

CHAPTER - TWO

PRE BRITISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.1 Pre British education system in India

British Indian society was not without any scientific culture and it lived by agriculture and handicrafts, which presupposed such sciences as astronomy, agronomy, mathematics and machines. It also witnessed the science of medicine. Not only these the Indian people had done remarkable work in the field of sciences such as mathematics, chemistry and medicine, centuries before most of the modern peoples of the world ever awoke to civilized life but Indian society became stabilized almost at the same economic and cultural level for a long period and they did not progress appreciably. That period witnessed the growth of various interpretations of the idealistic philosophy and it had formulated in the Upanishads but it did not accomplish any striking development in the sphere of natural sciences and technology. By introducing modern education in India, the British brought Indian people in contact with the extensive and profound achievements of the modern west in the sphere of scientific and social scientific knowledge.¹

Hindu society in pre- British period was caste stratified and it is the caste system which assigned a specific social function to each caste. It was the Brahmin caste who had the exclusive right to preach religious doctrines, to officiate as priest and above all as to function as a teachers and they alone had the privilege to study all higher religious and secular knowledge. On the other side, other castes were debarred by religious edicts enforced by the Hindu state from all higher studies. The Brahmin caste studied in special seminaries started for the purpose like *Tols*, *Vidyalayas* and

1. A.R Desai, *Op.cit*, 2010, P.126.

Chatuspathis and the medium of instruction was Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Hindus, in which only, all religious and higher secular knowledge was expressed.

It is difficult to find out any records what the Hindu and Buddhist kings did for education before the third century B.C.E but there were of course, the old *Brahmanical* system of education prevailing in India. According to this system the pupils were required to spend a good many years, from the age of six to twenty-one, in the house of their preceptors.² It must be noted that education was not universal but it was confined to particular classes. There were three types of institutions that are the '*Parishads*', the *Tols* and the *Pathsalas*, The *Parishads* were assemblies of the elders, almost exclusively for the Brahmins community. Their function was primarily to assist the kings in the interpretation of law and usages and they might be compared to the judicial assemblies. They used to take part in the studies of philosophy, logic and law for advance work and they also can be compared to the association of teachers in Europe in the middle ages which developed later into universities.

The *Tols* were the second type of these institutions for imparting education, and it had residential quarters attached to it. In the early Hindu period the word *Matha* meant a residence of pupils and ascetics.³ The *Mathas* which used to take in only students gradually came to be called *Tols* and the *Tolas* a rule admitted only the Brahmin students. The students remained at the *Tol* for eight to 12 years from their early age of about ten years, and the years of residence depends on the subjects whom the student used to study and specialize in. They used to live in the simplest manner in huts which was built and repaired at the expense of the *pundit* or teacher. But in a few *Tols* the teacher did not live with the students but they used to come every day early in the morning and stayed till sunset. Each *Tols* used to take in about 25 students and

2. J.M. Sen, *Op.cit*, 2002, P.5.

3. *Ibid.* P.6.

the senior students used to act as guardians of the juniors in the absence of teacher. Not only that there were no fees charged in the *Tols*, but the teacher also provided the students with food and clothing. As regards with the financial help of the teacher, it depended entirely on the generosity of the public and the more famous a teacher become, the more he used to get grants and presents from the benevolent rulers, and citizens.

The *Pathsalas* were the real elementary schools in ancient India which imparted instructions in reading, writing and arithmetic and these schools are still numerous throughout the country. The schoolmaster of the *Pathsalas* was an officer of the village community and either rent free lands were assigned to him or he was given some grains out of the village harvest as rumeration. The early schoolmasters were the *Brahmins* and his chief functions were to offer worship to the idol- the village deity- on behalf of all classes of people who lived in the village. Not only these his subsidiary function was to impart instructions to the children of the higher castes in the three R's in the vernacular together with precepts of morality as embodied in compilations and enforced by *Puranic* legends. Vyakaran (grammer), Abhidhan (wordbook or dictionary), and Kavya (poetry) in Sanskrit, were also taught to the most advance students of the superior castes.⁴Sometimes the *Pathsala* teacher could charge fees for his tuition or could receive offerings in kind from the scholars and parents and the remarkable characteristics of the Hindu village community schools were that they were democratic and they were more secular than the spiritual in their instruction and their general character. The village teacher who imparted instruction in the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) to them and usually received his fees in kind, kept his school open to all seasons of the year to admit them

4. *Ibid.* P.17.

according to their convenience to his school which they left after they had pick up the necessary elementary knowledge, either to start their own work or to join their family professions.⁵ With the emergence of the Aryans there was also emergence of castes system in Indian society and the *Pathshalas* or the village schools were open to all superior castes alike, and in this sense they were democratic but it must be admitted that even these *Pathshalas* were closed to those who lay outside the regular caste system, to those who were considered untouchables and to innumerable aboriginal inhabitants of the country.

Indian society at the end of the 18th century had consisted of several classes and a very large number of castes and tribes. During that time the princely governments had not accepted any responsibility for the education of the common. Priestly class who formed a very small minority needed formal institutions for religious instruction and therefore created and maintained them through their own efforts, with such support from the princes and the people as they could master.⁶ The small class of government servants, traders, money-lenders and landlords also did needed some elementary education in three R's. So they organized for themselves the institutions for this purpose and these could also be availed of by others if they so desired. The bulk of the population, however, never went formal educational institutions, and the principal means of their education were non-formal. They desired and needed most was vocational education and they generally obtained it by working at the family occupations. The women as a rule never went to schools but they learnt the art of home making, child rearing, and participating in the family occupations, through an apprenticeship to their mothers and other elderly women in the family.

5. Suresh Chandra Ghosh, Op.cit, 2011, P.275.

6. J.P.Naik, and Syed Nurullah. *A Students history of education in India, 1800-1973*, New Delhi, 2011, P.2.

The development of vernacular largely facilitated the expansion of elementary learning that is knowledge of three R's or knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic at the village level. From time immemorial the village school existed in some form or other to meet the educational requirements of the people other than the priestly classes who monopolized the Vedic schools where studies in Sanskrit religious scriptures were imparted.⁷In ancient India since Mauryan period the village assemblies or functionaries were under the village *Pradhan* or headman who managed the affairs of the village and in post-Gupta period such a village assembly often consisted of the whole adult population or of *Brahmanas* or of a few great men of the village selected by a kind of ballot.

