



Indian Knowledge Tradition in Vaidic Literature like Vedas, Purans and Smritis: An Overview

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Abstract: India boasts the second-largest education system globally, a system that has traversed through multiple phases to reach its present state. Education was given utmost importance in the ancient period. Education was taught to a person not only to gain knowledge but also for his character development, gaining self-control and confidence and understanding the social issues. However, all accept that Indian Vedas are the oldest scriptures of the world. Vedas are generally considered as religious scriptures. Teaching was largely oral and students remembered and meditated upon what was taught in the class. The method of teaching was psychological. Vedic education is more than just an education system; it is a way of living. This focus on all-round personality development is an attractive aspect of Vedic education. According to the Commission, the Indian Knowledge Tradition is the systematic body of knowledge developed to a high level in India since ancient times and consists of all the traditions and practices that have been developed, refined and preserved over generations by various cultures, Vedas, Purans and Smritis. The word Veda is derived from the Sanskrit word vid, which means knowledge or to know; therefore, it is a massive body of religious text that originated in ancient India. The Vedas have unique features. The Vedas consist of a beautiful combination of knowledge, action and devotion, uniquely synthesized. The Purana is a wide classification of Indian ancient religious literature, particularly myth and other ritual lore. Purana comprises the guidelines for ritual practice and has many mythological stories related to different gods. The paper critically examines the rich history of education in India, spanning from ancient times to the contemporary era, critically analyzing the aspects of each phase.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Tradition, Vaidic Literature, Vedas, Purans and Smritis.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In ancient India, the rich wisdom tradition included branches of knowledge (Vedanga) and other disciplines. Indians consider knowledge (vidya) as the only real wealth. Ancient knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation in the form of Gurukuls, where guru-disciple relationships flourish. Vedic literature means that vast literature which includes Vedas, Brahmanical texts, Aranyakas and Upanishads. Vedic literature is called 'Shruti', because Brahma, the doer of creation/rules, has received the Vedas only by listening to the sound of the Supreme Being, the Supreme Brahma. Under Vedic literature, there are many Upanishads, Aranyakas of all the above mentioned Vedas. Their language is Sanskrit which is called Vedic Sanskrit according to its distinct identity - the usage and meaning of these Sanskrit words are considered to have changed or disappeared over time. . Historically, these are considered a good reference about ancient India and the Hindu-Aryan race. They also have literary importance due to the ancient form of Sanskrit language. Ancient India has contributed immensely to the progress of mankind by setting records in various human welfare fields like philosophy, phonetic linguistics, rituals, grammar, astronomy, economics, Sankhya theory, logic, life sciences, Ayurveda, astrology and music. . It has been an amazing contribution. In ancient times, the Vedas were protected by the Guru-disciple tradition. Due to their not being in written and fixed form, some differences started appearing in the form of Vedas and their branches developed. According to 'Mantrabrahmanayo: Vedamadheyam', the translations of the four Vedas into Sanskrit language in ancient times are called Brahmin texts. There are four main Brahmin texts – Aitareya, Shatapatha, Sama and Gopatha. Brahmin texts are believed to have been



composed after the Veda Samhitas. These contain a detailed description of the rituals of Yagyas, as well as etymologies of words and stories of ancient kings and sages and ideas related to creation. Each Veda has its own Brahmins.

Vedic Literature: The Vedas are considered to be the oldest Hindu scriptures. Despite the fact that tradition often dates them to the beginning of Kaliyuga, scholars estimate that they were written about 2,500 years ago (3000 BCE). According to some Hindus, the Yajurs, the original single Veda, were eventually divided into four. However, according to scholars, Rigveda is the first Hindu scripture.

2. Types of Vedic Literature :

There are broadly two types of Vedic literature:

- **Shruti Literature** – The word ‘Shruti’ from the term ‘Shruti Literature’ means ‘to hear’ and describes the sacred texts which comprise of Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, & Upanishads. Shruti Literature is canonical, consisting of revelation and unquestionable truth, and is considered eternal.
- **Smriti Literature** – Smriti is a Sanskrit word which translates to remember. It is a section of Hindu sacred literature. The term "Smriti" came to be used specifically in reference to works relating to social behavior and law, such as the famous Manu-Smriti (Laws of Manu).

