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EDUCATION AND MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD



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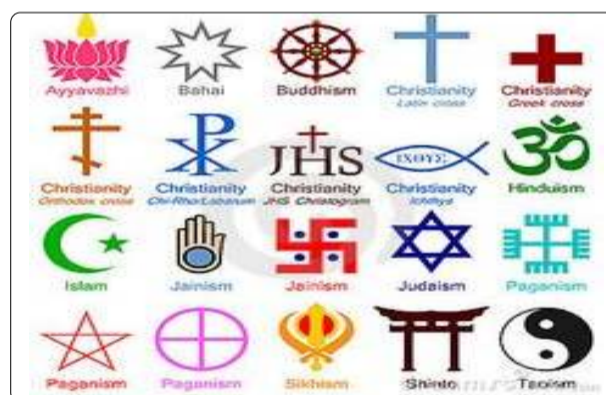
ABSTRACT :

The concept of education is not new to man. It has been there since a very long time. The religions along the world have supported the education in various methods. Their methods may be different but aims were to enlighten the minds of all the men alike. The religion my belong to any part of the world...east or west... they all emphasize on the betterment of mankind through education. It was found that every religion of the world stresses upon the fact that the education plays a vital role in development of humans.

KEY WORDS : *education, scope, development, knowledge, nature, method, mind, body, physical, mental, value based, learning, teaching, harmony, nature, pursuit, reasoning, judgement, institutions, contribution, advancement, character, curriculum, logic, personality, ability, approach, ignorance, dignity, justice*

INTRODUCTION:

Education is one of the oldest concepts told to man. Imparting and receiving education has been part of man's life since ancient times. The face of education may have changed over the time, but the purpose remains the same. The scope of education is concerned with nature of knowledge and method of attaining knowledge. It can be attained generously if the strongest aspect of human life i.e. religion also supports it. In India and abroad, it has affected the lives of people to the core. Even all the major religions have given importance to education. To establish schools and universities is one of the greatest achievements of mankind. These were found all over the world. It has been seen since early times the oldest religions have also supported the system of education.



HINDUISM

Hinduism is known as world's oldest religion. In India, religion has the uppermost place in man's life. So basically, education also organically linked mind and body. Accordingly, a man's mind and senses are power of the soul. Thus, making it the aim of Hindu learning. Hindus focused on education as value based worthwhile learning. Since ancient times education has been an integral part of Hindu upbringing in the four ashramas the education had an important place. The students were supposed to go and live with their gurus in their ashramas to attain education. The ancient seers in their system of education aimed to form and mould the mind which receives and analyses all type of information. Meditation also formed an integral part of such education. The ancient Indian education helped to conquer the perplexed state of mind. Hindus also believed that a serious student should observe simplicity and chastity. Without these, higher learning could not be imparted.

The old education system of Hindus was economic and democratic in nature. The education was open to all irrespective of caste, creed, rich or poor. Ancient Hindu rishis believed in harmony- harmony with oneself, harmony with fellow men, harmony with nature, harmony with the king. Such belief reflected in the education which they imparted, which is why students belonging to various strata of life shared same life under the same teacher. The princes were supposed to live the same life as of the common man. Stories of lord Krishna living at Rishi Sandipani's ashrama along with the others with the likes of Sudama are known to us. Later on, in Taxila, which was considered as a hub of education, received students from all over the world.

students belonged to all the horizontal and vertical sections of the society. Education of Hindus focused on the learning about something in a specific area. The students were required to memorized all the verses from the religions scriptures and they were supposed to recite them too. Also the youth were trained in skills such as medical, craft, farming, weaving etc. according to Hinduism such informal ways of teaching depended on the passing of such skills and knowledge from generation to generation. At the end of learning system, assessment was also carried out in order to evaluate the students' performance. Various tests were taken by the guru where the pupil were asked to fulfill certain tasks under the monitoring of the gurus. The gurus also ranked the students' performances. The gurus gave tasks to judge the mental and physical abilities of the students. Hinduism also had a perception that a wise man who is educated would follow God's path. The tradition of education continues in the modern times too. Hindu education stresses on not only the improvement in mental abilities but also emphasizes on the enhancing of physical abilities too.

JUDAISM

The tradition of education in Judaism goes back to biblical times, it was considered as the basic duty of the parents to give instructions to their children. The Hebrew term for education used in ancient times was Talmud Torah which means study of Torah. The emphasis of Jewish education is not on the pursuit of knowledge but rather on conduct. It would also be wrong to say that Jewish education is entirely religious. It aimed at getting prepared for life. It also a fact that on receiving the Jewish education, the student would dedicate his life to the service of God and follow all his laws.

