

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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The relevance of the investigated problem is caused by the increased attention to the issues of the spiritual and moral renewal of the society. The article is devoted to the development and formation of spiritual and moral education in India. The leading approach to an investigated problem is the dialectical approach which allowed to identify and provide the stages of formation of spiritual and moral education in different historical periods. The authors advocate that the Indian system of education provides spiritual and moral education by students' attracting to moral values, by attitudes to themselves, people and the world around them.

Key words: education, history of education, student, spiritual and moral education, religious education, secular education, values.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in the context of globalization and international integration, the forefront task of the society is spiritual and moral development of the person, the solution of which requires not only the use of the achievements of Russian science but also appeal to the international experience. So, having analyzed the world experience in this area, we turned to the eastern countries, where a hindsight of the development of the spiritual and moral system of education is richer and more multifaceted, and the range of problems of the main trends in the development of spiritual and moral education are extremely relevant for Russia (Albedil, 2003; Antonova, 1973; Fakhrutdinova, 2016; Jindal 2013; Gawande, 2002; Sharma, 1996; Fakhrutdinova, 2013).

Earlier, Russia, as well as the whole Europe, considered India as a country of wonders and wise men. Any references that were connected to India were associated with the philosophical and spiritual themes. Gradually, our country began to discover unique and original Indian art and literature, the bright world of unusual things and Indian wisdom. At the end of the 18th century the philosophical treatise the Bhagavad-Gita was translated into Russian, and in the 19th and 20th centuries the Vedic hymns, the Puranas, the epic poem "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana" were published. Since then, India has become associated not only with the fantastic and miraculous country, but also with the unique philosophy viewing it as the undisputed "Master of mankind." The question of what can be learned from philosophical thought of India, which takes a lot of truth seekers, is relevant up to the present time.

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METHODS

Taking into account numerous studies in this field, having considered and reviewed the history of Indian education, seven time periods can be distinguished.

1. 2000 – 1400 BC – the Vedic system of education (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). In this era there was a stable strong belief of what education and training should be. They were based on the idea that everyone should develop their moral, intellectual and physical qualities so as to become an integral member of their caste.

The aim of the ancient Indian education was originally laid down by the “Vedas”, the sacred writings, according to which the world is pervaded by divinity, and the goal of every person is to achieve salvation. In this case A. S. Altekar rightly noted, “The knowledge is a third eye of man, which gives him insight into all affairs and teaches him how to act. In the spiritual sphere it leads to our salvation, in the mundane sphere it leads to all round progress and prosperity. The illumination given to us by education shatters illusions, removes difficulties and enables us to realize the true values of life” (Sharma, 1996, p.1).

The detailed characteristics of Vedic education can be found in ancient epics such as “Bhagavata - Purana”, “Mahabharata,” “Bhagavad - Gita”. Education started in early age in order to develop students’ inner and outer talents. It was believed that if a student acquires good habits in early age, his future will be happy. Daily routine was essential for the character development. Thus, the purpose of Vedic education was lofty. It was aimed at preparing students for constant self-development and self-improvement.

2. 1400 – 600 BC – Post-Vedic system of education (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). At this time, Brahmans, the highest caste, gained the highest position in the society, therefore, the value of social basis and renewed rituals had an impact on education. An important goal of post-Vedic education was to transfer knowledge and skills of conducting rituals to new generations. It was associated with the study of sacred texts and maintaining a certain lifestyle based on the development of spirituality among population. Education continued to be based on the study of the Brahmanas and the Upanishads (Sharma, 1996; Singh, 2008). An ideal education outlook was formed (it was available only for the higher castes), according to which the man was born to live a happy life. It provided mental, spiritual, moral and physical development.

For three castes (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya) general education began after a performing a special ceremony that was called Upnayan or the ceremony related to taking a child to guru. The ceremony of Upnayan and the content of further training for members of three higher castes were not the same. Depending on the caste the age of initiation was different: 8 years for Brahmans, 11 years for Kshatriyas and 12 years for Vaishyas. The program of education for Brahmans was more profound and was authorized for spiritual knowledge. For Kshatriyas

and Vaicēhyas, the program was less intense, but professionally oriented. Kshatriyas were taught military disciplines, Vaishya – agriculture, trade and commerce. The duration of training usually did not exceed more than twelve years (Dzhurinsky, 1998).