With the emergence of Islam and Muslim rule in India, most part of the country came under its influence and the actual control was limited only to the imperial and provincial capitals and the adjoining areas. The native village communities with their village schools remained unaffected by the establishment of the new government in the country which did not interfere with them as long as there was no violent crime or defiance of royal authority in the locality. But during the time of Ala-ud-din Khilji and Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq and later under the Mughal rulers Islam penetrated the remote villages and as more and more converts from Hinduism began to join its ranks, numerous mosques with *Maktabs* began to appear on the scenes. The new converts began to receive their elementary education in Arabic and Persian languages. They were required to learn these languages particularly Arabic to study the Quran. The *Maktab* which was endowed and supported by a rich Muslim not only institutionalized the concept of education in a village but inspired others from the Hindu communities in the village similarly to come forward to support the

7.Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Op.cit*, P.274.

education of their children. The doors of the *Maktab*s began to open to the Hindus in such villages where there were no schools for children of the Hindus and conversely the Muslim children would often attend a Hindu school when there was no such *Maktab* in a village which was donated by Hindus. In this regard *Khurshid-Jahan-Namah* asserts that in Silapur in Bengal there were some educational institutions where both Hindus and Muslims were taught Persian and Arabic. The medium of instruction was the regional language of Bengal, which was in this case Bengali. During the Mughal rule in India there existed numerous such village schools in the villages. Shoberl gives a valuable description of such a school in the Deccan in his *Hindusthan in Miniature*: “The pupils sit cross-legged on a bench or the floor. They write on paper with reed pens, or with tubes of some other kind. The paper mostly imported from China is not so good as that of Europe. It is smooth, very thin and easily tears. The Quran is chiefly read by the *Mussalmans* who also study the Persian language.”⁸ It is possible Shoberl may be referring to an advanced stage in elementary education where paper was used chiefly for writing but before this stage it was either the slat or an oblong board which could be washed clean at the close of a session or banana and palm leaves were in use. It was in case of Bengal at the end of medieval era of Indian History.

The aim of Islamic primary education was to teach the students knowledge of the alphabets and religious prayers and this was done in the *Maktab*s. The term *Maktab* is derived from the Arabic word *Kutub*, meaning a place where writing is taught and these *Maktab*s were attached to mosques. Usually when a mosque was built, the buildings of the *Maktab*s were also constructed along with the mosque and it was the chief place where primary education was imparted to children. There were

8. Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Op.cit*, P.276.

also the *Khanqahs* or monasteries and *Dargahas* or shrines where education was imparted to the children of *Islam* and *Maulavi* or religious preceptor of Islam was appointed to these places by the builders of *Khanqahs* and *Dargahas*. The offerings made at these shrines by the devotees contributed towards the maintenance of the *Maulavis* apart from the regular help they received from the patrons of the shrines.⁹

2.2 Admission and Curriculum

Like *Vidyarambha* or *Upanayuna* the methods of admission of students in the *Brahmanical* system of education, there was also a special method of admission for the students to the *Maktabs*. Education among Mohammedans used to commence with the formal observance of a ceremony known as *Bismillah*. In this system when a child is four years, four months, and four days old, the friends of the family assemble and the child is dressed in his best cloths, brought into the company and seated on a cushion in the presence of all. The alphabet, the form of letters use for computation, the introduction to the Quran, some verse of chapter 55, and the whole of chapter 87 are placed before him, and he is taught to pronounce them in succession.¹⁰ And in this process if the child is self-willed, and refuses to read, he is made to pronounce to *Bismillah*, which answers every purpose, and from that his education is deemed to have commenced. Besides the royal family children the general Mohammedan children received primary education in *Maktabs* and not only these some Hindu children also learnt Persian in the *Maktabs*. In the beginning the children were taught the script through the help of eye and ear and the knowledge of the script was followed by the study of the thirtieth chapter of the Quran which contained verses of daily prayer and Fatima that is verses recited at the time of burial ceremony. The

9. P.L. Rawat, *History of Indian Education*, Agra, 2014, P.87.

10. *Ibid.* P.88.

children were also taught *Pandnamah* of Sadi and they were not required and expected to understand it but much attention was paid to the correctness of pronunciation. The study was followed by the teaching in the art of writing and the Persian grammar was caused to be crammed by the students. The *Gulistan* and *Bostan* of Sadi were also taught and explained to the children which help their knowledge of morals. The students were also taught certain poetic works as *Yusuf* and *Zulekha*, *Laila* and *Manju* and *Sikandarnamah* etc. not only these, elementary arithmetic, mode of conversation, correspondence, drawing of petition etc. were included in *Maktab* education system.

2.3 Madrasah

In the medieval period Islamic higher education was imparted in the *Madrasahs* and these were the places where eminent scholars used to deliver lectures. In *Madrasah* a numbers of erudite teachers conducted their teaching work in different subject through lectures and they were usually appointed by the state and certain altruistic wealthy persons. The students entered into *Madrasah* after finishing their academic career in *Maktab*s and for this no formal ceremony were observed. The administration of *Madrasah* was conducted by a private managing body or respective benefactors and the states used to sanction financial aid to these institutions but in view of non-existence of any state education departments, their management was not in the hands of the state. Generally lands and some specific sum of money were granted to *Madrasahs* and in certain places lodging and boarding of the students in hostels were also granted by the government. But these provisions were made by individual rulers being promoted by religious sentiments or sense of self-honours and not only these they also encouraged higher education by appointing students to high and honorable post under state. Higher education in *Madrasah* can be put under two categories that is

(a) Secular and (b) Religious and the course covered a period of some ten to twelve years in all.

