

# Education and Its Importance in the Vedic Era

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## Abstract

Education is the main pillar of human civilization. India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. In India, the first education system was established by sages during the Vedic period. Education was given considerable importance for the needs of the society. During the Vedic period, the Arya society had the Chaturashram system. These four Ashrams are – Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Banaprastha and Sannyasa. After upanayana one had to practice celibacy and live as a disciple in the guru's house and receive education. Education or Vidya is of two types Paravidya and Aparavidya.

**Keywords:** Ved, Vedic era, education, religion, chaturaashram, Different types of education

## Introduction

Rikveda is the oldest in the world. The sages meditated and witnessed the words of the Vedas. Vedas were unwritten. The disciples would memorize it after hearing it from the Guru. So another name of Vedas is Shruti. He again taught the Vedas to his disciples. In this way, the Vedas are known as Shruti as they were learned by hearing in the guru tradition. The Vedas are divided into four parts -- Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. Each Veda is again divided into two parts, Brahman and Samhita. Samhita is composed in verse and Brahman in prose. Later two divisions were formed called Aranyakas and Upanishads.

By Vedic age we mean the age in which Vedic literature was composed and the civilization that developed during the Vedic period is called Vedic civilization. According to scholars, the beginning of the Vedic era is from about 2000 BC and its end in 600 BC. They divide the Vedic age into two parts. Firstly the age of Rigveda, secondly the age after Rigveda. The period of the Rikveda is approximately from 2000 BC to 1200 AD. And the era after Rigveda is from 1200 BC to 600 BC. The time gap between the two eras is vast.

## Education in The Vedic Era

During the Rikveda, teaching was oral. By listening to the Guru's spoken lessons, the disciples memorized them by reciting them repeatedly with correct intonation and harmony. Education was for Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas - these three classes. Grammar, mathematics, rhythm science, phonetics etc. were the subjects included in the curriculum.

Vedic society was divided into four classes on the basis of occupation. Brahmins are experts in puja-archana, yag-yajna and recitation of scriptures. And the people engaged in national defense and governance are known as Kshatriyas. Those engaged in trade, agriculture, industry and animal

husbandry are known as Vaishyas. Those engaged in these three classes of service are called Shudras. This classification was not hereditary. Intermarriage between different classes and eating together were not prohibited. Later on Arya society saw the rigor of caste discrimination. They could change profession as per wish and opportunity. Vishwamitra attained Brahminhood.

The life of the Aryas during the Rikvedic period was divided into four stages. These four stages are known as Chaturashram. It was applicable to the three upper classes of the society, Brahmins, Ksaritras and Vaishyas. After upanayana, the Arya boy had to observe celibacy and stay as a disciple in Gurugriha.

The aim of this life was to gain proficiency in various scriptures by giving up pleasures. During his childhood and adolescence, the Arya children used to stay in the Gurugriha and practice learning and help in various tasks of the Guru's household. This was called Brahmacharya. Vedas, grammar, literature, rhymes, ethical stories were the subjects of education in Gurugriha. At the second stage, the student would get married and start a family at the end of the student life. This stage is called Garhasth (domestic).

During puberty, leaving the illusion of family, property, family, etc., the transcendental thoughts and living in the forest were at the vanaprastha stage. The fourth ashram is Sannyasa or Jati. At this stage, it was the duty of a monk to travel as a recluse, thinking about God and leading a hermit life. Some of them spent their lives in teaching, penance and truth-seeking rather than practicing domestic religion.

Vedic society placed special importance on acquiring education. The life of the Aryans was divided into chaturashram (four stage system). The first stage of this chaturashram is brahmacharya, which is an indicator of complete education. If the childhood of human life gets proper education then the future life becomes fulfilled. And to get this education it was necessary to go to Gurugriha.

The disciple had to go to the Guru's house to learn from the Guru. But a special ceremony was arranged for him in Vedic society. It can be said that Arya Balak had to qualify to go to Guru. Arya boys were fit for education through Upanayana. He was reborn. To qualify to approach that Guru.

Upanayana was considered a mandatory duty for the higher three castes before entering the brahmacharyashram. Girls were also upanayan. Upanayana, however, does not seem to have been observed during the Rikvedic period. In the post-Rigveda period, if Vedic education was made compulsory, boys had to be upanayanad in due course.

