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## INDIAN CULTURE AND ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** This paper throws light on the earliest Indian culture which has always been aware of its Yugadharm and Ancient Indian Education system. Educational Institutions usually mirror the ideas of a nation and enable us to understand the spirit of its culture and civilization. Ancient Indian culture is one of the most interesting and important culture of the world.

If we want to understand it correctly, we must study its system of education which preserve propagated and modify it during more than 4000 years. This circumstance lends and adds importance and interest to the study of Ancient Indian Culture and Education.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Culture of any human community is the very essence of that community, and it distinguishes specific human community from others. Culture is breath of human society, the very life that sustains it and indicates that it is alive, it can grow, it can exert influences on everything the community possesses - customs, traditions, modes of life, thought processes and not in the least the educational theory and practice.

The Indian culture has been very influential all through the ages. While dealing with the topic of this paper, it was realized that it was difficult if not impossible to delimit the scope of Indian culture. It is like a vast expanse of ocean which has currents, under currents, sub currents, and to which many rivers add large volumes of water. The Indian culture, as it stands today, is a product of diverse cultures which are indeed unique in their own ways.

The present paper throws light on the earliest Indian culture and Ancient Indian Education. Educational Institutions usually mirror the ideas of a nation and enable us to understand the spirit of its culture and civilization. Ancient Indian culture is one of the most interesting and important culture of the world. If we want to you understand it properly, we must study its system of education which preserve propagated and modify it during the course of more than 4000 years. This circumstance lends and adds importance and interest to the study of Ancient Indian Culture and Education.

### II. INDIAN CULTURE

The Indian culture and the Indian education system belong to the Indian heritage and the good old days. Those principles and practices were noble and sublime. Indian culture though it is age-old and glorious, is a part of the world culture. Therefore, it is no doubt, crucial but the whole viz. the world culture is more crucial and significant. India has always been aware of its Yugadharm. It has learnt from world, and it has guided the world. It has brought about what can be termed as the Indian Renaissance which is slowly and steadily contributing to the world renaissance. It has proved the value of spiritualism. It has showed the world that 'unity in diversity is difficult but not impossible to achieve. It has made the world say that India is a supreme power of tomorrow, and India knows to achieve lasting spiritual bliss through fulfilment of world desires.

It is no wonder that these forces have influenced by Ancient Indian Education System throughout the world. They have modified the goals of education. The four-fold goals can be –

- Self-realization
- Human Relationship,
- Economic Efficiency, and
- Civic Responsibility

### III. ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION -MEANING

Before we proceed to discuss the conception and goals of education, we must point out the meaning of Education in the period of Ancient India. Ancient Indians have used the term education in a wider as well as in a narrower sense. In its wider sense education is self- culture and self- improvement and the process will go on to the end of one's life and in its narrower sense as denoting the instruction and training which a youth receives during the student hood before he settles down to his profession.

From the Vedic age downwards the central conception of education of the Indians has been that it is a source of illumination giving us a correct lead in the various spheres of life. The illumination given to us by education shatters illusions removes difficulties and enable us to realize the true value of life.

Ancient Indians have emphatically averred that intellect, as developed and refined by education is a real power in this world. The use of education is too diverse to be exhaustively enumerated; it nourishes us like the mother, directs us to the proper path like the father, and give us delight and comfort like wife. Life without education is, therefore, utterly futile and worthless.

### IV. GOALS OF ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION

The question, 'what were the goals of ancient Indian education?' 'Can be answered by saying, whatever was the goal of life, was the goal of education. It is no exaggeration because for ancient Indian people, life was an integrated whole as the human body with its different organs. Therefore, social life and social goals, educational life and educational goals, economic life and economic goals were identified with life and its goals.

It is well-known that religion was predominant in every sphere of life. In fact, ancient India was built up in the very religious field. In this case, Altekari, A.S. (1965) remarks, "Religion played a large part in life in ancient India, and teachers were usually priests. Therefore, piety and religiousness were the first and foremost aim of education". (P.9) Mukerji, R.K. (1947) states, "Learning in ancient India was prized and pursued as the means of Moksha" (P.4).

**The attitude of the Upanishads is**

**ब्रह्म सत्यं जगत् मिथ्या।**

**(only the Absolute is true, and the whole world is false)**

Indeed, the ultimate of human life was the achievement of the absolute (Brahma) which one he/she is. Everyone should seek oneness with the Absolute. This oneness is a must for Mukti or salvation from the bondage of life and death. This oneness can be procured through Vidya and therefore vidya, it was said, emancipates:

**या विद्या सा विमुक्तये।**

**(Vidya is that which emancipates)**

Moreover, it was emphasized that oneness with the Brahma was possible only through full self-realization, which required self-illumination. Mundakopanishad says,

**अथ परामयातदक्षमधिगम्यते।**

**(Ultimate knowledge is that only, which enables one to realize the Absolute)**

One thinker considers knowledge as the third eye (ज्ञानं तृतीयं मनुजस्य नेत्रं।) of man. It provides to him with, insight. In the Mahabharata, it is stated as

**नास्ति विद्यासमंचक्षुर्नास्ति सत्यसमंतपः।**

**(Nothing gives such an unfailing insight as education)**

Thus, the achievement of Maksha, oneness with the Brahma, self- realization and self-illumination were the basic foundations of human life, and therefore, the cardinal principles of all educational endeavours in ancient India.

In addition to these principles, the scholars of ancient Indian education, such as Mitra Veda (1964) Apte, D.G. (1961), Altekar, A.S. (1965), Rai, B.C. (1966); Mukerji, R.K. (1947) have enlisted the aims and ideals of ancient Indian education.

- Infusion of piety and religiousness
- Formation of Character
- Development of Personality
- Emphasis on performance of social duties
- Promotion of social efficiency and happiness
- Preservation and transmission of culture. (Altekar, A.S., 1965, pp. 8-18)

It is highly crucial to enlist two significant features of ancient Indian educational philosophy and human life itself. They are four Purusharthas and the theory of three debts.

#### **Apte, D.G. (1961) explains the notion of the four Purusharthas:**

The Indian seers formulated a four-fold scheme which aimed at giving vent to all he instinctive desires and sublimating them to lead a person towards divine life. This scheme consists of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Dharma means the discharge of one's duties as per social ethics. Artha means ordering one's worldly concerns to happiness. Kāma means pleasures seeking without conflicting Dharma. Moksha means the disentangling from ephemeral pleasures. (P. 46-47)

#### **V. DIVERSE FUNCTIONS OF ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION**

Ancient Indians gives us proper notion of cleanliness and manners and have laid down that the rules of cleanliness and etiquette should be first taught to the young student before anything else (Manu, II, 69). Education removes our prejudices and makes us more reasonable and considerate by enabling us to understand viewpoints different from our own. It sharpens the intellect, improves the grasping power and develops the faculty of discrimination and thus protects us from falling into errors. It strengthens our moral nature and enables us to stand the severest temptations of life. True education refines and strengthens our moral fibre and thus prevents us from being affected by the wayward breezes of fleeting passions and prejudices.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Education was regarded as a source of illumination and power which transforms and ennobles nature by the progressive and harmonious development of our physical mental intellectual and spiritual powers and faculties it does enable us to live as a decent and useful citizen of society and indirectly help us to make progress in The Spiritual Spear both in this life and in the life to come. Body, mind, intellect and spirit constitute a human being; the goals aims and ideas of ancient Indian education were to promote their simultaneous and harmonious development. Men are social beings; ancient Indian education not only emphasis social duties but also promoted social happiness. No nation can be called educated which cannot preserve and expand its cultural heritage. Our education enables us to do this for several centuries.

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