

## EDUCATION IS NOT SIMPLY CONDITIONING HUMAN BEING INTO SOCIAL BEING THE REAL EDUCATION IS THE JOURNEY WITHIN, STIRRING THE SPIRITUAL BEING

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### ABSTRACT

*Much has happened over last half a century. People across the globe, in different ways, through different modes, in different languages and expressions are turning to inner sources of knowledge and wisdom and are converging to the truth that education is not simply conditioning, cultivating or training the human beings to become refined and more elegant human beings superficially. Education is determined to probe deeper. It is not simply soothing the skin but it is stirring of the spirit. It seeks to touch the deeper more profound insights and inner recesses of human existence. It strives to unfold the human existence from within; eventually awakening of spiritual being. The foundation of ancient Indian education system is holistic, integral and fundamental; it aims at essential development of being. It endeavors for better existence of individual as well as all beings on this planet. There is growing separation, conditioning and disintegration in all human activity. We are in quantity driven neo- hi-tech era. We are all forerunners of our future, so to create a new quality oriented potential we need to create new consciousness of our young ones. This means education for next generation must be 'consciousness education'. The paper focuses on an education structure organized at nurturing and fostering the inner being. Real education is the journey within in all aspects.*

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Being, Education.

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### INTRODUCTION

He, who is possessed of supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control, like spirited steeds controlled by a charioteer.

(Katha Upanishad iii,6)

In the whole world there has been clash and contradiction between spiritual and physical life. There has been denial of Matter by those with the

acceptance of spiritual life and there has been denial of the Spirit by those with the acceptance of conviction in perfect physical life. Now we are at such turning point in the history of human civilization that we need to rethink that Spirit and Matter are irreconcilable realities. Our question is about the Matter as well as Spirit and the possible answer is that the reality is neither the one nor the other, but something in which both truly come together. Indian

culture and ancient Indian education were inseparable for ages. Indians believed that knowledge or Vedas are not merely for preservation of tradition but they are the sources internal ardor of psychological and spiritual practice.

The concept of awakening the spirit refers to the idea that all the properties of a given system in any field of study cannot be determined or explained by the sum of its sections. Instead, the system in its entirety reflects how its elements function. A spiritual integral approach in education tries to include and assimilate manifold levels of implications and understanding rather than narrowing and conditioning human possibilities just up to a social being.

The ideal of education has been very grand, noble and high in ancient India. Its aim was the 'training for completeness of life' and the molding of character of men and women for the battle of life. The history of the educational institutions in ancient India shows how old is her cultural history. Some hundreds of years must have been needed for all that is found in her culture. The aim of education was at the manifestation of the divinity in men, it touches the highest point of knowledge. In order to attain the goal the whole educational method is based on plain living and high thinking pursued through eternity (Macdonal, 1990).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **I Conception of education in ancient India**

From the Vedic age downwards the central conception of education of the Indians has been that it is a source of illumination giving us a correct lead

in the various spheres of life. Knowledge is the third eye of man, which guides the individual's journey within. As per classical Indian tradition "Sa vidya ya vimuktaye", (that which liberates us is education). From the very beginning the pupils conceive the idea of their country as less a geographical and material than a cultural or a spiritual possession, and to identify, broadly speaking, the country with their culture. The country was their culture and the culture their country, the true spirit of the country, the 'invisible shrine of culture' not confined within physical bounds. India thus was the first country to rise to the conception of an extra-territorial nationality and naturally became the happy home of different races, each with its own ethno-psychic endowment, and each carrying its social reality for Hindus is not geographical, not ethnic, but a culture-pattern. Devotion for the country and patriotism expanded as ideals and ways of life and it received acceptance. Thus, from the very dawn of its history has this Country of the Spirit ever expanded in extending circles, Brahmarshidesa, Brahmavarta, Aryavarta, Bharatvarsha, or Jambudvipa, Suvarnabhumi and even a Greater India beyond its geographical boundaries.

Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may so put it, but for the sake, and as a part, of religion. (It was sought as the means of self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life. viz. Mukti or Emancipation. Ancient Indian education is also to be understood as being ultimately the outcome of

the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the corresponding scheme of life and values. The scheme takes full account of the fact that Life includes Death and the two forms the whole truth. This gives a particular angle of vision, a sense of perspective and proportion in which the material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perishable and permanent interests and values of life are clearly defined and strictly differentiated. The individual's supreme duty is thus to achieve his expansion into the Absolute, his self-fulfillment, for he is a potential God, a spark of the Divine. Education must aid in this self-fulfillment, and not in the acquisition of mere objective knowledge (Education in Ancient India, 2014).

The Hindus were conscious about their ideal. Though spirituality is their goal they never neglected the material affairs. In the words of Wordsworth, they were true to the kindred points of heaven and home and knew fully that matter and spirit are interrelated; one cannot be conceived without the other.

Louis Revel (1946) has observed that India, in her glorious past, has understood that the greatness of a nation, its virility, its moral value, depend entirely on the system of education that is given to it. Ancient India furnished us examples of schools, universities, Brahmanic or Buddhist, which brought to this nation most glorious harvests – harvests fallen, alas! Today in to oblivion. Let us take such centers of culture as Takshashila, Ujjain, and Nalanda. These universities where thousands of students came from all parts of

Asia to drink at the source of learning – based their system of education on individual contacts between master and pupil, but the masters themselves were pupils in the great University of Life. What they gave to their students was the honey of their moral and intellectual experiences received through masters still more experienced in spiritual science, in the true knowledge of the laws of life. Do we not see the famous Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsang, coming to perfect himself at Nalanda in the study of Yoga-sastra, the knowledge of the laws of being? Did he not have, at Nalanda, the celebrated vision of the vicissitudes through which India would have to go? Thus, there passed through these universities great winds of free Spirit and free Intelligence which swept away the false conceptions, which formed real men, noble men, in whom joy sparkled.

## **II 'Man Making' was the Actual Aim of Education in Ancient Indian Education**

The making of man was regarded as the creative and actual aim of education in ancient India. It was thought of as the means of journey within, self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life. They call it 'Mukti' or Emancipation. Ancient Education System in India is also to be understood as being eventually the result of the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the related design of life and values. The system takes full account of the fact that Life includes Death and this form the eternal truth. This gives a specific viewpoint and vision, a sense of perception and proportion in which the material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perish-

able and permanent wellbeing and values of life are evidently characterized and exactly separated.

Education must aid in this self-fulfillment, and not in the achievement of mere objective knowledge. According to the ancient Indian theory of education, the training of the mind and the process of thinking, are essential for the acquisition of knowledge. The pupil had to focus on mental and external growth and development of internal attributes. There was a great emphasis and importance on inner strength of being.

### **III Distinctive Aspects of Ancient Indian Education**

From time immemorial, India has explicitly recognized that the supreme goal of life is self-realization and hence the aim of education has always been the attainment of such a fullness of being. But at the same time it was also recognized that different individuals have naturally different inclinations and capacities. Hence not only the highest philosophy but also ordinary subjects like literature and science as vocational training find a place in ancient Indian education system. The education system of ancient India may claim to be distinct in the world due to following reasons.

1. The State and the society did not in any way interfere with the curriculum, fees or time.
2. Fully and compulsorily residential. The student lived in the house of his teacher for the whole duration of his studies.
3. During the stay the pupil observed how his

teacher responded to different situation arising in daily life and the pupil learnt from it.

4. Stress was laid on interpersonal relation between the teacher and the taught.
5. Each student used to meet the teacher separately and received separate guidance.
6. Education was absolute free and the teachers put up with the primary needs of the pupil including food and clothing.
7. Supported the dignity of labor. Hence even a student aiming at the highest philosophical knowledge was duty bound to do some physical labor daily such as collecting fuel, tending cattle, etc.
8. Pupils used to learn through discussions and debates.

Thus the contributory purpose of education was to provide excellent training to young men and women in the performance of their social, economic and religious duties. Also preservation and enrichment of culture, character and personality development and cultivation of noble ideals were the other aims of education in ancient India.

