



A KALEIDOSCOPIIC REVIEW OF TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present article deals with the Traditional University Educational System in India. It throws a light on how education was imported during Vedic period and the Buddhist period. Moreover it also deals with the various other aspects of the traditional university educational system of India.

KEY WORDS-

Traditional, Education, University, Sages, Scholars, System , values, ethical, Vedic, Buddhist, learning, knowledge

INTRODUCTION-:

Mark Twain , the famous American writer, has rightly said, “India is the cradle of human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition . Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.”

The history of education in ancient India is really awesome and amazing as it embraces all aspects whether religious or scientific. Walking down through the corridors of history we have come across that 3rd century B.C. was marked with the advent of education in India.

The education was imported only by the sages and scholars. Traditional mode of education was in vogue as education was imparted at home, in temples, pathshalas , tols , chatuspadis and gurukuls.

Ethical , moral, religious and spiritual values were inculcated in the students. The religious dissemination of knowledge passed the way for the children to become our great luminaries and saints. Such children became the apostles of brotherhood, harmony and peace who preached the gospel of brotherhood and

mankind to the erring humanity. Such divine souls were like Swami Vivekananda, Sir Aurobindo, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ramakrishna Paramhansawho not only preached but also ushered in many reforms for the upliftment of our society. Even lord Rama in Ramayana composed by sage Valmiki preached the mankind, the ideal way of living. The slokes of lord Krishna in Bhagvad gita are not merely religious and spiritualistic but also compendium of practical wisdom.

Teaching was imported orally and student's later contemplated on what was taught.

Indian epistemological and philosophical traditions from the edifice of Traditional moral and spiritual Indian Educational system, life is methya (falsehood) and death is yathartha (ultimate reality). Life is transitory and all pleasures are merely fleeting charms.

VEDIC EDUCATION-

Vedas are the fountains of philosophy, religious, spirituality and wisdom. Our culture, literature and Indian philosophy are manifest in Vedas. Even the upanishads, the Smritis and Purans admit the superiority of the Vedas. The edifice of our culture lies in our four Vedas i.e. Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda.

GURUKULA AND VEDIC SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

The Gurukuls were considered as an integral part of Traditional educational system. "Guru- Shishya Parampara" was adhered.

The knowledge of Vedas was imported by the Guru (teacher) to the shishya (students). Two methods were followed- (i) oral and (ii) thinking i.e. chintan.

When the pupil left home to join the Gurukul the admission was made by the formal ceremony. "Upanayana", Brahmacharya or celibacy was compulsorily followed.

The Vedic age witnessed the existence of three types of institution namely Gurukulas, Parishads (Academics) and Sammelans (conferences).

Advanced studies and research in various fields were also encouraged. According to Rig veda these are called Brahmana-Sangha. During Vedic age the Academics were called Parisads; there is a reference to the Panchala Parisad in the Upanishads. Even kings participated in its proceedings.

These Academics imparted the scientific and spiritual knowledge to the students through discussions and discourses. During the vedic period one's Varna was determined by the profession he chose. But during the later Vedic period Varna was determined by birth. The whole society was categorized into four varnas- Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

Educational System According to Sutras and Epics-

Sutras literature was one of the important characteristic of the Vedic Literature which corresponds between 600 BC and 200 BC. The rules and regulations of education were enshrined mainly in the Dharam – Sutras that embodied the principles of social conduct and code of duties for the teachers and students.

Sutra Literature was divided into six vedangas. A prior knowledge of various subjects such as Siksha, Chhadan, Vyakaran, Kalpa and Jyotisha was indispensable to comprehend the Vedas.

One distinctive feature of education of this period is a specialization of students in different branches of learning. The six systems of philosophy, viz, The Samkhya of Kapila, The Yoga of Patanjali, The Nyaya of Gautama, The 20 Vaisheshika of Kanada, Karma or Purvamimamsa of Jaimini and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta of Badarayana.

The Ramayana and The Mahabharata are the main epics of ancient India which also reveals the creed of militarism of that age. But with the passage of time, these institutions turned into Universities.

This age also marked the advent of institutions like Taxila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Banaras, Ballavi, Ajanta, Madura and Vikramsila. Taxila was renowned for medicine and Ujjain for Astronomy.

