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### Indian Education System (Special Reference to Ancient India)

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#### Abstract

The Articles touch upon the topic of India's education system and main focus is the education during ancient times. Both formal and informal education styles have been covered in the article and how they defer. Understanding the background and how the education system evolved with time can help us compare the changes happened during centuries, the learnings involved and how we can improve the current education system by inculcating some of the best practices utilised across the time. The article also has explained the foundations and the pillars of an education system like a teacher's role, importance of curriculum, teaching methods. To know about the pillars and how they contribute to making the education system what it is, is important to identify the nitty-gritties. In the teaching method, the articles also covers the modes of teaching and how they were different back in ancient times. To study about the ancient education system in detail, it is necessary that we look at both the advantages as well as the disadvantages of it. Therefore, the article has tried to cover both the aspects of it. The advantages can be taken as lessons and points of improvement that we can use now to enhance our current system and the disadvantages can be taken as pain points as well as points for improvement that needs to be worked on and if required removed from if they still exist in the current Indian education system.

**Keywords:** Education, curriculum, gurukuls, teacher, teaching methods.

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#### Introduction

Both formal and informal educational systems were in place in ancient India. Native American education was given at chatuspadis, gurukuls, pathshalas, tols, temples, and homes. There were adults who helped young children adopt religious lifestyles in households, villages, and temples. Temples served as both educational institutions and hubs for the advancement of information about our prehistoric system. For deeper learning, students travelled to universities and viharas. Most of the time, instruction was given orally, and pupils took notes and gave the material some thought.

In the age of rapid technological innovation, a growing number of people are choosing to homeschool their children. In this manner, parents may effectively oversee their child's education and schedule flexibility. Some parents, unable to be with their kids all the time, send them to reputable boarding schools. In a similar vein, there were formal and informal educational pathways in the historical educational system. Certain things are best left to be ingested rather than taught. Children learned about religious and pious lifestyles from their elders in the family or community. Pupils picked up a lot of talents and art forms informally through listening to the

sage advice of experienced individuals and simple observation. Since visiting temples on auspicious days was customary, the majority of this learning took place there. Native American education was given at chatuspadis, gurukuls, pathshalas, tols, temples, and homes.

Gurukuls, sometimes referred to as ashrams, served as residential educational institutions. A large number of these bore the sages' names. Gurukuls, which used to be surrounded by beautiful forests, were educational institutions where hundreds of students studied together. Even in the early Vedic era, women had access to education. We come across allusions to a number of notable female Vedic academics, including Maitreyi, Viswambhara, Apala, Gargi, and Lopamudra.

All around the nation, universities and viharas were founded. Originally intended as places for monks to meditate, the Viharas were Buddhist monasteries. Later on, it evolved into a learning centre. Because there were few facilities, the instruction was primarily oral. In the beginning, paper was still a rare commodity, and students internalised the lessons taught. In the past, education was provided in gurukuls. The teacher, or guru, would typically be a sage. One kind of

school in the traditional educational system is the Gurukul. Their primary goal is knowledge development, and they place a strong emphasis on education. The gurus instruct their pupils in yoga, meditation, and other disciplines.

The gurus and their shishyas coexisted at that time, supporting one another in daily life. Realising one's inner potential, living a disciplined life, and obtaining comprehensive education were the key goals. Before achieving their objectives, students lived together away from home for years. The guru-shishya relationship developed over time in the gurukul as well. The emphasis was placed on developing the inner aspects of the personality as well as the external aspects of the various disciplines they were pursuing, such as history, debate art, law, medicine, etc.

The students are referred to as Shishyas, while the teacher is termed a Guru. They were located in a calm setting, like a forest. Students who spend years at the gurukul think of it as a second home. Gurukuls teach a wide range of students, not simply men. Famous Vedic intellectuals such as Maitreyi, Viswambhara, Apala, Gargi, and Lopamudra were all women. Education comprised studying the Vedas and fundamental skills like cooking and wood-gathering. They acquired practical knowledge in areas such as arts, history, and law, rather than merely memorising terminology.

In the past, kids received an education that included topics like politics, economics, psychology, physical education, and mental education while living away from their parents. Given how challenging the scenario will be, weren't they designed to survive in any condition? Even while mediaeval education primarily focused on religion, it nevertheless adhered to the same protocols as ancient education. Everything has changed in the contemporary period of large educational institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), including student living standards, curricula, and overall development. The student's main focus has been to simply succeed and reach their goals. The only academic institutions that have embraced modern teaching methods are the IITs, IIMs, and a few other private and government-aided universities. Every institute has a different curriculum, different teaching strategies, and different living conditions for its students. The current educational system's syllabus does not take into account emerging trends or the needs of the industry. The primary goal of education is primarily theoretical and not applied in real life.

### Curriculum

The curriculum is a vital component of the educational system. It was composed of several stages and was dynamic rather than static. The primary objective of creating a quality curriculum was to foster pupils' mental and physical growth. Four Vedas, six Vedangas, Upnishads, darshanas, Puranas, and Tarka Shastra make up the curriculum. The six darshanas were Nyaya, Baiseshika, Yoga, Vedanta, Sankhya, and Mimasa; the six vedangas were Shiksha, Chhandas, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Jyotisha, and Kalpawhile. Grammar, algebra, and geometry were also given greater weight at that time. At the time, Panini was well-known in the field of grammar. The Abhidharma, the pitakas, and the sutras make up the Buddhist curriculum. In addition to this medication, the Vedas were valued. While Buddhist studies received greater attention, Hindu learning was also included. At the time, both methods worked hand in hand. Exams were given annually, and the only forms of instruction were orals and debates. The ancient educational system placed a strong emphasis on topics related to politics, religion, the military, and battle.

