
STATUS OF EDUCATION IN DIFFERENT PERIODS OF ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL AND MODERN INDIA

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Abstract: The Indian education system continued in the form of ashrams, in temples and as indigenous schools. During the medieval period, maktabas and madrassas became part of the education system. During the pre-colonial period, indigenous education flourished in India. This was an extension of the formal system that had taken roots earlier. This system was mostly religious and spiritual form of education. Tols in Bengal, pathshalas in western India, chatuspadis in Bihar, and similar schools existed in other parts of India. Local resources via donations supported education. References in texts and memoirs inform that villagers also supported education in southern India. As we understand, the ancient education system of India focused on the holistic development of the students, both inner and outer self, thus preparing them for life. Education was free and not centralized. Its foundations were laid in the rich cultural traditions of India thereby helping in the development of the physical, intellectual, spiritual and artistic aspects of life holistically. Our present day education system has a lot to learn from the ancient education system of India. Therefore, the stress is being laid on connecting learning to the world outside the school. Today educationists recognize the role and importance of multilingual and multicultural education, thereby connecting the ancient and the traditional knowledge with contemporary learning. This paper focus on Status of Education in different periods of Ancient, Medieval and Modern India.

Introduction: "Educate your children; they must live in a time different from yours."

Society has viewed education as an important part of life for many years. A few generations ago when a person received an education through the eighth grade level, they would be fine living their life and raising a family.

According to the definition of Thomas Moore "Education is the art of educating or bringing out what is latent in a person. In its early forms, the word was used of basic physical nurturing, bringing out the undeveloped powers of the physical body, and could even be applied to animals. In its deepest form, education is the art of enticing the soul to emerge from its cocoon, from its coil of potentiality and its cave of hiding. Education is not the piling of learning, information, data, facts, skills, or abilities – that's training or instructing – but is rather making visible what is hidden as a seed." The purpose of education is to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed and reasonable decisions. Any other consequences should be treated as merely incidental.

Ancient Education System In India — A Way of Life: In ancient India, both formal and informal ways of education system existed. Indigenous education was imparted at home, in temples, pathshalas, tols, chatuspadis and gurukuls. There were people in homes, villages and temples who guided young children in imbibing pious ways of life. Temples were also the centres of learning and took interest in the promotion of knowledge of our ancient system. Students went to viharas and universities for higher knowledge. Teaching was largely oral and students remembered and meditated upon what was taught in the class.

Gurukuls, also known as ashrams, were the residential places of learning. Many of these were named after the sages. Situated in forests, in serene and peaceful surroundings, hundreds of students used to learn together in gurukuls. Women too had access to education during the early Vedic period. Among the prominent women Vedic scholars, we find references to Maitreyi, Viswambhara, Apala, Gargi and Lopamudra, to name a few. During that period, the gurus and their shishyas lived together helping each other in day-to-day life. The main objective was to have complete learning, leading a disciplined life and

realising one's inner potential. Students lived away from their homes for years together till they achieved their goals. The gurukul was also the place where the relationship of the guru and shishya strengthened with time. While pursuing their education in different disciplines like history, art of debate, law, medicine, etc., the emphasis was not only on the outer dimensions of the discipline but also on enriching inner dimensions of the personality.

In ancient times, Takshashila was a noted centre of learning, including religious teachings of Buddhism, for several centuries. It continued to attract students from around the world until its destruction in the 5th century CE. It was known for its higher education and the curriculum comprised the study of ancient scriptures, law, medicine, astronomy, military science and the eighteen silpas or arts.

Takshashila became famous as a place of learning due to its teachers' expertise. Among its noted pupils were the legendary Indian grammarian, Panini. He was an expert in language and grammar and authored one of the greatest works on grammar called *Ashtadhyayi*. Jivaka, one of the most renowned physicians in ancient India, and Chanakya (also known as Kautilya), a skilled exponent of statecraft, both studied here. Students came to Takshashila from Kashi, Kosala, Magadha and also from other countries in spite of the long and arduous journey they had to undertake.

Takshashila was an ancient Indian city, which is now in north-western Pakistan. It is an important archaeological site and the UNESCO declared it to be a World Heritage Site in 1980. Its fame rested on the University, where Chanakya is said to have composed his *Arthashastra*. Archaeologist Alexander Cunningham discovered its ruins in the mid-19th century.