The sacred book of Talmud states that children's education should begin at six. Later, in his adult life, his mind would evolve these principles which would serve as guidelines for his future life. Proper solutions for all the problems could be deduced by reasoning and the methods which were taught in the higher schools. Thus, the education was two pronged ; one- full knowledge of the law of Torah and other- strict observance of the law in life. Both these aspects of education i.e. learning and its implementation in practical life has equal importance in Judaism. According to them, only the

education which is achieved in this manner, enhances their judgement and dignifies their living. So to observe all the laws of his faith, a Jew must be highly educated.

Jews have contributed not only to the advancement to their own education but also to that of the world. The rabbis stated that the children should not be beaten with a stick or a cane. Schools were housed in annexes or separate buildings close to synagogues. For most of the history, Jews educated their children in their own institutions and expressed their educational ideas in their own languages. There was a little contact between the Jewish and the non-Jewish education system. There is also a concept of "each one, teach one" in Judaism. There is an obligation on the educated ones to teach others what one has learnt for him. Every male was obligated to teach his sons.

Jewish education is rather synonymous with life. Whatever knowledge is imparted to him, it is in relation to the Law. For example, in studying the laws of permitted and forbidden foods, the student is taught about the facts of botany, medicine, hygiene, zoology etc. The study of Torah is completely incorporated with various aspects of life. It also focuses on all the aspects of an environment as a whole. The range of scope of Jewish education is quite wide, from things kept in a room to the way the food is cooked and served; from what is to be served and when to travel, bedtime, waking up, personal hygiene, etc. Jewish education is not confined to the classrooms or school only, it can occur anywhere. It is concerned with the learner's total being. Its emphasis is on personal Jewish development rather than development of Jewish culture. The methods of teaching are quite flexible; as they are open to change and adjustment in accordance with the needs of the learner. The education system of Jews also aims at specialized vocational training. These arts and crafts are regulated with Torah. On having acquired the technical skill of his life's occupation and having completed his formal schooling, the student was prepared for life and the world affairs.

JAINISM

Jainism, which is also one of the oldest living religions of the world, takes education as an important activity as a process of development and a path to the highest goal of life. Education in Jainism is an integral part of the Jain way of life. It includes knowledge, vision and sound character. According to Jainism, salvation or liberation is the highest goal of life, so it becomes the main aim of education to lead a person towards salvation. It is a way of life. Education, according to Jainism, is teaching one's own self and to develop the higher quality of life and attaining liberation from pain and suffering.

There was provision for education from primary level to highest education in a Jain matha. Education of youngsters began at the age of five years. The Acharya or Upadhyaya initiated the young boys. Drawing letters of Siddham (traka) or table started with Siddham Namah. The boys wrote on fine sand, spread on a board with their fingers. After mastering Siddhamatraka they wrote on folding blackboards (kadata) with chalk (balapa) and finally went on to write on palm leaves. However, learning at a higher level had to be in Sanskrit only. The method of learning various subjects was traditional, i.e., memorizing, repeating, and reproducing. Vāda or discussion formed the main platform in the Jain system and training was given in oratory.

Tarkasatra or science of logic occupied a prominent place in the Jain syllabus. Apart from this Jain curriculum also emphasized vocational education. For this education in different vocations should be provided to the students. This will help in equipping economic conditions in the country and in developing manpower also.

Thus Jain curriculum includes social sciences, natural sciences, moral education, vocational education and various co-curricular activities and yoga exercises. Besides food and shelter, books were distributed free at Jain temples and it is likely that medical instruction was also imparted at the free

hospitals attached. Hospitals big and small were attached to Jaina mathas where sick cattle and birds were also treated besides human beings. Jainism stood for compassion towards all living beings (sarvajeevidayapara), and youngsters developed this trait early in life.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism, an ancient religion of India has an important contribution towards education. Buddhist education aims at personality transformation into the highest form of human being considering various aspects of his personality. According to Buddhist education, perfection in these areas can be achieved through attaining happiness and removal of unhappiness. Buddhist education stresses upon the bookish knowledge as well as its practical efficiency. It aims at inculcation of highest value for the development of physical as well as spiritual aspect of human personality. Buddhist educators aim at instilling five qualities in the disciples which are faith, virtue, generosity, learning and wisdom.

It focuses at parallel transformation of human character and intelligence. This wisdom can be generated through mythological training. In this task, learning and wisdom are closely inter-woven. Wisdom arises systematically by working through the principles learnt during the process of education and applying it in the day to day life. In early Buddhist period, education was limited within the monasteries and was meant for the members of the monastery only. Later on it was open to people belonging to all walks of life. Students irrespective of caste, creed and religion were given education. The teachers were highly qualified and served as guardians of the students. The students and the teachers had to follow the strict rules laid by the monasteries.

