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CONCEPT AND EVOLUTION OF MILITARY STUDIES

From history of India you may have learnt of how armies were formed and how they protected the people. If armies have been there since long and they are an essential part of a society, then it is important to know how armies function and how they should be used by the Government. So, what is Military Studies? Military studies deals with all subjects pertaining to the military and how soldiers and kings are trained in the art of war fighting.

The lessons in this book will answer questions such as how are the armed forces organised to fight a war? what are the rank structures? What are the weapons with the armed forces? What is the role and responsibility of armies in today's world? How should the armed forces be used by the government? How was the military trained in olden times? How did the training change with time?



Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the military education organisation in ancient India;
- compare the military studies subjects as taught by ancients and as taught today and
- trace the changes that came with changes in the armies.

2.1 Military Studies in Ancient India

Before learning about military studies, it is important to know about the education system of ancient India. First was the system of Gurukul. It was basically a residential school where all children including the children of the king were sent to learn. Important points to know about the Gurukul system are as follows:-

- (a) It was a residential school where the Guru or teacher had a house. The teacher and the student stayed together in the Gurukul.
- (b) Students stayed in the school for about 10 years to learn many subjects.
- (c) The subjects taught included language, grammar, science, mathematics and vedas.

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- (d) The Guru also taught Military subjects such as use of weapons, physical training and art of warfare.
- (e) Military subjects were compulsory for all students including sons of kings.
- (f) Life in a Gurukul was tough and a strict disciplined routine was followed.
- (g) Education was free and it included boarding and lodging at the Gurukul. It was possible to give free education in those days because the king and other wealthy people gave money to run gurukuls.
- (h) The concept of Gurukul was living with the teacher and helping the teacher with daily activities. This included farming, cleaning, woodcutting etc. The students therefore learnt practical aspects of living. By doing this, students learnt theory and practicals together so that every student could become a person with good character.

2.1.1 Types of Schools

Apart from Gurukul system there were other types of schools. In South India, temples were the centres of all cultural activities and educational institutions formed part of temple establishments. There were schools and colleges in important temples. In certain place there were post -graduate institutions to impart higher education in special subjects.

The educational institutions attached to the temples were known as Salais. These were endowed Schools of a residential type, where scholars received free tuition as well as free boarding and lodging, clothing and other amenities till they completed their studies. Chera King Ay first established the system of 'Salais' in Kerala around 8 A.D. The syllabus and method of teaching were similar to the Gurukul system. Along with the Salais was the Kalari School which specialised in martial arts and training of soldiers.

2.1.2 Kalari and Physical Education

Kalari was one of the most important educational institutions of South India.



Fig. 2.1 : Kalaripayattu

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It was a military school where general education was imparted through a rigorous course of physical training and the study of the science of offence and defence. The Rajas of Kerala were great patrons of learning and to them are credited the establishment of Kalaris in Military Schools. It was presided over by the Panikkar or Kurup.

The youth of the land were taught the use of weapons as well as marital arts such as fencing, boxing and wrestling. Even the Namboothiri youths received military training in the Kalari during the wars of the 11th century when the Kalari system came into vogue. The training received in the Kalaris was called Kalaripayattu.

It was a regular and full-fledged scheme of physical education intended for the youth of the land. The most promising of the trainees were taught the marmas, viz, the vulnerable parts of the body. Kalaris were intended to foster martial spirit of the Nairs and to keep them fit for war.

2.1.3 Physical Education

During ancient times, physical fitness was given prime importance, especially by the kings and the higher-class warriors. Physical education consisted of strength training; running; swimming; weight lifting. Along with physical education games formed an important curriculum of training.

Ancient India had a rich tradition of games that were played and passed on through generations and cultures. Games were not only meant for leisure but also to develop mental capabilities and maintain physical fitness. Games played in ancient India were related to military tactics and strategy. Popular games played by soldiers include Chaturanga, Chess called Ashatapada or 64 squares, Wrestling and Archery.

