

Education System in India during the Mughals

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 07 September 2018

Keywords

Education, Literature, Mughals, Indian Society

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ABSTRACT

The Mughals were responsible for the creation of a rich legacy in India. The Mughal age witnessed multi-sided cultural activity leading to the emergence of a national culture. The period can be called a second classical age comparable to the Gupta age of the early period. In this culture we notice a synthesis of Turko-Iranian and Bharatiya cultures. The languages that received patronage of the Mughals were Arabic and Persian. Various genres of Sanskrit literature also flourished under their patronage. As a result of the growth of vernacular literature, the output of Sanskrit literature appears to have reduced to a great extent. They also tried to upholding the society through the development of education system. In view of the importance of the scenario, the investigator, selected the present study which aimed to enquire and analyze about the status and development of education system during the reign of Mughal dynasty. Their reforms, which have direct or indirect influence in education and culture is to be considered for necessary interpretation. And, another aim of this study is to reveal the historical background of the education system in medieval India.

1. Introduction

Two centuries of the Mughal rule in India from AD 1526 to 1761 make an important watershed in the evolution of the Indian culture as they promoted and patronized literacy and arts. The Mughals were responsible for the creation of a rich legacy in the shape of literary masterpieces in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. All the above factors made the Mughal rule in India a memorable one, to be remembered for its creative intellectual activity. Satish Chandra is of the view that the Mughal age witnessed many-sided cultural activity leading to the emergence of a national culture. He further points out, that the Mughal period can be called a second classical age comparable to the Gupta age of the early period. In this culture we notice a synthesis of Turko-Iranian and Bharatiya cultures. The languages that received patronage of the Mughals were Arabic and Persian. Various genres of Sanskrit literature also flourished under their patronage. As a result of the growth of vernacular literature, the output of Sanskrit literature appears to have reduced to a great extent. The most popular literary languages of northern India were Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi.

Thus, from the foregoing discussion it is now clear that the Mughal period was a glorious period regarding socio-cultural up gradation of Indian society. They also tried to upholding the society through the development of education system. In view of the importance of the scenario, the investigator, selected the present study which aimed to enquire and analyze about the status and development of education system during the reign of Mughal dynasty. Their reforms, which have direct or indirect influence in education and culture is to be considered for necessary interpretation. And, another aim of this study is to reveal the historical background of the education system in medieval India.

2. Objectives of the study

Education has to play a vital role in the progress of any country. So, in order to understand and evaluate an

education system, it is necessary to search the history behind it. The major objectives of this study are as follows:

- To enquire about the educational reforms in Indian state during the reign of Mughal dynasty.
- To identify the educational activities of the learning centers during the Mughal period.
- To analyze the design of courses, curriculum and methods of teaching and learning of the Mughal education system.
- To interpret the status of education of the women's during the period.

3. Methodology of the study

For the present study historical research method is followed. Historical method is the technique developed to discover and present the past events in their correct perspectives. It is an act of reconstruction undertaken in a spirit of critical enquiry designed to a faithful representation of a previous age. The historical research involves three major steps, which follows in the study are:

- Collection of relevant data from the primary and secondary sources.
- Internal and external criticism in order to assess the validity of the data.
- Presentation of facts in a readable and most appreciable form involving problem of organization, composition, exposition and interpretation.

4. Analysis and interpretation

The system of education in medieval times was still at a rudimentary stage. Primary schools in the modern sense probably did not exist. Tols or schools attached to temples, Hindu or Buddhist, and maintained by grants or endowments made for that specific purpose, were to be found throughout the country. The teachers there would not only solicit

contributions to raise the building but also to feed their pupils. No fee was paid as to give instruction fee is enjoined by the sacred scriptures of the Brahmans. John Marshall, who visited India in the later 17th century writes, "Hindus never teach their children for money; those they teach, they give them victuals, too, besides their learning which is estimated as a gift." Maktabas or the Muslim primary institutions, usually attached to a mosque, were common sight during the Mughal period. The Traveller, Della Valle, mentioned that in Jahangir's time there were private schools in every town and villages.

There was no printed primer, but the children were made to write the letters of the alphabet and figures on wooden boards. Usually the students had their lessons under the shade of a tree. Combined letters were practiced and difficult words selected from a standard book like the Quran were dictated. Great importance was attached to calligraphy and students were instructed to imitate and practice the style of the best calligraphists of the day.

As soon as the boys could read and write, grammar, followed by the text of the Quran, was invariably introduced in every Maktab. Every child had to learn it by rote. There was definite evidence of the fact that most of the boys could read even if they did not understand the text. There was little evidence about the course of instructions in vogue in Hindu institutions. Growse, however thought that Ramayana formed the chief text in the primary schools. But as the Ramayana was put in Hindi by Tulsi Das at the end of Akbar's reign that could not obviously have been a text book till the end of the 16th century. According to Bernier, however, the Puranas were taken up after learning the alphabet. The teaching of elementary mathematics went side by side with literacy. After finishing Quran, Muslim students took lesson in Gulistan, Bostan and poems of Firdousi, while the Sanskrit scholars studied the Puranas, Upanishads and Shastras and sometimes the Vedas. At Banaras there were in existence various colleges for specialization in different subjects such as the Vedas, grammar, poetry, Vedanta, logic, law and astronomy.