Objectives of the Study:

- To discuss the fundamentals of Ancient Indian Educations.
- To Analyse the meaning of the terms attached to ancient education system
- To Enumerate the main characteristics of education system in Ancient, Medieval and Modern period

Learning in ancient India was imparted by the teachers called Gurus to the pupils who gathered around them and came to live with them in their house as members of the family. Such a place was called Gurukul. The Gurukul functioned as a domestic school, an ashrama, where the children's learning was developed by the Guru who gave personal instruction as well as attention to the students. Education was primarily the privilege of the upper castes. Learning was an intimate relationship between the teacher and the pupil called the Guru-Shishya Parampara. The process of learning generally began with a religious ceremony, '*Upanayana*' (sacred thread ceremony). Education was normally imparted orally. It included memorization of texts like Vedas and Dharmashastras, fully or partially. Later subjects like Grammar, Logic, and Metaphysics came to be taught and studied. The Maitrayani Upanishad teaches us that the supreme knowledge (gyan) is the result of learning (vidya), reflection (chintan) and austerity (tapas). Through introspection (atma vishleshana) one was to attain goodness (Satva), purity of mind and satisfaction of the soul in stages. During this time self education was regarded as the proper method of attaining the highest knowledge. The best example of this can be found in the Taittiriya Upanishad where Bhrgu, son of Varuna, approaches his father and asks him to teach what is Brahmana. The father tells him to find this out through meditation.

The ancient Indian education system was successful in preserving and spreading its culture and literature even without the help of art of writing. It was only because of the destruction of temples and monasteries by invaders that the literature was lost. The cultural unity that exists even today in the vast sub-continent is due to successful preservation & spread of culture. The education system infused a sense of responsibilities and social values. The ancient education system achieved its aims to the fullest extent. Ancient education emerged from Vedas. The basis of Indian culture lies in the Vedas.

During the Mauryan and the post-Mauryan periods, the Indian society went through a phase of intensive change. With the growth of urban centres and trade, the mercantile community came to

acquire an important position. As a result, the guilds of the merchants began to play an active role in providing education. They became centres of technical education and fostered the knowledge of mining, metallurgy, carpentry, weaving and dyeing. There were new formulations in building and architecture. With the emergence of city life, new architectural forms evolved. The guilds also gave patronage to astronomy, the study of the position of stars, to help them in ocean navigation. The astronomers and cosmologists began a debate on "time" (kala). This helped in the development of a sharp sense of "time" (kala) in comparison to the past. Medical knowledge began to be systemised as Ayurveda. The elements formed the basis for the Indian medical system. A right combination of the three was necessary for a healthy body. Knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs and their usage reached a very advanced stage. 'Charaka' became famous for medicine and 'Sushruta' for surgery. 'Charak Samhita' written by Charaka was an authentic and exhaustive work on medicines.

Chanakya was a renowned philosopher, scholar and teacher. His most famous work is 'Arthashastra'. The curriculum of studies mentioned in the Arthashastra refers primarily to the education of princes. After Upanayana the prince learnt the four Vedas and the Vedic study included a study of sciences. They also learnt logic, economics and politics. Education of those times was primarily life skills based which is so different from what education is today. The curricula in the Ramayana for the princes was Dhanurveda, Nitishastra, Siksha (lore) of elephants and chariots, Alekhya and Lekhya (Painting and writing), Langhana (jumping) and Tairana (swimming).

In the Gupta period, the Jain and Buddhist systems of education assumed a different dimension. Buddhist monasteries admitted students for ten years. Learning began with the oral method. Later they shifted to the reading of literary texts. The monasteries had libraries. Important manuscripts were copied and stored. Students from other countries like China and South-East Asia came to the Buddhist monasteries for education. The monasteries were normally maintained by grants from kings and the rich mercantile class. They attracted scholars from far and near. Fa-Hien also spent several years in the monastery at Pataliputra, studying Buddhist religious books. Besides Pataliputra, there were other centres of learning like Vanarasi, Mathura, Ujjain and Nasik. Nalanda University was known all over Asia for its high standards of scholarship. The subjects taught included Vedanta, philosophy, study of the Puranas, epics, grammar, logic, astronomy, philosophy, medicine etc. Sanskrit, the court language was the medium of instruction. The Jains used Sanskrit literature like 'Adipurana' and 'Yashatilaka' for educational purposes in the earlier phase. But to make education more popular, the medium was changed to Prakrit and other regional languages like Tamil, Kannada and so on. Books in the Jain and Buddhist libraries were written on palm leaves that were tied together and were known as "granthas". Slowly, Jainism and Buddhism lost royal patronage and their monasteries started declining as centres of education and learning. The 'mathas' supported by Brahmins were institutions parallel to Jain and Buddhist monasteries. The 'mathas' functioned like *ashramas* for educational purposes.