The way of study in the teacher's home was built largely on the type of family relations: the student was treated as a member of the family so the teacher's duties were to impart education for all round development and to inculcate good habits, feeling of sacrifice, social service and to develop skills that would be useful in life. Students, in their turn, had to serve a teacher and carry out all the necessary routine: to graze animals, to cultivate the land and beg for alms. It fostered gentleness and generosity. Thus, he had to lead a life of Brahmacharya and perform certain practices to keep the senses away from the attraction and be concentrated on knowledge. No doubt that sharing a house with a teacher, makes a student imitate a teacher. It's all about a deep inner spiritual unity which could be a real basis for the tradition transmission therefore the whole apprenticeship system was built to provide maximum spiritual closeness of a teacher and a student (Albedil, 2003).

So the Vedic system of education was aimed at self-development and self-improvement both moral and spiritual. The content of education was mainly religious in nature, but included such subjects as astronomy, geometry, philosophy, mathematics, etc. It should be noted that the caste system of the society limited access to education for Shudras, and this is what we believe is one of the major disadvantages of that period.

3. The Brahmanic system of education, approximately 600-500 (200) BC (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). Brahmanic education was only a refined form of Vedic education. During that period, attempts to the development of various areas of literature and material knowledge were made. Education was an instrument of acquisition spiritual, moral, physical, social, and religious education.

One of the main goals of education was spreading of religious ideas and principles. The teacher paid much attention to students' purity of mind, body, word, action, etc. In addition, great attention was paid to the formation and perfection of character. Teachers created an environment deprived of worldly entertainments and amusements.

The training program depended on the caste and the education system in the Ashram. In addition to the "Vedas", which were of utmost importance, such subjects as Sanskrit, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astrology, Economics, History, Politics, Agriculture, Military science and Philosophy were introduced. Sanskrit became the language of communication, and finally sacred texts were written by scientists of that time. (Chandra,2006; Singh, 2008).

4. 500 (200) BC – 1200 A.D. – the Buddhist system of education (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). In the history of Indian civilization a new era began. There were significant changes in the economic and spiritual life, in the sphere of education

and learning. Such changes created the conditions for the emergence of a new religion – Buddhism, which, in turn, had a decisive impact on the way of life of Ancient India. The new doctrine opposed to the rigid caste differences, supported equality of men by birth, and was particularly attractive for tradesmen and wealthy Vaishyas, who took a very modest place in the social hierarchy at the Brahmanic time. Buddhism found support among Kshatriyas who increasingly concentrated power in their hands, but still felt strong ideological pressure from Brahmins who declared themselves the only sacred varna, and even the gods of the earth (Antonov, 1973).

As in the Vedic period, to start education all boys passed the ceremony of initiation that was now called Pabaja. Boys started their education at the age of eight, the training period was twelve years, and at the age of twenty they were ordained as monks (the ceremony of Upasampada). Despite the fact that people of all castes were allowed to get education, but almost only the children of the upper classes were taught there (Singh, 2008).

New educational centers were opened for students to get higher education. These were similar to modern universities which welcomed students at the age of 16.

Thus, the Buddhist system of education was democratic and was not focused on caste differences. It opened an access to education for all castes. The emergence of the monasteries contributed to the opening of schools and universities, where teachers were monks only. It should be noted that the Brahmanic and Buddhist systems of education did not suppress, but complement each other forming an integrated system.

5. 1200 - 1700 A.D. – the Muslim system of education (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). As a result of convergence of the Brahmanic and Buddhist systems of education a unified cultural and educational system developed but it went into decline when much of India was under Muslim rule. Most Muslim and Mughal rulers made a great contribution into education opening makhtabs, madarsas and libraries. One of the most important figures of that time is considered to be Akbar. It was during his reign, when much attention was paid to the development of literature, culture and civilization in general. He wanted to reorganize the system of education and to put it on a new level. Being liberal in religious matters, he insisted Hindus and Muslims to be educated by studying religions they belonged to.