The Secular education system in *Madrasah* included in its curriculum subjects like Arabic grammar, prose, literature and logic and philosophy, law, astrology, arithmetic, history, geography, medicine, agriculture and composition etc. the medium of instructions was mainly Arabic, although Aurangzeb emphasized the use of mother tongue in place of Arabic as medium of education because he felt that a child was incapable of acquiring proficiency in Persian or Arabic even after the education in them for twelve years.¹¹ And with regard to prayers, Aurangzeb thought that the students could be taught in mother tongue and in this way learning would be simple. On the other hand the religious education system in *Madrasah* is the composition of comprehensive and profound study of the Quran, commentary on Quran, traditions of the Prophet Mohammad, Islamic laws, and sometimes the tenets of Sufi creed. In the earlier stage the Mohammedans had specially stressed on secular education and they felt the dire necessity of multiplying their number in India, and to this end they converted many Hindus into Muslims and initiated them to Islam. These converts needed religious education and hence in course of time religious education dominated the scene. The curriculum of education was changed during the reign of Akbar and he adopted the policy of religious toleration. The Emperor therefore, anticipated some danger to the safety of his empire in providing only Islamic education to the Hindus and in addition to that, the prevalent system of education appeared to be quite unsuitable to practical life. Akbar also established colleges for the Hindu children where they were taught Hindu religion, philosophy and literature along with Persian. The Hindus had also already begun the study of Persian with a view to availing

11. *Ibid.* P.89.

themselves of the benefit of state service and Raja Todarmal deserves special mention in this connection. Emperor Akbar was not satisfied with the contemporary system of education and he therefore introduced improvements in the education system by broadening the sphere of curricula. Thus he made the education system much more suitable and beneficial to the practical needs of life. AbulFazl has given the following account about the content of contemporary education in *Ain-i-Akbari* “every boy ought to read books on morals, arithmetic, the notation, peculiar to arithmetic, agriculture, mensuration, geometry, physiognomy, household matters, the rules of govt., medicine, logic, the *tibbiriyazi* and *ilahahi* sciences, and history; all of which may be gradually acquired. In studying Sanskrit students ought to learn the *Vyakarana*, *Nyaya*, *Vedanta*, and *Patanjali*. No one should be allowed to neglect these things which the present time requires.”¹² Mughal ruler Aurangzeb was not as broadminded as Akbar in matters of education and religion. During his reign Aurangzeb examined the defects of educational system. Aurangzeb had an aversion to hypocrisy and vanity in spite of being in favour of religious education and he had also strong faith in such system of education as might prepare the child for the practical aspects of life. He also did not like the idea that the precious time of children should be wasted in learning ancient and classical literature only and he was in favour of rendering higher education of more practical utility by including in the curriculum that is the study of history, Geography, Philosophy, art of warfare, politics and diplomacy. Emperor Akbar, in his reign, had aimed at making education more useful and substantial but after Akbar the educational curriculum had deteriorated. So, Aurangzeb in his reign eagerly tried to improve the education system and curriculum but it should be however, remembered that his attention was more towards the education of princes

12. *Ibid.* P.90.

than to that of common masses and consequently subjects of practical utility could not be included in the curriculum of general education.

Owing to the predominance of higher Arabic and Persian literature, grammar, prosody and poetry, the medieval Indian institutions laid special emphasis upon bookish and theoretical learning as in contemporary European institutions. Their learning was based upon knowledge of pure literature, poetry, logic, philosophy and dry and rigid grammatical principles. During that period education was imparted simply and meaningfully for the sake of *education* and not for the sake of *life*. The teachers and the students spent their time in a jugglery of words over any philosophical issue or in appreciating different aspects and the subjects of law were also imparted in the *Madrasah*. Like Buddhist and *Brahmanical* system of education, the basis of medieval Indian Islamic education system was also religion and the law was based on religious work *Quran* and the long standing traditions was the conversations. On this ground Islamic education system in medieval India was of a lower standard and it was less developed than ancient Indian system of education. Generally music was taught and it was not a popular subject but in royal courts musicians were highly honoured, Tansen in the court of Emperor Akbar was a unique example of it. Education in architecture and sculpture was also imparted in medieval India but it was in traditional form.

In the Islamic education system, the methods of teaching in *Maktabs* were very simple. When a child could speak accurately, *Qalama* was caused to be crammed by the child and afterwards the child learnt some verses from the *Quran* by rote. When the child attained the age nearly seven years, religious education was started with the study of the holy *Quran*. The vogue of cramming and memorizing was prevalent in Islamic education system and the methods of teaching in the *Maktabs*

were mainly oral. During the Mughal period, Emperor Akbar soon realized that much of the precious time was merely wasted in learning useless words and he introduced improvement in the methods of teachings in respective Islamic educational institutions. In this regards P.L. Rawat in his work *History of Indian Education* laid some lines from Ain-I-Akbari of AbulFazl, which was quoted by Nadvi: “In every country, but especially in Hindustan, boys are kept for years at schools where they learn the consonants and vowels. A great portion of the life of the students is wasted by making them read many books. His majesty orders that every schoolboy should first learn to write the letters of the alphabet and also learn to trace forms.

“He ought to learn the shape and name of each letter which may be done in two days, when the boy should proceed to write the joined letters. They may be practice for a week, after which the boy should learn some prose and poetry by heart, and the commit to memory some verses to the praise of God, or moral sentences, each written separately. Care is to be taken that he learns to understand everything himself, but the teacher may assist him a little. He then ought, for some time, daily practice in writing a hemistich; the verse; the former lesson. If this method of teaching be adopted, a boy will learn in a month or even in a day what it took others years to understand, so much so that people will get quite astonished.”¹³

From the above quoted lines it appears that Akbar introduced a scientific method of teaching and the method could not remain in force for long and died out gradually. Not only Akbar, Aurangzeb also complaining of the wasting of time in learning alphabet of Arabic and Persian and a long and continuous task of learning words.

13. *Ibid.* P.93.