The Vedic literature can be classified into the following categories:

- The four Vedas i.e. the Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva, and their Samhitas.
- The Brahmanas
- The Aranyakas
- The Upanishads

Indian civilization and culture is one of the oldest civilizations and cultures of the world, but which one is the oldest has yet not been decided. However, all accept that Indian Vedas (Rig-Veda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda and Samveda) are the oldest scriptures of the world. Vedas are generally considered as religious scriptures but they are the repositories of all types of knowledge discovered and developed by Aryans till then in the words of English scholar, F.W. Thomas There has been no country except India where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful influence." According to historians, Indians were totally governed by Vedas during 2500 B. C. to 500 B. C. and they call this period as Vedic Period. India was the first country of the world which could develop a very sound system of education during Vedic period. This system of education is known as Vedic System of Education. The Brahmins had acquired sole right on education in the later Vedic period, so a number of scholars call the later Vedic system of education as the Brahmin system of education. And because both the systems of education-the early Vedic system of education and the later Vedic System of Education were developed by Hindus, many of the scholars call both these systems of education as Hindu System of Education. We consider it appropriate to call it the Vedic System of Education as it was developed in Vedic period and it remained almost the same during the whole period.

- **Rig Veda:** Rig Veda is the oldest and most important of the Vedas. It contains 1028 hymns in ten books (known as mandalas) dedicated to various deities. Indra, Agni, Vishnu, Rudra, Varuna, and other early or "Vedic deities" are among them. It also includes men in the famous Gayatri Mantra and Shukta Prana, The Story of the Primal Man.
- **Yajur Veda:** Yajurveda, the second of the four Vedas, is known as the ritual scripture. It was written a century or two after the Rigveda. Yajur is a symbol of sacrifice. Yajurveda is a priestly manual for use when performing yajya (sacrifice). It is divided into two parts: the older "black"/"dark" (Krishna Yajurveda) section and the more current "white"/"bright" (Shukla Yajurveda) section.
- **Sama Veda:** Samaveda is composed of mantras and tunes that are sung during puja and yajya rituals. It was created to be used only in a ritual context. The words of the Samaveda are recited during rituals such as Soma Yajya. It is associated with the Rig Veda and is the smallest of the four Vedas.
- **Atharva Veda:** The fourth and final Veda, the Atharva Veda, is often referred to as the Veda of magical sutras. The hymns, hymns and mantras included in the Atharvaveda are mostly outside the scope of yajya.



The Vedas put effort into the cultivation and proper combination of faith and reason. An individual's domestic, social, national and global duties are clearly mentioned in the Vedas. The Vedas put equal effort into developing individuals' physical, mental, and spiritual faculties. This idea of harmony is also unique in the Vedas.

The Vedic Sanskrit

Sanskrit was the language of the ancient Indo-Aryan subgroup. The word Sanskrit means natural language. The Vedic Sanskrit evolved around five to six thousand years ago before writing was introduced.

Vedic Sanskrit was the ancient Vedic civilization's commonly spoken language in large parts of Asia. Sanskrit words sound difficult, but they are similar to words of many languages.

Vedic Sanskrit came into being more than five thousand years ago. Sanskrit is an ancient language and is a source of several languages. Vedic Sanskrit is called the mother language of all Indo-Aryan languages. Sanskrit is considered the language of Vedas and yoga, it holds divinity, and to date, all the auspicious Hindu customs follow the scriptures written in Sanskrit.

Vedic Literature – Brahamanas

The mantras of the Vedas are interpreted by the Vedic literature of Brahmins. They are prose works that discuss in detail various sacrifices and rites as well as their esoteric significance.

There are innumerable Brahmins in every Veda. Aitareya Brahmana and Kaushitaki Brahmana are two Brahamanas associated with the Rigveda. These were written by invocations or sacred-priests (the priest who recites the mantras of the Rigveda at sacrifices). The Shatapatha Brahmana, which advises "one hundred sacred paths", is associated with the Shukla Yajurveda (Satpatha). Of all the Brahamanas, this is the most comprehensive and important. Gopath Brahmin has been added to Atharvaveda. In fact, these are in-depth analyzes of numerous hymns of the Brahamanical Samhitas.

Vedic Literature – Aranyakas

A few important points about Aranyakas are mentioned below:

- These are called Forest Books
- Sacrificial rituals are interpreted by Aranyakas in a symbolic and philosophical way.

