

VEDIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

Jintu Thakuria

Assistant Professor

Department of Education

Handique Girls' College, Guwahati

Vedic Period

The terms "education" and "teaching" are frequently used in ancient Indian literature of the Vedic period. "Education" means learning to recite. At that time, the mainstay of education was learning to recite the Holy Scriptures. The word "teaching" literally means "going to", referring to the idea of students going to a teacher for instruction, i.e. going to the Guru Ghar.

Ancient Indian education originated from the Vedas. The Vedas are the source of the Indian philosophy of life. Vedas mean knowledge. The Vedas are considered to be the earliest literary record of the Indo-Aryan civilization and the most sacred books of India. The term Vedic literature includes the four Vedas, the Vedangas, the Upanishads and other scriptures, which are based on the four Vedas. The word 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Vid' which means knowledge, existence, courage. Therefore, the Vedas are considered to be the knowledge and scriptures about the universe.

Vedic education is the education prevalent in India during the Vedic period. The period from 1500 BC to 600 or 500 BC is considered to be the period of Vedic education. This Vedic period can be divided into two parts. Early Vedic Period and Post Vedic Period. The four Vedas were written in the early Vedic period. The later Vedic period is also known as the era of epics, in which the epics 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' were written.

Vedic education was an educational system that completed the individual to truly adapt himself as an individual being in society. It illuminates the path to knowledge of the path to ultimate liberation called Brahman. The Manusmriti says that people all over the world should acquire knowledge for responsibility. It refers to the karma theory of Vedic philosophy.

The Vedas are perhaps the earliest documents of the human mind. The time of creation of the Vedas, the date of their creation, and the author cannot be determined. In ancient times, the Vedas were passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition became. Therefore, the Vedas are also known as Srutis. The general idea is that the Vedic hymns were either taught by God to the sages, or were revealed by the sages themselves who were mantra-seers. The Vedas are indeed considered to be excellent, unlimited repositories of knowledge.

Vyasa, Krishna, Daipayana are among the persons who compiled the Vedas.

Many scholars of different eras have raised the question why the Vedas were written. Among these, Sayan's critical note on Vedic philosophical views is widely accepted as the most authentic. In his work "Krishna-Yaju Veda" he mentions that the Vedas symbolize the things through which man attracts his ends and protects himself from bad traits, undesirable things and conduct.

A. S. Altekar states that 'education was regarded as a source of illumination and power, which transforms and enables our nature by the progressive and balanced development of our physical, mental and intellectual, spiritual powers.' From this perspective, it can be said that Vedic teachings emphasize a healthy, balanced and prosperous life.

Structure of the Vedas:

Each Veda is divided into four parts. That is-

- **Samhita:** A collection of mantras or songs is called a samhita.
- **Brahmins:** Brahmins indicate rituals and traditions. These Brahmanas are books of conduct including precepts and religious duties. Every Veda has several Brahmins.
- **Upanishads:** The Upanishads come from the roots of Indian philosophy. The Upanishads are the concluding part of the Vedas and are therefore called Vedanta.
- **Aranyaka:** Aranyaka is theology. This section discusses various philosophical problems. Aranyaka emphasizes practice as an object of meditation for ascetics living in forests dealing with mysticism and symbolism.

The Four Vedas:

Rig Veda (The book of Mantras) Mantrabook:

The Rig Veda is the oldest of the Vedas. This is not just a collection of mantras or songs, it is a way of collecting all the information of the Vedic period. It contains the earliest forms of all Sanskrit mantras composed between 1500 BC and 1000 BC. Some scholars date it to 1200 B.C

It is said to date from 4000 BC. The Rig Veda Samhita contains 1017 songs or Suktas. Of these, 1,001 are collectively known as 'Herman' The Rig Veda details the social, political, economic and religious background of the Rig Vedic civilization. The Rig Veda is called Indra (god of heaven and rain), Agni (god of fire) and Surya (god of the sun).

Samveda (The book of Song) Music-book:

The Samveda is the Veda of melodies and songs. It is an ancient Vedic Sanskrit text consisting of 1875 verses. 75 of these verses are taken from the Rig Veda. Its earliest parts are believed to date back to the Rig Vedic period. The presently available collection is believed to date from the post-Rika Vedic mantra period of 1200 BC or 1000 BC. The classical Indian music and dance tradition considers song and melody to be one of the roots of the Sam Veda.

Vedic scholar David Frawley says, "If the Rig Veda is words, the Sam Veda is song or meaning; if the Rig Veda is knowledge, the Sam Veda is perception; if the Rig Veda is wife, the Sam Veda is her husband."

