

GURUKULA SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN ANCIENT TIMES

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Abstract: Education and Dharmashastra played a vital and contributory role in ancient educational system. The Dharmashastra regulated the civil, religious and moral life in the Aryan society. In fact the Dharmashastras are the primary source for history of education in ancient India. Objectives, Contents of education and Gurukula system promoted *plain living and high thinking* among educated elite.

The teacher played a significant role in moulding the character of the pupil. In fact, he became a role model for the pupils. He carried the divine responsibility by not only imparting knowledge but also transforming his pupil into a useful citizen of the society. Scholarship and excellent character were the two important requisites of a teacher. The students also maintain the perfect qualities to get proper intellectual training from the teachers.

Thus, Dharmasutras laid foundation for an excellency in our educational system. Many foreigners were attracted to join in our educational institutions and gain intellectuality. Thus, I made an attempt to discuss the various aspects of our educational system and the role of Dharmashastras in our educational system. This system and its methods are worthy of emulation in modern times with minor modifications.

Key words: Dharmashastra, Knowledge, Educational system, Worthy of emulation, Excellency

Introduction: Education and Dharmashastras played a significant role in ancient educational system. In ancient India educational system fulfils four objectives of life viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Education and religion coupled in ancient teaching. The writers on Dharmashastra were social thinkers and cultural ambassadors. The ancient life style was governed by social and religious factors. The Dharmashastra regulated the civil, religious and moral life in the Aryan society¹. Manu's dharmashastra became the authority in regulating educational system in ancient India.

Dharmashastras are the primary source for history of education in ancient India. The ideals of ancient Indian educational system were guided by the religious and spiritual factors. The purpose of education was to attain salvation or mukti. Thus education was a means to achieve this end. Education as philosophy and Dharmashastra as queen of science played key roles².

Objectives of education: Education was considered as a process of illumination and knowledge as a tool to dive into all affairs and also teaches him how to act in the life. The following are the objectives of education

1. Education removes all doubts and a gate way to the world of spirituality,
2. It increases efficiency enables the person to become immoral,
3. It promotes material welfare,
4. It fulfils the primary purpose of human birth and
5. It enshrined the person to act as the custodian and implementing authority of the principles of Dharmashastras.³

Contents of education: The upanayana ceremony inaugurates the study of education. Vedic education was made obligatory in ancient system. Four Vedas,

six Vedangas, Puranas, Nyayasastras, Grammer, Dharmasashtra etc. were the contents of the educational system. Modern sciences like Arthashastra, Astronomy, Vedic Mathematics, Ayurveda, Vrukshashastra, Aswa sastra, Mining, Medicine and Surgery, Metallurgy, Vsthusastra etc. were some other popular branches of knowledge.

Gurukula System: Gurukula system was a novel system of our educational system. Large number of students lives in gurukulas under the direct supervision of the teacher. Here, the teacher shoulders the responsibility of moulding the character of the students. Students were prohibited eating meats, sweets, spices and observe celibacy. They have to rise in the early morning, show courtesy to teachers and elders and pursue the rules of discipline. Students were required to live by begging to learn the spirit of humility. The objective of this system was "*Plain Living And High Thinking*". The entire system was aimed to promote the feeling of gratitude to the society⁴.

The Teacher: The educational system in ancient India revolved around the teacher. The teacher was the means to the success for the student. The Apastambha dharma sutra clearly says that the teacher whom a student asks for instruction should not refuse him, if he finds no defect in the student the above dharma sutra mentions the following qualities of the teacher.

1. The teacher must treat the student as if he was his son,
2. the teacher should impart the entire knowledge to him, by not hiding anything,
3. the teacher should not stop his student from doing his own work and

4. the teacher carries the divine responsibility of the moulding the character of the student and converting him as the Just part of the society⁵

There were three types of teachers termed as Guru, Upadhyaya and Acharya as per Dharma sastras. A person who teaches religious ceremonies and elevates the student to spiritual heights is known as Guru. A teacher who imparts knowledge for the sake of livelihood is known as Upadhyaya. The teacher who teaches Veda and Vedangas was described as Acharya.⁶ It is the duty of the teacher to select right students for intellectual dispensation.

Scholarship and excellent character were the two important requisites for the teacher. The Gayatri upasana of the teacher purifies him and this purity will be an influencing factor in moulding the character of the pupil. Thus, the qualities of the ideal teacher, contained in the Dharmashastra are relevant in all the times to come.

Qualities of the student: The following are the qualities of the student.

1. The life of the student was fully devoted to the service of the teacher and his family,
2. He has to lit the sacred fire everyday in the morning times,
3. He has to gather samidhas for the daily homam,
4. He has to look after the cattle,
5. He has to obey the teacher in the true spirit,
6. He has to pursue the strict ethical, educational and spiritual codes prescribed by the teacher.⁷

Thus a student should always dependent on the teacher, should speak the truth, avoid honey, flesh,

perfumes, wear flowers, oil baths, day sleep, wearing chapels, music, singing and dancing, touching women, inferior talk, using beds etc... Sitting rules were strictly followed by the students before the teacher. The Gautama dharma sutra is of the view that the student should not pronounce the name of the teacher⁸. The Vishnu Dharma sutra says that the student must leave the place where somebody defames his teacher.⁹

Systems of study: Memorisation, recitation, recapitulation were the normal methods of education. Hieuan-Tsang mentioned the extraordinary memory of the Vedic Scholars in Nalanda University. Lectures, discussions, debates, seminars, group discussions etc.... were some of the methods of study in our ancient educational system. Doubt clarifications were considered to be the important aspect of our system.¹⁰

Conclusion: Dharma sutras laid foundation for an excellent system of education in Ancient India. It also prescribed the quality of the teacher and also the student. It also prescribed code of conduct for an ideal teacher and for the ideal students. Simple living and high thinking was the motto of the system. The dharma sutras also mention the different methods of study which invited the appreciation of the foreigners. It is not the travesty of the fact to say that many foreigners desired to come to India to join in our august institutions to pursue academics. This system and its methods are worthy of emulation even in contemporary times with some modifications where ever necessary.

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