

MILITARY TRAINING IN ANCIENT INDIA

Dr S P Shrivatsa

India is known as a peace loving country. We have always believed in policy of 'Live and let live' but whenever our integrity is challenged by others we are ready to face them with courage and vigour. Keeping this fact in view, our ancestors had stressed the need for compulsory military training for the young men of selected castes. To fulfill this purpose they had started military training centers or sainik schools, then called 'Ashramas' at some important places of the country in which the young people were imparted the training of warfare and handling the weapons of that time.

Chanakya, the great politician of fourth century B.C. quoting Brihaspati and Shukracharya says in his book *Arthashastra* that either both the 'Varta' and 'Danda Nir' or only Varta should be taught compulsorily to the Kshatria boys - "Varta danda nisaha Barhaspatyah, Dandanitreka Vidye-yo-shanasa".

Manu, the writer of *Manu-smṛiti* also accepts "Danda Nir" as a compulsory subject for Kshatrias.

It is true that our saints and great men have been giving the message of non-violence and peace but at the same time they taught us - "Rashtram nah pranah" (Nation is our soul) and for the security of our nation they gave the lesson of "Tit for Tat", (Sathē Shathyam Samacartē).

This paper discusses in brief, the ways of imparting military training in the ancient Ashramas.

Leaving Vedic period aside, only a brief reference to Ramayana and Mahabharata period is given here:

Vishwamitra Ashrama

This Ashrama was situated at Malbar (just near modern Buxar) Saint Vishwamitra was its sole trustee. He developed it into

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12

great institution of learning and made a special arrangement for military training. New arms were also invented and built there. Lord Rama and his younger brother Lakshmana were also trained there for some time. Lord Rama was especially trained for using the following weapons:

Danda Chakra, Dharna Chakra, Kal Chakra, Vishnu Chakra, Endra Chakra, Vajra, Shoolvat, Brahma Shirsha, Eshirka, Brahmastra, Modaki, Shikhari, Dharnapasha, Kalpasha, Varunapasha, Shushka-Ashni, Ardra-Ashni, Penaka, Narayanastra, Shikha, Vayavyastra, Hayashirshastra, Krounchashtra, Shaktidvaya, Karkalashtra, Muslastra, Kaplastra, Kinkni-Astra, Nandanashtra, Mahanashtra, Praswanashtra, Prashmanashtra, Varsashtra, Shashnastra, Somalashtra, Madanashtra, Manavyastra, Tamasastra, Soumanashtra, Samvartashtra, Manslastra, Satyashtra, Mayamayashtra, Teprabashtra, Shishrastra, Shiteshu-Astra, Twastra-Astra, and Mandashtra.

It appears that saint Vishwamitra was a great master of military science in his time.

Saint Shringi's Ashrama

It was founded by saint Shringi near Singeshwara of Bhagalpur district of U.P. It was a residential institution of ten thousand boarders. Every kind of hostel facility was provided to the students in this institution. Besides other branches of education, there were adequate facilities for military education in this great institution (Ashrama).

Jamadagni's Ashrama

This Ashrama was founded by saint Jamadagni. In Ramayana we find no reference to it whereas 117th chapter of Mahabharata's Vanaparva gives a detailed account of this Ashrama.

Agastya's Ashrama

It was founded by the great saint, Agastya, a very respected saint of Ramayana period, at Agastyaapur, 24 miles from Nasik. In the Aranyakanda of Ramayana a detailed information of

Shreeaza English

13

this Ashrama is found.

When exiled Rama along with his brother Lakshmana and also Sita came to meet saint Agastya, a great bow and an Amoghha Bana (arrow), a tunic and divine sword were presented to him by saint Agastya.

This Ashrama remained a big centre of learning for years together. Mahabharata also gives a detailed information of this Ashrama:

Sa tara Brahmanah-Sthanam Agneh Sthana tathaiva cha vishnroh
sthanam Mahendrasya sthanam chaiva vivasvatah somasthanam
bhagasthanam Kauversthanamevacha, sthanam pasha hastasya
varunasyacha mahatmanah.

Detail

1. The Brahmasthan (Department of Brahma)
The curriculum of this department contained the teaching of four Vedas with all the related branches.
2. The Agnisthan (Department of fire)
The training of recitation of Sama Veda's sacred hymns and yajna ceremony was given in this department.
3. The Mahendrasthan (The Department of Mahendra)
The training of offensive and defensive arms was given here.
4. The Kartikeyasthan (The Department of Kartikeya)
Some other subjects relating to warfare were taught here.
5. The Varunasthan (The Department of Varuna)
The training of navigation, water controlling and swimming was given here.
6. The Garudasthan (The Department of Garuda)
The pilot-age and transportation were main subjects of the syllabus of this department.

7. The Vishnuasthan (The Department of Vishnu)

Shreeraza English

14

Political Science, Economics, Dairy Science and Agriculture were main subjects of this department.

8. The Vivasvasthan (The Department of Vivasvan)
All the branches of astrology were taught in this department.

9. The Somasthan (The Department of Soma)
All the eight branches of Indian medicines were taught in this department.

10. The Dhatriasthan (The Department of Dhatri)
There was a provision for the training of maternity science in this department. The students were also trained to manage creches.

11. The Kaulerasthan (The Department of Kaulera)
Economics and Statistics were main subjects to be taught in this department.

12. The Bhagasthan (The Department of Sexology)
All branches of sexology were taught here.

13. The Vidhatristhan (The Department of Vidhatti)
The architectural engineering and all the branches of technology were taught there.

In view of the above it is clear that this great Ashrama was not in any way less than any big University in modern times.

The Bhardwaj Ashrama

This great ashrama was founded by saint Bhardwaj at Allahabad (Prayaga) and was situated in an area of 40 square miles. Various subjects including military science were taught there. In addition to the above mentioned ashramas, there was Janak Raj Ashrama, Gautama Ashrama, Markandeya Ashrama, Valmiki Ashram, Vashistha Ashram, etc, in different parts of the

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15

country. In these ashramas too, military science was one of the important subjects. The following ashramas also existed in Mahabharata period:

Drona-Ashrama

It was a great training centre of military science. Its founder saint Dronacharya was himself a great master of military science of his time. This ashrama was situated at Hastinapura and was a great institution aided by government of Kuru dynasty. Pandavas and Kourvas, i.e. Arjuna, Bhimasena, Karna, Ashwathama, Duryodhana, etc, were trained in this great institution.

Sandipini Ashrama

54th chapter of Mahabharata's Virata Parva gives a detailed information of this ashrama. Its founder the saint Sandipini was a well-known saint of that time. Lord Krishna along with his friend Sudama remained there for a few years and got education. This ashrama was situated near Ujjain. The following subjects were taught there:

Four Vedas, six branches of four Vedas, Mathematics, Music, Ayurveda, Elephant-education, Horse-education, Military science, bir-education and politics, etc.

Agniveshya Ashrama

It was founded by saint Agniveshya at Prayag (Allahabad). He was the teacher of saint Dronacharya.

In addition to these ashramas, there were many more ashramas in which military training was imparted to the students, such as : Kanva-Ashrama, Rukmani-Ashradma, Badrik-Ashrama (only for girls).

In view of the above it is clear that along with other branches of education, the military education was also having important place in the syllabi of the teaching subjects during ancient times. Now the time has come when the archaeological department of India should start elaborate survey for excavation work of these ashrama. Only then we can be able to know

thoroughly about these ashramas which will give more accurate knowledge of military science prevailing in that period of remote past.

(The author was an acclaimed scholar of Sanskrit from Jammu.)