Yaju Veda (The book of Rituals) Character-Book:

It is the scripture of conduct. The exact century of the composition of the Yajur Veda is unknown, but scholars estimate it to be around 1200 to 1000 BC. This scripture can be divided into two parts, the "Krishna Yaju Veda" and the "Shukla Yaju Veda." The word Krishna refers to a collection of unstructured, ambiguous verses; on the contrary, Shukla means well-arranged, clear Sutras and mantras to be uttered are described.

Artha Veda (The book of Speed):

It is a book about the methods of everyday life. It is a collection of 730 songs with about 6000 mantras, divided into 20 scriptures. It is sometimes called the Vedas of magical formulas. It represents a "popular religion", which includes daily rituals for learning (upanayana), marriage and funeral initiations. It also includes royal rituals and the duties of court priests. than the Rig Veda in terms of history and sociology Many scholars do not want to consider it a Veda because of its simpler language and varied character than the Rig Veda.

NOTABLE FEATURES OF VEDIC EDUCATION:

Knowledge, awakening, humility, modesty are some of the words often used in the teachings of the Vedic period. Education is described as the source of light. In ancient India, teaching was considered a sacred duty. With the development of civilization, Indian society realized that knowledge is the best gift. In the Vedic period, there was a "gurukul system" in which students stayed in the ashram of the guru for 12 years They had to observe celibacy. Some of the notable features of the education system of the Vedic period are:

1. Education as Source of Knowledge: The Vedas are all termed as the source of knowledge. Only through education can truth be found and strength or courage gained. Education is a source of light that imparts knowledge to people at all walks of life.

2. Knowledge- Education as Third Eye: Knowledge opens the inner eye, of the individual It awakens the underlying energy, flooding the person with spiritual and divine life. Through knowledge, man is inspired to follow the path of good life.

3. Organization of Development: Education makes people civilized, refined and It makes it cultural. Vedic education was a system that human beings as individual beings They transform themselves into complete human beings to adapt to society.

4. Residential Education: The Vedic education system was residential. The student After the "Upanayan" ceremony, he had to leave his home and observe celibacy for 12 years and live in the ashram of his guru.

5. Practical Education: Towards the practical aspects of life in the Vedic education system Emphasis was placed on it. Alongside art, literature and philosophy, students could acquire knowledge of agriculture and other professions of life.

6. High Dignity of Teachers: Teachers or gurus in Vedic education He was given high dignity and great respect. The students had great respect and devotion for them.

7. Education for Personality: Education is the basis of the holistic development of the child's personality There was a goal. Vedic education emphasized the physical, mental and spiritual development of children.

8. Virginty / Celibacy: Celibacy is compulsory for everyone. Education helped in celibacy, control of senses and observance of purity of life.

9. Spiritual Entity: The attitude of the Vedic people towards life was not materialistic; Rather, it was intellectual and spiritual. Their main objective was to get rid of the illusion of the world through education.

10. Sanskrit Medium: Sanskrit was the medium of education in the Vedic period. Sanskrit was regarded as the highest language. The utmost importance was given to the correct pronunciation of Sanskrit mantras.

11. Travel: Travel played a special role in the Vedic education system. Travel was considered necessary to give education a real shape.

Thus Vedic education was a system of complete development of the personality leading to the attainment of the Absolute i.e. Brahman.

Period of Vedic Education:

Gurukulas were the main focal points of Vedic education. The students had to stay in the gurugrah for 12 years to receive their education. Students were educated in teachers' homes until the age of 24 and then entered domestic life. Students are divided into three categories:

1. Basu: Students who remain in the Gurugrah until the age of 24 are called Basu.

2. Rudra: Those who receive education in the Gurugrah till the age of 36 are called Rudras.

3. Aditya: Those who receive education in the Guru Ashram till the age of 48 are called Aditya.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF VEDIC EDUCATION:

Regarding the aims of Vedic education, Altekar says that the aims of education in the Vedic era were the worship of God, the feeling of religion, the performance of public civic duties, the protection and promotion of national culture and the enhancement of social skills. The main goal

of Vedic education was the overall development of the individual. The aims and objectives of Vedic education can be stated as follows:

1. Physical and Intellectual Development: The main objective of Vedic education was to achieve the mental as well as physical development of the disciples. Therefore, celibacy was compulsory in Vedic education. A strong body was considered necessary for a strong mind. Intellectual development is possible only through the physical development of the individual.

2. Religious and Spiritual Development: Religion played a special role in historical India. Building piety in the minds of the disciples Education was provided with the aim of raising. Its aim was to develop moral and spiritual capacity.

3. Education through Experiences: The Vedic education system was based on experience. It emphasized the acquisition of knowledge through experience. The disciples had to demonstrate the various knowledge they had gained through their own experiences, through lectures and discussions.

