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## Thoughts of curriculum in vedic education system: An analysis

**Santu Sarkar and Dr. Swapan Mal**

### Abstract

The Vedic Education curriculum has been established taking into account the students' requirements, interests, and aptitudes. But the situation differs for pupils from Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra, three different castes. In accordance with Varnasramadharma, there were specified requirements for the relevant caste system for providing the necessary educational opportunities. In the Gurukul system, the students received many forms of education from the teacher. As a result, we may state that there are numerous academic disciplines, including those in grammar, ethics, logic, astronomy, translation, dialogue, etc. The kids were taught a variety of courses. Because of this, students can gain a variety of experiences that will help them develop a well-rounded personality. These experiences will also help them learn how to physically and mentally adapt to their environment, how to act in social situations, and how to adjust to changing environmental conditions. All of these experiences are only possible in the Gurukul system.

**Keyword:** Curriculum, varnashramadharma, gurukula system, education

### Introduction

The curriculum of Vedic Education was according to the needs, interests, and aptitudes of the students. All the same, it is different for the students belonging to three different castes like Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. There were special criteria for the concerned caste system to provide the specific education as per Varnasramadharma as follows:

**Brahmans:** The students of this caste were given special training in all the branches of knowledge or subjects as they are expected to become teachers in future life.

**Kshatriyas:** Kshatriya's students were given training in special warfare, politics, and other related fields.

**Vaisya:** Vaisya's students were taught economics, trades, agriculture, industry, and other related subjects.

**Sudra:** Sudra emerged in the post-Vedic period. They were supposed to engage in manual labor in agricultural fields, grazing cattle scavenging, etc. They have given education in these subjects only, some of the Music, Dance, Drawing, Painting and other crafts.

In the Gurukul system, the teacher was given different kinds of education to the students. So, therefore, we can say that there are multiple courses of study like grammar, ethics, logic, astronomy, translation, conversation, etc. All kinds of subjects were taught to the students. That is why students can gather various types of experience which will develop an all-round personality, how students will physically develop and mentally develop, how they will act socially adjust to the environment, and how they will adapt to changing environment everything students had gained unique experience in Gurukul system.

The Satapathbrahmana XI-5,6,8, Taittiriyaanyaka II-9 and Chandogyaopanisad VII-1-2,4,7.1 contain comprehensive lists of subjects of study. More emphasis was laid on the preservation of this literature utilizing recitation. Memory was a valued faculty that was to be diligently cultivated. The Satapathbrahmana, emphatically enjoins that one should perform Svadhyaya regularly without interruption Svadhyayasdhetavyah. The Svadhyaya was considered a sacrifice to the Brahman.

We also found details about the Curriculum of the Vedic Education System in the following verses.

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MuṇḍakaUpaniṣad, First Muṇḍaka, Section I, Verse 4. MuṇḍakaUpaniṣad, First Muṇḍaka, Section II, Verse 1. MuṇḍakaUpaniṣad, Second Muṇḍaka, Section I, Verse 6. “Om Śīkṣhāṁvyākhyāsyāmaḥ” in TaittirīyaUpaniṣad, Chapter I, Second Anubakā, Verse 1. This verse explains the subject named Śīkṣhā. We will expound on pronunciation, letters or sounds, pitch, quantity, force or stress, articulation, and combination. In the TaittirīyaUpaniṣad, Chapter I, Anubākā, Verses 1-7 discuss the ‘Mahāsamhitāḥ’

The different Vedas, Itihasa, Purana, Grammar, the rules for sacrifices for an ancestor, the Science of numbers, the Science of portents, the Science of time, logic, ethics, etymology, the Brahma Vidya, the different angas, the Science of weapons, the Science of demons, astronomy, the Science of Serpents or Poison.” Chhandogya Upanishad, tale of Narada and Sanatkumara.

“The sacred laws which also formed a part of the curriculum of these schools included ‘not only the precepts for the moral duties of all Aryas but also the special rules regarding the conduct of kings and the administration of justice’”<sup>[1]</sup>.