EDUCATIONAL TRENDS DURING THE BUDDHISM ERA

The primary aim of Buddhist education was the attainment of salvation. The main subjects were Suttanta, Vinaya and Dhamma. Beside these spinning, weaving, printing of the cloth, sketching, medicine, surgery and coinage were the other subjects that formed the integral part of Buddhist educational curriculum.

Buddhist education laid more emphasis on purity of character. Propagation of Buddhism in every nook and corner of the world was also its primary aim. The Buddhist higher education also imparted knowledge in religion, philosophy, military science, medicine and other difficult subjects.

Many monasteries Viharas were established for monks and nuns to meditate, debate and discuss with the learned for their quest for knowledge during these periods. The Buddhist higher centres of learning attracted many students from China, Korea, Tibet, Burma, Ceylon, Java, Nepal and other distant countries. Among such centres Takshila was so renowned that it might be called the spiritual capital of India of that time.

SOME TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES IN ANCIENT INDIA

1. Takshashila or Taxila:-

Takshashila was one of the most famous centres of learning, including religious teaching of Buddhism for several centuries. Students across the entire world came to receive education here till its destruction in the 5th century CE. It was situated at a distance of 20 miles in the west of Rawalpindi. Taxila was the capital of Gandhar Kingdom. Evidence of this university are found in Valmiki's Ramayan. It is a prominent archaeological site and was declared to be world's Heritage site in 1980 by the UNESCO.

It was at the place where Chanakya is believed to have composed his "Arthashastra". Its ruins were discovered in mid-19th century by an archaeological Alexander Cunningham.

2. NALANDA:-

It is situated at the distance of 40 miles southwest of modern Patna and seven miles of Rajgriha; Nalanda was the most prominent cultural and educational centre of Northern India. It existed in 427 BCE to 1197 CE. The university was established in the 5th century CE. Though it was dedicated to Buddhist studies, but it also taught fine arts, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, politics and the martial arts. Kumaragupta I (414-445 AD) king of the Gupta dynasty made

immense contribution to the progress and development of the university.

Hieun-Tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim studied and taught for 5 years in the 7th century CE.

Our great cultural heritage Nalanda, the abode of Indian philosophy, arts and Civilization after an illustrious career of 700 + years fell prey to the barbarism of the Mughal conqueror Bakhtiar Khilji who destroyed the university at the end of the 12th century AD.

3. Valabhi:-

Valabhi was also a prominent education centre of Buddhist period, capital seat of the Maitraka kings between 475 and 775 A.D. The university imparted secular education and students from all the world flocked here to receive education.

Graduates of this university occupied higher posts.

4. Vikramshila:-

Dharampala, king of the Pal dynasty established the Vihara of Vikramshila in the 8th century in Northern Magadh at a beautiful hill on the bank of the river Ganges.

In Vikramshila 108 scholars were appointed as the incharge and Acharyas of the various temples. Six additional Pandits were also appointed for general management. The university comprised of 144 permanent scholars.

The university was later organized into six colleges. The main subjects taught were Vyakaran, Logic, Philosophy, Tantra Shatra and Karamkand. Graduates and post-graduates received degree at the time of Samavartana (convocation) by the rulers of Bengal.

Vikramshila University was destroyed by Bhaktiyar Khilji in 1203 A.D. and later on captured by the Muslims.

5. Mithila:-

Evidences of existence of Mithila University found in the Upanishadic age. It was named Videha. Religious conferences of learned Rishis and Pandits were

organized in this university. From 12th century to 15th century, Mithila had been an important centre of learning and culture; and besides literature and fine arts, scientific subjects were also taught there. Nyaya Shastra were also taught. A new school of New Logic (Navya-Nyaya) was brought into existence by Gangesha Upadhyaya. Even upto the period of Mughal Emperor Akbar, it continued to flourish as an important centre of education and culture credited with national repute. It was eminent and famous especially for its Nyaya (jurisprudence) and Tarka Shastra (logic).

6. Odantapuri:-

It was established by Dharmapala of Pala dynasty during late 8th century in Magadha. According to the ancient Tibetan records there were about 12,000 students studying at this

University.

7. Somapura:-

Dharampala of Pala dynasty was the founder of this University during late 8th century in Bengal. It was an eminent centre of learning for Buddhism , Jainism and Hinduism. Ornamental terracotta on its outer wall depicts the influence of these three traditions.

