

The applicability of Vedic education in today's world: a distinctive approach to Learning

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***Abstract:** Not only do many branches of Hinduism have their roots in the Vedas, but all major world faiths can be linked to them as well. We have a moral obligation to protect them so that they might continue to shine in all their grandeur for future generations. This article mainly emphasizes on the significance of Vedic education in the present educational scenario as the foundations of most of the teaching techniques and practices can be traced from this education system.*

***Keywords:** Gurukula, Veda, Guru, Contemporary Education*

Introduction: Ancient Indian education refers to the instruction that existed prior to the British-introduced current system of contemporary education. Before the missionaries began their educational operations in the nation, the Vedic, Buddhist, and Muslim era of education were the times when the old Indian educational system was in practice. The ancient education system has established its own objectives, curricula, and teaching strategies to preserve our nation's tradition and cultural legacy. Ancient Indian education was well known throughout the world. The educational institutions that were in place during the three periods-Vedic, Buddhist, and Muslim were well-known on a global scale. In this article main focus will be given on the Vedic system of education.

Education during the Vedic era: There are a lot of controversies regarding the fact as to which period of education was actually considered as the Vedic period of education. It roughly flourished for about 800 years covering the period from 1500 B.C. to 600 B.C. Of this period the period before 1000 B.C. is regarded as the Vedic period and the period after this till 600 B.C. is regarded as the Post Vedic or Brahmanic period. The four Vedas-Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda were the primary sources of instruction during the Vedic period. The Rishis of that time wrote these Vedas. They are the world's first scriptures. The Vedas were written by the Rishis with the intention of educating everyone on earth. They provide wisdom in the form of hymns or verses that is essential for everyone in order to live a happy and prosperous life. Origin of the Word 'veda' And The Four Vedas: The word 'Veda' has originated from a Sanskrit word 'Vid' which means 'knowledge'. These Vedas are a compilation of the extensive knowledge that these great Rishis have acquired throughout their lives through stern penance and a life of religion. Through rigorous penance, they could discover the actual purpose of existence. The Vedas were written by different Rishis according to their areas of specialisation. They have been grouped into the following four categories as a result:



1. Rig Veda: Rig Veda is the oldest scripture in the world. It is regarded as the main source of Hindu religion. It is a collection of more than 1000 hymns composed by the Aryans. These hymns throw light on the festivals, literature, religion, social rituals and cultural life of the Aryans. It is said that six 'Seers' (Rishis) were associated in the compilation of the Rig Veda. The literary meaning of 'Rig Veda' is 'Veda of hymns'. The hymns of the Rig Veda were perhaps preserved for their use in the sacrificial ceremonies. There were three priests who performed all the rituals – Hotri, Udgatri and Adhvaryu.
2. Sama Veda: The Sama Veda is a basic book of Indian music. The hymns contained in it are associated with the Soma sacrifice. Soma is a juice extracted from a particular tree, the consumption of which provides immortality to both humans and gods. For this the sama sacrifice was performed and beautiful hymns were sung known as Samans. Sama Veda is a collection of these samans. It originally had 1549 verses but later on the Hotri purohits added 18 more new verses to it.
3. Yajur Veda: Yajur Veda is the hymns related to the prayers offered at the time of performing sacrifices. These acts were performed by the Adhvaryus, who were the priests associated with the manual acts of sacrifice. It is regarded as a prayer book of the Adhvaryu priests. It mainly contains the rites and rituals to be observed while offering sacrifices.
4. Atharva Veda: The Atharva Veda was composed much later than the other Vedas. Its hymns reflect on science and secularism. Though some of its hymns are borrowed from the Rig Veda it contains a number of new hymns. It is regarded as the medical book of ancient India. Most of its verses throw light on the treatment of various diseases with the help of herbs. Its verses also offer knowledge regarding the solar system, economics, politics, philosophy etc. Therefore, it contains subjects apart from religion also.

The Gurukula System:

The Gurukula system of instruction is another well-known component of the ancient educational system. In the Indian culture, the 'Guru-Śiṣya Paramparā' (preceptor-disciple tradition) technique holds a significant importance. This country has practised this tradition for a very long period.

