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Ancient Teacher Education Programme According To Indian Tradition

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ABSTRACT

Education has always been found as the foundational root in Indian tradition. The education in the ancient Indian tradition was quite different and unique. They follow the system of Gurukul, where the students were taught in a natural setting and focused on the holistic approach to education. This study explores the ancient teacher education practices in India, focusing on their education system, pedagogical model, curriculum, philosophical ideals. In the Gurukul system they emphasized not only on intellectual development, but gave importance on moral and spiritual development. The primary objective of this study is to identify the wealth of knowledge related to teacher education in Indian tradition. This resorts to the secondary sources available in the area of study. It is expected that the scholars and the faculty in education will have another resource added to the reservoir of knowledge related to teacher preparation in ancient education system.

Key words: Gurukul, Teacher education, Ancient India, Holistic approach, Spiritual development.

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about teacher, we are referring to an individual or a group of individuals who foster not only bookish knowledge but someone who strives for wisdom and excellence. Teachers as we all know are the backbone of students' education. They play an important role in nurturing and shaping the life of many students significantly. Not only that they also play a pivotal role in the social development of the students. That ultimately lead to the progression and involvement in national progress. To quote Ever Garrison 'A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in pupils', in regard to this, teachers are the driving force for novel learning and discovery. In ancient India, education was deeply rooted in the teachings of the Vedas. During the Rig Vedic period, the Rishis were regarded as most influential and revered educators. Gurukula system was followed as the educational model where the 'Guru' (teacher) and 'Shishya' (pupil) shared a close relationship. This system emphasized on individualized instructions, allowing the student to learn accordingly at their own pace. One notable contribution of the ancient education system was the monitorial system, where senior students are gradually inducted to take on the role of the teachers.

CONCEPT OF TEACHER

Teacher also known as Guru, during the ancient period was highly honored and held in great esteem. They were trained to behave as the parents of the pupils whereas the pupils were considered as the members of the teacher's family. Teachers acted as a role model and motivator for the students. They are also moral educators, guides, personality developers, philosophers, evaluators, reformers and someone who is richly filled with wisdom and spiritual guidance. The bond between the teacher-student relationship were filial in nature. The teacher was the spiritual guardian and beyond being a mentor for academic growth.

AIM OF EDUCATION

The primary goal of education was to equip the students with high-quality education and experiences. Education mostly emphasized the enrichment of culture, character building, personality development and nurturing of noble values. It aimed to foster the students with proper mental health, physical, intellectual growth so in order to enable the students to prepare themselves for future and make them adapt or survive any circumstances they would experience. According to the Vedic view, the world is filled with divine presence and therefore every living being is to achieve the ultimate goal i.e., spiritual freedom and liberation. According to A.S. Altekar (2012), "The knowledge is a third eye of man, which gives him insight into all affairs and teaches him how to act. In the spiritual sphere it leads to our salvation, in the mundane sphere it leads to all round progress and prosperity. The illumination given to us by education shatters illusions, removes difficulties and enables us to realise the true values of life"

EDUCATION SYSTEM

During the ancient India, the education system revolved around the all-round development of the students. During the ancient period, two prominent systems of education were developed namely, the Vedic and later the Buddhist. The Buddhist followed language of Pali while the medium of language for Vedic system was Sanskrit. The content of education during those times include Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Dharmasutras. Beginning with the Rigveda the objectives of our ancient education focused on the development and nurturing of both the outer as well as the inner body. Values and ethics such as humility, discipline, self-reliance, truthfulness, and respecting all living creatures were centralized in their teachings. Education was mostly imparted in ashrams, gurukuls, temples and houses. The teacher education during the ancient Gurukul system was informal and was mostly based on Guru-Shishay (teacher-student) relationship. The learning was not confined to traditional classrooms but were made in natural settings. In the Gurukul system, the guru's are considered as one of the most influential figures, where the shishay (student) lived in the house of the guru and learnt life's philosophies, moral disciplines, experiential learning, observations and many other methods for inner as well as outer development. During this period education starts at a very early age. It was emphasized during the early life, because they thought it essential for the full development of both inner and outer talents of the pupils. A.S. Altekar (2012) says, "Ancient Indians were convinced that no good result could follow if education is begun late in life therefore, they insisted that education ought to commence in childhood."