In the Islamic education system higher education was conducted in *Madrasahs* and there too the method of teaching was mainly in oral. The teachers adopted lecture method as is implied in the term *Madrasah* and it is derived from Arabic word *Dars* meaning a lecture, a lesson. Along with this teaching method, they encouraged the students in developing the habit of consulting books and practical and experimental education in *Tibii*, *Riyaji* and *Ilahi* was also provided. *Tibii* included medicine and physical science; and *Riyaji* included sciences which treat about quantity and comprise mathematics, astronomy, music and mechanics; while *Ilahi* consisted of divine sciences comprising everything connected with theology and the means of acquiring knowledge of God.¹⁴ In *Madrasahs*, individual attention was paid to an all-round development of students and each student was given its own subject and lesson of study so that the student might develop knowledge freely and individually. The progress of a teacher in *Madrasah* was blocked by being placed with weaker students and only capable and eminent teachers undertook the duty of teaching. 'Monitor-system' was also prevailing in *Madrasah*. Not only these, teaching of reading and writing were done separately that is writing work would be taken up after completing reading works and this resulted in an unnecessary waste of time owing to the slow progress of students implied in the process itself. That's why Mughal Emperor Akbar in order to remove these defects followed the ancient Indian tradition, and prescribed the simultaneous process of reading and writing for the students. Islamic education system's higher educational institute *Madrasah* also adopted analytical and Inductive method of teachings, where higher education was provided in such subjects as religion, logic, philosophy and politics. Another teaching method which was also in vogue during medieval Indian Islamic education system was self study. In this system

14. *Ibid.*

students would study in solitude with the occasional guidance of teachers and this method was involved in learning by rote.

In the Islamic education system there was no hostel arrangement for the students of *Maktabas* and hostels were provided in *Madrasahs* alone. Big *Jagirs* were attached to *Madrasahs* and hostels for the purpose of meeting daily expenditure incurred on their maintenance and some benevolent citizens would also construct hostels in order to earn name and social prestige. In the hostels students were provided room, carpet, food oil paper and pen by the *Madrasah*. Not only these students would also get sweets and fruits with their daily food and they were given one *Asharfi* (golden coin) each per month. Hostel life of the medieval period in Islamic education system was much more convenient and comfortable than in the *Ashramas* or *Viharas* of ancient Vedic or Buddhist age. In the Ancient and Vedic period the *Ashramas* were situated in the forest away from the haunts of mankind where students were taught the lesson of self-dependence and strict discipline but under the Medieval Indian Islamic system of education, the hostels were usually situated amidst the town where all the means of comfort for the students were provided conveniently by their guardians.

2.4 Women's Education

In medieval Indian Islamic education system, the Mohammedan women remained generally deprived of education owing to strict *Pardah* system. There is no doubt that princesses and other girls belonging from royal families as well as the daughters of wealthy nobles received education inside their own palaces. Some of them were profoundly learned persons but there was no arrangement for the girls of general masses and only a few girls would learn mere reading and writing in the local mosque

along with boys. With reference to above interpretation and medieval Indian Islamic society, Jaffer, in his work *Education of Muslim India* laid down some lines “In India daughters of Islam could not rise to the standard of perfection, their preceptors had attained in belles-letters yet when allowance is made for the age they live in the circumstances that obtained then, it will be evident that they had made a fair advance in the sphere of intellect, and it will be wrong to suppose that their education was neglected.”¹⁵

2.5 Hindu Education during Medieval Period

When Muslim invaded India, traditional education system was flourishing in India and it flowed on incessantly in spite of the vandalism presented by the invaders and Muslim rulers with regard to the destruction of educational centres of India. Hindu society was founded on solid and fundamentally invulnerable principles and as such the Mohammedan efforts could not prevail in destroying Indian culture entirely; so much so that their influence on education was insignificant.¹⁶In the medieval era many of Indian towns were confined to political agitations but the tradition of religious, social, economic, democratic and decentralized education system prevailing in the villages. Numerous well organized and established educational institutions had fallen prey to the Mohammedan vandalism but ancient Indian Hindu educational institution which was run by the preceptor or gurus that is the *Ashrams* functioned uninterruptedly in the forest of India. Even during the period of political disturbances the medieval Indian Hindus produced vast high standard literature by continuing their own educational system and there were also some saints, philosopher and warriors

15. *Ibid.* P.103.

16. *Ibid.* P.107.

who safeguard the interests of Indian traditional education and culture. They also raised their voice against the foreign atrocities and tyranny.

In the medieval period the form of Hindu education was nearly same that had existed for long ago in ancient India, and till now the preceptor or Guru taught their disciples the knowledge of *Vedas, Puranas, Smritis, Upanishads, philosophy, Logic, and Bheshaj* or medicine in their respective Ashrams. Not only these the students still led a life of severe discipline and serve their Guru or preceptor and remained close contact with them but disciplines was followed not so strictly as it was done in ancient India. In medieval period regional language like Hindi which was originated from *Prakrit* made appreciable progress and it became the *lingua franca* of the masses in northern India. It also used as the media of Hindu education and there was also the evidence of developing regional language like Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarati and Bengoli to use as medium of education. Some philosopher poet such as Kabir, Dadu Dayal, Nanak, and Tulsidasetc, sang the essential unity and equality of all religious creeds and preached to the people to honour all the religions, which help the fusion of various creeds and faiths towards national integration.¹⁷ Hindu education during the medieval period did not enjoy state patronage, yet it would be nothing short of mistake to think that the standard of Hindu system of education had declined or literature of higher order was not produced because the Hindus were not outpaced by the Mohammedans in the field of literary production and they bequeathed to the posterity splendid works in Sanskrit and regional languages. The Hindus did never acknowledge the supremacy of the Mohammedans in the field of arts and literature through they were greatly influence by the Islamic culture and education.

