

Chapter – 11

Ancient Education System Of India

Comprehension Check

Q1. Why were travellers attracted towards India?

Answer. Most travellers were attracted towards India because of the fame of Indian culture, its wealth, religions, philosophies, art, architecture, along with its educational practices that had spread far and wide across the world. The Indian education system of ancient times was considered as a rich source of knowledge, traditions and practices that helped in guiding and encouraging humanity as a whole. For travellers, India was a land of great wonder.

Q2. What were the sources of the ancient education system?

Answer. The different sources of ancient system of education was the education imparted from the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and Dharmasutras. The writings of Aryabhata, Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali and the medical treatises of Charaka and Sushruta were also some of the rich sources of learning. Besides, the sources of learning were drawn from various disciplines such as Itihas (history), Anviksiki (logic), Mimamsa (interpretation), Shilpashastra (architecture), Arthashastra (polity), Varta (agriculture, trade, commerce, animal husbandry) and Dhanurvedya (archery).

Q3. What were the features of education system in ancient India?

Answer. Some of the features of education system in ancient India included the following:

1. Teaching and learning followed the tenets of Vedas and Upanishads fulfilling duties towards self, family and society, thus encompassing all aspects of life.
2. Education system focused both on learning and physical development.
3. The emphasis of education was on maintaining a healthy mind and healthy body.
4. Education in India had a heritage of being pragmatic, achievable and complementary to life.

Q4. What was the role of guru in pupils' lives?

Answer. In ancient times, the Gurus and their pupils worked conscientiously together to become proficient in all aspects of learning. Shastrartha (learned debates) were organized to assess pupils' learning. Pupils at an advanced stage of learning guided younger pupils, just as we have peer groups to share knowledge among ourselves. During that period, the Gurus and their shishyas lived together and they would help each other in everyday life. The main objective was to having end-to-end learning,

leading a disciplined life and realising a learner's inner potential. Students would live away from their homes for many years until their goals were fully achieved. The gurukul was the place where the Guru-shishya relationship became stronger with time. While pursuing their education in different disciplines like history, art of debate, law, medicine, etc., the emphasis was not just on the outer dimensions of the discipline. It also enriched the inner dimensions of the personality.

Q5. Where did nuns and monks receive their education?

Answer. The nuns and monks received their education from various monasteries or viharas which were educational centres of art and learning. These centres were mainly set up to meditate, discuss and debate with the learned to satisfy their quest for knowledge during the ancient period.

Q6. What is Panini known for?

Answer. Panini was a legendary Indian Sanskrit grammarian who was an expert in language and grammar and authored one of the greatest works on grammar called Ashtadhyayi. He was a revered scholar in ancient India who was considered as the "Father of Linguistics" who gave a detailed scientific theory of phonetics, morphology and phonology.

Q7. Which university did Xuan zang and I-Qing study at?

Answer. The Chinese scholars' I-Qing and Xuan Zang visited Nalanda in the 7th century CE. When Xuan Zang visited it, Nalanda was called Nala, which was a centre of higher learning in various subjects.

Q8. Which subject did Xuan Zang study in India?

Answer. Xuan Zang studied Yogashastra, grammar, logic and Sanskrit during his time at the Nalanda University in India.

Q9. How did society help in the education of the students?

Answer. During ancient times, knowledge was considered sacred and hence no fee was charged for imparting it. The contributions towards education from wealthy counterparts was regarded as the highest form of donation. Different people contributed differently. Financial support mostly came from rich merchants, wealthy parents and society. Apart from gifts of buildings, the universities would also receive gifts of land from wealthy people. The free form of education was mostly prevalent in ancient universities such as Valabhi, Vikramshila and Jagaddala.

Exercise

Q1. Which salient features of the ancient education system of India made it globally renowned?

Answer: Some of the salient features of the ancient education system of India that made it globally renowned are listed as below:

1. As our ancient education system in India evolved over the period, it focused on the holistic development of the individual that included taking care of both the inner and the outer self.
2. The ancient system focused on the spiritual, physical, moral and intellectual aspects of life.
3. It emphasized on values such as truthfulness, humility, self-reliance, discipline and respect for all creative works.
4. Students were taught to appreciate and strike a balance between human beings and nature.
5. Teachers taught and followed the tenets of Vedas and Upanishads, which mentioned fulfilling one's responsibilities towards self, family and society covering all the aspects of life.

Q2. Why do you think students from other countries came to India to study at that time?

Answer. In ancient times, students from China, Korea, Tibet, Burma, Ceylon, Java, Nepal and other distant countries were attracted to come to India and study as India was considered a land of wonder with a rich source of knowledge that had educational centres of higher learning. Various monasteries or viharas were set up for monks and nuns to meditate, debate and discuss with the learned to satisfy their quest for knowledge during this period.

Besides, Takshashila was also a noted centre of learning that included religious teachings of Buddhism, for several centuries. It continued to attract students from around the world until its destruction in the 5th century CE.

Q3. Why is education considered 'a way of life'?

Answer. Education is considered 'a way of life' because in ancient India, there was the existence of both formal and informal modes of education system. Indigenous education was imparted at home, gurukuls, tols, temples, Pathshalas and chatuspadis. People in homes, villages and temples would guide young children and help them in imbibing the pious and ideal ways of life.

Q4. What do you understand by holistic education?

Answer. Holistic education refers to the development of the inner and outer self of an individual which prepares them for life. Although ancient education system in India was free, it was not centralized. Its foundations were mostly laid in the rich cultural traditions of India that helped in the development of the physical, spiritual, intellectual and artistic aspects of life holistically.

Q5. Why do you think Takshashila and Nalanda have been declared heritage sites?

Answer. Takshashila was an ancient Indian city that was declared to be a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1980 because it was considered an important archaeological site and a place of core learning due to its teachers' expertise.

Being one of the oldest universities of the world, Nalanda was a centre of learning from the 5th century CE to 12th century CE. UNESCO declared the ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara as a world heritage site.