian culture and ethos along with the spirit of universal humanity. Presently, the education scenario fails to promote these essential features. Planners, administrators, and practitioners must intervene and evaluate education from this point of view. Creative approaches are essential to overthrow the prevailing inadequacies and indigestible dichotomies of the education sector in contemporary India.

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION IN ANCIENT INDIA: THE VEDIC PERIOD

The first chapter discussed a general perception of the context and path of educational developments in India, which presented a brief critical overview of education in the country from the ancient 'Bharath' to contemporary times. In this chapter, the readers will be acquainted with the educational scenario of India (Bharath) during the Vedic period. According to the available shreds of evidence, the educational developments in India started from the ancient age of the 'Rishis'. This period is named by historians as the Vedic Period, and the education of that age is renowned as Vedic Education. This chapter provides not only a critical review, but a presentation of facts, concepts, and information. Explanations are focused more on educational perspectives rather than on the philosophical notions of the period. Specifically, for example, while narrating Buddhist education, it is focused on the features of Buddhist education, not the philosophy of Buddhist education. This is the approach used in the script.

The most ancient Indian education system is known as Vedic Education, named so because of its connection with the early and later Vedic period.

Historically, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact time of the emergence of the Vedic Education system. Some historians observe that Vedic education existed from 3500 BC to 600 AD. According to some other viewpoints, it existed from 1600 BC to 600 AD. There are also some claims that the Vedic education system dates back even to 6000 BC or before. Anyhow, the Vedic education system continued to exist up to 400

– 600 AD with gradual changes through three major facets, early Vedic Education, Later Vedic Education, and Brahmanic Education. It could be factually observed that Vedic Education might be the oldest formal education system in the world.

Philosophy of Ancient Indian Education

Education in ancient India had emerged following the Vedic Philosophy, its ultimate aim being the obtaining of Liberation or Moksha from the mundane world. Essentially, early Vedic education aimed at the refinement of the mind, not facilitating the mundane life. Education was supposed to free the human being from all earthly bondages. The mind or ‘chitha’ is the cause of both bondage and liberation. If one loses control over the mind, it leads to bondage. Control of the mind is the path towards ultimate Liberation. Education was supposed to be a way for ‘Chitha Vruthi Nirodh’ – to control the mind.

In the Vedic period, learning did not mean merely the acts of ‘reading and writing.’ Learning was equal to the realization of one’s self; education was a process of self-realization and self-actualization. The Vedic epistemology imparted true knowledge and the knowledge that emancipates human nature. Knowledge of the self was considered the highest form of knowledge. In other words, it is called ‘Atma Jnana’. ‘Sa vidya yavimukthayh’ was the axiological triumph in the Vedic concept of education. It means ‘Knowledge that emancipates us.’

The axiology of the Vedic era did not distinguish social values and personal values. Both the personal and social values were part of the proclaimed universal eternal values – Satyam, Sivam, and Sundaram (Truth, Goodness, and Beauty).

The Vedic philosophy treated reality as a Divine Perfection. Vedas were considered Holy Scripts. The theory of metaphysics was revealed to the disciples through the learning of the Vedas. Oral transmission of knowledge was the accepted system. The concept of ‘reality’ had developed based on the Vedas and Upanishads. They were monistic in character. It was followed the method of Sravana (Hearing), Manana (Meditation), and Nididhyasa (Realization).

Characteristics of Vedic Education

Vedic Education was developed through years of refinement. It had almost all the attributes that a modern education system possesses; enrollment method, curriculum, formal and informal learning, and evaluation. Some of the specific features of Vedic Education are given below:

- Vedic Education was developed with Gurukul or Gurukula system
- The education of an individual commenced with a ceremony called Upanayan or Upanayana (title for the Induction Ceremony)
- Education in the Gurukul extended from six to fourteen years
- It was fully and compulsorily residential. Education was mostly for male students. (There were some isolated examples of co-education and female education)
- Students were directed to observe Brahmacharya (Celibacy) during the period of education
- Since the Gurukul system was residential, the teacher (Guru) paid full attention to the psychological and physical makeup of their students
- The most encouraged method of discipline was self-discipline
- Students were sent to accept alms (Bhiksha) from the public. (All students, irrespective of their socio-familial status, had to go for seeking alms. It was a very powerful step for eradicating the arrogance, egotism, and superiority feelings from the learner's mind)
- There were three types of educational institutions in ancient India: (a) Gurukul (b) Parishad (c) Sammelan
- Syllabus in the Vedic Education included proper pronunciation and recitation of the Veda, the rules of Sacrifice (Yajna), grammar, composition, poem and rhythm, understanding of secrets of nature, reasoning logic, the Vedic Mathematics, the sciences, and the skills necessary for an occupation.
- Subjects of Study included four Vedas, six Vedangas (limbs of Vedas), the Upanishads, the Darshans (schools of philosophy)