17. *Ibid.* P.108

2.5.1 Hindu Education

The ancient Indian education had been evolved strictly on the foundations of Indian epistemological and philosophical traditions, and the idea of ephemerality of life and the world, concept of ultimate death and the futility of mundane pleasures, had provided them with a special angle of vision. It is also says that the entire educational tradition originated in these principles, that is why the Indian sages devoted themselves to the study of a Supra-sensible world and spiritual powers. In India, during ancient time, the pupil stays away from the hunts of din and distractions of the material world, amidst beautiful natural surroundings, sitting at the feet of his teacher, would comprehend all the intricate problems of life through listening, intellection and meditation. The pupil was made to lead an unsophisticated and castle life and he would not remain contented with mere bookish learning but acquire fairly practical knowledge of the world and society through its close contact with the people. In the Vedic system of education attempts were made to make students capable of experiencing the supreme truth himself and mounding the society. The residence of the student at the house of the teacher accompanied by a sense of devoted service had been a unique tradition in ancient Indian education system and the pupil through such close contact with his teacher, would naturally imbibe his qualities through emulation. Wedded to the practical ends of life was also another characteristic of ancient Indian education. Student's residents at the teacher's house would make it possible for the student to develop social contacts as it was his sacred duty to collect fuel-wood, supply water and do other household odd jobs for the teacher. The problem of discipline among the modern students, which has baffled all solutions in today's educational setup, would resolve itself automatically with added advantage to the ancient students who could receive a valuable training in the occupations of animal

husbandry, agriculture and diary-farming etc., by tending his teacher's cows and serving him in a diverse way.¹⁸ The ancient Indian education system was not theoretical but it was related to the realities of life and higher education was not in consistent with manual labour. The educationist of the ancient time had also unravelled the complex problems in ordinary spheres of day-to-day and begging alms by the student for their own subsistence and service of the Guru (preceptor) explained the elementary characteristics of ancient Indian education system. This act was not to render the pupils dependent on others, nor did it run counter to the good of the society, and on the other side, it was regarded as honourable. Many teachers or gurus of ancient India was in the opinion that the practice of begging alms by the students fostered in them noble sentiment of self-abnegation and other humanitarian virtues and it was also believed that this act, by sublimating all unruly passions and ego in the student enable him face the realities of life. So the ancient Indian education system was developed in terms of the needs of the individual and those of the society as well. Its roots were firmly implemented in the depths of the society, so, its efflorescence was natural and it had definite ideal as well definite mission too.

2.6 Post Vedic Education

Importance of teachers, mode of teachings and duties of the teachers

The ancient Indian civilization is a reflection of the spiritual and ethical attributes of the teachers and the teachers were expected to possess all moral and spiritual qualifications. The profession of the teacher or preceptor who was popularly known as Guru at that time indispensable to master the Vedic Knowledge thoroughly and dwell entirely in the Brahma (*Brahmanishtha*) and he also illumined the inner being

18. *Ibid.* P.5.

of his pupils with his own spiritual enlightenment. In Ancient India only that person was deemed worthy of teacher ship who must himself has been an ideal student during his academic career and the man who possessed the qualities of guiding the society on right lines and profound scholarship, appropriated him rightly the title of teacher. It was the duty of the teacher to impart a pupil with highest knowledge when a fit pupil approached him and whatever knowledge he possessed was transmitted to the pupil without any concealment or reverse. There was also a tradition to transfer knowledge to pupils through a succession of gurus or teachers which come to be known as *Guru Parampara* and the teachers felt the natural desire that their truths and principles, learning and experience should survive them and promote good of the society. Not only these the life of the teacher served as a model of the pupil to follow and imitate and the teacher functioned as a spiritual and intellectual father of the pupil. In simple the teachers leads the pupils from darkness to light, and if the pupil fell a pray to moral turpitude or spiritual deviation than the teacher was likely to be responsible for it. The teacher evinced his paternal care and interest in matters of looking after the students generally, financially help to the indigent pupils, care of the ailing students and other like emergency.¹⁹

In the post Vedic period *Svdhyaya* or self study was prevalent and the *Katho-Upanishad* laid special stress on the indispensability of the teacher. The teacher was expected to be in possession of the essential qualities like profoundly of education, clairvoyant vision and intellectual regeneration. Not only these, he was also regarded as the builder, guide and leader of the society and only his son or the pupil was entitled to received education from him. The guru or the preceptor considered the pupil as his own son after the *Upanayana* or initiation ceremony and both of them

19. *Ibid.* P.17.

would be bound together in spiritual relationship. The Guru or the preceptor would accept only those persons who were eligible on the grounds of individual ability and sense of personal service to him as his pupil. There were also irregular or peripatetic preceptors or gurus who imparted education to the pupils without the performance of *Upanayana* or initiation ceremony. There is also some examples of husband initiating and educating his wife and father educating his own son, Yajnavalkya instructed his wife Maitreyi in theology. Svetaketu received higher knowledge from his father, likewise Bhrgu too was taught by Varuana, his father.²⁰ From the above discussion it is clear that in the Post Vedic period, educational system, while recognizing the magnitude of *Syadhyaya* or self study admitted the necessity of the teacher.

2.6.1 Models of teaching

In ancient Indian education system, during Vedic period education was imparted to the pupil and the teacher played the important role but in later Vedic education, the pupil was the main factor. In the later Vedic period, the method of teaching was characterized by catechism which involved the elucidation of a particular subject through a graduated series of questions and answers between the teacher and pupil. In this system the teacher put forth certain propositions to the pupil and the pupil himself also ask questions being answers duly by his teacher. In this way the pupil removed all the doubts after getting answer from his teacher and thus the solutions of the proposed problems and answers to questions constituted the chief method of educations. The educational system in Upanishads was witness by discursive and argumentative and in this system all the intricate and difficult mysteries were unravelled through intelligent and leading questions. Instructions to the pupils were imparted orally in general and the art of writing was also in to the mark of

20. *Ibid.*

progressing. A numbers of important method of teachings like catechism, stories, allegories and parables etc were employed. Not only these, during the period of Upanishads the discursive method of study led to the development of *Tarka Shastra* or logic and later on its development contributed to the evolution of *Nyaya Shastra*. In later Vedic education system, during the course of discussion, the pupil was not merely a passive listener to his Guru or preceptor but he had to remain mentally active and conscious and he had to cogitated answers to the question through the process of introspection and meditation. It also can be said that the mental faculty and imagination of the pupil received exercise and training indirectly. On the other side it was usual for the teacher to provide some leading and important hints and ask the pupil to work them out themselves; and the pupil reached the destination of his proposition through *Svadhyaaya* or self study, *Manana* or intellection and *Chinrana* or meditation. In this regard, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* recorded the three main processes of learning and they are (i) *Shravana*, (ii) *Manana* and (iii) *Nididhyasana*. *Shravana* or listening it self called for six specified auxiliaries: (a) *Upakrama*, a formal ceremony performed preceding the study of the Veda; (b) *Abhyasa*, recitation of the text; (c) *Apurvata*, ready grasp of the meaning (d) *Phala*, a comprehension of outcome; (e) *Arthavad*, the reading of elucidatory texts; (f) *Upapatti*, attainment of final conclusion.²¹ Not only these methods, knowledge of the absolute could be realized through Tapas and Yoga and the process of *Manana* was an unfailing aid of learning for the pupil.

