



Vedic Period of Education

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Abstract

The Vedic Period's educational system was rooted in the Guru-Shishya tradition where teachers imparted knowledge to students in Vedic Schools and Ashrams. The Vedic Period marks the dawn of India's intellectual and cultural heritage, laying the foundation for its rich educational traditions. The Vedic education aimed to produce individuals with a strong sense of duty, morality and intellectual curiosity, laying the foundation for India's rich educational heritage. This era saw the emergence of the Vedas, ancient texts that not only shaped spirituality but also influenced the development of education. Education focused on – Memorization and recitation of Vedic texts, Spiritual growth and Self-realization, Development of intellectual and moral character, Reservation of education for elite classes (Brahmins and Kshatriyas). This period's educational framework was deeply rooted in spirituality, philosophy and cultural values, aimed to produce individuals with a strong sense of duty, morality and intellectual curiosity. The Vedic Period's legacy continues to influence Indian Education, with its emphasis on the teacher-student relationship, respect for tradition and pursuit of knowledge for self-realization.

Keywords- Vedic Period, Vedic education, Vedic Schools and Ashrams.

Introduction

'Education' was derived from the Latin word 'educere, educare and educatum' which means 'To Learn, To Know and To Lead out'. Education reveals a person's or child's latent inner talent. Since the Vedas constitute the foundation of Indian philosophy of life, they are the wellspring of ancient Indian education. The word 'VEDA' means 'Knowledge'. The development of one's physical, moral, and intellectual capacities in order to attain salvation was the focus of Vedic education which could be achieved by attention, concentration, and Yoga which was taught in this Vedic Period. Throughout the Vedic era, education was provided at no cost, and students followed an exemplary lifestyle as part of their education. India's rich tradition and culture were largely derived from Vedic education, which was greatly valued by the international community.

A child's future is greatly influenced by their education since it serves as a key to many opportunities and knowledge that will help them live prosperous lives in the future. The ability to become self-reliant, combat social evils, advance national and societal growth, and enhance the functioning of our society and, eventually, the entire world is all facilitated by education. It also helps in unraveling the mystery of nature and creates conditions for a better life both for men and women. Everyone has the right to a higher education in order to live a better life.

Vedic education was a support to lead our daily life in a very relaxed way. Vedic education was based on the idea of preparing students for society, not just for a materialistic existence but also for the

growth of their character and personality. Vedic education believed in universal brotherhood and community welfare and also instructed us to believe in unity rather than caste and creed in all religions. The entire foundation of Vedic education was moral education as the students were taught this in a practical way, as they lived in Gurukul with their teachers.

The root "VID," which means "To Know," is whence the word "VEDA" originated. The term "Sacred Knowledge" refers to the knowledge found in the Vedic text. The Vedas are regarded as the Indo-Aryan civilization's oldest written works. the traditional Hindu scriptures, which include spiritual knowledge covering all aspects of life.

Vedic Education in Ancient India

The Vedic System of Education was the educational framework that developed in ancient India. During the Vedic era, education served as a ray of light that enlightened people about all aspects of life. In Vedic education, one can attain wisdom and perceive the truth through Yoga and Meditation.

The Vedic period is divided into 2 parts: -

- 1) The Early Vedic Period (1500 BC-1000 BC) and
- 2) The Later Vedic period (1000 BC- 600 BC)

The cause of the significant changes in society between the time the first or early Vedas were composed and the publication of the last or later Vedic Scriptures / Period