### **Importance of education in Vedic society**

The Vedic society was able to grasp the importance of education. The Arya sages believed that self-knowledge and self-realization were the ultimate goals of education.<sup>1</sup> They have done the pursuit of true understanding by knowing themselves till the last day of their lives. Satyakam was a seeker of knowledge. So he was a lifelong learner. Education gives man the search for liberation. Money, wealth, social status and status cannot make people search for nectar. Hence Satyakam's longing for liberation abandoned him as futile and sought Amrita in search of liberation.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of education is to free oneself from everything and gain the power to move forward with unstoppable speed towards the highest goal of life. Knowledge is the third eye of man. With the help of this vision we can penetrate into the depths of everything. It is said in Mahabharata, there is no eye equal to learning and no penance equal to truth.<sup>3</sup>

Although liberation of the soul is the ultimate goal of life, the Arya sages were not indifferent to the necessary education of practical life. Learning to transcend this body is the real learning. Transcend the

body, but not despise the body. The body has its own value, its own demands. But he should not be given a place above that claim. Practicing Brahmavidya alone is not enough. So it is said in the Upanishads that two types of knowledge should be practiced. One is Paravidya, the other is Paravidya.<sup>4</sup> Brahmavidya or Aadhyatvidya is Paravidya, and all sciences, arts, arts etc. are Paravidya. In the Upanishads, sages say, Avidya means the practice of art, science, and art is necessary to survive in the world. And the practice of Brahmavidya is necessary for immortality or ultimate peace. Just as a bird flies in the sky with two wings, it cannot fly with only one wing, so it is not good for people to follow only worldly knowledge or only spiritual knowledge. So the Upanishad warns, Those who only practice worldly knowledge like science, art, etc., are immersed in the darkness of ignorance. But those who only practice Brahmavidya are plunged into even greater darkness.<sup>5</sup>

The goal of Paravidya is liberation of the soul – that is the ultimate goal of Vedic teachings. But this does not mean that every student has to leave the bonds of samsara and neglect the home ashram and adopt sannyas. A very small number of students in Vedic society take a vow of lifelong celibacy to study, teach and seek the truth. Most students enter domestic life. Hence the direct aim of Vedic education was to make the student fit for society.

There is a necessary educational system for biracials in Laukvidya. Along with the secular education, students were made aware of character building, personality development, self-confidence, self-restraint, fulfilling social duties, continuing the trend of national culture, etc. in the Vedic education system. Although Paravidya was the last word of education, Paravidya was not neglected in Vedic education.

India's asceticism is the original school and sages are the original gurukula. In the Vedic education system, Tapobanastha Griha was the student's ultimate pilgrimage.

Rikveda is the oldest book in the world. Hindus believe that the Vedas are eternal and immortal. The sages witnessed or heard the words of the Vedas in meditation. Another name of the Vedas is Shruti because it was heard. Vedas were unwritten. The disciples used to memorize it by hearing it from the Guru. He again taught his disciples the Vedas. In this way, the Vedas were learned by hearing orally in the Guru Shishya tradition, another name for the Vedas is sruti. For this reason the Vedic system of education is called the Sruti Parampara system of education.

Vedas are divided into four parts - Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. Each Veda is again divided into two parts Brahman and Samhita. The Samhita is partly in verse and the Brahman is partly in prose. The Vedas were not written down for a long time. Vedic mantras have been preserved through word of mouth. Later two divisions were formed called Aranyakas and Upanishads. There are mantras in the Samhita section. The Brahmin section which contains the sacrificial rules and the profound Tattvakatha and Aranyaka the philosophical teachings of the Vedas. It is called Aranyaka because it contains the knowledge of the forest sages. The full culmination of the profound philosophical theory developed in the Aranyakas is seen in the Upanishads. That is why the Upanishads are called Vedanta. The etymological meaning of the Upanishads is to sit near. It is called the Upanishad because the son or the most faithful beloved student was taught the esoteric philosophical theories about the soul and Brahman.

## Conclusion

The influence of Vedic education can be seen in the society of Vedic age. This educational system had ample resources to create a social life. So every individual did a special job according to his/her ability to meet the various needs of the society. For this purpose there was a practice of teaching suitable for

taking various karmic vows. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas had different lists of texts. The apartheid of the Vedic period affected the education system of that period. Everyone's duties and responsibilities influenced the text content. Social responsibility was considered an essential part of education.

The influence of religion and philosophy of life can be seen in the educational system of the Vedic period. The Arya sages felt the strange pleasures of an invisible great power in nature. That lila is described in those sukats written by them. Vedic teachings are based on the spiritual questions and answers of the Arya sages. Vedic literature shows that Arya sages were worshipers of various natural forces. They felt that God is one and unique. Feeling one with the Supreme Being was the Vedic Indian philosophy of life. So the religion and education of the Vedic age flowed in the same sector.

**Reference:**

1. Ātmanam rathinam biddhi ... .( Kathopaniṣad 1.3.3)
2. Chhāndogyopaniṣad
3. Nāsti vidyāsamaṃ (Mahabharat )
4. Dbe vidye veditavye iti ha sma yat brahmabido badanti -- parā caibaparā ca. (Muṇḍukopaniṣd – 1.1.4)
5. Andham tamḥ prabiṣanti yeSvidyāmupāsate tato bhūya ibo tamo ya u vidyāyām rataḥ (Ísopaniṣad – 9 )

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