

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN INDIA DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD: A HISTORICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: In this paper the researcher wants to focus on the development of education in India during the medieval period. During the medieval period, the education system was influenced by the Muslim system. During this period, various transformations were brought about in the system of education. The individuals began to realize the significance of education. They even began to enrol in higher educational institutions. Education system was divided into two sections---- primary education and higher education. Primary education was imparted in makhtabs, and higher education was imparted in the madrasas. There was initiation of modern and innovative methods and strategies in the teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: Medieval Period, Education, Educational Institutions.

Introduction: The period under the medieval India comes from about the 10th century A.D. to the middle of the eighteenth century, i.e. before the British rule. During this system, the Muslim system of education was predominant. Mahmud Ghaznavi invaded the country and established a large number of schools and libraries in his own country by the looted wealth. Later on when the Muslim rulers established permanent empire in India, they introduced a new system of education. Consequently, the ancient system of education was greatly changed. In fact, the education of the Muslim period was much inferior than that of the Hindu period. No Muslim ruler except Akbar did commendable works in the field of education. Education in medieval India was a domain that was limited to a few to a large extent, who were involved in the management of transmission, it was something technically that was within the reach of everyone. The rise of Mohammedanism is one of the most remarkable events in the history of the world. The entire history of India underwent transformations with the rise of Mohammedanism. The Mohammedan invasions in India took place from the beginning of the eighth century A.D. The Arabs and the Turks introduced most of the new customs, cultures and institutions within the country. Out of these, one of the most remarkable was the Islamic pattern of education, which was different to a major extent from the Buddhist and the Brahmanic systems.

The transformations that were brought about in the system of education since the ancient times is a reflection that there have been changes and transformations in the social contexts. The system of education in medieval India primarily focused upon Islamic and the Mughal system. The new social realities, particularly the interplay between the democratization of education, emergence of knowledge society and globalization had a large influence upon the educational processes of all societies. In making an attempt to meet with all the challenges and problems, the country also took into consideration, the international dimension of education. National needs and expectations of the

international community may seem to have conflicting interests, but the receptivity of change within the country has led to their complementarities. An analysis of the changing conditions reveals that most of these changes are likely to permeate through the educational policies of the next few decades.

Objectives of Education in Medieval India

During the Muslim period, the primary objective behind propagation of education was to extend the knowledge along with promoting Islam. The objectives of education in medieval India are as follows:

1. To extend the knowledge and propagate Islam.
2. To propagate Islamic principles, laws and social conventions.
3. To make the individuals religious-minded.
4. The Muslim education aimed at the achievement of material wealth and prosperity.

Educational Organization:

The institutions that provided school education were known as the maktabas. Whereas, those institutions that made provision of higher learning were known as the madrasas. The maktabas were generally run by public donations, while the madrasas were maintained by the rulers and the nobles. There were six different types of institutions, these include, those that were maintained by the rulers and the nobles, those that were launched by the individual scholars with the help and support obtained from the state or donations, those that were associated with the mosques, those that were associated with the tombs, those that were started by the individual scholars and those that were attached to the Sufi hospices. The renowned madrasas were the Muizzi, the Nasiri and the Firuzi madrasas in Delhi, Mohammed Gawani's madrasa in Bidar and Abul Fazl's madrasa in Fatehpur Sikri. The Sirat-i-figuzShahi provides a list of 14 subjects that were taught in the madrasas like jurisprudence or dirat. It was the method of recitation, punctuation, vocalization of the Quran text and so forth.

During this period, women were not allowed to go in front of the outsiders without covering their faces. This was known as the purdah system. Due to the prevalence of the purdah system, education among women was not given recognition. The presence of the Hindu religion schools where Sanskrit was the medium of instruction and the maqtabas of the Muslim religion where Persian was the medium of instruction led to the formation of a new language, Urdu. It was generally written in Persian characters with the words of Arabic and Persian origin. The origin of vocational and technical education was considered to be major developments under the Muslim period. Ever since the fall of the Gupta Empire, the Islamic rulers built an empire with the central administration.

Features of Education: The features of education during the medieval period have been described below:

Patronage of the Rulers – The rulers rendered a significant contribution in the spread of education. They initiated educational institutions and universities and also vested financial resources.

Absence of Control by the State – There was not any involvement of state in the controlling and functioning of the educational institutions. The rulers neither claimed any authority, nor participated in the management and administration of the educational institutions.

Importance of Religion – The religious education was regarded to be of utmost importance in the educational system. The aims, objectives, materials and the other aspects that are involved in the system of education, were based on religion.