Buddhist education system was based on some basic principles which consists the study of tripitaka which included teachings of Buddha, his philosophy. The curriculum was spiritual in nature as its main aim was to attain salvation. Along with that, the students were also given the training of spinning, weaving, printing of clothes, medicine and surgery. At initial stage, the medium of education was mother tongue, but for higher education, Sanskrit was taken as medium of instruction. There were two types of education; primary and higher education. In primary education, reading and writing was taught, in higher education religious philosophy along with vocational education and military training was imparted. Mental and moral development was attained through verbal education. The teacher used to ask questions after giving lectures. The students heard it and kept it in the memory. The teachers used to teach students by telling stories arranging dialogues and discussions. Teachers were responsible for physical, mental, spiritual and moral development. In turn the pupil also had to be responsive to instructions given by the teacher. There were also discussions based on logical arguments. Strict rules were imposed on women monks. The women monks were not allowed to meet any male monk alone and they resided away from the monk's monastery. Women were not given any permanent place in the monastery. Buddhist education makes man judicious, humanist, logical and free from superstitions.

CONFUCIANISM

Education is an important part of Confucianism which was founded by Confucius 2500 years ago in China. Before his time under Zhou dynasty, schooling took place in government offices where public officials served as teachers. General education was denied to common people. It was restricted to the rich and the elite only. To Confucius education was regarded as an equalizing factor within the community as it offered each individual to succeed. According to the philosophy of Confucius, social harmony could only be achieved if humans are given proper education. He was of the view that all have

the same potential and thus, education has the ability to use that potential in a proper manner. Confucius made education available to the people belonging to all sections of the society. Confucius considered education as an important tool in restoration of ethical and social norms of Chinese society. Education was important because it refined the character. It exhorted the men to become gentlemen who are able to express themselves and carry themselves with grace, speak correctly, and demonstrate integrity in every way. The main aim of education, according to Confucius, was to provide his students with the education that matched their mental levels, to inspire and guide them, to instruct themselves while teaching others.

Confucius' educational method contains four main points. First, it emphasizes that people holding important positions should set an example for the people by adopting good morals themselves. For Confucius believed that teaching by personal example had a long lasting effect on others. So education should be free from didactic instructions. Second, it aimed at providing education to all without any discrimination. During his teaching career, education was given to anybody who was willing to follow him. He gave the idea of universal education. Thirdly, Confucius believed in imparting education in accordance to the student's ability. He himself taught the students accordingly. Many a times, he gave different answers of the same questions asked by different students. Lastly, Confucius emphasized on self teaching. The students should not be given the answer, only the instructions on how a problem can be solved should be given. Women and servants were not given proper attention while teaching. They were treated unequally in traditional Confucian education system.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity which is one of the oldest religions of the world have given a lot of importance to the concept of education. The entire theory of advanced education comes out of the Christian world view. The monasteries and cathedrals offered education free of charge. According to Roman Catholics, education is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how do we attain it. The common approach of education is divided into 2 types; secular and religious. And there are 2 methods of getting education; reason and revelation.

By reason we can learn about sciences and languages whereas by revelation we can know more about God. Christian education aimed at relating every course to the divine origin. There should be recognition of the fact that there is a divine interpretation of every knowledge which is attained. Even in the study of history it can be pointed out that none of those things which happened down the centuries have taken place by chance. According to the Christian, any education that neglects acknowledgement of God in any activity is not Christian in nature. The purpose of Christian education is directing of process of human development toward God's objective for man i.e. Godliness of action and character, as education in general begins with physical birth, Christian education begins with spiritual rebirth. The whole body of Christian education theory rests upon the recognition that all truth is of God. A reverence for God of truth is present in all areas of factual investigation and reporting. Though the word of God is the main source of knowledge of God, the works of God are also an important part of Christian school curriculum.

The Christian schools curriculum includes astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and related subjects because they provide knowledge of God's nature and his work in this world. In the curriculum of Christian school, emphasis is laid upon the goal of service and instruction in skills and discipline which equip students for service. These instructions are related to the study of humanities or natural sciences. These instructions include mental as well as physical training. For the development and discipline needed for the service of God. The Christian school encourages the development of the

student's creativity as man has been given the ability to create in imitation of God.

Thus the main aim of Christian education is to bring mind, body and spirit to the subjection and will of god and the education which gives god an all important place in our thinking can only be called Christian education. And only the person whose mind body and spirit are subjected to the word of god through which he glorifies god can truly be called an educated person.