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Gurukul's was the traditional residences of the teachers where the students would arrive after the completion of their initiation ceremony and reside there until they finished their study. Through this, it fostered personalized learning and discipline. The parishads or academics were the advanced centers of learning, where knowledge was imparted through discussions and debates. Goshti or scholarly conferences, were the gatherings where the kings invited various intellectuals from every institution to exchange ideas and viewpoints. There were also other learning centers such as Ashramas or hermitages where students from different parts of the country came to participate in learning from saints and sages. Sringeri, Kanchi, Dwarka, and Puri, etc. were some places of spiritual learning founded by great Acharya, Sri Shankara. A place of learning was known as Vidyapeeth. There was also an institution for Brahmins called as Agraharas. The subjects related to Buddhism and philosophy, were taught to students at Viharas educational institutions founded by the Buddhists.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum plays as an important role in the education system. It consists of various stages and was dynamic than static. In order to build a good curriculum and provide quality education, it was necessary to equip the minds and bodies of students respectively. The curriculum includes four vedas, six Vedangas, Upanishads, Darshanas, Puranas and Tarka Shastra. Nyaya, Baisesika, Yoga, Vedanta, Sankhya, Mimasa were the Darshanas whereas the six vedangas consisted of Shiksha, Chhandas, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Jyotisha and Kalpawhile. Grammar, Algebra and Geometry were given significant importance during that time. During the era, Panini was significantly weight as importance in the field of grammar. Pitakas, Abhidharma and Sutras were the curriculum consists in the Buddhist system. Both Hindus and Buddhist system were emphasized and learning was going hand in hand at that time, although Buddhist learning was more emphasized. The exams were conducted every year and education was taught through debates and oral tradition. Subjects like warfare, military, politics, religion were focused during the ancient education period.

PADAGOGICAL MODEL

The ancient education system was solely to explore their core development emotional and spiritual awakening. Teaching during this time was largely done through oral tradition and the pupils were made to meditate and reflect upon the teachings. The main aim of teaching was to nurture the whole individual physically, emotionally, intellectually, ethically so that the individual can deepen their virtues, wisdom, and value of knowledge required for deeper connection with the world. Religion was considered as an integral part during the ancient Indian education system for their formation and foundational development. In the Gurukul system, meditation, prayers and spiritual disciplines played an important role. Students were taught to connect and nurtured with activities to develop their spiritual growth. The key objectives of the system was to lead the students towards self-realization and a deeper understanding of their divine nature. They also encompasses a wide range of knowledge such as philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, arts, literature, music and social sciences. Students were encouraged to ask questions, analyze and engage in meaningful discussions with their mentors and peers. Education was designed to stimulate their curiosity and to develop their critical thinking skills. The pupils learned and cultivate all types of basic skills and knowledge that are required for the thriving and survival of life. They are also made to do activities and chores such as cleaning, washing, cooking and fishing, etc.

The students also gained respect and humility in the society through almsgiving. They were also made to learn their mantras in order to preserve them for future generations. Students were taught how to memorize their mantras, sacred chants and sacrifices performed during rites. They focused on a holistic and student-centered approach where the students are able to learn through first hand experience. It led to a higher level of self-realization and enlightenment by involving all their strength and weakness. They also emphasized

on character building, where the vedic teachers thought the students will have a happy and peaceful future if they inculcate good habits from their early life. For the cultivation of good habits, regulation of daily routines was considered essential. They had to perform the habit of waking early in the morning, the daily rituals, speak the truth, live a simple life and behave accordingly with everyone.

PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALS

The philosophical ideals during the ancient education system were not only about imparting knowledge, but include the overall approach to holistic development. Their objectives were to provide quality education to the students at the same time focus on enhancing their character, behaviour, personality and achieving high moral principles. Their main focus was on the students to seek the truth and attain Moksha or liberation. They were to devote themselves to their Gurus completely, meditate, cultivate spiritual practices and indulging in selfless service to the mankind. They cultivate the values of life which are respectful, dignified, kindness, truthfulness needed for the sustaining of life. The teachers protect the students from harmful habits that can hamper their good values and morals. They guide them to become good human beings.

CONCLUSION

The Indian teacher education during the ancient period was quite fascinating and well-directed. The teachers were committed to their duties as well as taught the students to inculcate good moral values and wisdom to carry through, and be responsible in life. They focused on holistic approach to education engaging the students with books, meditations, hymns, mantras, chores and many other disciplines to enhance their personality development as well as spiritual growth. It aimed at providing the overall opportunity for them to develop themselves. Thus, the ancient Indian teacher education was well-equipped for character-building, foster the growth of diverse fields of knowledge and promoting social stability and economic prosperity.

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