

RELEVANCE OF VEDIC EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

Dr. Harjinder Kaur

Assistant Professor, Khalsa College of Education Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar (Punjab)

Abstract

Vedic civilization is the oldest civilization in the world, and India was the first country to develop a better education system in the Vedic period. The Vedic education system, which is very relevant in the present times, is based on simple living and smart thinking. The discoveries, inventions, theories, concepts of modern times are largely based on Vedic knowledge/literature. Many scientists have studied Vedic literature to gain in-depth insights into scientific, spiritual, psychological, behavioural knowledge. The ancient Gurukul education system was respected worldwide due to its multi-faceted, life and scientific management approach, various skills and knowledge imparted from childhood. Development of leadership qualities, principles and concepts of management, teamwork, problem solving techniques with ease and calm mind, understanding the mind and its complexity, sharpening the intellect and memory, observing and managing the ego, understanding the soul spiritually and through scientific methods, research and development, environmental management, besides science, mathematics, social sciences, grammar were all part of the Vedic education system in our ancient Gurukul system. Thus, Vedic education is the basic foundation of India's culture and rich heritage. Through this study, an attempt has been made to show the relevance of Vedic education in the context of National Education Policy 2020.

Keywords: Education, Vedic education, National education policy (NEP) 2020

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a significant reform in India's education system, aiming to create an inclusive, flexible, and holistic education system that caters to the diverse needs of the 21st century. The policy emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and holistic

development, aligning with the ancient Vedic principles of education. Vedic education, rooted in India's rich cultural heritage, prioritized physical, mental, and spiritual growth, moral values, discipline, a close teacher-student relationship, and an experiential learning approach. NEP 2020 seeks to rejuvenate the Indian education system by reintroducing these holistic and value-based elements. It emphasizes moral and ethical education, critical thinking, and experiential learning, echoing the essence of Vedic teachings. The policy advocates for a multidisciplinary curriculum, flexibility in subject choices, and emphasis on vocational training, aligning with the Vedic principle of education for self-reliance and overall development. The focus on inclusive and equitable education resonates with the democratic ethos of Vedic education, where all students, regardless of their background, had access to knowledge. Integrating the timeless wisdom of Vedic education within the framework of NEP 2020 can lead to the development of well-rounded, ethical, and competent individuals, poised to contribute positively to society.

Objectives

- To study the principles and merits of Vedic education.
- To identify the relevance of Vedic education in the context of NEP 2020.

Methodology

This is a theoretical work based on secondary data sources such as books, papers, Google websites, reports, and the researcher's observations, historical research which explores in detail the Vedic education system and find out the importance and relevance of it in the present education system.

Vedic Education

The word Veda is derived from the verb Vid, with the prefix Dhyana- meaning emotion, action (karma) and result. Vedas are derived from Smriti and Shruti, Vedic education is the mirror of all learning. The cultural system of India is rooted in Vedic education. It is appropriate to call Vedic education a reflection of spiritual knowledge. Vedic literature includes the following: 4 Vedas, 6 Vedangas, 4 Upvedas, 4 Brahmanas, 184 Upanishads, 6 systems of philosophy, Bhagavad Gita, 3 Smritis. There are various features of Vedic education which are acceptable in

the modern education system. According to Rabindranath Tagore - The highest education is that which not only gives us knowledge but also harmonizes our life with all existence.

Vedic Education: Principles

- **Holistic Development:** Physical education emphasizes physical health through yoga and sports, while mental development encourages intellectual growth through various disciplines like philosophy, science, mathematics, and arts. Spiritual growth is emphasized through meditation, mantra recitation, and sacred text study.
- **Gurukul System:** Residential education involves students living with their Guru in an ashram or Gurukul, providing an immersive learning environment. This approach allows for personalized instruction and mentorship, while also emphasizing community living and collective responsibility.
- **Ethical and Moral Education:** Dharma, or righteousness, is the teaching of ethical and moral principles, guiding personal and social conduct. It focuses on character building, developing virtues like honesty, integrity, compassion, and humility.
- **Connection with Nature:** Education in natural settings fostered environmental awareness and sustainability by teaching sustainable living practices and the importance of preserving natural resources.
- **Self-Discipline and Self-Realization:** The education system emphasizes self-control, encouraging daily routines, meditation, and ethical principles. It encourages introspection for personal growth and self-awareness, ultimately aiming for self-realization and recognition of one's true self and potential.
- **Experiential Learning:** Practical application involves direct experience, observation, and knowledge application, while hands-on activities reinforce theoretical knowledge through real-world experiences.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Continuous education promotes lifelong learning and knowledge pursuit beyond formal education, while adaptability emphasizes being open to new ideas and knowledge throughout life.