like Nyaya, Vaiseshika, Samkya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta, epics, Puranas, legends, history and Tarka Shastra (logic).

- Areas like Darshans had become part of education in the later Vedic period. The six Vedangas are the studies of six different disciplines of language and literature. They are Phonetics (Shiksha), Ritualistic Knowledge (Kalpa), Grammar (Vyakarana), Etymology (Nirukta), Prosody or poetic rhythm (Chandas), and Astronomy (Jyotisha).
- Higher learning opportunities in certain specific disciplines also existed in the later part of the period that included medical knowledge and applied sciences like- Ayurveda (medical science), Dhanurvedya (martial arts and weaponry), and Jyothishastra (astrophysics).

Upanayan or Upanayana

In Vedic Education, Upanayan was the induction ceremony of the student's education. The commencement of education was usually marked by a ceremony called 'Vidyaramb' by worshipping Goddess Saraswathi, the deity of Vidya, or Knowledge. Literally 'vidyaramb' means starting (aramb) of education (vidya). In the vidyaramb ritual, the first letters of the alphabet were introduced ceremoniously to the child. Vidyarmab was different from upanayan. It was only after the ceremony of Upanayan that the child could leave the parents' home and start schooling, staying in the house of the teacher. After Upanayan, which is considered a very sacred ceremony, the child offered himself to the Guru for availing education.

During the early Vedic period, Upanayan was open to all members of the society, but at the end of Later Vedic and Brahminic periods, it was limited to the members of students from upper caste communities. In the Brahminic period, upanayan became a special ritual of the Brahmin community. It metamorphosed to a status of a ritual associated with education and the wearing of the sacred thread of the Brahmin children.

On the day of the Upanayan ceremony, a learner had to assure the Guru that he will abide by all the rules and regulations of the Gurukul or Ashram and he will live there as a family member. So, in a sense,

Upanayan was an agreement of accepting a stipulated way of social life. It was an offer to the Goddess of Vidya (Goddess Saraswathi) to learn and practice true knowledge from this mundane world, obtained through the divine method of living and learning. Education is regarded as a sacred or divine activity.

Education in the Gurukul or Guru's Ashram

Details about the student's life in a Gurukul are available from many texts such as Puranas, Upanishads, and epics and specifically from smritis (smriti) like Manu Smriti and Yajnavalkya Smriti. A student in the Guru's Ashram had to partake in all the household activities with the Guru. The inmate student had various duties, like caring for the cattle, collecting the food, collecting the firewood, helping to prepare food, and looking after the Yagagni (the Sacred Fire).

Along with learning the prescribed syllabus, the resident student had to follow certain principles like respecting the family members of the Guru, taking a bath two times every day, speaking the truth only, finding happiness in simple food, following simple lifestyles, participating the prayer sessions, and abstaining from mundane passions and withdraw from blaming others. Life at Gurukul was a journey to attain the ultimate truth.

The Vedic system of education was mostly teacher-centered. The center of education had become renowned with the name of the teacher—the Guru. Disciples in the Ashram were under the sole guidance and control of the Guru, both in life and in learning.

Did the Caste System Exist in Vedic Education?

The caste system was a curse upon the social life of India, and the education system had no exemption. Even nowadays, the Indian education scenario is fraught with caste-related issues. The influence of caste in the ancient education system is still a topic of discussion.

Experts offer different views while discussing the caste system in the Vedic period of education. It is observed by many educationalists and historians that during the early stages, the caste system did not hold much influence over the Vedic Education. In those early days, students from all sects and strata of society were allowed to access the education programmes.

