
Social and Historical Background of Education in Ancient India

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Introduction :- The social structure in Ancient India was based on Scientific principles. It was a wise and statement-like classification which produced a general distribution of wealth, expelled misery and want from the land, promoted mental and moral progress. In the early days of the human race, it is said, there were no class distinctions since all are born from the supreme. In order to make personal supervision effective, the co-operation and help of advanced students was taken in the cause of education. They used to guide the students of the juniors under the general supervision of their teachers. On the other hand, the senior students at Taxila were often put in charge of their Scholars during the temporary absence of their teachers. This method of entrusting teaching work to brilliant students had a great educational value. It placed a high incentive before the students. It afforded opportunities to intelligent students to learn the art of teaching and thus indirectly performed the same function as the Teacher's Training college. It increased the efficiency and decreased the cost of the School by affording intelligent and free assistance to the teacher.

Objectives of education in Ancient India :-

The aims and objectives of education in Ancient India was based on social and Historical status of ancient period. These are as follows –

- 1) The objectives of education in Ancient India were formation of character and development of personality.
- 2) To performed the social duties, promotion of social efficiency.
- 3) To spread of national culture and development of civilization.
- 4) To performed at the beginning of both the literacy and professional education the primary and higher level.
- 5) To impressed the reality of the spiritual world and realize to product the

nature, mind and soul.

- 6) To provide the background of piety and religiousness but not to induce the students to renounce the world.
- 7) The aim of education is to make the students to become a useful and pious member of the society.

Discussion :- Society leaves every man free to choose his own line of work. A Brahmana is a learned man. He is intellectually advanced. He should help others in the performance of sacrifices. Similarly, no Brahmana is a Brahmana if he ceases to be the trustee of the interests of the whole body. The individual and the social sides of varma are inseparably intertwined. The theory varma or caste emphasized the social aspects. In the early days of the human race, it is said, there were no class distinction, since all are born the supreme. According to the Sruti, the fishermen, the slaves and the gamblers are all divine. Manu says that all men are born unregenerate by the first or physical birth, but become regenerate by the second or spiritual birth.

In the Vedic terminology, the word Varma comes from the root 'Vr' to choose. What is chosen is Varma. It may be taken to mean a profession, because it is chosen. The theory of occupation is based upon two factors. Firstly, the society need many things, which no single person can do efficiency. Secondly, every person has some peculiar tendencies and it left free, he follows his own bent of mind. A Sudra is not made a Sudra by the society but he is a Sudra because he could not, on account of his own weakness of idleness, choose for himself a respectable place. The society does not discard him. He is a useful member of the society, just as a man cannot stand upon his legs without feet. The individual and the social sides of Varma are inseparably intertwined. The theory of Varma or caste emphasizes the social aspects. According to Gautam, the four orders are that of the students, that of the Householder, that of the Ascetic and that of the Hermit in the wood. Some declare that he who has studied the Veda many make his choice which among the orders, he is going to enter.

The Varna srana was not the same as the caste-system of the present day. No one was a Brahmana by blood nor a Sudra by birth but everybody belonged to the order to which his merits. The people were not irrevocably walled in by caste, but they were free to rise to the

higher social level. A Brahmana can become a Sudra if he lacks in Brahmanic qualification.

The education in Ancient India may be divided as follows-

- 1) The first period from the pre-historic times to 1000 B.C. it may be conveniently described as the Vedic age, as most of the Vedic literatures was composed during this period.
- 2) The Second period from 1000 B.C. to 200 B.C. it described as the age of Sutra and Epics.

As there was no class-system, therefore, there were no annual examinations and no mass promotions at the end of a year for the formation of fresh classes. That was a time of individual attention and teaching. The educational system to the need and individual capacity of each student. There was a daily examination of every student and no new session was given until the old one was thoroughly mastered. When a student was quite well up, he was given encouragement and instructed further. Clever students were not compelled to mark time for their duller companions. On the other hand, an intelligent and industrious student could not finish his education much earlier. At the end of his education, the scholar was presented to the local learned assembly. When a young man desires to be initiated in to the art of his own craft with the sanction of his relations. The master was teaching him at his own house and feed him. He should not employ him in work of different description and should treat him like a son. The students had to spend at least eight years. The completion of the course was followed by an examination.

Conclusion :- In ancient India teaching was considered to be a holy duty which a Brahmana was bound to discharge irrespective of the consideration of the fee. In order to bring education within the reach of the poorest, it is not only permitted students to beg, but elevated begging itself in the highest duty of the student life. Teachers were expected to devote their lives to the cause of teaching in the missionary spirit of Self-Sacrifice and the society laid down the principles that both the public and the state should help the learned teachers and educational institutions very liberally. Fee was a minor item in the income of a private teacher and did not figure at all in the budgets of public colleges and universities in ancient India. Society realized that the gift in the cause of education was to be the best of gifts, possessing a higher religious efficiency than ever the gifts of land. Religion had a great hold over the public mind in ancient times. Society was always anxious to help the cause of free

education to all in a variety of ways. It was considered to be the greatest of sins, if a student goes away without food from the door at midday. On the occasion of religious feasts students and teachers are invited and donations were given liberally. There were free feeding houses for the poor in general and the students in particular. Well to do persons were expected to pay the maximum they could to the teachers, Government gave them land grants and pensions and helped them generously. Governments, Kings, Ruler, Land Lords, all helped them use of learning directly and indirectly in ancient India. Laws were so framed as to help and to keep the lamp of learning burning.

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