Education of that period depended on the local ruler, his desires and ambitions. They determined the aims of study. One of the main goals of the Muslim period in India was to spread religious knowledge, namely Islam. Children were taught to distinguish between good and bad, which often overlapped with religious and non-religious. In addition, material welfare played an important role as well. Knowledge was not obtained for the sake of knowledge, but as a means of preparation of a

person to life in the society. Thus, the purposes of education helped the rulers to strengthen their position in the social and political spheres (Chandra, 2006).

The educational process was carried out in schools and madarsas that existed in mosques. In schools, children received primary education. Along with the study of religion, they learned reading, writing and arithmetic. Much attention was paid to the study of the Arabic and Persian languages. Children of wealthy parents did not attend school but received education at home. They had tutors who served as home teachers. Children of royal families were taught in palaces. They were imparted such subjects as politics, law and martial arts. School education was meant for men only, but almost every rich family invited teachers for girls as well (Fakhrutdinova, Kondrateva 2016).

Muslim students were required to study Arabic. The program also included Grammar, Logic, Philosophy, Literature, Medicine, Astronomy, Greek, Agriculture, etc. Knowledge, as before, was imparted orally. But at the same time much attention has been given to writing, because in this period, many Hindu scriptures were translated into Persian (Singh, 2008).

Thus, one cannot deny that the education of the Muslim period is different from the education system of previous periods. Secular education began to prevail over the spiritual, although it did not take the last place. Each ruler had the right to choose what was more important at that stage – either the spiritual or secular knowledge.

6. 1700 – 1947 – the period of British colonialism (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). This period is characterized by the invasion of the British, who influenced the development of modern education system in India. It should be noted that earlier India had already been occupied by the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch, who tried to establish trade relations with India. Consequently, first missionaries appeared who wanted to spread Christianity establishing schools, preaching their religion and teaching all children regardless of caste.

The history of British colonialism began in 1757, when East India Company established its power in India. With an aim to win the trust to the British rule, the Company continued the tradition of local education and taught the children of Indian high society, preparing them to work as clerks for running British government machinery (Chaube, 2005).

1901 - 1920 – time of rising Indian nationalism. At this time the question of free and compulsory primary education appeared. During that period, Indian people clearly realized the need of education for all people. National leaders were opposed to the fact of controlling Indian education by the Europeans. Moreover, national leaders were striving to develop national character in education and to include vocational and technical education in the curriculum.

Later, lawmakers and Ministers of education developed programs for the improvement of Indian education in the areas of primary, vocational and technical education for adults and separately for women.

The atmosphere in the country was so intense that until 1947 the government did not have enough time to deal with educational issues. Thus, India became an independent republic in 1947, and inherited a system of education, deprived of organization, ideology and control, and one of its main tasks was to reorganize the system of education (Subramanian, 2001).

7. Since 1948 and up to the present time - modern period (Chand, 2000; Sharma, 1996). Significant changes in Indian system of education began to take place after India's independence in 1947. During that period, the government decided to set up committees on education and training at different levels, i.e. primary, secondary and high. In addition, the government developed programs for the reorganization of education, dividing it into five-year period.

Making up the program for subsequent five years, the government set new challenges, solving of which implied bringing education to a new, higher level.

RESULTS

A retrospective analysis allowed to identify seven periods of development and formation of spiritual and moral education in India and its main ideas. This was a prerequisite for the development of modern system of education in general and spiritual and moral education in particular.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thus, the study of the retrospective of spiritual and moral education in India has enabled to trace the development of ideas of education of a person who deeply understands the roots of nation associated with spiritual culture and heritage of the people, who knows and understands the traditions, respects the older generation, and strives for self-development and self-improvement. However, the caste system of the society imposed constraints on imparting knowledge, especially those related to spiritual and moral education. However, the colonization of India by the British Empire caused significant damage to the area we are studying, because, in our opinion, anglicism of the society led to the loss of spiritual national heritage. Accordingly, the post-colonial period of the revival and recovery was made possible due to historically formed tradition of spiritual and moral education. The vitality and resistibility of spiritual and moral education in India, the ability to maintain national traditions, culture, both at home and abroad is of particular interest for our study.

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