



EDUCATION IN INDIA

An Overview



Lecture Outline

The Great Search

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THE GREAT SEARCH

How it all began

Gandhi's Speech in London

“I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that **today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago,** and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root, and left the root like that, and **the beautiful tree perished.** [...] Our state would **revive the old village schoolmaster and dot every village with a school** both for boys and girls.”

Reference:

Extract from Gandhi's speech at
Chatham House, London
(October 20, 1931)

DHARAMPAL CLASSICS SERIES 4

THE
BEAUTIFUL
TREE

INDIGENOUS INDIAN EDUCATION
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

DHARAMPAL



Patshalas

- **Better than contemporary education in England:**

Broader content; Longer period of study; Superior methods of teaching; School environment less dingy and more natural; more dedicated and sober teachers.

- **Universal:** High literacy rate (In 1835, Bengal had 100,000 patshalas or elementary village schools) and open to all social classes.

Reference:

Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*

Patshalas

- **Economical:** one teacher per school, writing on sand/palm leaves or wooden boards.
- **Integrated Learning:** Reading and writing
- **Multi-dimensional:** Alphabets taught through poetic verses which also had moral and religious meaning.
- **Financing:** Local community; Grants of rent-free lands

Reference:

Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*

Subjects Taught

- **Basic Instruction** in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic
- *Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagoata Purana* taught in all schools.
- Accounts and book-keeping for **traders**, agricultural units for **farmers** and mathematical tables with units of weights and measures for **shopkeepers**; *Viwakarma Purana* taught to the manufacturing classes.

Reference:

Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*

Subjects Taught

- **Vocational training:** Apprenticeship for artisans and local craftsmen in the sixty four arts such as carpentry, metallurgy etc.
- **Higher learning:** Vedas, Vedangas, Six Systems of Philosophy, Law, Logic, Poetics, Grammar, Astrology, Astronomy, Medicine

Reference:

Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*

ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION

Meaning, Purpose and
Importance of
Education

What is Indian Education

“The emphasis on spirit as the true shaping reality of man gave Indian education and culture a peculiar colour and individuality”

Quote from:

Ram Swarup, *On Hinduism*, p. 166

Purpose of Education

- To strengthen our body and mind, our nerves and vitality.
- To see and hear and desire better, purer, finer and deeper.
- To form and mould the mind which receives, processes and analyses all information.
- Ultimate aim is *chitta-vritti-nirodha*

Reference:

Ram Swarup, *On Hinduism*, p. 166-176

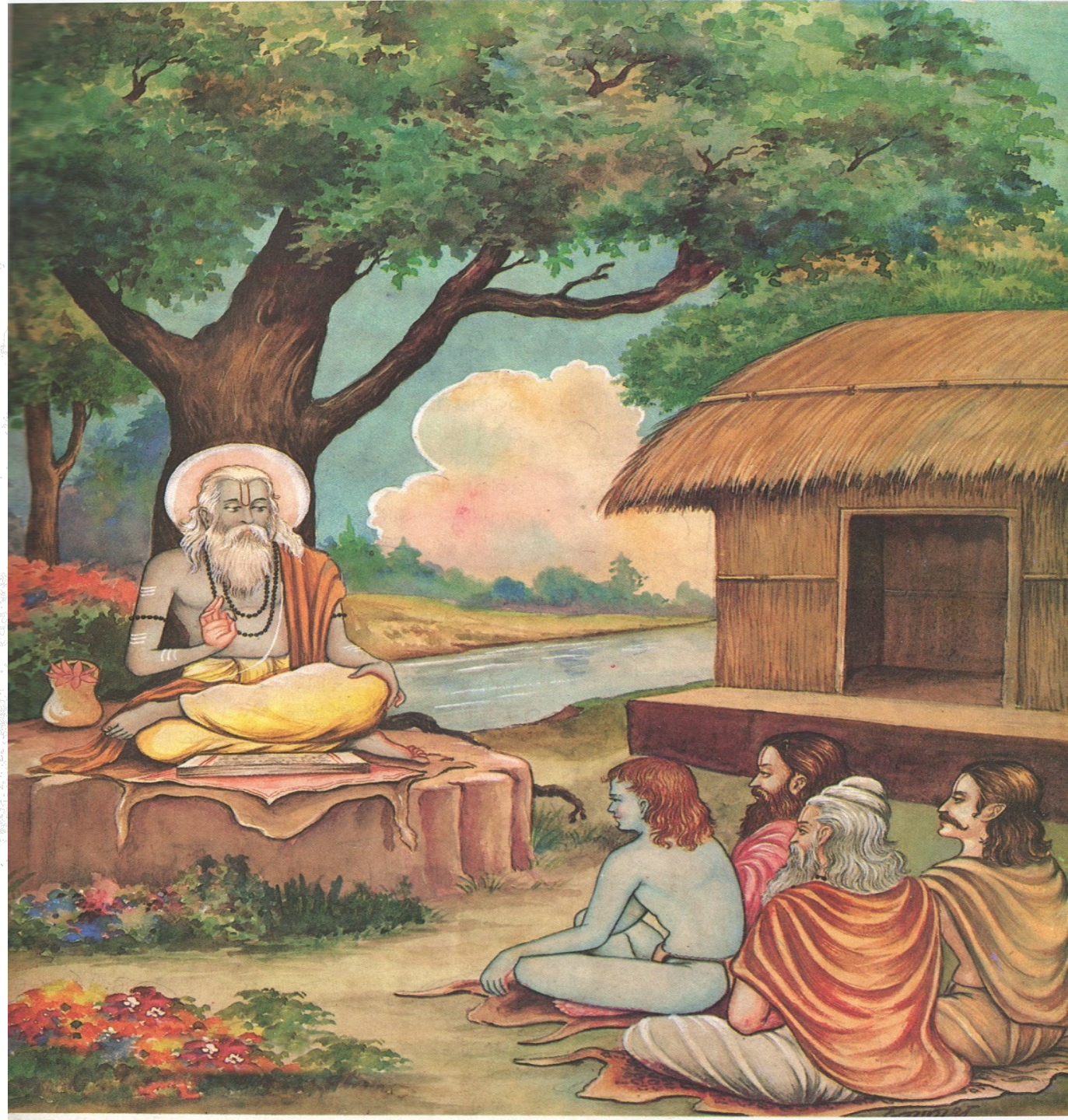
Purpose of Education

“Education was treated as a matter of growth, a **process of life, which was controlled in its totality**. The very tenor of life was changed for the pupil who had to leave the home of his parents to live in a new home, the home of his spiritual parent, the guru or teacher.”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education, in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 582

Gurukulams



Importance of Education

“no people probably appreciate more justly the importance of instruction than the Hindus [...] they sacrifice all the feelings of wealth, family pride and caste that their children may have the advantage of good education [...] Native free schools were once universal throughout India.”

Quote from:

Alexander Walker, 'Walker of Bowland Papers, 184 a 3, chapter 31, pp.501-27, cited in Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, 261-262.

Importance of Education

- Guru-shishya tradition elaborately explained in *Smritis* and *Dharmastastras* such as *Manusmriti*, *Yajnavalkyasmriti* etc.
- Kautilya's *Arthashastra* describes education of a prince.
- *Ramayana* (Asrama of Rsi Bharadvaj), *Mahabharata* (Asrama of Rsi Saunak with 10,000 pupils).

Reference:

R.K.Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education*

Manual Work

Ancient period characterised by *Asramas* or *Gurukuls*.

“The house of the teacher known as asrama or gurukula was the centre of education. The teacher accepted a student and made him a member of his family. There was no fixed fee. The student had to serve the teacher, beg for food, collect fuel, and do other chores which were assigned to him by his teacher. The life in a gurukula was simple and the brahmacharin-s were taught to work hard without self-interest. The student had to serve his teacher whole-heartedly.”