2.6.2 Forms of educational institutions

In the later Vedic period there were existed of three types of educational institutions, they are like *Gurukulas*, *Parishads* or academies and *Sammelans* or conferences.

21. *Ibid.* P.20.

***Gurukulas* or the house of preceptors**

In the Vedic education system the students were resided at *Gurukulas* and the main reason keeping a student at *Gurukula* was that he availed himself of the opportunity to mould his life and character on the patterns of idealistic life of his teacher by living close contact with him, the guru or the preceptor serves as a model for the child. By keeping closest and constant contact with the *Guru* or Preceptor the possibility of assimilation by the pupil of all those virtues which have served as the guiding force of his guru's life itself, grows in intensity. By keeping constant contact with the Guru the pupil would get the practical knowledge of domestic affairs because the *Gurus* generally were settled family-holders and this explains the vogue receiving education at the *Gurukuls*. The child with his first streaks of consciousness, leave his natural parents for the house of his spiritual father; there, having undergone the initiation ceremony, he was admitted to the stage of life known as *Brahmacharya*.²² The pupil would receive education for a period of 12 years doing multifarious duties at the house of his *Guru* or preceptor like tending cows, collecting fuel and keeping the sacred fire a flame etc. and after becoming a profound scholar, the pupil take leave of his *Guru*. This system was much more similar with the Rig Vedic period.

2.6.3 Parishads (academies)

In the later Vedic period the academies or councils were the main forums where students belonging to higher order of learning gathered and quenched their insatiable thirst for knowledge through discussion and discourses. Those who would not terminate their scholastic career earlier and remained in the quest of truth and

22. *Ibid.* P.21.

supreme knowledge enriched their mind in these academies.²³ In this system mutual discussion and argumentation alone was not the method to learn; the pupil also invited erudite scholars and literary celebrities to these gathering and go about journeying through the country. The *Brahmana*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* abound in such instances and it is also marked that the Upanishads themselves in a sense were the outcome of such disputation. The *Brahmana*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* are so to say that a representation of the various philosophical investigations of the scholars of higher order whose main pursuit was characterized by incessant quest after truth and *Atman*.

2.6.4 *Sammelans* (conferences)

Besides the local *Parishads*, the well educated and intellectual persons were invited occasionally by some great king, several scholars, *Rishis*, philosophers and psychologists to a national gathering for the sake of discussions and debates in later Vedic period. There were also honour and special prizes for the ablest, best scholars, speakers, philosophers and thinker in the *Sammelans*. Along with the Brahmins, their learned ladies accompanied them to participate in the debates of *Sammelans* and wielded the weapon of their intellectual acuteness in contest.

In the later Vedic period in addition with *Gurukul*, *Parishads* and *sammelans* the courts of the kings too served as important centers of learning where several scholars and philosophers, hailing from different countries, would folk together, talk, discuss and throw light on metaphysical; theological and other problems. There were also certain sylvan institutions which were situated in the peaceful solitude of forests amidst beautiful nature and the pupil coming together, would study Veda. The sages regarded it as more creditable and to practice asceticism in the solitude of forests

23. *Ibid.*

where the environment was most suitable for their mystic devotion. In the later Vedic period the Gurus or the preceptors while managing their household affairs and taught their pupil at their own houses in the villages or towns and later on there is the evidence that educational institutions were established in different important cities.

2.6.5 Buddhist Education System

In the Buddhist system of education the monasteries were the centre of education and besides monasteries there were no other organizations for imparting education. Only the *Bhikshuks* could receive religious and other types of education but other persons were deprived of this facility and there were no place of *Yajna* in Buddhist system of education like in *Brahmanical* form of ancient Indian education.

In the Buddhist form of education system as monasteries were the centres of imparting education, so, one had to be admitted into a monastery, if he wanted to receive education. In this system the admission process was similar with the *Brahmanical* form of education of ancient India. For admission the student had to present himself before the teacher and request him for giving education and the teacher was fully responsible for education of his student. The student had to be responsive to the instructions received from his preceptor and he was not also at all accountable to any other *Bhikshuk* in the monastery. Both the teacher and the pupil were equally responsible to the monastery but regarding education, food, clothes, and residence of the student monk, the teacher was wholly responsible. Whenever the student was ill, the teacher took whole responsibility for treatment and he also used to bestow all affection to his pupil and used to educate him through lectures and question answer method. In this way with similarities with the Vedic form of education of

ancient India, the relationship between preceptor and pupil also developed in Buddhist form of education system.

2.6.6 Pabbajja (first ordination)

In the Buddhist form of educational system *Pabbajja* was an accepted ceremony of the Buddhist monasteries and it means going out. According to this ceremony the student after being admitted to a monastery had to renounce all his worldly and family relationship.²⁴ For the ceremony the person had to get his head fully shaved and put on yellow clothes, and in this shape he was presented before the presiding *Bikshu*. On the presentation the person would pray for admission to the monastery, and on his prayer the head *Bikshu* would administer three main suggestions that is I take refuge with Buddha, I take refuge with religion and I take refuge with the order. And the aspirant for admission used to pronounced these advices very distinctly, after that the person's admission was permitted. After admitting into Buddhist monastery, the person began to called as *Sharman* and he was given ten suggestions to follow, that is, shun violence and practice non-violence, speak truth, do not steal, do not collect, observe celibacy, give up luxury, renounce wealth and do not touch women, do not use fragrant things, do not eat anything untimely, and do not use soft and very comfortable bed. In the Buddhist monastery a child could be admitted only on the consent of his parents but children suspected to tuberculosis, leprosy, and other diseases were not admitted. An individual belonging to any caste could be admitted to a Buddhist monastery, and after admitted he did not belong to any caste but military men, state employees and slaves were debarred from the admission. After admission the persons had to change his cloths and all old ways and manners of living, and *Sharmans* were advice to strictly follow the ten suggestions. For the *Pabbajja*

24. S.P. Chaube, *History of Indian Education*, Agra, 2011, P.22.

ceremony the minimum age of the person was eight years and when the student attained twenty years of his age that is when he received education for twelve years he had to undergo the *Upasampada* ceremony and this ceremony entitled a pupil for full-fledged membership of the monastery.