Difference between the Early Vedic age and Later Vedic age

Sl.No	Early Vedic Period	Later Vedic Period
1.	The pastoralist and semi-nomadic lifestyle of the early Vedic society was characterized by their aimless wanderings.	The nature of society settled down. It became dominated by farming and raising livestock.
2.	The barter system predominated in the Early Vedic Period, when exchanges involved little to no monetary value transactions.	Despite this, the barter system continued to be used. With the introduction of coinage at that time, known as <i>Krishnala</i> , it was mainly replaced by the trade of gold and silver coins.
3.	Since the king was chosen for a specific period by the <i>Samiti</i> , the local assembly, kingship was ambiguous.	During this time, society became more urbanized, which made solid leadership necessary. As a result, the Kings' absolute authority gained increasing prominence.
4.	The caste system was based on occupation rather than birth and was therefore flexible.	With birth serving as the primary criterion, the caste system grew increasingly inflexible, and social evil began to flourish.
5.	Shudras and untouchables did not exist; everyone lived together as one.	Shudras emerged as an essential character in the later Vedic Era. They were tortured by the upper classes and their only purpose was to serve them.
6.	During this time, women were granted more freedom and had a high degree of respect in society. To some extent, they were permitted to take part in the political process during the time.	Women were forced into subordinate and servile roles, which limited their ability to participate in society.
7.	Rig Veda was composed in this early Vedic period.	Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda were composed in this late Vedic period.
8.	Rig Veda = Praise of Gods/ Hymns	Yajur Veda = Vedas of Worship,

		Sama Veda = Origin of Music, Atharva Veda = Various branches of Science, Medical; Science, Military Science, Ayurvedic Science, Economics, and Vedic Maths.
9.	These educations were given in Gurukuls, which were situated at an undisturbed place in the forest away from the hustle-bustle of the town.	The education centers were in big towns or at famous centers of pilgrimage which was also a famous center of learning.
10.	The oldest period of the Vedic period was known as the Early Vedic period. The Early Vedic Age starts from the period of 1500-1000 BC.	The Later Vedic period started from the period of 1000 BC – 600 BC.

Classification of the Vedas

The Vedic System of Education is the name given to the educational framework that originated in ancient India. The Vedic Educational System was the name given to the traditional educational system that was founded on the Vedas. The Vedas are extremely significant in Indian culture.

There are 4 Vedas:-

- i. The Rig Veda
- ii. The Yajur Veda
- iii. The Sama Veda
- iv. The Artharva Veda.



Fig – The Four Vedas

The Rig Veda: - The Rig Veda is one of the Holy Scriptures in the world. "Praise, Knowledge" is what the word "Rig Veda" means. Of the four Vedas, the Rig Veda is the oldest. It is a religious text written in Sanskrit. Written about 1500 BCE, it is considered one of the most sacred texts in Hinduism. The earliest collection of human wisdom is the Rig Veda.

The Yajur Veda:- It dates back to 1100-800 BC. Yajur Veda means "Worship Knowledge" or "Ritual Knowledge", it gathers "chants/mantras for the ritual offering." Together with someone who used to carry out a ritual, the priests provided these chants. It contains instructions for religious rituals. It is an ancient Vedic Sanskrit text. It is an assortment of chants, recitations, and ritualistic worship formulas that are employed in religious events. Yajna (sacrificial fire) rituals are described in the Yajur Veda Texts along with formulas and mantras to be spoken. Yajur Veda is devoted to the worship of God, it primarily contains prose mantras for worship rituals as Yajuis Veda a book of rituals.

The Sama Veda:- Soma Veda dates back to 1200-800 B.C. It is one of the four main Vedas. It is known as the collection of Melodies and Chant; Sama means "Melody" and Veda means "Knowledge." It is an old Vedic Sanskrit text and one of the holiest books in Hindustan. The Sama Veda is sometimes referred to as the "yoga of song," the "book of song," or even "The Veda of Chants." Public worship is connected to this Veda. The foundation of Indian classical music and dance is regarded as the Sama Veda. The Sama Veda Samhita is supposed to be heard, not read, much like a musical score sheet. Out of the four Vedas, the Sama Veda is the shortest.