During the Muslim period education was organised in Maktabas and Madarsas. Primary education was given in Maktabas and higher education was given in Madarsas. In Maktabas children were made to remember the tenets of 'Quran' (Koran). Reading, writing and primary arithmetic were imparted to them. Besides they were given the education of Arabic script, Persian language and script. The stories of Prophets and Muslim 'Fakirs' were also told to the children. Children were also imparted the knowledge of art of writing and conversation. The system of oral education was mostly prevalent in those days. The children were sent to Madarsas after completing the primary education. There were separate teachers for different subjects. Special emphasis was given to the education of Islam. Religious and secular subjects also taught in Madarsas. The religious education included the study of Quran, Mohammed and his conventions, Islamic laws and Islamic history etc. The secular education included the study of Arabic literature, grammar, history, philosophy, mathematics, geography, politics, economics, Greek language and agriculture etc.

Art and education made great strides in the reign of Harsha. He encouraged education at all levels; education was given in temples and monastries and higher education in universities of Taxila, Ujjain, Gaya and Nalanda. In Nalanda, Hiuen Tsang spent several years studying Buddhists sculptures. Shilabhadra, a renowned scholar was its head.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, 'ghatikas', or colleges attached to the temples emerged as new centres of learning. The 'ghatikas', provided Brahmanical education. The medium of instruction was Sanskrit. Entry to these temple colleges was open only to the upper castes or 'dvijas' (twice born). Use of Sanskrit as the medium of instruction distanced the common people from education. Education became the privilege of only the uppermost sections of society.

In ancient India, education was a matter of individual concern. The aim of education was the development of pupil's overall personality. With this view of education as a process of one's inner growth and self-fulfilment, techniques, rules and methods were evolved. It was believed that the development of a person meant, primarily, the training of his/her mind as the instrument of acquiring knowledge. This knowledge would enhance his/her creative capacity. The thinking principle 'manana shakti' was reckoned higher than the subject of thinking. Thus, the primary subject of education was the mind itself.

Knowledge of applied sciences like metallurgy, baked bricks, glazing, measurement of areas and volumes were known to people in ancient India. The scientific system of medicine was developed in the post-Vedic period. Medicine became a subject at centres of learning like Takshila and Varanasi. The 'Charak Samhita' on medicine and 'Sushruta Samhita' on surgery were two important works in this field. Sushruta considered surgery as "the highest division of the healing arts and least liable to fallacy". Mathematics or 'ganita' included Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, Astronomy and Astrology. Interest in Arithmetic was due to its use in trade and commerce. 'Aryabhattachiya', by Aryabhattacha was a major contribution in the field of mathematics. Astronomy was overshadowed by Brahmanical superstitions. 'Surya Siddhanta', a work on astronomy consisted of the description of the instruments and the methods of observation which were neither accurate nor impressive. The bronze and copper remains from the time of Indus Valley Civilization are indicative of the development of chemistry and metallurgy. The processes of leather tanning, dyeing, and fermenting were devised during this period.

Sanskrit enjoyed a position of privilege in ancient India. It served as a medium of Brahmanical education. Sanskrit was the lingua franca of the educated upper castes as well as the Hindu rulers and courtiers. 'Prakrit' as a language developed with the rise of Buddhism. It became the language of the masses. Ashoka, the Mauryan king used 'Prakrit' in his edicts. It is interesting to note that in Sanskrit drama, women and the humble characters were made to speak in formalised Prakrit. Pali was one of the early variants of Prakrit. Most of the Buddhist canonical writings are in Prakrit and Pali, though some Sanskrit literature was also in circulation. Another language 'Apabhramsha' was used by Jain writers in Gujarat and Rajasthan for the composition of poetry. The Dravidian languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malyalam were in use in the southern parts of India. They found expression in the literature of this period as well.