The Parishads or Brahmanic Colleges mention in Brihadaranayakopaniṣad VI. 2.

“Parishad ought to consist of 21 Brahmins well versed in Philosophy, Theology and Law”<sup>[2]</sup>.

Yātedhāmānyuśmasigamadhyai yatra gāvobhūriśṅgā-  
ayāsaḥ |  
Atrāhatadurugāyasyaviṣṇoḥparamaṅpadamavabhāribhūri |  
Brahmavanitvākṣatranirāyaspoṣavaniparyūhāmi |  
Brahma drmhakṣatramḍrmhāyurdmhaprajāḍrmha ||<sup>[3]</sup>

The houses of the government we would wish to visit are those which are bright with the light of Lord Vishnu’s glory of human art and awareness so that we exclaim spontaneously: “Ah! Here is the place where the highest offices in Vishnu’s dispensation are wholly and exclusively held by learned and meritorious people”.

I know your Brahma system of education and research, your Kṣhatra system of defense, justice and peace, and your economic system of production and distribution. Strengthen and extend education and enlightenment, consolidate and advance governance and administration, improve and promote health and age, and strengthen and expand the welfare of the people.

Somaḥpavatesomaḥpavate-smaibrahmaṅe-  
smaikṣatrāyāsmasunvateyajamānāyapavata-iṣa-ūrjepavate-  
dbhya-  
ośadhībhyāḥpavatedyāvāpṛthivībhyāḥpavatesubhūtāyapavat  
evisvebhyastvādevebhya-eṣateyonirviśve-  
bhyastvādevebhyah ||<sup>[4]</sup>

Soma flows. Soma flows and is purified. Soma is purified and is offered for sacrifice. So does the ruler flow, issues in action and, through action, is purified, sanctified, self-sacrificed.

The ruler is sanctified and dedicated to the Brahma sub-system learning, education, and research, to the Kshatra sub-system defense and governance, to the devoted yajamana, a participant in the creative activities of the system, for food and energy, for waters, herbs, and vegetation, for earth and

heaven, for good life and conduct, for all the noble people of the land.

Ruler of the nation, this life, this land, this socio-political system is your haven and your justification. You are accepted, sanctified, and honored by all the noble people.

Brāhmaṇamadyavideyampitṛmantampaitṛmatyamṛsimārṣeya  
ṁsudhātudakṣiṇam |  
Asmadrātādevatrāgacchatapradātārm-āviśata ||<sup>[5]</sup>

I go and meet a Brahmana, a virtuous man of divinity and divine knowledge, of illustrious parentage with a heart of parental love, a venerable man of vision and discrimination who has realized the soul of the Veda-mantras, a man of real gifts of gold - generous, obliging, giving, redeeming all those who reach him. Go to the generous man of knowledge, wisdom and virtue, give freely, and the gifts will turn into blessings and come back to you to enrich your soul.

“Kshatriyas and Vaishyas never took seriously to the Vedic learning; only a section of the Brahmanas dedicated themselves to the Vedic studies, while the rest of the community learned only a few Vedic hymns necessary for their daily use and devoted their main energy to the study of the subjects of their own choice like logic, philosophy, literature, poetics or the law. The educational curriculum of the Smritis represents the Utopian idealism of the Brahma theologian and not the actual reality in society”<sup>[6]</sup>.

“We shall however find that Kshatriya teachers of Vedic and philosophical subjects existed down the 6th century B. C. and that the keen intellect of the Brahma community was for a long time utilized to further the bounds of human knowledge in several branches of non-Vedic studies. It was only in later times that religious and literary education came to be confined to the Brahmanas and professional and industrial training to non-Brahmanas.”<sup>[7]</sup>