2.6.7 Upasampada

In Buddhist education system, after *Pabbajja*, the Buddhist monks had to undergo the *Upasampada* ceremony and it was different from *Pabbajja*. The ceremony was performed after receiving education for 12 years that is it was performed at the age of twenty of the person and it was democratic in nature. In this ceremony the *Sharman* had to present himself before all other Buddhist monks that is *Bhikshuks* of the monastery and one could be admitted for the *Upasampada* only when the majority of the monks in favour of the same. After this ceremony the *Sharman* was regarded as a full-fledged member of the Buddhist monastery and after this occasion all his worldly and family relationship came to be an end. In ancient Indian Vedic education system the student was given education up to 25 years of his age and after that he was permitted to go home and lead the life of a household that is *Grihastha*. Quite contrary to this, in the Buddhist system after having received education the student never come back to his parents place for leading the life of a householder.²⁵ Finally the person remained a monk for good and cut off his worldly and family forever.

In the Buddhist education system, like the tradition of ancient Indian Vedic education system, the student was expected to serve his teacher with all devotion and on rising in the morning he have to arrange everything for the daily routine of his teacher. The student would keep the monastery and its surrounding clean and he have to cook his food and also clean his cloths and utensils. Whatever they acquired

25. *Ibid.* P.23.

thorough begging alms, they would place before their teacher and above all the students had to prepare themselves to received education at any time whenever the teacher required them.

2.6.8 Subjects and Curriculum

In the Buddhist form of education system education may be classified into two stages that are, primary education and higher education. In the primary education, emphasis was mainly given on the three R's that is teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic, on the other hand in higher education, emphasis was mainly given on religion, philosophy, military science, medicine and other difficult subjects. The educational curriculum was chiefly spiritual because the main aim of Buddhist education system was to attain salvation or *Nirvana*. In this education system the study of religious books was the most important and *Suttana*, *Vinaya*, and *Dhamma* were the main subjects prescribe for the study. Besides these, spinning weaving, printing of the cloth, tailoring, sketching, accountancy, medicine, surgery and coinage were the other subjects of Buddhist education.²⁶ In the Buddhist form of education system Varna distinction did not stand much in the way of choosing the subjects and numbers of students from different parts of India would come flocking to Taxila for the sake of education. For acquiring comparative knowledge the Vedas were also studied and Bodhisattva himself also acquired knowledge of the Vedas but *Artharva Veda* was not included in the educational curriculum up to the *Jataka* period. There is no description about sciences, fine arts and crafts in the *Jatakas* but the *Millnda Panha* refers to nineteen *Sippas* or *Silpas* or crafts which formed an essential part of the curriculum of Buddhist education system. We come across the mention of the following arts which were taught in the different institutions of Taxila: Elephant lore (*Hathi-sutta*), magic

26. *Ibid.*

charms, spells, hunting, spell for understanding the cries of all the creatures, Archery, the Arts of Prognostication, *Sarpa-vidya* (Art of snake charming) and medicine etc.²⁷ The students could specialized in any one of above mention arts and not only these, the theoretical well as practical aspects of education in these arts were equally emphasized. Journey and foreign travels were regarded as the practical educative value and nature-study, law and military science formed important part of the Buddhist educational system's curriculum and Taxila was the main centre of this kind of education in sciences and arts. There were also a custom of undertaking of a journey by the students at the end of their student's life in order to give a realistic and practical shape to what they had learnt in their monastic schools and they also believed that it would render their knowledge complete, solid and practical. From this point it is clear that Practical training was a usual aspect and *Jivaka* who had taken practical training in surgery was also an example of it.

Talking about the medium of instructions in Buddhist education system well-nigh the entire important Buddhist works were written in *Pali* and primary education consisted of three R's and principles of Buddhism. The child was primarily educated in the knowledge of the alphabet, vowels, *Sandhis*, or rules of combinations, *Samasa* and other grammatical propositions and knowledge of grammar was also an essential part in the education system. From these interpretations it is clear that primary education was a harmonious combination of both secular and spiritual aspects of education. As regarded higher education, Hiuen-Tsang has quoted the example of Nalanda where Buddhist philosophy, the literature, the yoga and other spiritual sciences were taught.²⁸ The institution of Vikramashila was important for imparting education in logic or *Tarka-Shastra* and jurisprudence or *Nyaya-Shastra* and another

27. P.L. Rawat, *Op.cit*, P.58.

28. *Ibid.* P.59.

Chinese traveller of 7th century A.D. I-Tsing had also mentioned the curricula and subjects of the study as Huen-Tsang noted. I-Tsing furthered mentioned that the Buddhist monks also studied *Tipitaka* like the Brahmins study Vedas in the ancient Indian Brahmanical form of education system.

In the Buddhist form of education system, special emphasis was made on the purity of conduct, because it was believed that if an individual was not good in behaviour, he could not learn anything for his development and the teachers of the monastery were empowered to expel any student on charge of misconduct or any type of serious disobedience. The student was expelled only when he was definitely ascertained that he lacked faith and respect for the teacher and other things related to the sanctity of the Buddhist monastery and after the death of teacher or when the teacher changed his religion or left the monastery for elsewhere, the students also deserted the monastery. In this way the education of the concerned students ended then and there. The *Acharya* or teacher gave lectures on the certain topic and the *Siddhiviharakas* students were required to listen with rapt attention. The *Siddhiviharakas* students were also expected to memorize the same and react before other fellow students, whatever they had committed to memory. The *Acharya* would proceed further only after having ascertained the thorough comprehension of the lesson by the *Siddhiviharakas*. From this point it is clear that the method of teaching was mostly oral and the art of writing also had considerably developed in this period but could not touch the masses as regards its practical use. Both the *Acharya* and *Siddhiviharakas* dwelt in the monasteries together but the *Acharya* had resource of direct method in teaching. In *Viharas* and monastic schools, *Hetu-vidya* or inductive method was adopted and the intellect of the pupils trained through it.²⁹ It was held

29. *Ibid.* P.60.

great importance in the Buddhist form of education system and in the monasteries; discussion and argumentations on different religious philosophical subjects were held every day. For this kind of teaching Vikramshilla is remarkable in the history of Buddhist education system.