Quote from:

Kapil Kapoor, ed., *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*

Vol. IV., p. 10-13

Manual Work

“The pupil is to fetch fire-wood out of the forest without damaging the trees and before sunset. The fuel thus fetched daily from the forest is to be placed on the floor of the teacher's house. After having kindled the fire, and swept the ground around the altar the pupil is to place the sacred fuel on the fire every morning and evening. He shall sweep the place around the fire after it has been made to burn (by the addition of fuel) with his hand, and not with the broom (of Kusa grass) but before adding the fuel, he is free to use the broom at his pleasure. Besides fetching fuel and tending the fire twice daily, the pupil was to fetch water in a vessel for the use of his teacher both in the morning and evening.”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, *Ancient Indian Education* p. 186

Bhiksha

“The student had to go out for begging twice a day, in the morning and evening. According to Gopatha Brahmana [i, 2, 1-8], and Baudhayana Dharma-sutra [i, 2, 52], a pupil must perform a prescribed penance for his omission to beg at least once a week. This rule indicates (1) that begging was enjoined mainly as a measure of discipline for its educative value, and (2) that it was not a compulsory daily duty [...] **Baudhayana points out the virtues of begging, viz. that by this the student makes himself poor and humble in spirit. It was thus valued as a method of moral discipline.**”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, *Ancient Indian Education* p. 184-185

Equality and Simplicity

“Studies were chosen freely and not according to caste. We read of Brahmana students learning divination at Taxila, but settling down as hunters in the forests of Banaras, studying magic charms, archery, science, the three Vedas and 18 accomplishments or crafts. **Princes at school had to share a common, simple, democratic life of equality with their poorer comrades. The food of the boys at school was very simple.** Rice-gruel was served for breakfast by the maid of the teacher's house, while at invitations they were given a meal of sugar-cane, molasses, curd and milk.”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education,
in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of
Imperial Unity*, p. 593

Story of Jivaka

- **Physician to the Magadhan emperor Bimbisara**
- **Physician-in-attendance on Buddha**
- **Best medical expert of the times.**
- **Obscure origin**
- **Son of a courtesan of Rajagriha found him thrown on a dust-heap from which he was rescued by Bimbisara's son, Prince Abhaya**

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education,
in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of
Imperial Unity*, p. 587

Story of Jivaka

- Studied medicine at Taxila for seven years
- Examination by teacher:- "Take this spade and seek round about Takshila a yojana on every side, and whatever plant you see which is not medicinal, bring it to me." After a good deal of botanical investigation, Jivaka could not discover any plant that was devoid of medicinal properties.
- The teacher was satisfied and gave him a little money with leave to go home and practise as a physician.

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education,
in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of
Imperial Unity*, p. 588

64 ARTS

TANKS, BUILDINGS, ETC.

- Stone-cutters Wood woopers (Wood cutters)
- Marble mine workers Bamboo cutters
- Chunam makers Wudders (Tank diggers)
- Sawyers
- Brick-layers

METALLURGY

- Iron ore collectors Copper-smiths
- Iron manufacturers Lead washers
- Iron forge operators Gold dust collectors
- Iron furnaces operators Iron-smiths
- Workers of smelted metal Gold-smiths
- into bars Horse-shoe makers
- Brass-smiths

OTHER CRAFTSMEN

- Preparers of earth for bangles Salt makers
- Bangle makers Earth salt manufacturers
- Paper makers Salt-petre makers
- Fire-works makers Arrack distillers
- Oilmen Collectors of drugs and roots
- Soap makers Utar makers, druggists

64 ARTS

MISCELLANEOUS

- Boat-men
- Sandal makers
- Fishermen
- Umbrella makers
- Rice-beaters
- Shoe makers
- Toddy makers
- Pen painters
- Preparers of earth for washermen
- Mat makers
- Carpenters
- Washermen
- Dubbee makers
- Barbers
- Winding instrument makers
- Tailors Seal makers
- Basket makers Chucklers
- Mat makers

TEXTILES

- Cotton cleaners
- Fine cloth weavers
- Cotton beaters
- Coarse cloth weavers
- Cotton carders
- Chintz weavers
- Silk makers
- Carpet weavers
- Spinners
- Sutrenze carpet weavers
- Ladup, or Penyasees Cot tape weavers
- cotton spinners Cumblee weavers
- Chay thread makers
- Thread purdah weavers
- Chay root diggers (a dye)
- Gunny weavers
- Rungruaze, or dyers Pariah weavers (a very large)
- Mudda wada, or dyers in red
- Indigo maker
- Barber weavers
- Dyers in indigo
- Boyah weavers
- Loom makers

Fees

"the pupil was admitted by the teacher without payment of any fee to him. According to Manu, a student should not pay any fees to his teacher before he finishes his education"

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education,
in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of
Imperial Unity*, p. 582

Fees

(1) *Upadhyaya* who took to teaching as a profession for his livelihood and taught

only a portion of the Veda or Vedanga, and

(2) *Acharya* who taught the Veda with its Kalpasutras and Upanishads without

charging fees. The pupil after completing his education was to give him such

presents as he could afford- field, gold, cow, horse, umbrella, shoes, grain,

vegetables or clothes.