The best example of ancient India's advancement was the university of Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang a famous Chinese traveller records Nalanda University as a post graduate university for advanced study and research. Nalanda was also famous for its 'Schools of Discussion' as noted by the students who had their own hostels. King Balaputradeva constructed a temple for the students of Java who came to study at Nalanda.

Education in the Medieval Period: With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, Islamic system of education was introduced. Education in medieval India was designed on the lines of the tradition of education developed under the Abbasids of Baghdad. As a result, scholars from countries like Samarqand, Bukhara and Iran looked up to the Indian scholars for guidance. Amir Khusrau, an exemplary personality, not only developed the skill of writing prose and poetry but also devised a new language which suited the local conditions. Some contemporary historians like Minhaj-us-Siraj, Ziauddin Barani and Afif have written about Indian scholarship.

The institutions that provided school education were known as 'makhtabs', while those of higher learning were called 'madrasas'. The 'makhtabs' were generally run by public donations while 'Madrasas' were maintained by the rulers and nobles. There were six different types of institutions: (i) those

established and maintained by nobles and rulers, those which were started by individual scholars with the help of state assistance or donations, (iii) those that were attached to the mosques, (iv) those that were attached to the tombs, (v) those that were started and maintained by individual scholars, and (vi) those that were attached to the Sufi hospices. The famous '*madrasas*' were the Muizzi, the Nasiri and the Firuzi *madrasas* in Delhi, Mohammed Gawani's *madrasa* in Bidar and Abul Fazl's *madrasa* in Fatehpur Sikri. The Sirat-i-figuz Shahi gives a list of 14 subjects that were taught in the Madarsas like Jurisprudence or Dirat which was a method of recitation, punctuation and vocalization of the text Quran etc.

The main feature of the Muslim educational system was that it was traditional in spirit and theological in content. The curriculum was broadly divided into two categories: the traditional (*Manqulat*) and the rational (*Maqulat*) sciences. Traditions, law and history and literature came under the traditional sciences. Logic, philosophy, medicine, mathematics and astronomy came under rational sciences. Later, rational sciences came to be emphasized more than the traditional sciences. Traditional subjects dominated education from the time of Iltutmish (1211-36) till the reign of Sikander Lodi (1489-1517). The scenario started changing from the time of Sikander Lodi when he invited the brothers Sheikh Abdullah and Sheikh Azizullah from Multan to Delhi. They introduced the study of philosophy and logic in the curriculum.

Education System under the Great Mughals: The Mughal period made immense contribution in the field of learning and education. The Mughal emperors had great love for learning and they contributed more in the field of spreading education through Pathshalas, Vidyapeeths, Makatabs and Madarsas. Akbar gave grants to educational institutions. He started a College near Jama Masjid. At that time, education was not a state subject. Generally the temples and mosques were the centre of elementary education. They were dependent on the donations given by rulers, rich men and donors. Sanskrit and Persian were taught in temples and mosques. There was no provision for women's education. The women of the royal and rich families got education at home.

The Mughal rulers were great patrons of learning and literature. This period saw the rise of Urdu as a language which came out of a long contact between Persian and Hindi i.e. the Turks and the Indians. Babar wrote his own biography known as Tazuk-i-Babari. The Mughal Emperor Humayun introduced the study of mathematics, astronomy and geography in the '*madrasas*' in Delhi. This helped in reducing the bias in the existing education system. Many Hindus took to learning Persian and a number of translations from Sanskrit to Persian were made. Akbar added subjects like accountancy, public administration, geometry and built a workshop near his palace. He personally supervised the workshop. Akbar's attempt to introduce secular and scientific system of education was not liked by the orthodox sections. Akbar's efforts ushered in a change which continued for centuries. In the eighteenth century some nobles were against the introduction of Western methods in education which involved inquiry, observation, investigation and conducting experiment. Memorising, discussing and writing out the lessons were the basis of instruction in the Muslim '*madrasas*'.