The teachers were held in high respect. The pupils would touch their feet and speak only with permission. A teacher who could lecture without the help of books was very much respected and remembered for his knowledge. Badauni specially mentions one Shaikh 'Abdullah of Badaon' who never felt the necessity of referring to a book for the purpose of solving those questions and obscure subtleties for whatever he had once seen, he had on the tip of his tongue.

The chief centres of learning or universities, if we may call them so, were at places where the renowned scholars had made their abode. Hindus preferred shrines and sacred places where pilgrim traffic supplied a subsidiary source of income to the teachers residing there, and thus, free from the worries of livelihood, they pursued their studies undisturbed. Banaras, Nadia, Mithila, Mathura, Tirhut, Paithan, Karhad, Thatta, Multan and Sirhind were the famous seats of Hindu learning. Dharmadhikari, Sera Bhatta and Mouni were the learned families which figured prominently at Banaras for more than three centuries (1500 – 1800). Raja Jai Singh also founded a college there for the education of the princes.

There were other seminaries where famous Pandits interpreted and expounded the fundamentals of Hindu religion and philosophy. Nadia, in Bengal, was, after Banaras, the greatest centre of Hindu learning in the country during the Mughal days. In Navadvipa alone there were 4000 pupils and 600 teachers in 1680. Vasudeva Sarvabhauma (1450 – 1525), the great scholar of the 16th century was the founder of the famous Nadia school of Nyaya which even outrivalled Mithila. Raghunatha Siromoni was also the founder of a school of Logic at Banaras. Raghunandana created a school of Smriti in the 16th century along with that of logic at Nadia. Mithila retained its importance as a centre of learning during the Mughal times. In fact a student of this university performed digvijaya at the instance of Akbar, who was so pleased that he gave him the whole town of Mithila as a gift. Madura was famous as a centre of studies in Indian philosophy. There were over 10,000 students in its several colleges. Thatta had about 400 colleges according to Hamilton. The students there specialized in theology, philology and politics. Multan was famous as a centre of specialization in astronomy, astrology, mathematics and medicine, most probably Ayurvedic. It supplies doctors to the whole empire.

Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Jaunpur, Gujarat, Sialkot and Ahmadabad were some of the main centres of Muslim learning. Akbar, Shah Jahan and Jahanara built madrasahs at Agra. Akbar even invited a scholar, Chalpi Beg, from Shiraz to teach there. Some of the renowned scholars like Sayyid Shah Mir of Samana took their abode there and attracted students from far and wide. The traveller Peter Mundi refers to a college of Jesuits at Agra. At Delhi, there were a number of madrasahs, important among them being Humayun's madrasah built in honour of Zainud Din Khafi and Maham Anaga's madrasah known as Khair-ul-Manzil, opposite the western gate of Purana Qilah, called Madrasah-i-Begum by Badauni. It was a residential madrasah; students raised there in the rooms of both the storeys and classes were held in the hall. Shah Jahan built a magnificent madrasah called Darul Baqa on the southern side of the Jami Masjid. Madrasah-i-rahimiyya known after the name of Abdur Rahim, father of Waliullah, was built during Aurangzeb's time.

Jaunpur and Gujarat were the two other centres where learned scholars had taken up their residence. Jaunpur, rightly called the 'Shiraz of India', kept up its importance throughout the Mughal period and attracted students from far and wide. Mukundarama, the author of the poem Chandi-mangala, refers to the existence of several maktabas in Gujarat. Aurangzeb instructed the Diwans of Gujarat to appoint teachers in every year at the cost of the state and to pay stipend to students, according to the recommendations of the Sadr of province and attestation of the teacher.

Lahore's importance as a centre of learning dates from the time of Aurangzeb when the reputation of its scholars attracted many pupils from far and wide. Kashmir, with its pleasant and refreshing climate, was a place of retreat for scholars, some of whom such as Abu Talib Kamil, Mulla Shah Badakshi completed their works there. Among other centres of learning, Gwalior, Sialkot, Ambala and Thaneshwar may be mentioned.

5. Duration of courses, curriculum and certificates

The courses of study usually varied from 10 – 16 years for graduation. Some more years were required for doctorate after studying under a renowned scholar. No regular examinations were held in those days. A good mastery of certain specified courses, of which the teacher was the sole judge, was sufficient for promotion to the next standard. It was not surprising to see a pupil being promoted to the next standard within six months. No regular degrees were awarded. To have studied in a reputed institution or under a renowned teacher was the greatest qualification one could have. There are, however, instances of diplomas being awarded by great scholars of theology to the pupils conferring upon them the authority to give instructions therein.