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education,
in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of
Imperial Unity*, p. 583

CENTRES AND TYPES OF EDUCATION

Vedic Study, Military
Training, Industrial
Education

Pedagogy

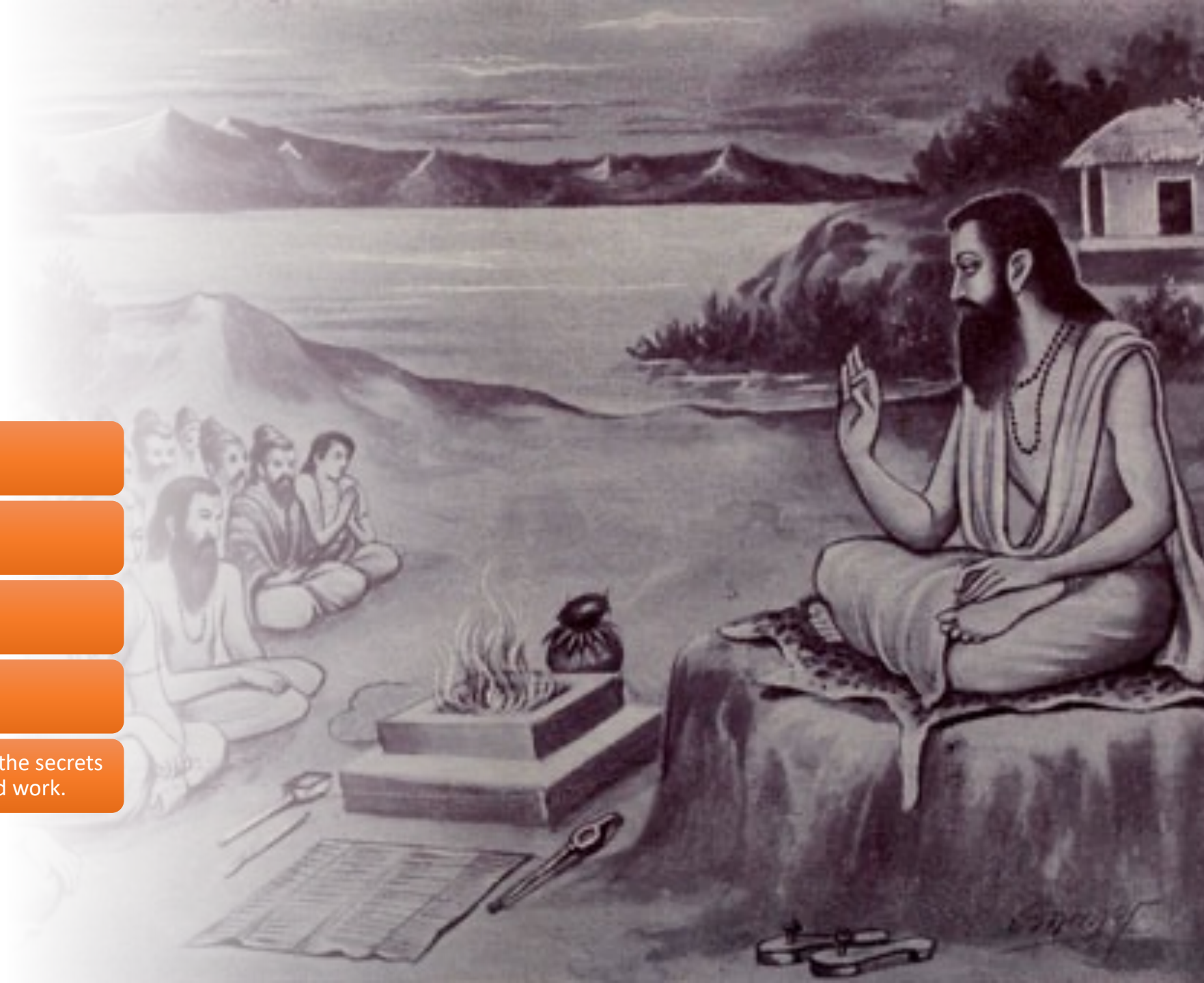
Yoga

Japa

Meditation

Serene atmosphere

To imbibe the inward method of the Guru, the secrets of his efficiency, and the spirit of his life and work.