- **Integration of Knowledge:** The interdisciplinary approach in education promotes a comprehensive understanding of various subjects, fostering a harmonious balance between physical, mental, and spiritual development.
- **Cultural and Artistic Education:** The curriculum incorporates arts and aesthetics, promoting creativity and beauty appreciation, while teaching cultural heritage and traditions to instil identity and continuity.
- **Social Responsibility:** Community service promotes social service and societal welfare, while leadership and citizenship development involve active participation in community activities for the development of responsible citizenship.

Vedic Education: Merits

If we look at the present conditions, needs, possibilities and aspirations of India, Vedic education has many merits in it which can be adopted in some form or the other:

- **Free education:** No fees were charged from the students in the Vedic period.
- **Objectives of education:** The main objectives of education in the Vedic period were preservation and enhancement of health, development of knowledge, social, national duty, preservation of culture, moral and character development, livelihood education, arts, skills and spiritual development.
- **Comprehensive curriculum of education:** The curriculum in the Vedic period included the development of the aspects of people, i.e. natural, social and spiritual and to achieve these goals the curriculum included both types of subjects and activities of Para (spiritual) and Aparā (material).
- **Specialization:** Specialization in the field was introduced in higher education in our country in the Vedic period.
- **Development of good teaching methods:** Teachers in the Vedic period had developed many good methods of teaching like simulation, lectures, question-answer, listening-practice, reasoning, experiments and exercises, drama and storytelling.

- **Disciplined life of teachers and students:** The rules of Gurukul in the Vedic period were very strict and both teachers and students followed them.
- **Cordial relationship between teachers and students:** Teachers looked after the well-being of students and made every effort for their all-round development. Students, in turn, respected their teachers, followed their orders and served them.
- **Appropriate environment and ritual oriented life pattern of Gurukuls:** Gurukuls in the Vedic period was located in the calm and serene environment of forests away from pollution.

Relevance of Vedic education in the context of NEP 2020

As we all know about the quality and richness of the Vedic education process in the ancient times. Many powerful influences are still present in our modern instruction pedagogy. I have tried to mention these effects in the following lines.

- **Moral Education:** Man is a social animal and he has to learn various social habits, like respecting elders and teachers, helping the poor, respecting women. Vedic education was completely based on moral values and emphasis was laid on moral education. If we really want a better society, pious people then moral education should be made the main weapon to change the nature of students. We are living in the modern age but we are proud of the civilization and culture of our ancestors which we have inherited. We still give importance to religion, God and worthy deeds. We give more importance to character, spiritualism, philosophy than wealth, materialism and science. The present world respects money power violence and diplomacy while we believe in truth, non-violence and detachment. We still believe in idealism and want to live an ideal life. From ancient times to the present, whatever education policies have come in India from time to time, moral education has been given a very important place. NEP 2020 emphasizes the integration of value-based education to nurture ethical and responsible citizens. Schools can adopt moral education programs that focus on character building, respect, and compassion. This can be achieved through curriculum reforms, extracurricular activities, and community engagement projects.

- **Discipline, teacher-student relationship:** The sense of discipline and cordial relationship between the teacher and disciple of the Vedic era is well known to the world. Today we see that the educational environment has become so toxic due to indiscipline and it has become a problem. To adopt the ideal relationship between teacher and disciple, teacher-disciple relationship can be created, and a sense of discipline can be developed. Keeping this in mind, NEP-2020 has proposed inter-disciplinary education as a holistic approach in all sciences to ensure knowledge harmony and integrity. Education is paramount in human life as it has the potential to make the world a better place. This can be called the best example of universalization of education and right to education in the current context.
- **Curriculum:** Education is something that makes a man self-reliant and selfless (Rig Veda). Education in the Vedic period was not only for the acquisition of knowledge but its main aim was character building and preparation for the eternal bliss of the afterlife. Gurus used to teach different subjects from Sanskrit to holy scriptures and from mathematics to metaphysics according to the interest of the children. The direct or indirect form of this is found in the modern school curriculum in the form of increased flexibility and choice of subjects for study including subjects in physical education, arts and crafts, and vocational skills. Keeping in mind, NEP 2020 promotes a multidisciplinary approach, allowing students to choose subjects based on their interests. This flexibility aligns with Vedic principles, encouraging holistic development and catering to diverse talents and interests.
- **Students' Life:** In the Vedic age students were encouraged to lead a simple life. Nowadays the lifestyle of our young generation has completely changed. They prefer to live a life full of fashion and show. They have abandoned the principle of 'simple living and high thinking' and have adopted the opposite principle i.e. high living and simple thinking. So that their life can be healthy and smooth, emphasis is being laid on moral education to make them realize the importance of the ancient style of life.
- **Education for self-reliance:** Ancient schools followed the principle of education for self-reliance. Modern education emphasizes on preparing the students themselves for their future life. NEP 2020 highlights the importance of vocational education to prepare

students for real-world challenges. Integrating vocational training and life skills into the curriculum can enhance self-reliance and employability.