“A perusal of the relevant rules of the Smritis produces the impression that Vedic studies must have dominated the course prescribed for the Brahmanas. It has been emphatically laid down that all Brahmanas should devote twelve years to Vedic studies after their Upanayana. Such, however, was not the case in actual practice. Only a small section of the Brahma community, possibly not more than its one-fifth, used to devote itself to Vedic studies when new branches of knowledge like grammar, philosophy, law, and classical Sanskrit literature came to be developed. For the preservation of the Vedic literature, the services of only a small section of the community were necessary, the rest were required to memorize the few Vedic Mantras necessary for daily religious purposes and encouraged to devote their main energy to the development of new branches of knowledge like philosophy, grammar, and classical Sanskrit literature, where they were able to make substantial contributions, which continue to be highly valued both in India and abroad.”<sup>[8]</sup>

“Teaching may be a fit profession for Brahmans, but if some of them were intellectually inferior, their birth could not impart to them the necessary efficiency as teachers. Even a Brahma writer, therefore, is constrained to observe those

<sup>1</sup> Education in Ancient India, Mr. Mazumder, Edition 1916, P-70

<sup>2</sup> Civilization in Ancient India, R. C. Dutta, Volume-I P. 163

<sup>3</sup> Yajurveda Chapter VI, 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Chapter VII, 21

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Chapter VII, 46

<sup>6</sup> Education in Ancient India by Dr. A. S. Altekar, p – 13

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp – 39-40

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp – 42-43

dull Brahmana children should follow the profession of the Kshatriya or the Vaishya”<sup>[9]</sup>.

### Various subjects

Ākūtyaiprayuje-gnyesvāhāmedhāyaimanase-  
gnyesvāhādīkṣāyaitapase-gnyesvāhāsarasvatyaipuṣṇe-  
gnyesvāhā

Āpodevīrbṛhatīrviśva-śambhuvodyāvārthivī-uro-antarikṣa  
|Bṛhaspatayehaviṣāvidhemasvāhā||<sup>[10]</sup>

This oblation is for the lighting of the fire for the resolution and dedication of the mind to virtue and the voice of the Veda. This is for the development of intelligence and the study of science and electricity for the general good in the language of common understanding. This is for commitment to Dharma and the teaching and learning of solar energy and the original universal heat in the language of universal understanding. This is for knowledge and education and the study of nourishment and vital heat of the body with scientific language for all. We study the heavenly waters of great and universal good and peace, earth and heaven, and the vast middle regions of the sky. And we study all these with oblations of appropriate samagri materials with the chants of the divine revelations of the Vedas.

Siṃhyasisvāhāsiṃhyasyādityavaniḥsvāhāsiṃhyasibrahmava  
niḥkṣatravaniḥsvāhāsiṃhyasisuprajāvanīrāyaspoṣavaniḥsvā  
hāsiṃhyasyāvahadevānyajamānāyāsavāhābhūtebhyastvā ||<sup>[11]</sup>

Language is sacred and it is power. It is the treasure of science, the science of the stars and light especially of the sun in the zodiacs. It is the language of the Veda and eliminates ignorance. It is the language of governance, administration, and military science and fights injustice and crime. It is the language of economics, commerce, finance, and management and removes poverty and suffering. It is the language of social science and human welfare and eliminates antisocial forces. For the yajamana, it brings spiritual knowledge and noble virtues. I serve and develop this noble language through yajna for the enlightenment and happiness of living being.

Samudraṃgacchasvāhāntarikṣaṃgacchasvāhādevaṃsavitāra  
ṃgacchasvāhāmītrāvaruṇaugacchasvāhāhoratregacchasvāhā  
chandāmsigacchasvāhādīvāpṛthivīgacchasvāhāyajñamgac  
chasvāhāsamāgacchasvāhādīvyamṇabhogacchasvāhāgnim  
vaiśvānaramgacchasvāhā mano me  
hārdīyacchadivāmedhūmogacchatusvarjyotiḥpṛthivīmḥas  
manā-pṛṇasvāhā ||<sup>[12]</sup>