4. Character Formation:: In the Vedic period, education was regarded as a means of teaching values such as strict obedience to elders, truthfulness, honesty and restraint. Morality, or right conduct, was the highest religion. The goal of education was to develop self-confidence, self-discipline, cooperation, and compliance do it.

5. Conservation and Promotion of Culture: Vedic education aims at preserving and transmitting the best traditions, practices and professions of the thoughts and actions of the ancestors. Every disciple had to learn at least part of the heritage of his ancestors.

6. Importance to Social Duty: The aim of Vedic education was to enable the disciples to perform their duties according to their social roles. Most Brahmins and Aranyakas say that a man's wealth and property are not for his own interests or for his family. The promotion of social skills and welfare was an important goal of Vedic education.

7. Improvement of Instincts: One of the main objectives of Vedic education was instinctive Heightening the tendencies, so as to establish control over the material and elemental tendencies. Therefore, celibacy was given the highest importance.

8. Personality Development: The ancient Indians believed that Education can develop an individual's personality. This emphasized self-control, confidence, self-respect, discrimination and judgment.

9. Self-Realisation: The ultimate and immediate goal of Vedic teachings was salvation To shed light on the path to attainment or self-realization. Education must be the ultimate means of achieving neutrality.

Curriculum in Vedic Education

Vedic education was based entirely on the Vedas and their various sub-texts. The curriculum of the Vedic period included the Vedas, Vedic literature and spiritual and moral lessons. Other subjects such as philosophy, astrology, language and grammar were considered an important part of the Vedic curriculum. Archery, hunting, and wrestling were some of the areas through which physical development was emphasized. Some professional and technical education such as astronomy, Ayurveda and economics were also included.

According to recent research, the disciplines included in the Vedic curriculum in graded form were anthropology, geology, humanities, astronomy, economics, mathematics, military science, etc. The various aspects covered in the Vedic curriculum are:

- 1. Vedas:** The curriculum of the Vedic period emphasized the study of the four Vedas. The Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sam Veda and Artha Veda. The curriculum placed the utmost emphasis on the correct pronunciation of Vedic songs and Vedic mantras.
- 2. Vedang:** Vedang is a part of the Vedas or a sub-part of the Vedas. It includes the study of education, Kalpa, Nirukta, Rhyme, Astrology and Grammar.
- 3. Tarkashastra:** Tarkashastra is an important subject of Vedic education. It develops the ability to reason. It was taught so that the disciples could deal with various situations skillfully.
- 4. Art:** Art refers to art and fine arts. It is concerned with the development of aesthetic knowledge and practical construction skills. It is closely related to symmetry, introduction and beauty.
- 5. Physical Education:** More emphasis was placed on meditation, pranayama and surya namaskar for the physical development of the individual. Horse riding, hunting, swimming, jumping, etc. formed an integral part of Vedic education.
- 6. Technical Subjects:** Various professional and technical subjects like astrology, mathematics, economics etc. were included in the Vedic curriculum.
- 7. Religion:** Morality or the right to conduct was considered the supreme religion. The religion was Vedic It is an integral part of education. In fact, it brings a touch of morality to the students and enables them to take responsibility.
- 8. Meditation:** Meditation is a part of the daily life of the young students, which helped in inner liberation. It made the entire education system an education for the whole people.

Method of Teaching:

In the Vedic period, education was mainly imparted through oral training. At that time, the gurukul system was followed; where students usually had to stay with their teachers in residential schools (shelters) located in the forest. The teaching method followed the question and discussion method with Sanskrit as the medium of instruction. Students were taught individually, making learning a richer and lasting experience. The students had to listen to the teacher and consider and correct what they had learned earlier. The three primary methods used in Vedic education were oral, contemplative and contemplative. Travel was considered essential to complete education.

The teaching methods applied in the Vedic education system can be described as follows:

a) Oral method: This method emphasized the correct pronunciation of mantras or songs. The teacher corrected the mistakes of the disciples through repetition. It was believed that mispronunciation of mantras caused sins.

b) Contemplation: Contemplation is one of the methods used in Vedic teaching. It was a method by which the disciples had to reflect on the mantras they had orally learned. It promoted the development of the disciples' logical abilities.

c) Contemplation: Contemplation means reflection. Through meditation, the disciples had to analyze the songs or mantras they had learned orally and draw various conclusions and universal truths. It was mainly used to teach Rudra and Aditya disciples.

d) Meditation: Meditation helped in preserving the meaning of mantras and developing words. By meditating on each word of the mantra, the senses and echoes can be understood.

e) Questioning: Vedic teaching sometimes uses the method of questioning and then the questions are discussed. The disciples had to demonstrate their knowledge through discussion by answering the teachers' questions and lectures.

Thus, different teaching methods were used in Vedic education. In addition to the above methods, emphasis was placed on experiential methods. Travel was therefore considered an important part of Vedic education; However, the three methods of oral, reflection and contemplation were widely used.

