

Industrial, Technical and Vocational Education in Ancient India: With Special Reference to Artisans and Craftsmen

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ABSTRACT

Industrial, technical and vocational education in ancient India was not as developed as the education of other types. But there was some provision for this type of education in ancient India. The basis of such type of education was to build up her own economic life and prosperity. Through the ages luxuries and other articles have been turned out by her cottage industries and handicrafts. Education on arts and crafts was flourished in ancient-India by method of industrial crafts production and a form of artistic activity. Before the introduction of machinery every article of domestic use was produced by hand. So these craftsmen and artisans became the keystone of a developing commerce. They organised guilds which absorbed their sons in their profession. This techniques passed down in families for generations and even apprenticeship was a quasi-paternal relationship. After the introduction of machinery there has been a lot of change in the traditional craftsmanship.

Introduction

The study about artisans and craftsmen is an essential key to understanding of a people's culture. The Indian craftsmen has been an organic element in the national life. They have produced two typed of arts and crafts which are rural and urban. In developing economy this has to satisfy the needs of both the rural and the urban population.

In the Vedic period there are references to development of considerable perfection or training in the art of dress and the industrial products of spinning and weaving.¹ Panini gives a long list of industrial crafts connected with fine arts. pottery, carpentry, dyeing, dress and garments, both woollen and cotton, gems, metals such as

gold, silver, iron and tin. There are also reference of mineral products like gold, silver, diamond, gems, pearls, metals, salt, played an important part in the economy of Mauryan age. Milindpanha gives sixty occupations, connected with various kinds of crafts. Most of these occupations and crafts mentioned in this text had a basically rural background and also developed in urban area too.

Buddhist text Lalitavistar gives the description of lofty mansions, golden networks and ornaments, oil, sugar, musical instruments, vessels made of costly metals and stones, dresses of different varieties of cloth dyed in various shades and similar other details probably indicating that crafts goldsmith, weaving, dyeing, tailoring, garland-making perfumery flourishing during Gupta period with its developed stage.² The period of the Kushanas is reflective of a proliferation of arts and crafts and its education. Kamasutra of Vastyayana also a work of the Gupta period gives the pictures of numerous arts and crafts which were patronised by the city dwellers and villagers.

Training for Craftsmen and Artisans

Apprenticeship was the main method to develop this training. This method was famous throughout the ancient India.

Admission

In the Vedic period apprenticeship was very popular and there was a regular method for admission. Admission to an industry or craft was governed by regulation. Different principles were compulsorily maintained for admission.

- (i) If a young man wished to initiated into the art of his own crafts, he first-obtained the sanction of his relations and then proceeded to live with his master after previously fixing the period of his training or apprenticeship.³
- (ii) In the Vedic and Buddhist period it was mostly seen that the master must impart to his pupil his training at his own house where he is to be provided with his board and lodging. The master treated his pupil like his son.⁴
- (iii) If the apprentice deserted his master who duly instructs him and was not at fault in any way, the pupil was compelled by forcible measures to stay with his master and was liable to corporal punishment.⁵
- (iv) When the pupil completed his training before the training period then he could not go to his house before time but he had to stay with his master and to work

for his master. And after mastered in his crafts and arts pupil should make gifts to his teacher according to his means and then take leave from their master house.⁶

- (v) An apprentice after graduation could have his services retained by his master who will then have the right to employ him after setting his remuneration with regard to his qualifications. In such a case, the pupil should not seek service with others.⁷
- (vi) Teacher can extend the period of training because after mastering his apprentice, teacher was expected to be compensated for the trouble in teaching and the expenses in feeding the apprentice from the wages he would earn as a fully trained worker during remaining period of his indenture.⁸
- (vii) If apprentice deserted his teacher without a sufficient cause, he was brought back and compelled to stay, learn and work.⁹

After living his training if however, the teacher offered him suitable wage, he was expected to serve him in preference to stranger. The training under the above apprenticeship system was fairly efficient, for it was both theoretical and practical and given in the workshop itself.

Ethics of Contract Practice

After discussing the admission and its rules in the apprenticeship it can easily be identified that industrial apprenticeship was treated as contract. Because it was a rule to complete the course in a limit of time. The arrangement fixed the respective obligations of both the master and his pupil during the time of training. The obligations of the master were that he should treat pupil like his son which meant that he should give him free board and lodging in his house. The master should not treat the pupil like hired labour, and should teach him honestly and whole heartedly without keeping back from him any secrets of his Knowledge. He should not exploit pupils skill and labour by employing him on work not related to his training but only for his gain.¹⁰

On the students side there were certain obligations which included that he should not desert his teacher before time where there is no justifiable ground for such desertion. Secondly that pupil could not leave his master until he has not completed his training period. If he completed his training before time then he had to work for hismaster and its gain will go to his teacher on the whole about the limitation of the apprenticeship if can be said to that is was based on a contract system.¹¹

It is clear from the above account that in Ancient India due importance was given to the training of artisans. The required proper facilities for the artisan were available properly. The nature of apprenticeship in the past differed from the apprenticeship of today. In the past, apprentice got his maintenance from his master and was relatively free to decide whether to stay with the master or not after the period of training was over. While today, in some case, the apprentice gets nothing as maintenance and is often not free to serve another employer.

Factors in Specialization

The specialization in arts and crafts education was promoted by several factors. Among them first one is the knowledge and use of the raw materials and the discovery of tools. As elsewhere Indian artisans made progress through trial and error and brought nature increasingly under control of technical device. The second is the guild organization with its plan of perpetuating skill through the practices of hereditary and apprenticeship. The father handed down his skill and experience to his son and a new entrant into the guild had to go through a course of training under the guidance of a master before he qualified himself for the professions. And thirdly is the expansion of the market lastly, there is the protection and patronage of the state.¹²

Conclusion

Industrial craft and its education in ancient India was organised by both state and private initiative. On the whole it can be said that artisans and craftsmen got good position in the society. They had very respectable place in the society not only in urban but also in rural area. Through the ages luxuries and other articles have been turned out by the cottage industrious and handicrafts. Education on arts and crafts was flourished in ancient India by method of industrial crafts production and a form of artistic activity. In developing economy this has to satisfy the needs of both the rural and the urban population. Industrial, technical and vocational education in ancient India was an essential practice for the development of society. Therefore, apprenticeship was the main method to develop this training. This method was famous throughout the ancient India. Apprenticeship and training education was governed by regulation in which different good principles were compulsorily maintained.

References

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