Pedagogy

- *Sravana* – Listen
- *Manana* – Reflect
- *Nididhyasana* – Meditate



Vedic Study according to Kautilya

- *Susrusha* – Eagerness to listen to the teacher
- *Sravanam* – Grasping the lessons
- *Grahanam* – Apprehension of the lessons
- *Dharanam* – Retention
- *Uhapoha* – Discussion
- *Vijnana* – Knowledge of meaning conveyed
- *Tattvaabhinivesha* – Comprehension of truth



Education of Brahmins

“The Buddhist text *Milinda-panha* also gives a long list of the subjects of study for a Brahmana, which comprised the following:

the four Vedas, Itihasas, Puranas, lexicography, prosody, phonology, verses, grammar, etymology, astronomy, astrology and the six Vedangas; knowledge of auspicious marks (on the body); interpretation of omens, dreams, and signs; prognostications from comets, thunder, junction of planets, fall of meteors, earthquakes, conflagration and signs in the heaven and earth; study of the eclipses of the sun and moon, of arithmetic, of casuistry; interpretation of the omens to be drawn from dogs, deer and rats, and mixtures of liquids and the sounds and cries of birds.”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education, in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 586

Education of Kshatriyas

“The Kshatriyas had to acquire knowledge of elephants, horses, chariots, bows, rapiers, the art of war, documents and currency [...] King Milinda is said to have a knowledge of 19 arts and sciences, viz. Sruti (Vedas) and Smriti; Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika systems of philosophy; arithmetic; music; medicine; archery; Puranas; Itihasa; astronomy; magic; causation; spells; the art of war; poetry; and currency.”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education,
in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of
Imperial Unity*, p. 586

Education of Kshatriyas

According to Kautilya-

“After investiture with the sacred thread, he shall study the triple

Vedas, the science of *Anvikshiki* under teachers of acknowledged

authority (*Sishta*), the science of *varta* under government

superintendents, and the science of *dandaniti* under theoretical and

practical politicians (*vaktriprayoktribhyah*)". [...] he had to receive

military training relating to the operation of the different elements of

the army such as elephants, horses, chariots and weapons of war

(*praharana*) He had also to study history or Itihasa which included (1)

Purana, (2) *Itivritta* (history), (3) *Akhyayika* (tales), (4) *Udaharana*

(illustrative stories), (5) *Dharmashastra* and (6) *ArthaSastra*."

Reference:

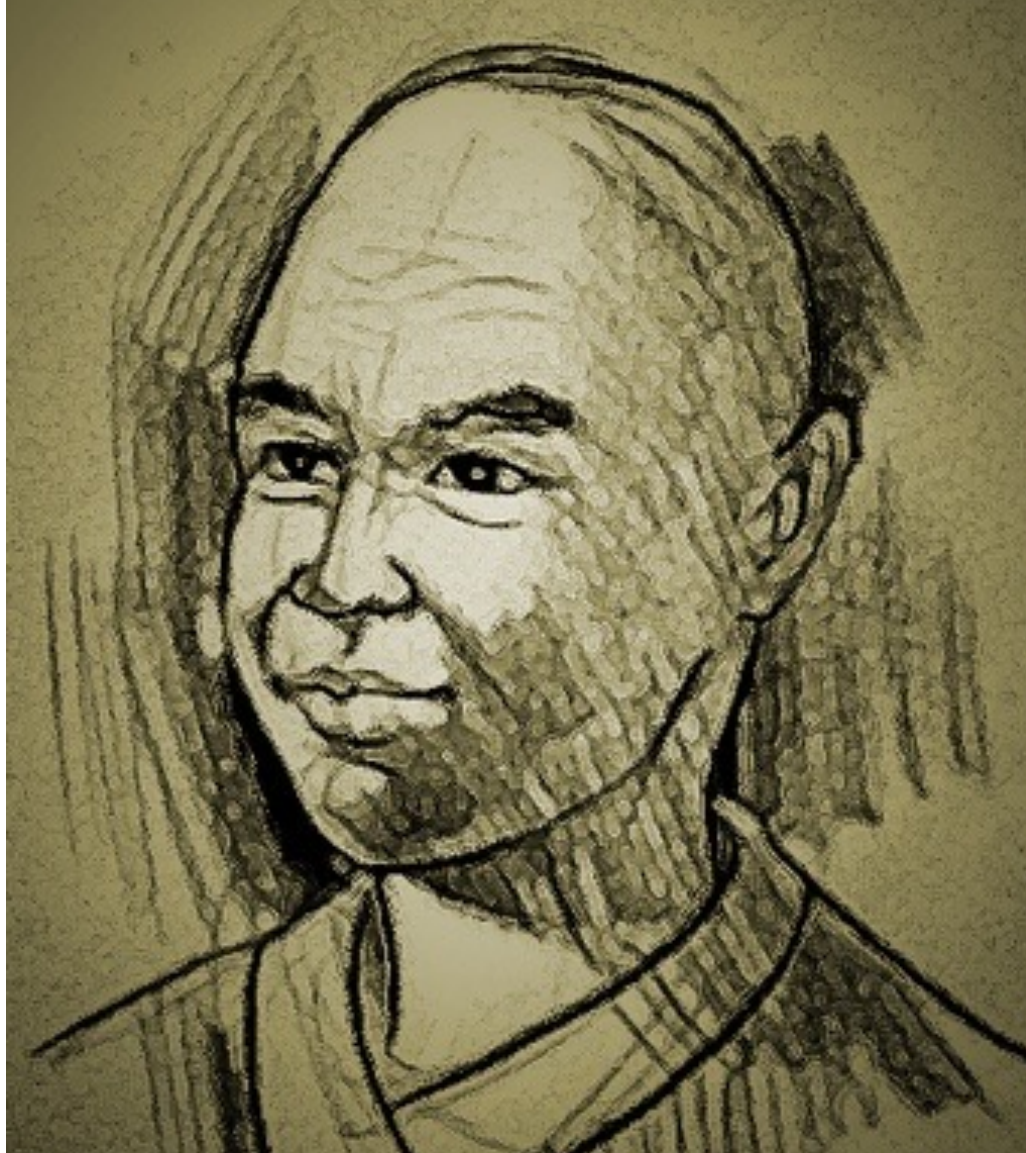
Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education, in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 586

Industrial Education

“The young man must first secure the consent of his guardian before he is apprenticed to his master. He will then settle with him the period of apprenticeship. **He is to live with his master, whose home is his workshop, and is to be treated and instructed by the master as his son.** He is not to be exploited and employed on work not connected with his chosen craft. He cannot leave his master before the stipulated period of apprenticeship even if he has completed his training, the gains from which are to go to the master. An apprentice deserting a master, not lacking in character or as a teacher, deserves corporal punishment and confinement. At the end of his pupilage, the apprentice must reward his master as best as he can, or may accept service under terms settled.”

Reference:

Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Education, in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 587



I-TSING (635-713CE)

“In India there are two traditional ways by which one can attain to great intellectual power. Firstly, by repeatedly committing to memory the intellect is developed; secondly, the alphabet fixes one’s ideas. By this way, after a practice of ten days or a month, a student feels his thoughts rise like a fountain, and can commit to memory whatever he has once heard (not requiring to be told twice). This is far from being a myth, for I myself have met such men.”



XUANZANG (602-664 CE)

“To educate and encourage the young, they are first taught to study the book of twelve chapters (Siddhavastu). After arriving at the age of seven years and upwards, the young are instructed in the five Vidyas, Sastras of great importance. The first is called the elucidation of sounds (Sabdavidya). This treatise explains and illustrates the agreement (concordance) of words, and it provides an index for derivatives. The second vidya is called Kiau-ming (Silpasthanavidya); it treats of the arts, mechanics, explains the principles of the Yin and Yang and the calendar. The third is called the medicinal treatise (Chikitsavidya); it embraces formulae for protection, secret charms, (use of) medicinal stones, acupuncture, and mugwort.”