2.1.4 Places for Higher Education

Apart from Gurukuls, there were Academies for higher education, similar to what we call colleges. These were called *Parishads*, *Ashramas*, *Vidyapeeth*, and *Ghatikas* etc, depending upon the subjects being taught. Some of the most famous Indian institutions known worldwide in those times were Takshashila and Nalanda universities.

Vallabhi, Sringeri and Kanchi were other places of learning in ancient India.



ACTIVITY 2.1

Do you know how to play chess or Chaturanga? Well, look up the internet and learn how Chaturanga and chess are played. This helps in training the mind to formulate strategy to defeat the opponents king and army.



Intext Questions

2.1

1. Explain any two features of the gurukul system of education.
2. Name any three Academies in ancient India for higher education.
3. The name of the military school in ancient Kerala was _____.
4. Normally a student spent _____ years of his life in a Gurukul.

2.2 Military Education

Military science was generally called Dhanurveda. In Ashrams or Gurukuls there were several departments. The department that dealt with military studies was called Mahendrasthana. You may have learnt in History about how armies were formed and what weapons were used by soldiers.

All armies in India had chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry. It was called Chaturangabala. So how did the soldiers learn to fight? Military education was organised into two types of teaching. First was the individual training of the soldiers. The second was training the army in fighting as a combat unit.

2.2.1 Individual Training

All soldiers and sons of kings had to attend Gurukul with all others. All students were treated as equal. Only those students who had the skills to handle weapons were taught Dhanurveda or the art of fighting with weapons. In other words Gurukul was the first step in learning the art of fighting.

In ancient times, military education was not only organized by the State, but also by individual teachers too who would undertake this duty. In every village, there were military training camps where villagers were given military education for self-defence.

2.2.2 Collective Training

After their basic education in the Gurukulam, individuals were enrolled as soldiers and organised into various units of the army. Each unit had a specific role in war. The soldiers in the cavalry were experts in horse riding and fighting on horseback. Similarly, the charioteer was a good driver who could take the chariot with speed to the given place.

The elephant army was different from the cavalry. All these separate units of the army needed specialised teaching in handling the horses, elephants, etc. and also skilfully managing them in battle. You must have heard of Chanakya, who was a renowned philosopher, scholar and teacher under Chandragupta Maurya. His famous work is 'Arthashastra'. In his book he mentions that army used to assemble at one place every



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day in the morning and start their training. Typically the training started with physical training followed by use of individual weapons. Soldiers handling animals had to spend time with their animals and train with them. The leaders would also train the soldiers to fight as a team and follow the tactics.

2.2.3 Administration of the Army Units

Apart from training the soldiers and the army units, there were departments looking after administration of the army units. The officers, men and handlers were taught subjects specific to their job. For example an elephant handler learnt about animal behaviour, controlling the animal, what to feed and when to feed the animal, etc.

Officers such as the Senapathi were required to have knowledge about law and justice, in order to keep the soldiers disciplined.

The curriculum for the princes was Dhanurveda, Nitishastra, Siksha (lore) of elephants and chariots, Alekhya and Lekhya (Painting and Writing). Langhana (jumping) and Tairana (swimming).

Military education is very different from other form of education. The training of leaders and soldiers is as per their role & task in a battle.



Intext Questions

2.2

1. Name the department that taught military studies in ashrams/ Gurukuls.
2. Name any three subjects taught to the Princes in ancient India.

2.3 Evolution of Military Studies

From Vedic times to modern India, a number of changes happened as we have learnt in history. With the Muslim invaders came the Islamic system of learning in Maktabas and Madarsas. After the Muslims came the British. They brought the English method of teaching and organising schools and colleges. While both, the Muslims and the British encouraged higher education, the concept of educating soldiers and officers of the military also changed with time.

The British set up specialised academies for training officers. Training centres for soldiers were established at different places. Teaching in military studies became different for soldiers and officers. It was no longer a common academy for both the soldier and the officer. For officers Indian Military Academy was established and for soldiers Regimental centres at various locations were opened.



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2.3.1 Military Education in Medieval India

We have seen how soldiers were trained in the art of fighting in ancient India. Let us see what changed came when Muslims invaded India and established Mughal rule. What changed during Mughal rule and in the rest of India ? Major changes were:-

- Use of fire arms;
- Use of artillery or guns;
- Use of horse cavalry and archers on horse back;
- Changes in tactics in the battlefield.