The persons having sympathies with Buddhism were known as *Upasaka* and these people's listened Buddhist sermons by inviting Buddhist monks into their respective houses. Follower of different religions held occasional discussions and the Buddhist monks engage themselves in hair-splitting disputations while criticizing other religions like Hinduism or Jainism. So they trained their students in the art of debating from the very beginning of their career and sometimes occasionally the religion celebrities and authorities were invited to deliver talk on different topics for the intellectual benefit of the pupils. In this way in Buddhist form of education addresses and philosophic disputations had carved an important niche in general scheme of education and this process also promoted the growth of the mental faculties of the pupils. This method also considerably widened mental horizon and practical interest of the student and the student also developed clarity of vision through discussion on different problem of his life. This method became so rampant that it ultimately degenerated into a creed of "discussion for discussions sake" and thus it also dealt with a fatal blow to the acquisition of substantial knowledge and profoundly of learning in Buddhist system of education. There were also some special peripatetic Buddhist *Acharya* or preceptors like *Sariputta*, *Mahamuggallan*, *Anuruddha*, *Ananda* and *Rahula* who would go round journeying in the continent on teaching mission. The teaching method in regard to technical education in Secular science, Arts and crafts

was identical, *mutatis mutandis* with that of *Brahmanical* education, i.e., students were given educations through theoretical and practical methods.³⁰

2.7 Pre British Education Systems in Barak Valley

Information about the system of education in pre British period which prevailed in Barak Valley is shrouded in obscurity and talking about Cachar, no written records of Kachari rule and tradition current amongst the Kachari give any reliable information about the education and literature. Education was mainly managed by private individuals and concerns, but royal patronage was occasionally extended to scholars for their erudition and contribution towards dissemination of learning. However, it is presumed that the *Gurukul* system of education, traditional system of education of early days found popular support in Cachar as in other parts of Assam province.³¹ In the *Gurukul* system of education no tuition fee was charged and students were also used to sit on the ground over which mats of *Kusa* grass or reeds were usually spread. In the seventeenth century of Christian era, a number of writers and poets of Cachar composed some poetical works and the Raja sometimes allowed small sums to a few Brahmins and Kayasthas while they were absent from the country pursuing their studies in Bengal. The Raja also entertained a few pundits which gave instruction in Bengali and Sanskrit to some of their caste only. The little learning extent in Barak valley was strictly confined to the Brahmins though the Mohammadan section of the population was the most numerous.

During the Heramba rule, the Rajas encouraged and patronised education and the Raj Darbar was adorned by a galaxy of scholars who had composed a number of scholastic works in Bengali. In 1730, at the request of Rani Chandraprabha, the

30. *Ibid.* P.61.

31. Bijoy Bhushan Hazarika and S.B. Roy Chaudhury, *Cachar District Gazetteers*, Guwahati, 1991, P.393.

Kachari queen the poetry book named *Shri Naradiya Rasamrita*, was composed by Bhubaneshwar Basaspati Bhattacharya. Gobinda Chandra, the last Kachari king of Cachar also composed some Vaisnavite poetical works like, *Govinda Kirtan* and *Maharasothsava Lilamrita*. Suradarpa Narayan, son of Rani Chandra Prava, himself composed some *Malashi* songs and *Brahma Purana* was also translated during his reign. The royal priest also regularly recited the *Bhagwat Purana* and explained the slokas in Bengali to the Raja and his courtiers. In the 18th century *Vivad Darpan*, *Rin Dan Vidhi*, *Heramba Rajyer Danda Vidhi*, *Rana Chandi* were composed and some *Purana* and chapters from the epics were also translated in Bengali. Notable among them were *Vishnu Purana*, *Gaya Purana*, *Prahlad Carit*, and *Ajodya Kanda*, *Kiskinda Kanda*, *Sundar Kanda*, *Lanka Kanda*, *Viravahu Yudha*, *Lakshmaner Sakti Shel* and *Uttar Kanda* from Ramayana and *Drona Parvan* and *Virat Parvan* of Mahabharata.³²

From the above discussion it is clear that the pursuit of learning was held in high esteem by the rulers of Cachar. The Rajas of Cachar also granted *Brahmattara* land to the Brahmins. The Brahmins ran *Tols* in their houses. The existence of regular *Tols* and *Pathshalas* in the noted temples of *Ranachandi* and *Kachakanti*, where learned Brahmins were appointed by the rajas as hereditary *Sebayats* cannot be ruled out, considering that *Adhyapana* or teaching was an additional duty of the temple priests in India in the former times.³³ It is however, not unlikely that in an agricultural country like Cachar and whole of Barak valley, the bulk of the common people had little interest in learning and the education was confined to the priestly castes like Brahmins and *Kayastha Pundits* and highly castes like the Rajas and the queens. The kings officials might had received their education in Sylhet which had produced eminent scholars from a remote period of history. Talking about the educational

32. J.B. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*, New Delhi, 1977, P.228.

33. *Ibid.* P.229.

institutions, the only evidence is from the social structure of Dimasha Kachari is that the only form of educational institution that seems have to existed in Cachar district was *Dekachang* or young man's club and no reading and writing were taught there. All the practical trainings on agriculture, handicrafts, music, sports, and tribal-warfare were imparted in *Dekachang* and it also resembles *Gurugriha* and *Gurukul* system of ancient Indian *Brahmanical* tradition of education system and serves as residential educational institute where all the students and teachers live together and learn community living.