8. Nadia:-

It was formerly known as Navadweep which is situated at the confluence of the Ganga and Jalangi rivers in Bengal. It was the centre of trade and commerce as well as learning and culture. It was an eminent centre of Hindu culture and education.

The educational centre of Nadia University were Navadweep , Shantipur and Gopaalpara. Sometimes students studied here for 20 years.

9. Telhara University:-

According to the archeological evidences this university is located at Tehara , at the distance of around 40 km from Nalanda University in Bihar. This university was the highest place of learning near Nalanda.

Evidences reveal that Telhara university was burnt and razed by Bakhtiyar Khilji at the time when he destroyed Nalanda university , i.e. in 1193.

10. Sharda Peeth Temple:-

This Temple university was once renowned and biggest centres of learning in ancient India. Evidences suggest that this ancient centre of learning now falls under Azad Kashmir jurisdiction of Pakistan. Many erudite scholars from India and neighboring countries enjoyed the pride of receiving education here. Adi Shankara and Kalhana were the students of this university.

11. Vallabhi University:-

Vallabhi university flourished in Saurashtra region of Gujarat till 12th century. Vallabhi University taught several subjects like Economics, law, politics, medical science, book-keeping literature , vyakaran and hinayana. International repute came here to receive education. This centre gained eminence due to religious tolerance and mental freedom. It was destroyed by Arabs in the 8th century.

12. Pushpagiri University:-

Pushpagiri University is as old or older than Nalanda University. This sprawling university

campus was spread across Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri hills. The centre taught many different subjects and attracted students from every part of the world. This university declined due to lack of patronage due to Muslim invasions.

13. Bikrampur University:-

Dharampala established this university in the late 7th century at Munshiganj in Bengal which is presently in Bangladesh. This learning centre was excavated in 2013. This university attracted students from across the country and the world from as far as China, Tibet, Nepal and Thailand. A wide range of subjects was taught but much emphasis was put on Buddhist education. During 11th century around 8,000 students, both local and foreigners studied here.

14. Morena Golden Triangle University:-

Morena in the Chambal division of Madhya Pradesh was regarded a hub of a university education from the 8th century. An inscription found in the Chaunsath yogini temple in Mitavali makes striking revelations about Mitavali Padavali and Bateshwar temples as a Golden Triangle within which a famous university existed.

These three places in Morena imparted education in different subjects but Astrology and Mathematics were important ones.

15. Kanthaloor Sala University:-

This university existed at Valiyasala District in Thiruvananthapuram of Kerala. This university existed between 9th to 12th century. This university imparted education in 64 different subjects. It attracted students from all over the world especially Sri Lanka. This university is also known as Nalanda of the South.

16. Jagaddala University:-

Jagaddala University was set up by Pala king Rampala in the early 11th century in Varendra in North Bengal, now in Bangladesh.

Jagaddala imparted education in diverse subjects but much emphasis was laid on Sanskrit education. One of the special subjects taught was Vajrayana Buddhism. A Veteran Buddhist scholar and poetry anthologist Vidyakara composed Subhasitaratnakosa, one of the earliest dated anthologies of Sanskrit verses. Many Tibetan sacred texts were composed at this university. The Muslim invaders destroyed this university around 1207.

17. Nagarjuna Vidyaapeeth:-

Nagarjuna Vidyapeeth is dedicated to Nagarjuna, an ancient Indian Buddhist Philosopher. Evidences reveal that this university flourished in peak during the 7th and 8th centuries. Students from foreign countries received education here.

The multi – storey library of Nagarjuna Vidyapeeth consisted of the manuscripts pertaining to the various branches of knowledge from medicine science to philosophy, mineralogy, geography and also Buddhist teachings, kings were also found at the Nagarjuna Vidyapeeth site.

CONCLUSION-

Walking down through the glorious lanes of Indian history we have come across that the education system in the Vedic period and Brahminical educational system shows the evidences of the prevailing Gurukul system of education and Guru- Shishya parampara.

In ancient India particularly in Vedic and Buddhist periods, well- organized educational institutions like that of the modern age did not come into existence. The traditional system witnessed the growth of monasteries where different denizens of the world come to receive education.

Most of the universities lost their existence around the 12th century which led to the decline of traditional educational system in India.

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