The Artharva Veda:- It dates back to 1000- 800 B.C. The name Atharva Veda (Atharvan + Knowledge) refers to the tatpursusha combination of the ancient sage and knowledge Atharvain. This Veda does a really good job of enumerating daily activities. It has twenty books, arranged according to the length of the hymns they include, 730 hymns, or suktas, and six thousand mantras. While most of the hymns in the Atharva Veda are new, a handful are borrowed from the Rig Veda, in contrast to the Sama Veda. The Atharva Veda is the

repository of knowledge for Atharvanas, or daily living procedures. "Knowledge of the Fire Priest," a book from the Atharva Veda, contains charms and spells. It is an assortment of hymns, spells, and incantations that incorporate different regional customs and are partially performed outside of Vedic sacrifice.

Education system in the Vedic period

The Vedic Education System was regarded as a highly sophisticated educational framework that emphasized simplicity in living and human enlightenment. Additionally, it teaches students the importance of finding happiness in even the little things in life, which lowers stress and anxiety levels in people.

Forms of Educational Institutions in the Vedic period

1. **Gurukulas** – Gurukulas were the residence places of the gurus, located in peaceful environments far from the hustle and bustle of urban areas. As the name suggests, during the study term, the instructor and his resident students resided in Gurukul. Under the close supervision of their Guru, students resided under the "Antevasin" roof. Serving the teacher and his family, who shared a home with the students, was the students' main responsibility in gurukuls. After celebrating their "Upanayan Sanskar," one of the most well-known of the 16 sanskaras in Hindu dharma shastra, which is a traditional sanskar or rite of passage that marks the acceptance of the student by a preceptor such as a guru or an acharya, the parents send their children to the gurukul at the age of five to nine years old, depending on their caste. We can say that it is the start of Vedic Education).
2. **Parishads** – Parishads were larger educational institutions where a number of teachers taught various courses. This can be compared to an assembly of learned men, called a college parishad in the Upanishads, who convened to discuss philosophical issues. Subsequently, "Parishads" were established in areas where a large population of knowledgeable individuals resided, and over time, these institutions developed into permanent hubs for the diffusion of knowledge.
3. **Sammelan** – Literally speaking, sammelan refers to gathering for a specific objective. Scholars from all over the world convened at these kinds of educational institutes, usually at the king's invitation, for intellectual debates and contests. The right incentives were given to scholars.

Methods of Teaching during the Vedic period

1. **Oral Teaching** – Due to a shortage of printing press and writing materials, particularly paper, there were very few books throughout the Vedic era. As a result, instruction was mostly given verbally. Students learn the lessons from their teacher by word of mouth. The students paid close attention to the teacher's instructions and memorized the texts.

There are three stages to this oral teaching approach.

- i. **Shravan** - It includes listening to the teacher read the text aloud.
 - ii. **Manan / Meditation** – it is the process of thinking through or discussing the material that is presented.
Nididdyasan – it is the enlightenment attained via meditation.
2. **The Question–Answer Method** – Discussions and the questions-and-answer method were popular during the Vedic era. Through this method, students had to understand their subjects. The student asked questions, and the Guru answered them.

3. **Agra-Shishya or Pupil Teacher System** – In Ashrams and Gurukulas, it was common for the Gurus to assign bright senior students to instruct younger ones. This approach relieved Guru's burden and benefited students as well as teachers.

4. **Use of Illustration, Examples, Sutras, Stories, Maxims** – This system was built on ideas from psychology. The Guru used illustrations, stories, maxims, and other examples to help clarify concepts. The guru moved from the known to the unknown and back again. In addition, he used rhetorical tools like metaphors and similes to clarify concepts.