XUANZANG (602-664 CE)

“The fourth vidya is called the **Hetuvidya** (science of causes); its name is derived from the character of the work, which relates to the determination of the true and false, and reduces to their last terms the definition of right and wrong.

The fifth vidya is called the science of “the interior” (**Adhyatmavidya**); it relates to the five vehicles, their causes and consequence, and the subtle influences of these.

The Brahmins study the four Veda Sastras. The first is called Shau (longevity); it relates to the preservation of life and the regulation of the natural condition. The second is called Sse (sacrifice); it relates to the (rules of) sacrifice and prayer. The third is called Ping (peace or regulation); it relates to decorum, casting of lots, military affairs, and army regulations. The fourth is called Shu (secret mysteries); it relates to various branches of science, incantations, medicine.”

PIETRO DELLA VALLE (1586-1652 CE)

“I entertain’d myself in the Porch of the Temple beholding little boys learning Arithmetick after a strange manner, which I will here relate. They were four, and having all taken the same lesson from the Master, in order to get that same by heart and repeat likewise their former lessons and not forget them, one of them singing musically with a certain continu’d tone, (which hath the force of making deep impression in the memory) recited part of the lesson; as, for example, “One by its self makes one;” and whilst he was thus speaking he writ down the same number, not with any kind of Pen, nor on Paper, but (not to spend Paper in vain) with his finger on the ground, the pavement being for that purpose strew’d all over with very fine sand”.



PIETRO DELLA VALLE (1586-1652 CE)

“after the first had writ what he sung, all the rest sung and writ down the same thing together. Then the first boy sung and writ down another part of the lesson; as, for example, “Two by itself make two,” which all the rest repeated in the same manner, and so forward in order. When the pavement was full of figures they put them out with the hand, and, if need were, strew’d it with new sand from a little heap which they had before them wherewith to write further. And thus they did as long as the exercise, continu’d; in which manner likewise, they told me, they learnt to read and write without spoiling Paper, Pens, or Ink, which certainly is a prety way. I ask’d them, if they happen’d to forget, or be mistaken in any part of the lesson, who corrected and taught them? they being all Scholars without the assistance of any Master; they answer’d me and said true, that it was not possible for all four of them to forget, or mistake in the same part, and that thus they exercis’d together, to the end that if one happen’d to be out the “others might correct him. Indeed a prety, easie and secure way of learning.”



Urban Institutions of Ancient India

- Pupils from various parts of the country flocked to **Taksasila (then capital of Gandhara)** to study under world-renowned teachers.
- Chinese travelers like Fa-Hien (399-413 AD), Hiuen Tsang (629-645 AD) and I-Tsing (671-695 AD) describe Buddhist monasteries and particularly the famous **Nalanda** (in eastern India) which housed more than 3,000 monks and **Valabhi** (in western India).
- 'Dark age' after destruction of Nalanda by Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1197

Reference:

R.K.Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education*



Nalanda





Taxila





Vikramshila





Valabhi

EDUCATION IN MODERN INDIA

Problem of Modern
Education and
Solutions

THOMAS
BABINGTON
MACAULAY
(1800-1859)



Macaulay's dream

A class of Indians in blood but English in culture

- European knowledge
- Secular textbooks
- Centralized bureaucracy
- English calendar

Reference:

A.P. Howell, *Education in British India*

YET Traditional Education Continues

“... we find that the central purpose of the Hindu system of education is still the same, though not explicitly recognized or supported in today’s government-sponsored system of education. The guru-shisya parampara still exists and Indian knowledge systems and men of knowledge exist chiefly outside the mainstream Macaulayan framework.”

Quote from:

Kapil Kapoor, ed., *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*

Vol. IV., p. 10-13

Back to the Future

“If we want to be the architect of our true future, we must understand our past. It may be that while exploring the past, we may come by some seed ideas which are true for all times. If that happens, those ideas may give us some direction and guidance in our current educational planning”

Quote from:

Ram Swarup, *On Hinduism*, p. 176

Back to the Future

“All curriculum and pedagogy, from the foundational stage onwards, will be redesigned to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos [...] in order to ensure that education is maximally relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students.”

Reference:

National Education Policy 2020, p. 16

(https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf)



THANK YOU