Role of Teacher:

The word 'gu' means 'darkness' and the word 'j' means 'controller' It means avoiding darkness and ignorance. In the Vedas, the word 'Acharya' was used for the Guru, who is considered to be the greatest treasure of knowledge. We can mention the following aspects about the role of teachers in the Vedic system:

a) Guide: The guru is the guide for the disciples. He guided the disciples to attain salvation and gave them true and complete knowledge of the Vedas.

b) Philosopher: A guru is a person who enables disciples to think and reflect. The teacher develops insights into thinking and contemplation among the students. The teacher's vision was to inspire the students for holistic development.

c) Protector: The teacher should take care of each student. He is the protector of the students in all circumstances. Food and accommodation were provided by the Guru in the early stages. If a student feels or becomes ill, the teacher acts as the doctor at that time.

d) Father: The Guru had to play the role of a father to each of his disciples. He had to make sure that the students enjoyed a safe life under his guidance. He treated his disciples as if they were his own children.

e) Devoted (secluded): The Guru was very devoted. He encouraged his disciples to make all kinds of developments.

Discipline

In the Vedic period, discipline indicated a controlled life. The Vedic discipline was spiritual in nature. It does not take any external motivation into account. Both teachers and students should have respect for each other. In the case of discipline, there is an internal relationship between the teacher and the disciple, which is natural and spontaneous. The rules are introduced and managed by the Guru. There was no distinction between students in this regard. Everyone had to follow those rules. The rules were enforced with emphasis on the physical, mental and moral development of the students. The following aspects of Vedic discipline can be mentioned:

a) Kaumarya Vrata: The Gurus continued strict discipline. During the celibate life, the disciple had to maintain a controlled life in every aspect.

b) Spiritual: Vedic discipline was spiritual in nature. The purpose of discipline was to lead a controlled life to attain Brahman, neutrality.

c) Introduced by the Guru: The disciples had to follow various rules for physical, mental and moral development. Those rules were introduced and administered by the Guru.

d) Control: Although discipline was conducted by the teacher; But there is respect between both teachers and students. Discipline included the aspect of mutual respect.

E) Organized learning: Discipline was practiced to organize and systematize learning. The discipline regarding the pronunciation of mantras was given the highest importance.

Thus Vedic discipline taught us to be responsible and moral.

Merits of Vedic Education:

The merits of Vedic education can be pointed out as follows:

1. Cultural Progress: Indian culture developed greatly during the Vedic period. Along with Vedic literature, rituals also laid the foundation for the rich imagery of Indian culture.

2. Self-discipline: Vedic teachings emphasized inner discipline. Vedic education played an important role in instilling the importance of self-discipline in the minds of young students.

3.Character formation: Vedic education placed the highest importance on the moral development of the students. It focused on character development, mental and physical development of learners. 3.

4. Practical Education: Vedic education included various practical lessons like swimming, hunting, running etc. which gradually benefited the civilization of the Aryans.

5. Goal Oriented Life: Vedic teachings make us aware of the ultimate goal of life. Thus it paves the way for a meaningful life.

6. Excellence of instinct: Vedic teachings emphasized the upliftment of instinctive tendencies so that others can control material and fundamental tendencies.

7. Women's Education: There were no restrictions on women's education in the Vedic period. Gargi, Maitreyi and other women scholars of the Vedic period. Of course, in the later Vedic period, women's educational facilities were made unavailable.

Limitation of Vedic Education:

While the Vedic education system had many merits, it also had its limitations. The limitations of Vedic education are as follows:

1. Lack of mass education: Vedic education was reserved for only a small number of people in the society. It was not promoted for the general welfare of the people.

2. Strict discipline: Vedic teachings were very strict and inflexible, which is contrary to child psychology.

3. Virginity: By maintaining celibacy, students were kept away from their instinctive desires, which undoubtedly leads to disappointment.

4. Lack of coordination: There was little coordination between different disciplines of learning in Vedic education.

5. Women are deprived of education: During the post-Vedic period, women's education was stopped which reduced their empowerment. Women were deprived of religious and social rights.

6. Brahmin dominance: In the later stages of the Vedic period, Brahmins dominated Vedic education.

Practice Questions

1. Fill in the blanks

- a. The initial ceremony of Vedic education is known as
- b. In Vedic education, the house of the preceptor is known as
- c. In the Brahminic education, the 'Upanayana' rituals was performed between the age of
- d. The ultimate aim of education in ancient India was
- e. The word 'Veda' is derived from the verba root 'Vid' which means to
- f. Education in the Vedic Age was imparted in the forest-home of teachers, which were known as

2. Write two characteristics of Vedic Education.

3. Mention two merits of Vedic Education.

4. Write two limitations of Vedic Education.