ISLAM

Islam was revealed to humanity by Prophet Muhammad in Arabia in 6th and 7th century. Islam attaches great importance to knowledge and education. The training of human mind is not complete without education. Education makes a man right thinker. It directs man how to think and how to make right decisions. Man is like living in a closed room and education opens windows to the outside world. When the Quran began to be revealed, the first word of its verse was IQRA i.e. read. Education is thus the starting point of every human activity. The Prophet Mohammed made the knowledge an obligation upon every Muslim. He even went on to say that the scholars are the heirs of the Prophets. Furthermore Prophets emphasized that seeking knowledge is a way leading to paradise. All the books of Hadeeth have a chapter on knowledge.

The Prophet not only teaches about the knowledge, he also gave examples of promoting knowledge. In the very first battles of Muslims and unbelievers of Mecca, known as the war of Badr, the Muslims gain victory and caught seventy kuffars as prisoners of war. One of the criteria of releasing the POWs devised by the Prophet was that those who were literate among the prisoners could go free if they teach ten Muslim children how to read and write.

Islamic education is uniquely different from other type of educational theory and practice allegedly because of the encompassing influence of Quran. The Quran serves as comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and the society and as the primary source of knowledge. One of the aims of acquiring knowledge is to gain the good of the world, not to destroy it through wastage, arrogance and in reckless pursuit of higher standards of material comfort. Another aim of knowledge is to spread freedom dignity, truth and justice. It is not to gain power and dominance for its own sake.

The curriculum of the Muslim school was primarily directed to young male children, beginning as early as age four, and was centered on Quranic studies and on religious obligations such as ritual ablutions, fasting and prayers. The focus during the early history of Islam on the education of youth reflected the belief that raising children with correct principles was holy obligation for parents and society. Memorization of the Quran was central to the curriculum of Muslim schools. Once student has memorized the greater part of Quran, they could advance to higher stage of education, with increased complexity of instructions.

The framework of Islamic thought represents a comprehensive view of life and the universe. A Muslim is therefore required to attain both religious and worldly knowledge. In fact, Islam advocated knowledge at the time when the whole world was engulfed in ignorance. In matter of years the early generation of Muslims became learned refined people, for Islam has awakened in them the faculty of intellect. Those early Muslims understood from the teachings of their religion that use of knowledge is necessary for the benefit of self and humanity. Hence, they pursued it to such a degree that they surpassed other nations in developed and productivity and carried the torch of civilizations for many centuries.

SIKHISM

Sikhism came into being some 500 years ago in the undivided India in 16th century. Sikhism has attached a great significance to education. Education helps in self realization and self manifestation. In this process the acquisition of divine knowledge helps in harmonious development of body, mind and soul. Education is the most significant element of all. It is ignorance which binds the mind and education is compared with the light of sun. Just as the darkness when a lamp is lighted, ignorance of our mind is removed through the study of books of wisdom. With the help of knowledge man is able to discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong. He shuns evil and follows a virtuous path.

A knowledgeable man is able to fight impulses of his mind with the sword of knowledge. Guru Nanak education is not synonymous with book learning, he differentiated education from mere information and passing of examination on the modern times. One may read innumerable books and still may not be a rightly educated person. Reading loads of books without realization and understanding the knowledge gained is useless. It is a burden of mind. A mere store of information or knowledge does not constitute real education. The ability to use what we learn is the fundamental aim of intellectual education. Like the modern educationists Sikh guru believed that education that kindles the spark for quest and enquiry in man improves his thinking, sharpens his imagination and makes him socially useful person, is the right education. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism was a pioneer of new educational movement. He had definite views on education, role of education in human life and the teacher and the content of education.

In Sikhism concept of teacher is elevating and inspiring for the instructors of today. Like the modern educationists he believes that every child is endowed with infinite potentialities which can be made to blossom under the personal care of teacher through dedicated efforts, "in the mine of human soul there so many gems and jewels of faculty waiting for development only if one cares to listen to the word of teacher.

Sikh gurus not only expressed their views on education, took practical steps to educate their masses. In those days the illiteracy was widespread. Instead of Sanskrit and Persian, he preferred to impart education in vernacular. It helped him to take education to the doors of masses. They seem to understand the psychology of children and wanted to get education in their mother tongue.

Second guru, Guru Anagad introduced a new alphabet known as Gurmukhi Script, by modifying the existing Punjabi script characters. He also opened many schools for the education of children. As Persian was the language of Mughal Government, it was mandatory to get education in Persian and Sanskrit along with vernacular Punjabi. It gave rise to new literacy movement that spread among the people. A network of simple informal type of elementary school sprang up to make education accessible to all. By the time of tenth guru, the knowledge of three hours, as well as skill in warfare became essential equipment of a Sikh.

CONCLUSION

Thus it may be seen that education is not a new concept, it is part of our lives since ancient times. Different religions from all over the world have promoted education and made it a source of multidimensional development of mind, body and soul. Be it the oldest religion or the newest one, they all support the importance of education for the race of human beings. The methodology may differ, the language may vary, but the essence remained the same.



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