Man of knowledge, in service of the government, with the knowledge of navigation and ship-building, go to explore the seas. With the knowledge of aviation, fly to the skies. With the knowledge of space and space dynamics, go to the brilliant regions of light. With the knowledge of yoga, explore the secret of the pranic energy of breath and vitality of the inner spirit. With the knowledge of astronomy, know the motions of the sun and planets and the formation of day and night. With the knowledge of grammar and versification, study, interpret, and apply practice the four Vedas. With the

knowledge of geology and astrophysics, go deep into earth and space. With the science of yajna, know and practice the yajna of science and technology in the socio-practical economic and spiritual fields. With the knowledge of herbs, pursue the science of health and life. With the knowledge of water and gases, explore their celestial presence and formation of water and rain. With the science of energy, study heat, light, electricity, and all-pervasive Agni fire, and harness it for use in life. Know all this, do all this, follow up all this and justify all that I have taught, to my heart-felt joy and satisfaction. Let the fumes and vapors of your yajna rise to the sky. Let the light of it reach the sun. Fill and cover the earth with the essence and alchemy of your yajna for valuable products. This is the divine voice.

Mitrāvaruṇābhyāmtvādevāvyaṃyājñasyāyusegrhṇāmīndrāy  
atvādevāvyaṃyājñasyāyusegrhṇāmīndrāgnibhyāmtvādevāv  
yaṃyājñasyāyusegrhṇāmīndrāvaruṇābhyāmtvādevāvyaṃyāj  
ñasyāyusegrhṇāmīndrābṛhaspatibhyāmtvādevāvyaṃyājñasyā  
yusegrhṇāmīndrāvīṣṇubhyāmtvādevāvyaṃyājñasyāyusegrh  
ṇāmī||<sup>[13]</sup>

Head of the council, protector of the good and the noble people, I select you for the progress of this social yajna from agnihotra up to the governance of the land for the noble people of love, friendship, and knowledge.

Protector of the men of knowledge, I appoint you in the service of Indra, the ruler, the man of power, majesty, and grace, for the advancement of this social yajna of unity and cooperation.

Man of science and technology, protector of higher and astral sciences, I welcome you for the progress of this technological yajna for the realization of the power of heat and light.

Man of science and industry, protector of the men of scientific and industrial enterprise, I sanctify you for the promotion of the yajnic realization of electric and water power.

Teacher and man of education, promoter of education and yoga-vidya, I consecrate you for the promotion of social and ethical education as a yajna for the improvement of administration and the collective yoga of ethical governance of the land.

Man of knowledge, a friend of the spiritual people, I dedicate you to the advancement of the sacred yajna of moral and spiritual values for the realization of Divinity and knowledge of the shastras<sup>[14]</sup>.

O Maruts, vibrant winds and dynamic leaders of humanity, whoever, too proud, despises us or whoever despises our Vedic learning or holy works in progress, let his crooked works and ways and words be his self-torment. The lord of refulgent omniscience subjects the negationist of divinity and divine knowledge to the crucibles of self-punishment<sup>[15]</sup>.

O light of the inner eye, Anjana, beatific beauty of divinity, knowing full well and having attained full faith, I pledge: I shall speak the truth, no untruth ever. Cows and horses, lands and acquisitions, senses and mind, will and action, education and culture, knowledge and grace, all this is your gift. O Spirit of the Universe, pray let me live by these and ultimately serve the soul to be what I am for you as yours<sup>[16]</sup>.

Created and composed by the Brahmana, scholar of science and Veda, and approved by the wise Councilor, you go

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p – 47, (Details in Goutama Dharma Sūtra I. 6. 16. Rājanyavaiśyakarmāvidyāhinaḥ)

<sup>10</sup> Yajurveda Chapter-IV, 7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, Chapter-V, 12

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, Chapter-VI, 21

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Chapter-VII, 23

<sup>14</sup> Atharvaveda Kanda II/Hymn XII.6

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Kanda IV/Hymn IX.7

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, XIX.2

forward shining and blazing like a victorious army. O Oshadhi, wherever you reach and act, fear stays no more.

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