- **Teaching Method:** During the Vedic period, education was centered around the student, with no single method of instruction. Students were taught through recitation, question-answer, debate, discussion, and storytelling. There was no classroom teaching, but a monitorial system was prevalent, with senior pupils teaching juniors. The teaching methods were mainly oral, with emphasis on memorizing Vedic hymns and Richayas to preserve their original forms. Grammar and pronunciation were compulsory for all. The thinking method was used to preserve Vedic mantras and Richayas. Manan, a higher method of teaching, developed and preserved the meanings of Vedic mantras in one's mind. This method encouraged highly intelligent students to research and was akin to ancient times when Manan (reflection) was a special method for highly intelligent students. Modern education can benefit from incorporating Vedic methods such as interactive and experiential learning. NEP 2020 encourages innovative teaching methods that promote critical thinking and creativity. Techniques like group discussions, peer teaching, and project-based learning can be effective.
- **All-round Development of the Child:** The main aim of education in ancient India was integral and all-round development. The same aim has been kept in modern education also. Ancient education never neglected physical development, although the main emphasis was on intellectual and spiritual development. For this, the students were provided with a peaceful, quiet, clean, attractive and natural environment away from the cities and villages. Keeping in mind NEP 2020 aims to provide holistic education that addresses the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of students. Schools can create supportive environments that offer a wide range of activities and subjects to foster overall growth.
- **Equality of Opportunity:** Vedic age education was democratic in its approach to education. All students, whether rich or poor, prince or commoner, were treated alike. In modern India too, the constitution has adopted the principle of equality in the field of education. Modern education systems strive to ensure equality of opportunity. NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusive education, aiming to bridge gaps and provide equitable access to

education for all students. Policies and practices that promote inclusivity and diversity can help achieve this goal.

- **Free and Universalization of Education:** Vedic age education was free and universal. The fee, if any, was to be paid after completion of education in the form of Guru Dakshina from the earnings of the youth receiving education. During education, boarding and lodging was free for almost all these students. After independence, our constitution makers made it clear that it is the duty of all governments to provide free education to every child in the age group of 0-14 years. Many programs have been adopted for this. Thus, we can say that the education of the Vedic era is important in the modern era. Today, under the NEP 2020, it has been talked about providing free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 to 14.

Conclusion

The Vedic education system is one of the oldest education systems in India and it was independently born in ancient India. The main objective of the Vedic education system is to properly develop the moral, spiritual and intellectual aspects of a learner. So basically, Vedic education teaches to become a better human being which is necessary even in modern times. Modern education not only focuses on the major academic subjects of commerce, science and arts but also aims to promote the all-round development of students i.e. critical thinking, life skills, value education, analytical skills and decision-making skills. NEP 2020 provides a framework for incorporating these ancient ideals, creating an inclusive, flexible, and value-based educational environment. Embracing the richness of Vedic education can lead to the development of well-rounded, ethical, and self-reliant individuals capable of contributing positively to society. Overall, it can be said that the ancient Vedic education system holds an important place even in the 21st century and its relevance remains even today.

References:

- Chalukya, B.V.(2020).Ancient vedic education in present era.*Professonal perks of book reading*. Gaurang Publishing Globalize Pvt. Ltd. Mumbai.

- Koshti, P.V.& Shaikh, A. S.(2021). Change in nature of education from vedic to modern era. *Educational Resurgence Journal*,3(6),42-52.
- Kumari,P.(2017). Education system in vedic period. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*,4(9),620-623.
- Rather, Z. A.& Upadehyaya.(2015). Concept of Vedic Education And Importance of Moral Education. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*,20(12), 9-15.
- Ratnesh, K., Jain, A., & Saharan, H.(2023). Significance of ancient vedic education in present era. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science*,5(2),1840-1845.
- Sengupta, S.S. & Mondal, T.(2021).Significance of Vedic education system in present time. *International Journal of Sanskrit Research*,7(1),371-376.
- Kaur, H. (2024). NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020: SKILL ENHANCEMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION. *Edumania-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 02(01), 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.59231/edumania/9015>

About Author

Dr. Harjinder Kaur is an Assistant Professor at Khalsa College of Education Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar (Punjab) with a diverse educational background, including a Master's degree in Hindi, History and Education, a Ph.D. and UGC Net in Education. She has taught B.Ed., M.Ed. classes. She has also published articles, research papers in UGC Care journals, and delivered guest lectures in many institutions. She has also presented paper at conferences and seminars, and has developed e-learning delivery. Dr. Kaur has also participated in various programs and workshops, including the Faculty Induction Programme, Refresher Courses.