

# Ancient Indian Psycho-Philosophical System of Education and Its Relevance in Present Scenario

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## Abstract

Indian traditions offer invaluable tools for psychotherapy, education management and social work. The great epic Bhagwat Geeta describes three Gunas i.e., Tamas Rajas and Satwa and explains that all the existence in world is combination of these three characteristics. Upnishads also explain four psychological craving in the life of human being as Arth, Kama, Dharma and Moksha, on the basis of which life span of individual is divided into four Ashrams: Brahmcharya, Grihasth, Vanprasth and Sanyaas. Sri Aurobindo has also admitted Yoga as practical psychology. He accepts that self is surrounded by five sheaths as described in Taittiriya Upnishad and explains a wonderful vertical system concerned with level of consciousness ranging from lowest to highest. Indian psychology as well as philosophy believes that one's inner state determines the outer. Lasting fulfillment and joy are found by stilling the mind and diving deep within pure thought and free consciousness because human being is not just combination of body and mind but also has existence of pure consciousness. Now it is a challenge to dive deep into Indian traditional education system and reveal a delightful and effective insight about the development of human being for the welfare of society and of all its business. This paper is an attempt to explore the solutions of today's problems in past remedies which were proven as the best world-wide. Our past has tremendous treasure in itself in the form of various proceedings of day-today life, which needs to be investigated properly for better future. A secondary data based descriptive analytical research methodology is being applied for this piece of research work. It concludes that before peeping in others way of working we must study our own system, where there is a lot to be followed in our education system to make it employment oriented and developing value based social beings/

**Keywords:** Ancient India, Psycho-Philosophical, education System, traditions

## Introduction

Every educational organization is concerned with people dimension and its management. Development of human personality is the major task of any education system. Ancient Indian psycho-philosophical system of education encompasses the vast body of India's wisdom concerning the human being. Indian philosophy and psychology share a framework and believe that human has enormous potential hidden in its being. The Indian sages from ancient time have propounded various valuable theories regarding this area, preserved in ancient text and scriptures in the form of literary treasure of the country. Indian psychology is sophisticated, rich and practical and it also has technology to raise the consciousness of human being. Prevailing system of education in India is completely ignoring the traditional psycho-philosophical system in spite of great treasures hidden in its ancient scripture which has been explored by various western thinkers. One such excellent piece of work was done by great German writer and philosopher Max Muller. He was not only the admirer of Sanskrit language but had explored the greatness of Indian scripture. In his lecture titled as "what India can teach us?" at Cambridge University in the year 1883 he expressed the magnificent glory of India as follows "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If

I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.”<sup>1</sup> The west has already discovered the eminence potential of Indian traditions and techniques like Yoga and Pranayama, concerning the wellness and growth of human being. Indian traditions offer invaluable tools for psychotherapy, education, management and social work. It has global relevance and can reduce the gearing and unhealthy asymmetry between outer and inner conscience.

#### **Need and Significance of the Study**

Today India is facing many major social problems such as unemployment, youth unrest, increasing crime and deviation towards terrorism, increasing crimes against women, insufficient human resources among the crowd humans. This picture depicts that there is some fundamental drawback in country's up-bringing of its generation. Indeed, it is bitter facts that as you sow so shall you reap. The basic problem is exactly lying in our education system. Right from the independence we are just appearing to be the follower of west without any background. In this way our own recognition and treasure heritage has left far behind. Though west has got tremendous development through their ways but still is lacking humanistic values to grow as a human. This is the high time when world is studying Indian sculptures to seek the ultimate path of human totality, still India is continuing to do some more experiments with our education system for next seventy to eighty years to decide the result. This is the high time for India to go back and explore all those possibilities which can enrich our education system with traditional glory combined with modernity. Ancient Indian Education system was unique with reference to encompassing totality of life in its whole scenario. It was also based on individual differences and nature of students. As mentioned at different places in Bhagawat Geeta about the models of highly developed human potential in its totality. It also describes three characteristics and says that we all are the combination of these three gunas, which are Tamas, Rajas, and Sattwa. All men, women, animals, plants and objects in nature are made up of this combination. Where Sattwa represents light, Rajas represents dynamism and Tamas represents lethargy and inertia. The beginning of psychology in India is characterized by a philosophical search for the ultimate reality. The ancient sages searched for an understanding of their own self and its relationship with the material world. This search led them towards