Salient Features of Vedic Education

1. The study of Vedas was the main aim of Vedic Education. The most important aspect of Vedic education is the Rig Veda.
2. In Ashrams and Gurukulas, the learner is taught by the teacher. Both educators and students adhere to the maxim 'simple living, high thinking'.
3. The education was predicated on a single lesson. Every teacher works with one student. The teacher places a high value on the student's overall growth.
4. The majority of the students' time was spent introspecting, self-study, and meditation. Knowledge and intelligence are more important than material goods.
5. Everyone was entitled to free education, and admission was based on good behavior.
6. The teacher-student connection was friendly and supportive, and students showed their teachers a great deal of respect and commitment. Teachers were highly respected.
7. The crucial aspect of Vedic education is religion. Vedic Education places a high value on religion since it is a subject that all students must learn.
8. Students were not treated unfairly based on their caste, creed, color, etc.
9. The approach to teaching was psychological.
10. The primary goal of Vedic education was to use knowledge to achieve salvation.
11. Learning for various professions and practical knowledge was the primary emphasis of education.
12. Education aided in maintaining integrity, self-control, and moral purity.
13. The students' continued concentration on meditation and thought led to the emergence of creativity in them.
14. Women were accorded a prominent position in society, and their education received special attention.

The Aims and Objectives of Vedic Education

1. Preparation for Moksha or Self-Realisation (Self-Realisation Aim).
2. Knowledge Attainment Aim.
3. Cultivating Dharma.
4. Vocational Aim or securing a job for earning Artha or worldly wealth.
5. Preparation for fulfilling 'Karma' or worldly desires without giving up 'Dharma'.
6. Creating rules and army men for safeguarding the society.
7. Character development Aim.

Main Features of the Vedic education

1. **Personality Development** – Vedic education placed a strong emphasis on personality development and character formation. During the Vedic schooling period, personality development was given an

unparalleled degree of stress compared to any other era. In ancient India, morality was essential. Moral ideals were instilled in students to be followed throughout their lives. Teachers also emphasized the learning of sensory control as a means of promoting the development of character. Self-reliance and a modest lifestyle were strongly encouraged for students' character development. During their time of learning, they were known as the "Brahmacharis" and refrained from all joys and luxuries.

Practical Education –Vedic education helped people acquire practical skills by providing more than just academic knowledge acquired from sacred texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. In addition to receiving other occupational training, children were taught how to perform manual labor. Among the professions were weaving, ceramics, painting, dance, singing, etc.

2. **Spiritual and Religious values** – Education without spiritual and religious qualities was not regarded as education at that time since the Vedic educational system placed a strong emphasis on piety and the establishment of religious values in addition to moral standards in students. It was thought that religious principles should be instilled in students from an early age.
3. **Civic responsibilities and Social values** – Students of Vedic Education also had civic obligations after completing their education at the Gurukul. They were expected to return to society and contribute in many ways to improve and evolve it. They were required to extend hospitality and charity to those in need.
4. **Enlightenment** – In order to reach complete enlightenment, students had to learn the value of both the body and the soul through the Vedic Education System. The system incorporates spiritual components such as prayer chanting and religious rites on significant occasions, with an emphasis on human enlightenment.

The Curriculum of Vedic Education

Studying the ancient Indian Vedic literature was the goal of Vedic education. Students received spiritual and religious principles in this schooling. Philosophies, grammar, astrology, logic, languages, and Vedic literature were all taught to the students. Practical learning was crucial at this time as well. In addition, they received teaching in hunting, archery, dancing, painting, singing, and riding. The students also received teaching in Ayurveda, Yoga, Astronomy, and Philosophy from their teachers.

The curriculum varied according to the intrinsic needs of the different classes.

- Brahmin Class (Siksha, Vyskarana, Kalpa, jyotisha)
- Kshatriyas (Archery, Horsemanship, and other art of warfare)
- Vaisyas (Agriculture and trade)
- Geology
- Human Eugenics
- Mathematics
- Military Science.

Features of Vedic education

- Education to all and free education.
- Gurukula System where teachers and students reside together and gain education.
- Upanayana Ceremony (it was an initiation ceremony)

They were also taught –

- Anthropology
- Astronomy
- Economics
- Epistemology
- Eschatology
- Ethnology
- Brahmacharya
- Accepting of Alms
- Self-control and Self-discipline
- Teacher – Student Relationship
- Curriculum
- Medium of Instruction
- Method of teaching
- Vocational Education
- Guru has full Autonomy
- No state control on Education
- Widespread education of women
- Evaluation System.