But in the later Vedic and Brahminical periods, education opportunities began to be denied for the people from the lower castes. Some historians believe that both early and later Vedic Education was not characterized by any creed or caste influence. Afterward, along with the emergence of Brahminical education, the caste system began to gain considerable impact on the educational scenario. Some historians have observed that the caste system in education began to get prevalent only during the last centuries of BC and the early AD. But the Varna system was already in existence there.

The ancient texts, legends, and epics are the biggest available sources of information on the structure and character of Vedic Education. A scrutiny of these texts will furnish us with evidence of whether the caste system was applied in the educational system of Vedic times.

Aims of Vedic Education

In ancient India, education was not burdened with any pre-planned, mundane aims or material objectives. It was just the process of a 'Man-Making Education,' which aimed to develop a mundane individual into 'an active individual of responsibilities and divine powers.'

The major aim of education during the Vedic period was to provide training for youngsters in performing their social, political, economic, and religious duties. It also aimed at the preservation of culture, transformation of character, personality development, and the inculcation of moral values. Of course, there were certain classified aims like learning the Holy Texts, learning the Purusharthas, acquiring values, learning epics and Puranas, understanding Rajyathantra (politics of ascendancy), and knowing about life after death.

Methods of Learning

A close relationship existed between the pupil and the teacher during that period. The teacher would pay individual attention to his students and used to teach them according to their aptitudes and capabilities. Oral transmission of knowledge was the most common method of teaching. The different methods of learning were:

Memorization – The preliminary stage of learning was the process of by heart learning the sacred texts through an infinite number of repetitions and rehearsals, both by the teacher and the student.

Critical Analysis– A critical analysis was made of the existing knowledge.

Introspection – The student had the opportunity to look back on his knowledge and capabilities. The combined process of Sravana (listening), Manana (contemplation), and Nididhyasa (concentrated contemplation) is the process of introspection. Through introspection one can acquire knowledge and realize the truth.

Storytelling – The use of stories and parables to explain philosophies and principles was the most popular method of that time. The use of ballads was also very common.

Question and Answer Method – In this method, the students would ask questions and the teacher would discuss at length on the topics, clearing their doubts. It was the same as the modern Socratic Method.

Seminars – The students gained and expressed knowledge through talks, elocutions, debates, and discussions which were held at frequent intervals.

Period of Study

Mastering the Vedas took 12 years. Hence, depending upon the wish and capacity of the student to learn more subjects, the period of study varied from 6 to 12 years or more. A learned student was called Snataka and the graduation ceremony was called Samavartana.

Types of Teachers

We can see different types of teachers in the Vedic Education era. Typically, there were teachers that specialized in different subjects, like teachers for music, teachers for Vedas, or teachers for Danurvedya (Archery). Certain Gurus never left their ashrams for imparting education.

Students had to stay at the ashrams to get an education. Many Gurus were vagabonds. They traveled wherever they liked and imparted their knowledge to the needy and also to the public circle. Some teachers lived with royal families and they were popularly called Raja Gurus. Classifying the teachers during the Vedic period was not an easy task. Based on the method of their approach, they could be broadly classified as follows:

- **Upadhyayaka:** The one who adopted teaching as a profession to earn his livelihood
- **Charakas:** They were scholars who taught at various centers. They were wandering scholars who toured the country teaching and seeking higher knowledge.
- **Guru:** The one who used to lead a family life and earn his livelihood after imparting education to his disciples. It must be noted that the term Guru was also used broadly to represent all types of teachers of that time.
- **Acharya:** A type of teacher who taught his pupils without charging fees from them.
- **Sikshaka:** A teacher who instructed in arts like fine arts, music, and dancing.

A Glimpse of Aims, Ideals, and Objectives of Vedic Education

The major features of the Vedic Education system could be summarized as follows:

- Vedic Education considered Moksha (Liberation) and Self-Realization as the ultimate aims of education. Education in ancient India trained the individual in such a way to prepare him for attaining the greater objectives of Liberation, or, acquiring oneness with the Paramatma (the Universal Soul), to be liberated from the cycle of births and deaths and rebirths.
- Vedic Education aimed at infusing piousness and religiousness in the minds of the pupils. Vedic Education also aimed to train individuals for making a livelihood like many vocational activities.