Importance of Vocational Education – The significance of vocational education was recognized to a major extent. The individuals possessed the viewpoint that they would be able to sustain their living conditions adequately through acquiring vocational education

Relationship between the Teachers and Students – The relationship between the teachers and the students were recognized through the implementation of the traits of courtesy, kindness, decorum and amiability. The teachers may give approval regarding something or may not give their approval, the students were required to obey and accept their decisions.

Individualized Attention – One of the major advantages of the system of education was, the number of students within the class were limited. Therefore, the teachers were able to pay individualized attention to the students. In this manner, the students were able to generate good academic outcomes and were able to solve their problems.

Expert Teachers – The teachers during this period were well-educated and wholeheartedly dedicated themselves towards the performance of job duties. The teachers were acknowledged and revered to a large extent. It was believed that teachers are the ones, who can create well-educated, and a well-organized system of education and produce scholars.

Discipline – The educational institutions as well as the members, i.e. teachers and students were disciplined. In case the students did not abide by the rules and the policies, then they were punished. Apart from getting involved in all the tasks and activities that were related to learning, discipline was considered to be of utmost significance.

Teaching Assistance – The number of students within the classes was less in number, and could be easily managed by the teachers. But in some cases, the teachers needed help from their junior or senior teachers, in case, they feel that teaching methods cannot be put into practice solely and joint teaching and collaboration would be beneficial.

Islamic System of Education: In the medieval period, the Islamic system of education replaced the Vedic system of education and Buddhist education system. The reason being, it was felt that there was an increasing need for Islamic administration. The Islamic system of education was introduced with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. Islam gives great importance to education, which is the process of teaching, acquiring or learning knowledge. In the Islam religion, education renders a significant contribution in leading to progression and enhancement of every individual, so that he can be successful in securing his future and living an efficient life.

The system of education in medieval India was structured on the lines of the tradition of education that was developed under the Abbasids of Baghdad. The scholars belonging to countries such as, Samarqand, Bukhara and Iran looked up to the Indian scholars for guidance. Amir Khusrau, a scholar from the Indian sub-continent, not only developed the skill of writing, prose and poetry, but also formulated a new language, suitable to the local conditions. Some of the contemporary scholars, like Minhaj-us-Siraj, Ziauddin Barani and Afif have written about Indian scholarship (Education in India, n.d.). In this period, there were number of subjects that were introduced, these include, logic, mathematics, geometry, history, geography, accountancy, public administration, literature, science, and astronomy. Apart from these, there were also introduction of different strategies and methods in the system of education, these include, reading, writing, discussing, logical reasoning, research and experiments.

Muslims regarded general education as an integral part of Islamic education. They demolished the ancient Buddhist and Hindu temples and schools and other educational centres and built mosques and madrasas. In the Muslim period, learning was held in high esteem. The great Mughal emperors were the patrons of learning and promoters of education. The people, who were well-educated and learned were respected and revered throughout the country. The lawyers, judges, teachers, researchers, educationists, commanders in the army and ministers, all belonged to educated classes. The Muslim system of education began to implement strategies and approaches that even Hindus began to acknowledge it. The main purpose of this education was to adequately prepare the students to sustain their living and cope up with challenges and problems.

The main features of the Muslim system of education were that it was traditional in spirit and theological in content. The curriculum was divided into two categories: the traditional (manqulat) and the rational (maqulat) sciences. Under the traditional sciences, the subjects that were introduced included, law, history and literature. Logic, philosophy, medicine, mathematics and astronomy came under the rational sciences. More emphasis was put on the rational sciences at a later stage as compared to the traditional sciences. Traditional subjects dominated education under the period of Illtutmish, which was from 1211-1236 till the reign of Sikander Lodi from 1489-1517. The system of education began to experience a transformation, when logic and philosophy began to get introduced in the system of curriculum.

The Educational system under the Mughals: The Mughal period contributed to the system of education. During this period, the Mughal emperors acquired enormous understanding for learning and recognized the significance of education to a major extent. Pathshalas, vidyapeeths, maktabks and madrasas were the institutions, through which education and learning were spread among the masses. The Mughal emperor, Akbar gave grants to educational institutions, and established a college near Jama Masjid. During this time, education was not a state subject. Elementary education was provided in temples and mosques. The functioning of temples and mosques in terms of provision of education was dependent upon the donations given by the rulers, wealthy individuals and donors. Sanskrit and Persian were also taught in temples and mosques. One of the main areas that is disadvantageous is, women were usually deprived from acquiring education. The women, belonging to royal and wealthy families received education at home.