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Education in the Modern Period: As in other aspects of social life in India, many of the traditional features of the preceding centuries had continued in the field of education. The old famous centres of higher learning like those at Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila near Bhagalpur, at Jagaddal in North Bengal, Vallabhi at Kathiawar and Kanchi in the South had disappeared long ago. Islamic education, on the other hand flourished subsequently under the patronage of rulers and nobles. Still the majority of the Hindu population continued to receive education in their time honoured institutions and with the growth of vernacular literature they studied their classical works. 'There is not country' wrote Thomas in 1891 'where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful influence'. According to him 'The English found in India, a widespread style of elementary education and higher education, of which the former was mainly practical while the latter mainly literary, philosophical and religious.

For about 150 years, the British were involved in trade and conquest in India. So they maintained a distance from all kinds of cultural activities including education. The beginning of oriental scholarship was made by Warren Hastings in 1781 when he started the Calcutta Madrasa. His endeavour was primarily due to administrative reasons. Eleven years later, in 1792, Jonathan Duncan, a Resident of Varanasi started a Sanskrit college to educate native Hindus to assist the Europeans.

Meanwhile, Christian missionaries were making efforts to introduce Western education by opening elementary schools and providing education to the more humble sections of the society, including the so called untouchable castes. The first half of the nineteenth century can be called a period of educational experiments. The East India Company's Charter Act of 1813 enabled the Company to set aside one lakh rupees for "the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India". A debate ensued between the Orientalists and the Anglicists which was finally settled by Macaulay's Minutes and Bentinck's Resolution of 1835. It was decided that this fund would be utilised to promote European literature and sciences. William Bentinck adopted English as the official language of the government. Lord Hardinge in 1844, decided to grant employment to Indians who had received English education.

Wood's Despatch of 1854 underlined the objective of educational policy which was the diffusion of "the improved arts, sciences, philosophy and literature of Europe" through English or other modern Indian languages as the medium. The Despatch suggested that Universities should be set up in Bombay (modern Mumbai), Madras (modern Chennai) and Calcutta (modern Kolkata). It emphasized the development of private enterprise, a system of grants-in-aid, training teachers in the schools, women's education and so on. In 1857, the Universities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were established. The Universities of Punjab and Allahabad were established in 1882 and 1887 respectively.

In 1901, Lord Curzon convened the conference of Directors of Public Instruction which began an era of educational reforms based on its decisions. In 1904, the Indian Universities Act was passed that enabled the Universities to assume teaching, inspection of colleges and undertake measures for qualitative improvement in higher education.

Under the Colonial Rule, mass education was neglected and the attempt was to create an urban educated elite that would act as interpreter between the ruler and the ruled. The examination system was emphasized in both high schools and Universities. The impact of English education was not even. Literacy and education were more widespread in towns than in villages. The positive aspect was that it produced a breed of educated political leaders and social reformers who played important roles in the

freedom struggle of the country. The publication of newspapers and pamphlets brought about an awakening among the masses.

The British encouraged the teaching of English language in schools and colleges as they needed people to work in the administrative offices either as clerks or babus. This helped in creating a new class of people who later helped them in governance as well as in controlling many aspects of administration in India. As a result, Christian missionaries who came to India started opening schools where English was taught. You will find many schools in India even today who were opened during those times. One such school is Presentation Convent in Delhi, which is still running and providing good education. Many Indians sent their children to these schools as they thought it would help them in getting jobs in government offices.

The teaching of English was encouraged by the British rulers to suit their own interest but it proved to be useful for the Indians in a different way. People living in different parts of India spoke different languages and there was no language that could be understood by all. Use of English by Indians provided one language that cut across the entire country and became a common link for them. English books and newspapers brought to them new ideas from across the sea, i.e. other countries. Fresh ideas from the west like freedom, democracy, equality and brotherhood began to have its impact on the thinking of the English knowing Indians which gave rise to national consciousness. The educated Indians now thought of getting freedom from British rule.

Education in the Post Independence of India: As you know, we got independence from British rule in 1947 and the responsibility of planning for the education of our people fell on the Indian Government of free India. To achieve the goals of personal, economic, social, political and cultural development, it is necessary to make appropriate provisions for an integrated programme of education for people who happen to be living at different levels of development, possessing different linguistic, social and cultural attributes. Such programmes have to be based upon a common curriculum to strengthen unity within diversity and also to facilitate mobility from one part of the country to another.