- Character formation and development of value sense – Education was regarded as a means of inculcating values such as obedience to elders, respectfulness, truthfulness, honesty, and temperance.
- Significant stress on social duties - Individuals had to perform their duties towards society in many capacities conscientiously and efficiently.
- Development of all-round personality through (a) Self-restraint (b) Self-confidence (c) Self-respect (d) Discrimination and judgment
- Teachers had the role of Spiritual as well as Intellectual Guides
- Opportunities were provided for the education of women, but there had no equality of opportunities as it was availed to male people.

Autonomy of Educational Institutions and teachers was a very special feature of the Vedic period education. Teachers had complete authority over the admission and assessment of students. The teacher was the sole pedagogic authority who decided whether the student was fit for admission and also whether he had completed the studies meritoriously.

- While the Upanayan (Upanayana) was the initial ceremony of education, the Samavartan (Samavartana) was the convocation.
- Process of Instruction was based on three steps:
 1. Sravana: Listening to words of texts as they were uttered by the teacher.
 2. Manana: The process of deliberation or reflection on the topic which was taught.
 3. Nididhyasana: The highest stage or a meditation on knowledge.

A Critical Evaluation

The Vedic Education system was not carried out in schools or any other types of formal educational institutions. It was conducted at the teacher's residence, specially designed Ashrams, or even at the learners' residence. The student's opportunity to assimilate various extents of life

experiences was limited. The life of the student at the Ashram could be called schooling. Education from the Ashram was designed as the fundamentals of learning and knowing, it was a platform for further learning. Education from the Ashrams was too literary, with importance on memorizing rather than on meaningful learning. It was teacher-centered rather than student-centered. The system of education was need-based and rigid.

Kane (1987) explains that “the defects of the ancient Indian system of education were that it was too literary, there was too much memorizing, it had hardly any instruction in usual manual arts and crafts, the studies were not brought in contact with practical life.” There are contesting views on this as well, with none other than Dr. S Radhakrishnan opining that ancient Indian education was philosophical. It taught great philosophical ideologies during life in the Ashrams or Gurukuls. Vedic Education utilized the scientific methods of lecturing, narration, preaching, discussion, and direct learning. Education was treated as a process of learning from life. Learners could gain expertise in at least one area by undergoing the education. It had many varieties of approaches and practices.

Vedic Education slowly lost its educational credibility under the overriding influence of the caste system. The metamorphosis of the Vedic system to the Brahminic system paved the way for the invasion of caste into educational practices and so a big part of the society was marginalized and was removed from educational opportunities.

A meticulous comparison of a very ancient education system with the 21st Century education programmes is a meaningless exercise. Ancient education had a pattern that bonded with the moral values practiced at that time. Acquisition of knowledge was both the means and the end of the ancient system of education. The most important point is that such a strong system of educational effort existed in ancient India that aimed to provide education to children from different strata of society. The ancient education system had worked effectively for many centuries without much serious drawbacks or problems.

CHAPTER 3

THE JAIN AND BUDDHIST EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN ANCIENT INDIA

Vedic education was the most robust education system in ancient India. Along with the Vedic system, the ancient period experienced certain non-Vedic educational advances. Interestingly, the Vedic Education period itself witnessed the questioning of the Vedas.

Vedic education was flexible and democratic in approach. The critical thinking, questioning, and quizzical interpretations by the learners could emerge only from a democratic education pattern. Such a way of teaching and learning only can produce inventive social dogmas, philosophical thoughts, and socio-personal tenets. So, in a way, we can observe that Vedic Education was democratic and highly productive in approach. The democratic outline of the Vedic system paved the way for unique thought processes. It is surprising to understand that Vedic Education produced people to question the Vedic content! The educational programmes developed under the religious philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism are the products of such initiatives.

This chapter briefly introduces the educational contributions of Jainism and Buddhism. The chapter will help to enhance the metacognitive awareness of the readers on the formal contributions of Buddhism as a system of education. The chapter also discusses the emergence of universities in ancient India. The curriculum, academic activities, and organizational system of ancient Indian education during the period of Jainism and Buddhism and of the Universities such as Nalanda and Takshasila are explained. This chapter does not discuss in detail the philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism but rather describes only their educational perspectives.