Vedic Literature – Upanishads

A few important points about Upanishads are mentioned below:

- There are 108 Upanishads
- Out of 108 Upanishads, 13 are considered the major ones.
- The concepts of 'Atman' and 'Brahman' are majorly explained by Upanishads
- It contains philosophical ideas about the following concepts too:
 - Sacrifice
 - Body
 - Universe

The Puranas: The Puranas are an important source of sacred Hinduism. Purana, meaning "very old" or "ancient," refers to the texts themselves, which claim an older date than the Vedas. still. They are considered by scholars as new scriptures because they refer to the "later gods"—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The Puranas discuss creation, the lineage of gods and patriarchs, moral guidelines, descriptions of multiple worlds, and many famous myths and legends. Some Puranas are often recited in public such as the Devi-Bhagavata-, Bhagavata- and Vishnu-Puranas.

Purana is based on five points:

- **The creation of the universe:** In Hinduism, Lord Brahma is the creator of the universe. Early texts like Brahmananda Purana describe that there was nothing but an eternal ocean. From this, a golden egg called Hiranyagarbha,



emerged. The egg broke open and Brahma, who had created himself within it, came into existence (gaining the name Svayambhu). Then, he created the universe, the earth, and other things.

- **Secondary creation after the periodic annihilation** in physics, reaction in which a particle and its antiparticle collide and disappear, releasing energy. The most common annihilation on Earth occurs between an electron and its antiparticle, a positron.
- **The gods and the supernatural:** Supernatural refers to phenomena or entities that are beyond the laws of nature. The supernatural is featured in folk lore and religious contexts, but can also feature as an explanation in more secular contexts, as in the cases of superstitions or belief in the paranormal. The term is attributed to non-physical entities, such as angels, demons, gods, and spirits.
- **The era of humans:** The timeline of human existence stretches back approximately 200,000 years, with the emergence of anatomically modern Homo sapiens. Over millennia, humans have developed complex societies, advanced technology, and reshaped the planet, leaving a profound mark on the course of Earth's history. Humans have become the single most influential species on the planet, causing significant global warming and other changes to land, environment, water, organisms and the atmosphere.
- **History of solar and lunar dynasties:** Swayambhu Manu was the First King of the Universe and Swayambhu Manu was also the first man on earth. Both the Hindu Puranas and the Buddhist texts include Shuddodhana, Gautama Buddha, and Rahula in their accounts of the Ikshvaku dynasty but, according to the Buddhist texts.

SMRITI: Smriti is a Sanskrit word which translates to remember. It is a section of Hindu sacred literature. Although Smriti Vedic literature develops interprets and codifies Vedic philosophy, it is considered less authoritative than Vedic Shruti literature because it is a descendant. However, the Smriti texts are more widely known to modern Hindus. The texts include the Kalpa-Sutras, important religious manuals, the Puranas, collections of prehistoric myth traditions and histories, and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, India's two greatest epics. The term "Smriti" came to be used specifically in reference to works relating to social behavior and law, such as the famous Manu-Smriti (Laws of Manu). According to the Vedas, education means attainment of knowledge or wisdom based on vedas. Education is the search for life, soul and Brahma. Education Self-respect, self-realization, personal ".It is given in universal form. Vedas are considered to be the encyclopedia of all knowledge. According to the Vedas, education is the path to salvation. It has also been considered. 'Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye'. Ancient education originated from the Vedas. These are considered the sources of Indian philosophy of life. In the Vedic period, life was divided into two types of knowledge, Para and Aparā. Meaning of 'Para', the method of 'Brahma Satya, Jagat Mithya' through knowledge, action and worship. It is still in practice till today. Aparā' means social knowledge, i.e. from its worldly form. To run life under a well-planned social system, it was necessary, but in ancient times more emphasis was given on spiritual knowledge. Religion, Artha, Kama and Moksha were the main pillars of Indian life, person with religious feelings was full of thoughts. The idea was that truth is beyond the limits of the body and its attainment is the ultimate goal of human life. Ancient people believed in karma and they considered education as a means of human liberation. The aim of education during the Vedic period was physical, transcendental salvation i.e. salvation through development of moral, intellectual and spiritual powers. There was attainment. The form of sadhana was inward facing. In the field of meditation, Yama, Niyama, Asana. There is description of Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi Yoga etc.