The main subjects of study in the Vedic system of education were the four Vedas, six Vedangas (phonetics, ritualistic knowledge, grammar, exegetics, metrics and astronomy), the Upanishads, the six darshanas (nyaya, vaiseshika, samkya, yoga, mimamsa and vedanta), puranas (history), tarka shastra (logic), etc. A majority of people earned their livelihood by following various professions. Ancient Indian literature refers to sixty-four arts

which include weaving, dyeing, spinning, art of tanning leather, manufacture of boats, chariots, the art of training elephants and horses, art of making jewels, implements and equipment, art of dance, music, agriculture, building houses, sculpture, medical science, veterinary science, the profession of a chemist, manufacture of perfumes and a host of other professions. In the vocational system of education young men used to work as apprentices under a master for a number of years and gained expertise in their respective professions. The apprentices were taught free of cost and provided with boarding and lodging by the master.

#### **IV Methods of Learning**

In ancient India there was close affinity between the pupil and the teacher. The teacher used to pay individual attention on his students and used to teach the pupils as per their ability, aptitude and competence. Oral tradition was followed. Memorization, critical analysis, introspection, story - telling, question and answer method, For professional courses including medical science, students/apprentices used to learn by observation and through practical method. In Sameelans (seminars). The pupils acquired knowledge through debates and discussions which were held at frequent intervals.

#### **V Centers of Education in ancient India**

The *Gurukul* was the house of the teacher who was a settled house-holder. After the initiation ceremony a child would leave his natural parents and reside in the house of his preceptor or Guru till

the end of his studies. Then there were *Parishads* centers of advanced learning. Pupils gathered and enriched themselves through discussions and discourses. The purpose of these gathering of scholars was to adjudge the literary excellence of works submitted for criticism and to set the standard and style. These gathering were patronized by kings. *Goshti* or Conferences was a national gathering summoned by a great king in which representatives of various schools were invited to meet and exchange their views. *Ashramas* or hermitages were another center where pupils from distant and different parts of the country congregate for learning around famous sages. *Vidyapeeta* was an institution for spiritual learning founded by the great acharya, Sri Shankara. *Ghathikas* was an institution of highest learning where both the teachers and the taught met and discussed religious literature. *Agraharas* were settlements of Brahmins in villages where they used to teach. *Mathas* was a place where pupils used to live and receive instructions both religious and secular. *Brahmapuri* was a settlement of learned Brahmins in parts of towns and cities or in any selected area where education was imparted. *Vihara* was a Buddhist monastery where all subjects concerned with Buddhism and its philosophy was taught.

#### **VI Knowledge Centers of Ancient India**

Takshashila was a chief center of learning in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. There were schools of painting, sculpture, image making and handicrafts and many more. But this university was reputed for its medical

school. Nalanda was famous for its faculty of Logic. Vallabhi was the center for the advanced learning in Hinayana Buddhism. Secular subjects like Arthasastra (economics), Niti Shastra (law) and Chikitsa Sastra (medicine) were also taught here and like Nalanda students from all parts of India used to come here to study. Students who studied from this university used to be employed in the royal courts as administrators with huge responsibilities. Just like Nalanda University was destroyed by Muslim invaders, Vallabhi also met the same fate. Vikramasila was well-known for Tantric Buddhism. Ujjain was famous for its secular learning including mathematics and astronomy. Benaras was well-known for teaching theology. Salotgi in Karnataka was an important Centre of learning. Ennayiram in Tamilnadu and other important centers of learning in South India were Sringeri and Kanchi. With the invasion of Muslim conquerors nearly all the centers of higher learning of the Hindus and Buddhists were destroyed. Nalanda was burnt to the ground in 1197 A.D. and all its monks were slaughtered. Kanauj and Kashi were looted and plundered. Temples and educational institutions and libraries were put to destruction and they were replaced by mosques. In spite of such merciless and extensive destruction, Hindu educational institutions remained a living reality. They sustained strength from its inherent strength and exuberance. Even during the reigns of terror and turmoil, ruthless persecution

and motiveless destruction, the Hindu culture and scholarship continued to survive in fragments, though it had to migrate to more safe regions within the country (Luniya, 1978).