the knowledge of human personality, its development and process of its upliftment to the spiritual heights. There are lots of explanations of human personality and ways of living for the achievement of highest goal of life along with material well-being. So, when our policies makers are moving towards some concrete and fruitful changes in our education system it is the most significant area to explore the possibilities and relevance of our ancient treasure in present scenario for most valuable and sustainable development of our society. Our New National Education Policy 2020 has also accepted the importance of ancient Indian treasure. It is clearly stated in the introduction of the policy that “The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought has been a guiding light for this Policy. The pursuit of knowledge (*Jnan*), wisdom (*Pragyaa*), and truth (*Satya*) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the highest human goal. The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self. World-class institutions of ancient India such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Vallabhi, set the highest standards of multidisciplinary teaching and research and hosted scholars and students from across backgrounds and countries. The Indian education system produced great scholars -----who made seminal contributions to world knowledge in diverse fields such as mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, medical science and surgery, civil engineering, architecture, shipbuilding and navigation, yoga, fine arts, chess, and more. Indian culture and philosophy have had a strong influence on the world. These rich legacies to world heritage must not only be nurtured and preserved for posterity but also researched, enhanced, and put to new uses through our education system.”<sup>2</sup> Thus the research studies of glorious past of this country may also help boosting up the speed of our economic growth through emerging ancient work culture once again in our present generation, mingled with modern techniques. This is the most needed area of study to know about ancient psycho-philosophical system of education; the golden period of the country, to find its relevance in present scenario. It is very important to know that ‘how each and every member of society was a resource for the country and was contributing effectively for its socio- economic growth’. Thus, the researchers decided to explore various dimensions of ancient Indian psycho- philosophical system of education and its relevance in present scenario.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of present study are as under:

1. To explore the psycho-philosophical impact of ancient Indian thoughts on education and society.
2. To find out its relevance in present scenario.
3. To provide workable suggestions for future education.

#### **Review of Related Literature**

Review of literature is an essential step in any research work as it provides the direction to the work in hand and leads to avoid unnecessary

repetition in this regard. This is also very important step to proceed with some new objectives in mind and helps in avoidance of vagueness of the work. As stated by Kaul L. (1997) "The review of literature enables the researcher to define the limits of his field. It helps the researcher to delimit and define his problem."<sup>3</sup> So keeping these points in mind researchers also decided to make review of related literature, which is as under:

In the study titled as Education System in Ancient India by Kalam Chauhan (2016), the author focused on the most important ancient education system namely Vedic and Buddhist and found that their purpose was self-control, development of character, social awareness, personality development, propagation of purity and preservation of culture for youth."<sup>4</sup>

Another research study titled "Academic Libraries in India: A Historical study conducted by R.K. Bhatt (2009) Associate Professor DU. In his study he has highlighted the enriched past and concluded that the glorious history of libraries can be traced back in the ancient era when our forefathers learnt the art of communication and writing, penned the information, knowledge and wisdom in the form of texts and manuscripts which carried the legacy of traditions, customs and knowledge from one generation to another."<sup>5</sup>

A book titled as "The Educational Heritage of Ancient India by Sahana Singh was reviewed by Dr. Sheshgiri S. (2017). This review reveals that Sahana Singh has shaken the dust-off India's glorious but forgotten past. According to Sheshgiri the book emphasizes the whole scenario of cultural heritage together with the richness of its civilization. She added that the book provides various evidences of heights of literature, arts, grammar, metrics, law, logic, geometry enriched universities. It also highlights that knowledge was applied in building of tangible artifacts such as irrigation canals, rain water harvesting and town planning. Thus, the review clearly depicts that the book is not only glorifying the ancient achievements but it is also highlighting the scenes of downfall for which change in education system may be the root cause."<sup>6</sup>

Another study by Ghonge M.M., Bag and Singh (2020) titled "Indian Education: Ancient, Medieval and Modern, focusses on the study of whole education system of three main era on education in India. The main purpose of this research was to explore the things needed to adopt in our current education system from ancient and medieval period. The study concludes that our education system needs to learn from ancient and medieval education system regarding the implementation of practical knowledge, student-teacher relations, ways of life students lived in that age. It also reveals that the future of industries and commercial sectors will be very tough and ever demanding, so our government has to provide such an education system which will bring all-round development in students and make them future-ready and also teach them to live in any critical situation."<sup>7</sup>

The review clearly depicts that there are too many dimensions in the ocean of Ancient Indian

psycho-philosophical thoughts which needs to be explored with reference to present scenario. Thus, the question in hand is found to be very relevant and needful for research with a new dimension of changing scenario of society.