If adequate measures are not taken for the spread of education, economic inequality, regional imbalance and social injustice can widen further resulting in the building up of tensions in society. That is why in 1966, the Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) (popularly known as Kothari Commission) referred to education as the only instrument of peaceful social change. To this end, the Constitutional Amendment of 1976 included education in the concurrent list, that is, the centre and states both assume joint responsibility of education.

Elementary Education: Elementary education is the most crucial stage of education, spanning the first eight years of schooling (class I to VIII) and laying the foundation for the development of personality, attitudes, social confidence, habits, life skills and communication skills of the pupils. The Constitution under Article 45 provided for the State to introduce compulsory and free education for children up to the age of fourteen. The period of elementary school is now also recognised as a period of free and compulsory schooling vide the constitutional amendment making education a fundamental right. We will read about this Act in detail under Section 18.9 of this lesson. The National Policy on Education 1986 emphasized that thrust areas in elementary education will be

- universal access and enrolment.
- universal retention of children upto fourteen years of age in the school.
- substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was a flagship programme of the Central Government for universalization of elementary education started in 2001 .

Secondary Education: “Secondary school is a period of intense physical change and formation of identity. It is also the period of intense vibrancy and energy.”

There has been a phenomenal expansion of secondary education since independence. It covers children of age group 14-18 (classes 9th to 12th). According to 2001 census 88.5 million children are enrolled in secondary education. However enrolment figures show that only 31 million of these children were attending schools in 2001-2002. While a great increase has taken place in number of schools and in enrolment, there has been a lesser increase in the number of teachers. It is obvious that, on the whole it has adversely affected the teacher-pupil ratio. The pressure for expansion will most certainly continue and may indeed increase as the country progresses towards the universalisation of education. Although anyone in India who wishes to pursue secondary education (upto class X) is allowed to do so, not more than half of those who pass the upper primary stage join the secondary classes. After the success of SSA at elementary stage, the central government is all set to achieve the goal of universalization of secondary education under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, about which we will read in some detail under Section 18.9.

Vocational education is a distinct stream at Senior Secondary Stage. It aims at preparing students for various occupations involving various kinds of activities. Vocationalization of higher secondary education was a major objective of the reforms envisaged in the First Education Policy adopted in 1968. However, the attempts made till now have not borne fruits and enrolment in the scheme, which was expected to include around 50% of students at the +2 level, has remained marginal and confined to a few states. According to the planning commission report for the 11th five year plan, there are about 514 Industrial Training Institutes (ITI's) imparting training in 57 engineering and 50 non-engineering trades. A positive step in this direction in recent times has been the setting up of a National Skill Development Mission and Training.

Higher Education: The first Prime Minister of India, late Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, who laid the foundation of the process of India's modernization, declared that if all is well with the Universities, all would be well with the nation. Higher education begins after a student completes senior secondary (class XII) stage. He then enters a college which is part of a university. Despite the key role assigned to higher education, the development in this field has been extremely uneven. While few colleges and universities are playing a crucial role in academic excellence, the general condition of universities and colleges is a matter of great concern to the nation.

The number of students in the age group of 18-20 years enrolled for higher education is low. The proportion is even more adverse in some regions, particularly in case of women, scheduled castes and tribes. Rural areas have been touched only marginally by higher education of quality. The facilities in colleges vary widely. It is important that courses in higher education offer programmes of study and courses closely related to life, aimed at the development of personality, reasoning and learning capabilities of students. The State has subsidized higher education very greatly. A college student pays by way of fees a very small amount of money. The rest of the expenses on his education is paid by the State or the Central Government. This is public money which must be carefully spent for those who deserve higher education. As per report of Higher Education in India, the gross enrolment ratio increased from 0.7% in 1950-51 to 11% by 2006-2007. By 2020 it is expected to increase to 26.3%.

Adult Education: Removal of adult illiteracy has also been accepted as an imperative goal, Adult education particularly in the age group of 15-35 years has been included as part of the minimum needs programme in the sixth plan. In this regard National Literacy Mission (NLM) objective is to impart functional literacy to 80 million illiterate persons. The literacy rate after independence in 1951 of 7+ population was 18.3% which increased in 2011 to 74.0 percent. The male literacy rate is 82.14% and female is 65.46%.