Takshashila, also known as Taxila, was a well-known hub of learning in the past, particularly for Buddhism teachings and religion. His advanced education, which covered courses in ancient scriptures, law, medicine, sociology, astronomy, military science, and eighteen silpas, among other things, made him well-known. Notable alumni of the university were the renowned grammar expert Panini, who wrote extensively on Ashtadhyayi, and the adept statecrafters Chanakya, who also attended. Despite the difficult and lengthy voyage, students from Kashi, Kosala, Magadha, and other places poured into the university. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) designated Takshashila, an ancient Indian city that is now in northwest Pakistan, as a world historic site in 1980. Takshashila was a renowned centre of learning.

Nalanda: Known as Nala when Xuan Zang arrived, Nalanda was the epicentre of learning for a wide range of subjects. In the past, students from all over the nation and the world came to study here. A variety of subjects were taught, including astronomy, mathematics, medicine, the arts, and the Vedas. Xuan Zang herself started studying under Yogashastra. UNESCO also designated Nalanda, which is currently located in Rajgir, Bihar, India, as a World Heritage Site. The other well-known universities from that era were Benaras, Vikramshila, Ujjain, and Vallabhi.

### Methods of Teaching

During that time, teachers gave their students extra attention and tailored their instruction to each student's level of knowledge and proficiency. The main modes of instruction were orals and debates, and the various approaches were as follows: Since there were no books back then, pupils developed the habit of learning and memorising all that was taught in class, with assistance from their teachers. In the past, students would delve deeply into the lessons their teachers were teaching and look for novel approaches to learning them. Contemplation, focused contemplation, and listening were a few of the novel approaches to investigating learning styles. To instruct the students, the teachers employed storytelling techniques. When issues came up about the subjects that the professors were teaching, the students would first have a discussion about them before receiving their answers. Knowledge of the subjects taught in class was primarily applied in the schooling of the era. Regularly scheduled lectures and debates provided the students with a wealth of knowledge.

### Role of Teacher

Teachers had total control over everything, including choosing which students to teach and creating curricula. The course ended when the instructor was happy with the pupils' performance.

He taught what his students were eager to learn and would take as many students as he liked. The main teaching approaches were debate and discussion. Students at the advanced level helped their teachers.

Knowledge was free at the time and was regarded as sacred. The highest category of donations was thought to be contributions towards education. Every everyone in the community made a contribution of some kind. Rich parents, society, and merchants provided financial support. In addition to buildings, gifts of land were given to the universities. Similar free education programmes were offered at several historic universities, including Jagaddala, Valabhi, and Vikramshila.

Agraharas functioned as hubs for education and learning at the same time in the southern region of India. There were further cultural establishments in the South Indian kingdoms known as Ghatika and Brahmapuri.

A Ghatika was a tiny educational institution that taught religion as well as other subjects. An agrahara was a larger establishment, a community comprising.

The Indian educational system persisted as native schools, ashrams, and temples. In the Middle Ages, madrassas and maktabas were incorporated into the educational system.

Indigenous schooling was quite popular in pre-colonial India. The formal system that had already gained traction was expanded upon by this. The majority of the schooling in this system was spiritual and religious. There were similar schools in various parts of India, such as pathshalas in western India, chatuspadis in Bihar, and tols in Bengal. Education was funded locally through donations. In southern India, locals also supported education, according to references found in writings and memoirs.

Our ancient educational system changed over time, starting with the Rigveda and centred on the holistic development of the individual by attending to both the inner and outside self.

The moral, physical, spiritual, and intellectual facets of life were the system's main concerns. It placed a strong focus on virtues like self-reliance, discipline, humility, and respect for all living things.

Pupils were instructed to value the harmony that exists between nature and humans. Teaching and learning were based on the principles found in the Vedas and Upanishads, which covered all facets of life and included obligations to oneself, one's family, and community. The educational system placed equal emphasis on physical growth and learning. Stated differently, the focus was on maintaining a healthy body and mind.

### Advantages

- The method places a strong emphasis on pupils' overall growth.
- The practical knowledge was prioritised over the academic understanding.
- The pupils' primary goal was information acquisition rather than merely moving up the ranks.
- The classrooms were designed to resemble woodlands, giving the pupils a comfortable place to learn.
- Students were not under any pressure to perform well academically so they could learn.
- Kings at the period contributed to the advancement of education; the government did not meddle in the creation of curricula.

### Disadvantages

- The Gurukuls refused to accept women.
- Caste inequality existed since only Kshatriyas were permitted entry to the Gurukul; Eklavya were turned away.

### Conclusion

The examination of the Brahmanical and Vedic educational systems reveals that throughout that era, the Gurukulas were the educational establishments where the teachers (Gurus) lived. There, like members of a single family, the teacher and the taught coexisted. During the Vedic and Buddhist eras in ancient India, there were no well-established educational establishments comparable to those in the present day. Large religious sites and a few monasteries have been established back then. It is reported that scholars from various locations would congregate and engage in discourse there. Around the 12th century, the majority of universities are said to have closed. The old Indian wisdom that was lost was caused by the destruction of these centres and other locations in northern India.

Industries and technology are growing daily in the modern era. Every industry is searching for the ideal candidate for their field. The demand for industrial sectors is growing, and this calls for an overhaul to our current educational system. Students in universities get no real-world knowledge—they are only learning to compete with one another to finish first. Due to the extreme strain and weight of their coursework and workload, students are taking their own lives. Regarding the application of practical knowledge, student-teacher relationships, the lifestyles of those in that era, the contribution of kings to education, the lack of stress placed on students, and many other aspects, our educational system needs to learn from the educational systems of antiquity and the middle Ages.

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