#### **Research Methodology**

Since, it is a research article so a descriptive qualitative research methodology is being applied for the proposed study. According to the objective of the study the evidences of ancient education system together with educational thoughts of contemporary educationist like Sri Aurobindo has been collected to interpret in this context, to find some concrete conclusions and suggestions.

#### **Analyses and Interpretation**

The oldest Indian literary work is known by the name Rigveda, followed by Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. There are other works after Vedas known as Brahmins, Aranyakas and Upanishads. The meaning of Upanishad is sitting near Guru for attainment of knowledge. The other sources of knowledge in Indian literature are some literary epics i.e., Ramayan, Mahabharat and the most important one is Srimad Bhagvat Geeta which absorbs all the previous valuable gems of values leading an ultimate life described in Indian scripture and is providing a magnificent way of living for human being. The philosophical and psychological teaching aroused through meditation and contemplation of thoughts of various sages called Maharishi and Muni in ancient India and were subsumed in two categories of philosophy named as orthodox and unorthodox. The orthodox categories cover all six darshans known as Shad darshan i.e., Naya, Sankhya, Yog, Vaisheshik, Purv Mimansa and Uttar Mimansa or Vedanta whereas unorthodox category Jain and boddadh darshan. The educational aspects of these schools are highly logical and scientific in nature. A survey of ancient Indian philosophical thoughts depicts a wonderful impact over the mysterious mind of all human being leading them to understand the glory of dignity of labor called as purusharth and vastness of real beauty of life called as saundarya. Indian ideology has also characterized the life of human being by four psychological cravings namely Arth, Kama, Dharm and Moksha. According to this the life span of an individual is divided into four Ashrams. The first ashram is Brahmcharya which emphasis on celibacy, learning and preparation for life to come in second ashram i.e. Grihasth, which mainly emphasis on Arth and Kama within the framework of norms of society based on Dharma. In the third ashram Vanprasth, person has to serve the society and discharge the obligation and demand of social living. All three ashram prepare the person for Samnyas-leaving all eagerness, desires and getting the stage of Moksha. Indian scripture presents the ways, how to get a successful and effective personality. It enables us to know the profile of highly developed personality, describes different ways of life, explains concept of conscience through the concept five Sheaths (Koshas) surrounding human soul.

Sri Aurobindo a great Indian saint had also admitted Yoga as practical psychology. His studies of

## Shrinkhla Ek Shodhparak Vaicharik Patrika

consciousness and ways of its development are unique. He has given two systems simultaneously active in the person. One is concentric system resembling with the concept of "Panch Koshas" given in Taittiriya Upanishad and its development. This system is like a series of ring or sheath surrounding the self. "The outer sheath is concerned with the awareness of physical body named as "Annamaya Kosha" in the Taittiriya Upanishad. It indicates that the food we eat gets transformed into muscles, veins, nerves, blood and bones. If proper diet exercise is given the Annamaya Kosha develops well. The second sheath is the awareness of vital body (Pranyamaya Kosha) which is concerned with proper training and education of sense organs. Third sheath is mental (Manamaya Kosha). All these three types of awareness are inter-connected and compose the next sheath called psychic body or inner mind (Vijnanamaya Kosha). The inner most core of self is called spiritual cell (Anandmaya Kosha). This indicates the presence of supreme energy and divine power in all of us. The vertical system is like a staircase concerned with the levels of consciousness ranging from lowest to highest i.e., "Sat Chitta Anand". The sequence of this system is physical –vital- mind-higher mind- illuminate mind- intuition- super mind-anand- chitta- satt. This shows gradual evolution of human consciousness. The highest level of consciousness is endowed with amazing powers, goodness and knowledge."<sup>8</sup> Thus the human development and its existence was the major concern of ancient Indian psychology as well as philosophy. Indian psychology says that one's inner state determines the outer, where as western psychology believes the outer circumstances determines one's inner state. Indian tradition says that fulfillment of desires would give short term happiness, until a new desire springs up. Lasting fulfillment and joy are found by stilling the mind and diving deep within pure thought and free consciousness. While western thought believe that human is only body and mind and no existence of pure consciousness. No one can deny the fact that the ancient education system was the best system as it existed right from the beginning. "SA VIDHYA YA VIMUKTAYE" this sukta depicts that the height of knowledge was self-satisfaction and self-actualization i.e., the complete end of all greed. In Mahabharat the real meaning of Knowledge is being defined in a shlok as "NAYANAM VIDYA SAM CHAKSHU, NAYANAM SATYA SAM TAPA" Here the meaning of this shlok is that there are no eyes equal to knowledge, and further it says that there is no highest worship as is truth. If we go deep to understand the meaning of this small sentence, we can find the whole scenario of the then society. That was the time where pupil of all sect of society had to lead the same life of suffering during their Gurukul age. Secondly the aim of knowledge was not just to attain it theoretically but was to utilize it in practical life, that's why it is compare with chakshu i.e., eyes (Gyan chakshu). Thirdly, the universal value TRUTH was recognized as the only way of moral life. The evaluation system in such education was absolutely practical life. The most important feature of ancient