## **VII Creating Conditions in Education for Stirring up the Spiritual Existence**

In Ancient Bhartiya (Indian) tradition Guru (teacher) focused on an approach to make the pupil more concerned, compassionate, liberal, all-encompassing, ethical, inclusive and humane by imparting value education. It is time to reinvent our ancient ways and system in education and add to it something that may never have been attempted before on the planet- to create conditions for the emergence of a new way of spiritual existence ‘being’ on this earth. The main purpose of such an education would not be to repeat what others have practiced or are practicing. The reinvention of the ancient concept of education with a makeover is not something that will lend itself too readily to our understanding for most of us are too attached to old thought patterns and old knowledge systems too seriously. We believe very staunchly that things cannot change radically or universally this might actually prevent any serious and sustained attempt to impart the real education, the journey within, stirring of the spiritual being, the inward approach.

## **VIII A Few Attributes of Ancient Indian Vedic Education**

### **Pursuit of Knowledge was Pursuit of Spiritual Values**

The primary aim of ancient education was instilling into the minds, of pupils a spirit of being pious and purpose of life was delivering glory of divine. The pursuit of knowledge was a pursuit of spiritual values. The life of the pupil was full of ritual acts. Prayers were inseparable part of existence for the seeker of knowledge. Education without discovery of being was not education at all. It was believed that a keener appreciation of spiritual values could be fostered only through a strict observance of spiritual values.

### **Character Development**

Only an integrated character was considered to be a well developed character. Character must have four dimensions, dimension of wisdom, dimension of heroic will, dimension of compassion and universal love, and dimension of competence, chiseled skill and untiring labour. A developed character was that personality which harmonizes physical education, emotional education, rational, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual education.

### **The inculcation of civic virtues and social values**

The pupil after his education in the Gurukul returned to the serve the society. He was required to be hospitable to the guests and charitable to the needy and make the society better place to live in. After a certain period of studies he was required to become a householder and to perpetuate his race and transmit his culture to his children and next gen-

eration.

### **Personality Development**

The Guru in the ancient times realized that the development of personality is the sole aim of education. Human personality was regarded as the supreme work of God. The qualities of self-esteem, self confidence, self restraint and self respect were the personality traits that the gurus nurtured in his pupils through illustration, practice and theory.

### **Preserving and spreading National Culture**

Every individual was required to follow the oral tradition. Everyone propagated the acquired knowledge through oral tradition and thus the knowledge was transmitted. The element of cultural unity that exists even today is the result of feature of mouth to mouth promotion of ancient education System.

## **IX Quoting few features of Vedic Education for Modern Education**

There is a vast difference between Ancient Indian Education and modern Indian Education. Still there are several elements of ancient education which can be reintroduced in modern education both in theory and practice.

### **Optimism**

We are living in modern age but we feel proud of the civilization and culture inherited from our ancestors. We give more preference to character, spiritualism, philosophy rather than wealth, materialism and science. The present world gives reverence to wealth, power violence and diplomacy whereas we rely in truth, non-violence and mortifi-

cation. We still believe in optimism and wish to lead an ideal life, life of internal fulfillment.

### **Guru - Sishya Parampara (Tradition)**

The sense of discipline and the cordial relation between teacher and pupil of ancient India is well known to the world. In contemporary times indiscipline has probed in the educational environment which results in to problems. The sense of discipline can be developed by inculcating bonding in guru and sishya.

### **Variation and Choice in Subjects**

The study of Sanskrit language and Sanskrit literature in neglected to a greater extent. It is this literature which is enriched by the sense of peace, humanity, universal brotherhood which should be the part of our curriculum.

### **Teaching Learning Process**

In Ancient India there was affinity between education and life. Education was looked upon as a preparation for life and life was considered to be a process of continuing education. The pupil was educated to study life in all its aspects. The pupil attempted to apply psychological principles and truths of life to education. The objective of our education system is summarized in the inner voice of the pupil saying, 'Lead me from falsehood to truth, Lead me from darkness to light, Lead me from death to immortality'. These words are so potently loaded in spirit that it guided and governed Indian education system for ages. Even in the contemporary times, distant as we are from that ethos still we turn to it for divine inspiration.