Technical Education: It is impossible to overestimate the importance of technical education. India already has one of the largest reservoirs of trained manpower. Technical and management curriculum was targeted on current as well as the projected needs of industry. Technically trained persons have already been a source of strength for scientific and industrial development. It is often suggested that talented engineering students are not provided the kind of jobs and work environment which would

give them a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. This has resulted in a significant incidence of brain drain either to the developed countries or to the management stream. When brilliant young men and women, who are highly educated and talented, leave the country and go to a foreign country in search of better income, it is called brain drain. There are several centers of excellence in technical and professional education in India like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIM).

Open and Distance Learning System: There are many learners who are compelled to discontinue their studies in the formal system. This may be because of financial, geographical, academic or medical reasons. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system is meant for such learners. In this system the learner can learn through lessons sent by the institutions of distance learning without attending classes. These students can keep themselves engaged in service or business while studying.

The learner is not in direct touch with the teacher. He is at a distance. Open School at present offers both secondary (Class X) and senior secondary (Class XII) education. You have joined Open School. You know that while retaining your regular employment, you are also studying through the lessons sent to you. These lessons have been prepared with a lot of care. The system is open because there is flexibility in terms of pace, place and time. You are free to select any combination of subjects and pass them at your convenience over a period of five years. Similar facility is being provided at higher level by the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

These institutions will go a long way in taking education to every Indian citizen who may not have been able to continue with the regular stream of education. Thus, education has developed at a rapid pace in India since independence. The national goals of development, integration, excellence and equality in the sphere of education can be fulfilled only when every child in the country crosses a minimum threshold of educational attainment. A holistic atmosphere of development, hard work and excellence has to be built up through a programme which involves everybody as a promoter as well as a recipient of new attitudes and ideas.

Conclusion: In the Vedic period, education was imparted in the 'ashramas' which were primarily a privilege of the so called upper castes (*varnas*). Education was also provided by the guilds which became centres of technical education during the period BC 200 - AD 300.

Buddhist education aimed at purity of character. Vihars or monasteries are the centers of education in Buddhist education; monks are receiving the education in a viharas. Cordial relationship between the teacher and the students. The total period of education was 22 years, 12 years as Pabbajja and 10 years Upasampada. The teacher responsible for food, clothing and residence and also moral and religious education. Acquisition of knowledge through lecture and question answer as well as different types of teaching methods like discussion, tours, conferences, meditations evidences and prominence etc.

In Brahmanic periods the main aim of education was all round development of human life. Education was started after the Upanayan sanskar. The student and teacher relationship was ideal in nature. The student had to study in the Gurukuls for about 12 years. In the curriculum all useful subjects were included like Vyakaran Nyayashastra etc. Buddhism threw its colleges open to all, irrespective of any consideration of caste or country. The rise of organized public educational institutions may be justified attributed to its influence. It raised the international status of India by efficiency of its higher education, which attracted students from distant countries like Korea, China, Tibet and Java. The cultural sympathy which the countries in eastern Asia feel for India even today is entirely due to the work of the famous Buddhist colleges of ancient India. Buddhist education also helped the development of Hindu logic and philosophy by initiating and encouraging comparative study. Buddhist monasteries and the Jain system of education played a significant role in making India a leading learning centre in the world. After the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the Muslim system of education was introduced which was an elaborate system encompassing both elementary and higher learning. The introduction of Western education brought some radical changes in terms of providing education to all sections of society including the so called "untouchables". The National Policy of Education 1986, marked a significant step in the history of education in independent India.

In the larger domain of human capital, education and skill development has a big role. Census 2011 data on literacy gives us a quick perspective on the current status of education. However, education is not just about literacy. RTE act acts as a cornerstone for Indian education. Nevertheless, it is the various education policies, charted out since Independence, which led to the historical evolution of the education system in India. The results of these policies can be said to be mixed. There is still a lot of room for improvement. There are various government initiatives targeting each level of the education system in India. Higher Education System is given a greater focus these days. The latest update in the education sector is the Kasturirangan report or draft new education policy. It captures the need of the hour for reforming education. The modern Indian education system is crying for a revamp. The draft New Education Policy (NEP) is the right moment to take stock of its past history, achievements, misgivings and to chart out a futuristic education plan for 21st century India.

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