Women's Education in the Vedic period

The Women were highly honored and had a respectable status in this Vedic Period. They were allowed to Higher Education, study the Vedas, and also perform administrative tasks and other important jobs mostly performed by men even today, the women were treated with respect and devotion and were given a high social standing. They took part in the arguments and attended the assemblies. In society, women were granted the same position as males. They were allowed to take part in every religious ceremony.

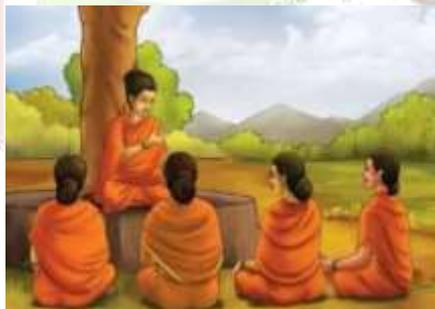


Fig – Women's Education in the Vedic Era

Women who became sages during the Vedic Period were known as "Rishikas" and "Brahmavadinis," as they were the offspring of the Brahmacharya school of learning, to which women were also entitled. According to the Rig Veda, young women who complete their education as "Brahmacharinis" are married off to husbands who merge them together as rivers do in oceans.

Women Scholars who were Famous in the Vedic era

1. Apala
2. Devajani
3. Ghosha
4. Lopamudra
5. Indrani
6. Jarita
7. Savitri
8. Juhu
9. Yami
10. Sharanga
11. Paulomi
12. Vishvavura
13. Romasha
14. Gargi
15. Maitreya
16. Urvashi
17. Gautami.

Merits of the Vedic period

1. Vedic Education paid attention to the formation of character and development of personality of the child.
2. Education was free of cost.
3. The teachers enjoyed the highest social status and were given respect.
4. The teachers treated their students as their own children.
5. Education of women also received proper attention during the Vedic Period, as women were also allowed to learn the Vedas.
6. Since the King was granted full power, both society and the King paid for the expenses.
7. Students who were forced to beg for charity gained tolerance and humility as a result of the situation.
8. Efforts were made for the preservation of culture and the students were responsible for it.
9. Social skills evolved through training in the fulfillment of duties.
10. Music and Dance were also taught to girls.
11. Arts and handicrafts were highly respected.

Demerits of the Vedic period

1. The Vedic Education laid undue stress on spiritual matters only.
2. The secular and material aspects of life were not given adequate importance, this was because the goal of life was self-realization, and education was not considered as the birthright of a person.
3. The immense importance of religion had to learn the mantras /chants at a very small age.
4. Lack of freedom of thought because they had to follow all the instructions as written.
5. Neglect of education of masses as they were instructed.
6. Hatred of New religion, as the focus was on Hinduism.
7. Strict discipline had to follow all the rules as written.
8. Rigidity in Instruction, they had to do as it was written.

Conclusion

The Vedic educational system has been effective in maintaining and disseminating its literature and culture throughout the world. Education took on an idealistic form during the Vedic era, with teachers emphasizing the worship of God, religiosity, spirituality, character development, personality development, and fostering an interest in order to foster the growth of culture, nation, and society—all of which led to significant advancements. The Vedic Education System placed a strong emphasis on understanding Vedic texts, which leans more toward religious neutrality and a more spiritual way of living. Women possessed high levels of education during the Vedic Era due to the importance of education in society at the time. It was seen as significant for society and pious. It was mostly spiritual, liberal, and thoughtful in nature and so gave importance to all castes and creeds. It favoured women's education which was the most important thing at that time. The Vedic System of education provided free education and modeled conduct for its students. Like father and son relationships throughout the Vedic Period, the teacher-student connection was very friendly and supportive of one another in many aspects of life.

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