Some sort of diploma or degree was awarded in some of the Hindu institutions, as for example, in the University of Mithila. Raghunatha, a student of the Nadia University was deputed to “exact from Mithila, a charter to confer degrees.” An unusual type of examination called Salakapariksha marked the termination of the graduation course in Mithila. A candidate was expected to explain correctly that page of the manuscript which was pierced last by a needle run through it. ChhurikaBandhanam resembled our present day convocation which was marked by the tying of a dagger to the dress of the pupil as a token of his graduation. Some renowned scholars earned the titles of Sarvabhauma, AkbariyaKalidas, PratyagraPatanjali, etc. The post collegiate studies were invariably completed under a specialist. It was not easy to get one self-admitted as the scholars were reluctant to have more than a limited number of students. It was with great difficulty that Mullah Shah badakhshi agreed to take JahanAra as his pupil. Badauni was proud to have had the privilege to study under Mir Sayyidjalal, the saint. For still higher studies eager scholars visited the chief places of Muslim learning in western and central Asia such as Mecca, medina, Basra, Kofa, Yemen, Cairo, Baghdad, Hijaj, Khurasan, etc.

Very little information about the curriculum then in vogue is available. The courses of study in Muslim institutions usually comprised grammar, rhetoric, logic, theology, metaphysics, literature and jurisprudence. Astronomy, mathematics and medicine were included under Hindu influences. The Arabic curriculum included besides grammar, syntax, rhetoric, philosophy, logic, scholasticism, tafsir, fikh, Hadis, etc. The Persian texts included Ruqqat-i-Abu-l-Fazl, letters of Chandra Bhan Brahman and MullaMunir, Insha-i-Yusufi, Lilavati translated by Faizi, Zafar-nama-i-Kangra by Raja Hussain, etc.

The subjects of study in Hindu institutions included grammar, logic, philosophy, history, poetry, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, medicine and veterinary science. Physics and chemistry were studied but were regarded as a part of the science of mathematics. Hindus, especially Brahmans, were interested in philosophy and mathematics which were in vogue in India from ancient times.

Very little attention was however paid to geography in schools and colleges. Aurangzeb heaped abuses on his tutor for wasting time on the subtleties of Arabic metaphysics to the neglect of practical subjects such as geography and politics.

People were ignorant of the geographical position of the neighboring countries. A map of the globe was so rare a thing that Sir Thomas Roe included it among the presents he offered to the Governor of Surat.

6. Women's education

Women's education was not completely ignored, though no regular separate school seems to have existed for imparting education to girls who had their lessons usually from their parents. Girls in their childhood attended schools with boys and learnt the Quran and one or two other lessons by rote. The rich appointed tutors to teach their daughters at home. The daughters of Rajput chiefs and some Bengali zamindars were usually able to read and write. Special care was taken for the education of Mughal princesses, almost all of whom daily read the Quran and occasionally corresponded with their relatives. Some of them even composed verses. The average Mughal princess received but a limited education. Their regular studies came to an end with her marriage which usually took place at an early age. GulbadanBegam's 'HumayunNama', too, abounds with spelling mistakes and clumsy sentences. Even the poems of Zib-un-Nisa and Zinat-un-Nisa do not rise so high in poetic excellence as those of contemporary male authors.

There is however, little doubt about the literacy of the average middle class woman who had sufficient knowledge of either Hindi, Persian or the native provincial language to enable her to study the religious scriptures. The knowledge of Sanskrit was wide spread in the south. A Malayalam work Chandrotsavan gives us an idea about the general reading of educated women in the south and this includes, Sakuntalam, Malavikagnimitram and other Sanskrit dramas. A well-known work of the period entitled Mahilamriduvani gives us a list of no less than 35 women all of importance, “not minor poets but poetesses who have left their mark on the literary sphere”. Special stress was laid on the education of widows, some of whom, as for example HatiVidyalankara became teachers. We may well concur with Mukundarama's view that “there is evidence to show that women belonging to the lower ranks of society, such as house maids, were illiterate, but there is nothing to discountenance female education”.

7. Conclusion

From the above discussion we may conclude that the said period witnessed different kind of educational activities as like development of literature, religious studies, patronizing the centers of learning, etc. Though modern form of formal education system was totally absent, but the standard of education was so high. Some sorts of science discipline were also included in their course of study. Higher studies of the individual were fully depended on the level of achievement and the positive consent of the teacher's. No regular examinations were held in those days. Except the religious study, other subjects of study were grammar, logic, philosophy, history, poetry, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, medicine and veterinary science. Physics and chemistry were studied but were regarded as a part of the science of mathematics. Very little attention was however paid to geography in schools and colleges. Women's education was not completely ignored, though no regular separate school seems to have existed for

imparting education to girls who had their lessons usually from their parents. There is however, little doubt about the literacy of

the average middle class woman, but there is nothing to discountenance female education.

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