3. IMPACT OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE TRADITION AND VAIDIC LITERATURE ON HUMAN LIFE:

The Indian Knowledge Tradition, through its emphasis on cultural enrichment, profoundly influences students by exposing them to India's rich heritage. This exposure cultivates a deep sense of identity and pride, instilling in students a connection to their roots. The Indian Knowledge Tradition has the potential to complement and enrich contemporary higher education by providing a more comprehensive understanding of human knowledge, civilization, and cultural heritage and bringing benefits to students, academia, and society at large. Thus, the main aim and objectives to achieved through education and training are many and comprehensive:

- 1.) **Achieving and Developing Skills:** Indian Education helps in achieving and developing skills, abilities, insights and scientific temper.
- 2.) **Developing and Drawing out the Best:** Indian Education aims at developing and bringing out the best of a student's inner personality, without neglecting the outer and material aspects. Education also means that students are made capable of standing on their own feet, to earn their bread and butter.
- 3.) **Balanced Development:** The purpose of Indian Education is to strike a proper balance between inner and outer emotional and practical aspects of one's personality and life.



4) Integration and Harmony: The main task of education is to produce useful, intelligent, patriotic, emotionally integrated, morally strong, cultured, scientifically tempered and healthy young men and women.

5) Adjustment: Education should produce people properly adjusted with the rhythm of life, and this cannot be achieved unless there is the much desired adjustment between rhythms of mind and heart in the individual.

6) Develop Character: One of the primary aims of education is to develop character. For the moral and character development of the students, they should educate and inculcate religious and spiritual value. They are trained in activities like observance of celibacy, control of sense organs and self control.

7) Individual as well as Social Development: The aims and objectives of education, includes individual as well as social development, with emphasis of social transformation aiming at reconstructing society to make it modernized, productive, and value oriented nation committed to its constitutional obligations.

8) Developing Human Potentialities and Capacities: Education should enable a human being to attain the greatest possible harmony, internal and external, spiritual and material, for the fullest possible development of human potentialities and capacities.

Changes Due To Indian Education System: However, it is essential that we should be quite clear about the purpose of change. The following ideas give an indication of the kind of changes education is expected to bring about:

1) Modernization: Modernization of society in terms of scientific and technological advancement is a view which seems to be quite popular. This calls for modernization of education in order to make. It is in conformity with the modern times and to keep pace, with the advances in the world. Modernization, however, is not interpreted and equated with westernization. Education should integrate and unite the people of India, modernize society while preserving what is authentically Indian in our cultural and spiritual heritage.

2) Productivity: Linking education with productivity and making individuals as productive citizens to build a productive society. Education should bring about a social transformation, and enhance greater efficiency and productivity in all sectors such as agricultural, industrial and service. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi's system of basic education is still considered as a basically sound system and a suggestion has been made that with necessary modification elements of basic education may form part of education not only at the primary stage but at all stages in our national system of education.

These elements are:

i) Productive activity in education.

ii) Correlation of the curriculum with productive activity and physical and social environment.

iii) Intimate contact between the school and the local community.

3) Community Participation: In a democracy education without community participation is barren. This aim of education is, therefore voiced by a number of groups and organisations. The change that is envisaged on this front is that of integrating education with community in all respects. The education system in all its branches and sectors should get itself involved in activities related to problems of local community life and thus endeavor through the desirable community participation community involvement in the educational field to bring all education of its rightful place in community life.

4) Acquisition of Values: Moral, cultural and spiritual values in education have been given immense importance. One of the expressions emphatically point out that, certain basic values as respect for others, responsibility, solidarity, creativity and integrity must be fostered in our children.

The values which are considered important are mentioned below:

i) Character building meant to train people to behave according to religion and to provide proper direction to their conduct and thinking.

ii) Values of optimism and secularism, and service to the poor should be stressed on the young minds.

4. CONCLUSION:

Education in India stands at the cross-road today neither normal linear expansion nor the existing pace and nature of improvement can meet the need of the situation; it should therefore be reexamined and reorganized. Education is essential for every society and individual. It is life itself but not preparation for life. In retrospect, it may be said that the Vedic system of education is the foundation stone of the modern Indian system of education, Our modern system of education has developed on its basis. The truth remains that our education system in Vedic period was based on our culture and we cannot be segregated from our culture. Even today the aims of our education are basically the same as they were in Vedic period. Like Vedic period, we include all the knowledge, skills and technology etc. in the curriculum. At present. Even today we want to establish cordial relationship between teachers and students.



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