In our Vedic culture the ideals of truth, light and immortality represented a threefold unity where one substituted the other. Truth meant vast unity in which multiple facts and phenomenon were fundamentally one. Light was symbolic of a state of consciousness with cosmic, undivided, unified and integral concentration. In this condition the reality of unity and oneness that was comprehended was found by them to be a peaceful and perpetual, a state in which one can permanently dwell and through which one can realize miraculous transformations of the process of mind, life and body. The objective fact of journey within of being self-luminous and comprehending multiplicity in oneness was known variously in ancient Indian perception of knowledge. The Vedas describe it as *Ekam Sad, vipra bahudha Vadanti Rigveda (64)*. (One Existent which the wise call by various names.) The highest positive description for one Existent given by the Upanishads is that which is something else. That is known to us as Sachchidananda- the conscious and the delightful Existent.

In ancient period Shravan or Listening, Manan or meditation and Nididhyaana or realization and experience, question and answers, discourse, lecture discussion and debate methods were prevalent. These methods can be reintroduced in its right spirit.

### **Simple Living**

In Vedic period pupils adopted simple living. In present times students have given up idea of simple living and high thinking they have adopted reverse

idea. We must organize a system which leads to the sense of balance in student's life.

### **Holistic development**

The main aim of ancient Indian education was holistic development (Panchkoshatmak Vikas). The same aim is kept in view in modern education but it has become superficial it has lost its real essence. The ancient education never neglected physical development although the main emphasis was given the intellectual and spiritual development. For this a quiet, tranquil, hygienic, beautiful, peaceful and natural environment was provided to pupils on the outskirts of the kingdom. Although, we profess to look after physical, moral spiritual emotional and intellectual development of pupil in modern schools yet it is only informative knowledge which gets the most of the attention.

There is active discourse and experimentation in holistic models of education that has much to offer in international education. In international development, holistic generally refers to the integration of various facets of life such as economics, livelihood skills, health education and nutrition into education. Holistic education also attempts to nurture the development of the whole person - this includes the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic and spiritual (Miller,2006).

### **Education for Self sufficiency**

The ancient schools followed the principle of education for self sufficiency. The school was small integrated community self sufficient in every way. The students used to grow their food products, tended

cows, collected firewood's and erected cottages themselves under the guidance of teacher. Modern education also lays stress upon preparing students to prepare themselves for their future life but at times certain things remain in theory and the practical aspect remains unfocussed.

### **CONCLUSION**

If India still stands as a distinct spiritual civilization and if we are able to keep the spark of spirituality alive within us, in the most brutal and darkest periods of history; it is because of the strong foun-

#### **Heart**

**In it benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, liberty, kindness, altruism and patience.**

#### **Character**

**In it courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence.**

#### **Mind**

**In it wisdom and intellegence and love of learning, openness of poetry, art and aesthetics. Capicity and skill in work.**

#### **Inner Being**

**Filled with kindness compassion, love for God, seeking after the highest, the spiritual turn in all thoughts and actions, strict obsevence of all social obligations.**

dations that were laid by our ancestors. Our spiritual inheritance prevented our fall during the most overcast, gloomy era in our history.

The vital central principle governing the Indian education system was that of perfection for developing mind and spirit of man. Education helped the individuals to nurture in supremacy and spirit to contribute to certain large universal qualities which in their harmony build a higher type of manhood. The code was not moral or ethical conception, though these elements were foremost; it was also intellectual, social; aesthetic, the emergence of whole being, the accomplishment of whole human nature.

In ancient Indian conception of education we find the unsurpassed the most varied qualities.

The figure shows how the ancient Indian education system was fine combination which created an ideal and rational mind both spiritually and according to the worldly ways. It nurtured the inner being of the individuals deeply spiritual, nobly ethical, determinedly yet supplely, intellectual, scientific and aesthetic, logical and artistic patient and tolerant to face the complexities in life but arduous in self-discipline. Education was thus the part of general system of Indian culture. This system nurtured, involved and regulated man's nature. It prepared him suitably for the social life; it induced in his mind the ideal for betterment of human race, it made the men harmonious in all ways. Besides this it placed before the individuals the practice of Yoga to seek the higher self for higher change of body, mind and spirit. It gifted the men with unique concept of spiritual

existence and aroused in him the longing thirst for divine and the infinite

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