The Mughal rulers showed interest in learning and literature. During this period, there was prevalence of Urdu language. This language was introduced out of a long term contact between Persian and Hindi, i.e. the Turks and the Indians. The Mughal emperor, Humayun introduced the study of mathematics, astronomy and geography in the madrasas in Delhi. This assisted in causing a reduction in bias in the existing education system. Most of the Indians began to learn Persian and translations were made from Sanskrit to Persian. The subjects like, accountancy, public administration and geometry were added by Emperor Akbar and he instituted a workshop near his palace. The management of all the activities that took place within the workshop was done by Emperor Akbar. The attempt that was made by him to introduce scientific and secular system of education was not much appreciated by the orthodox sections of the society.

Vocational Education: During the Muslim period, there was provision of vocational, technical and professional education. The individuals began to acquire education, on the basis of their skills, abilities and interests. During this period, the individuals were engaged in number of occupations, these include, silk weaving, carpentry, pottery making, dyeing, artworks, handicrafts, working with metals, precious stones, production of garments, jewellery etc. The Mughal emperors took keen interest in artworks and handicrafts. The Mughal paintings are famous even in the present existence. The fine fabrics, shawls, painted wares and gold and silver ornaments of India were the outcomes of professional, technical and vocational education. The individuals, who are engaged in the manufacturing and production of these items, need to possess adequate knowledge and skills. They should possess sufficient awareness regarding how to make use of machines and tools to generate productivity. The commencement of vocational education began with the initiation of the religious ceremony.

Educational Institutions: The educational institutions that were prevalent during the medieval period organized the system of education in such a manner that it generated professionals such as, doctors, lawyers, researchers, educationists, teachers, and so forth. The curriculum and the instructional methods and teaching-learning processes were carried out in an appropriate manner. The educational institutions and the organization of education in medieval India took place in the institutions, classified as follows:

Maktabs

In the maktabs, the children belonging to common groups were provided education. The type of education that was focused upon in maktabs was primary education. Along with religious education, the students were also taught reading, writing and arithmetic. Therefore, it can be stated, focus was put upon the basic literacy skills. Apart from the basic literacy skills, the students were also provided knowledge regarding religious education.

Madrasas

After completion of education in a maktab, the individuals would move to madrasas to acquire higher education. During the Muslim period, madrasas were the centres of higher learning. In a madrasa, apart from religious education, the individuals were given training in terms of other areas in order to prepare them practically. Islamic religion was compulsorily taught to all the students. The Mughal emperor Akbar brought a halt to this tradition. He

provided the teaching of Hindu religion and philosophy in many madrasas. The subjects that were introduced in madrasas included medicine, mathematics, history, geography, economics, political science, philosophy, astrology and law.

Method

In the maktabas, teaching primarily took place, making use of oral methods and memorization of the assigned lesson. The Emperor Akbar encouraged writing and made an attempt to bring about reforms in the scripts. In the structure of education, attempt has been made by the emperor to bring about systematization. The education of the students began with the acquisition of alphabets knowledge, then he began to acquire word knowledge and then began to form sentences. In educational institutions, the students and the teachers were meant to follow the rules and regulations and maintain discipline. They were meant to obey the instructions given to them by their teachers and teachers in turn also treated students with kindness and courtesy. The teachers and the students were meant to work in collaboration and integration with each other.

The education that was considered prominent was practical education. The students were not required to take any annual or half-yearly exams. They were usually tested from time to time on the basis of the practical situations of life. Military training, artworks, and handicrafts were the subject areas that were considered to be of utmost significance. The women were usually discouraged from the acquisition of education. The women, who belonged to wealthy and royal households were able to acquire education within their homes. But in maktabas and madrasas, girls and women were also encouraged to obtain education. In other words, spread of education among women began to acquire significance.

Conclusion: The education in medieval India was predominantly based on Muslim system of education. The main objectives of education focused upon religious education, extension of knowledge and propagation of Islam. The characteristics of education are, patronage of the rulers, absence of state control, significance of religion, significance of vocational education, following norms and rules, relationship between the teachers and students, individualized attention, educated teachers, discipline, and teaching assistance. It can be understood that in medieval India, there were many changes and transformations that took place in the system of education. The education system was free from all restrictions. There was great respect for women and girls, but there were not any satisfactory provisions made to promote education among girls, belonging to the community. Education was limited to women, only belonging to upper and wealthy families. The main purpose of these changes and transformations was to generate awareness among the individuals in terms of the significance of education. Not only individuals, belonging to wealthy communities, but all the individuals, belonging to various categories and backgrounds should obtain access to education. Gradually, the system of education turned out to be more methodical and systematic, due to introduction of policies and strategies.

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