The Sanskrit word 'Guru' denotes a person who is a teacher, guide, expert, or master in a particular subject or profession. In Sanskrit, the noun 'Guru' means 'teacher', but in Indian traditions, it has additional context-specific meanings that go beyond what 'teacher' means in English. A person who is a counselor, a sort of parent of mind and soul, who helps form values and experiential sources and who unveils the purpose of life is included in the definition of the guru as well as someone who teaches a specific type of knowledge.

“Guśabdastvandhakāraḥ syāt ruśabdastannirodhakaḥ |
ndhakāranirodhivāt gururityabhidhīyate || ”

The syllable 'gu' signifies 'darkness' and the syllable 'ru' signifies 'he who dispels them'. Because of his ability to drive out darkness, the 'Guru' is so titled. In Indian culture the 'Guru' is given the highest place which can be seen in the following Śloka:

“Gururbrahmā gururviṣṇu gururdevo maheśvaraḥ |

gurureva paraṁ brahma tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ ||”

The Guru Ashrama, also known as the ‘Gurukula’ or ‘the family of the teacher’ was where the pupils stayed during the Vedic period. The pupils remained here like the son of the Guru. The primary reason for placing a student in the Gurukula was to provide him the chance to live in close proximity to his instructor and develop his life and character according to his teachings and ideals. The students were admitted in the Gurukula at the age of twelve through the ‘Upanayana’ ceremony which lasted for three days. The word ‘Upanayana’ means ‘to sit near the guru for attaining education’. Through this ceremony the students started their spiritual life by taking up Brahmacharya for a period of twelve years. The concluding ceremony of learning was known as ‘Samavartana’ ceremony. The word ‘Samavartana’ means ‘leaving the guru’s place and going back home’. This was basically a farewell given to the students. After this ceremony the students entered the social life and gave up Brahmacharya.

The role of Vedic system of education in the growth of the contemporary Indian education system:

The past serves as the basis for the present. Our contemporary educational system was built on the education system that evolved in our nation during the Vedic era. They played a fundamental part in the growth of the contemporary Indian education system, which we can describe in the following ways:

1. The beginning of state and societal involvement in the administration of education: Even though the state was not in charge of organising education throughout the Vedic period, the teachers encouraged the kings, the state, and the people to do so. The end effect was enormous donations to gurukulas from rulers and wealthy members of the society. In the current circumstances, the state now bears responsibility for organising education, but it is unable to carry out this task without the active support of the society. The involvement of the state and society in the management of education in our nation dates back to the Vedic era.
2. The inception of the classification of education at various levels: While there were only two levels of organization of education throughout the Vedic period which is primary and higher education, the groundwork for this leveling of instruction was already built at this time. The division of education into its several levels-pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education has been done so on the basis of this foundation and psychological knowledge.
3. Facilitated the development of the most effective teaching techniques: There is no denying over the fact that many effective teaching methods such as imitation, lecture, question and answer, discussion, logic, drama and storytelling, listening-learning, and practice, were already developed in India before education had even started among other human races around the world. Emphasis was also placed on making learning engaging and effective. Even if we have created a number of effective teaching techniques currently, using scientific, technological, and psychological knowledge, if we look closely at them, it is clear that their origins lie in the teachings of Vedic gurus. The importance of the foundation must be acknowledged.
4. Paved the way for vocational education: In the Vedic era, the term ‘Karma śikṣā’ was used to describe the modern day vocational education. Vocational education during the early Vedic period was based on

capacity and ability, whereas during the later Vedic period, it was based on Varna (caste). This laid the foundation stone for the emphasis in the present day vocational education which in turn helps in making the people of the nation self-sufficient.

Conclusion: The ancient education system has laid down its own aims, curricula and methods of teaching to keep up the tradition and cultural heritage of our country alive. The present Indian educational system is built on the principles of the Vedic system of education. The goals of education remain mostly unchanged from the Vedic era to today. Similar to the Vedic era, we now integrate all of the knowledge, skills, technology, etc. in the curriculum. We still strive to build friendly relationships between teachers and students. Vedic education system is a system of whole (samasti) qualities that is entirely value-based. Vedic education aims to instill the concept of simple living and high thinking among the people. Thus, we deduce that Vedic system of education paved the way for the development of the current Indian educational system.

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