Indian education was that it was not laden with values through some extra activities but the whole education was value in itself. If someone has got education, he has got values in life as the great western philosopher Socrates has said that "knowledge is virtue and virtue is knowledge."<sup>9</sup>

Now, the pertinent question is that how can we seek the solutions of our problems in ancient ideology while we have now moved further throughout using the British pattern and ignoring or better to say forgotten old ethical valuable education system. The question also arises that how the advancement of this age may combat with the old one. Practically as such it is not only difficult but also equal to impossible. Need is to study the most important practices which were responsible for the ultimate development of human as a rich resource of society. For example, the gurukul system was totally based on practical life of pupil, they were all collectively deputed some daily activities which were responsible for not only their theoretical knowledge but also immediate use of that knowledge in real social scenario. Another important feature of that system was use of creative and constructive evaluation responsible for stress free development of pupil further leading them to avail an enthusiastic life which our children of all ages are missing. The education of that time also had some essential activities that were based on particular type of skills enabling pupil to acquire as his/her livelihood, this factor was the key feature of that system making them self-sufficient and full of confidence due to which that society had never faced any problem of unemployment. Further when each and every hand had some work the society was availing a rich GDP, or was so called "The Golden Bird". The condition of our country becomes more pity when we see that whole world has changed their education system for practical experience, we are still stuck in the cramming of theories filled in books. This is the high time to bring some concrete changes in our education system but not for once again copying the west but should go deep in our own scriptures to explore those practical innovations for education which may really prove to be responsible for repetition of that golden glory.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

In the light of the above-mentioned discussion of important highlights of educational aspect of our ancient education system researchers came to the conclusion that if we are really seeking to get some concrete and most effective reforms in our present education system, we must peep behind in the historical background of our own heritage which is considered as source of ideals for rest of the world. The problem in this regard is found in the implementation of those practices in modern world when society has changed accordingly. At present, few Gurukul institutions are still working in present scenario but they all are not too much popularized in society nor is their product making any remarkable difference in their task. In this regard the researchers conclude that without going back in the realistic settings of ancient Gurukuls the need is to change the functioning of our present modern schools in the

direction of educational boards so that members of society can easily provide them acceptance. We need to be more and more practical rather than being theoretical, and the schools should emerge out as place of enjoyment rather than being over burdened with heavy bags and pressure of exhaustive curriculum. The evaluation system also needs to be more realistic in nature and should be done through some real-life activities. Some suggestions in this regard are as under:

1. School timing should include some more time for intervention programs so that all the problems regarding syllabus or courses should be completed in schools leaving no need for extra tuitions.
2. The end period of school should include some recreational activities as were in Gurukuls, this is very essential for establishing student's rapport together with their mental and physical health. This provision will make them far from unwanted social media and mobile games which is need of the hour to save our generation.
3. One most important thing is their healthy food for proper development of their Annyamaya Kosh as described in Tatriya upnishad, so either it should be provided in schools or parents should be instructed to essentially follow a healthy diet chart.
4. Our ancient education was essentially based on some vocational skills. So, for the development of a self-sufficient society and value of dignity of labor the present education system should also precede in this direction with inclusion of some modern vocational skills in school curriculum.
5. There are no words to express the importance of Yoga in life of human, but internationally accepted yoga is still not being practiced in our schools. This should be the essential part of daily assembly in schools which was followed in ancient education to make pupils mentally and physically strong. Yoga teaches us ways of leading a disciplined life so it will be transferred in real life too and will help in vanishing of all other problems from society.

Now it is challenge to dive deep into Indian tradition and reveal and effective insight for the development of human being for the welfare of society as It is well said that "Indian psychology is a living force for the future."

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