Because of these changes, the subjects changed. With a change in subjects the teaching methods and places of training also changed. For example, in olden times any open field could become a school. With the advent of firearms and guns, large areas were identified to train soldiers where specialised facilities like firing ranges were established.

Why were large areas required for training in artillery guns? The need for safety from firearms and the longer distance to which guns could aim and fire, were the reasons for the requirement of large areas.

2.3.2 Stages of Training in Armies

In the medieval period, training of the army consisted of three parts -

THREE TIER TRAINING OF ARMIES IN THE MEDIEVAL AGE



Table 2.1 - Training Structure

- (a) **Training for Combat** : Combat training was organised for individual soldiers as well as for the army units. This training also included games that helped in combat. The army had to be alert and ready at all times for war.

Therefore, their training was continuous and it was part of daily routine for the soldiers to train for battle. The basic training for combat consisted of the following types of training:-



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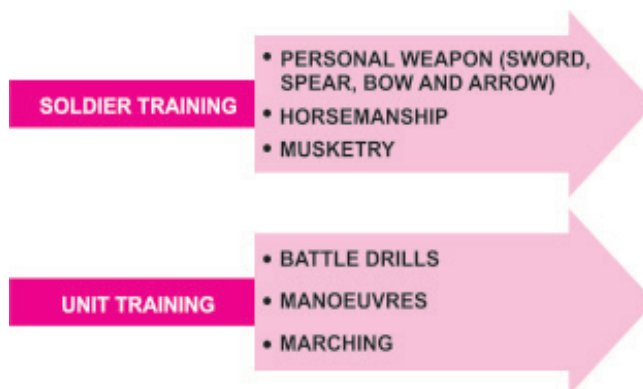


Table 2.2 - Types of Training

(b) **Sports and competitions** : Armies the world over believe that sports is a very useful form of training a soldier for battle. The influence of sport was crucial for instilling a warrior ethic and team spirit. The virtues displayed on the sporting field were also the ideal virtues of a soldier. The games and competitions organised were:-

- (i) Armed and Unarmed combat;
- (ii) Archery; horse racing and chariot racing;
- (iii) Boxing, Wrestling and swimming competitions;
- (iv) Hunting.

(c) **Benefits of Games** :

1. Build essential virtues of Strength, Courage, Chivalry and fair play
2. Instil fighting spirit and ability to win
3. Mental Fitness - Quick Thinking
4. Build Camaraderie among Troops and Officers

(d) **Inspections** : A well organised kingdom had good practices of keeping its army trained and ready for war always. It was also necessary to carry out inspections to check their state of readiness. Inspections by the King, Minister in charge of army and the Senapathy were conducted periodically.

During such inspections, some sort of drill and manoeuvres by the army units were shown to the inspecting officer. The commanding officers were also expected to show proficiency in basic military skills like horsemanship, archery and musketry, and their troops were supposed to practice with their weapons regularly.

2.3.3 Military Education in British India

'There is not a country' wrote Thomas in 1891 'where the love of learning had so early



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an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence'. According to him 'The English found in India, a widespread style of elementary education and higher education, of which the former was mainly practical while the latter mainly literary, philosophical and religious.

For about 150 years, the British were involved in trade and conquest in India. The educational training of the Indian troops started with the establishment of the East India Company. The beginning of an educational system for the army in India can be traced to the establishment of the British Regimental Schools, which provided training to the British troops.

Some of the British Regiments had brought the sergeants who were called "The School Master", along with them for the purpose of imparting instructions to their troops. But the number of schoolmasters and mistresses were negligible in proportion to the strength of the troops. As a result, the commanding officers were permitted to appoint educationally qualified non-commissioned officers as acting masters. Thus, a new system of formal education of troops was started.

2.3.4 Education under the Crown

From 1774 to 1785 British East India Company opened a number of regimental centres for British and European troops. The East India Company did not bother too much about educating Indian sepoys. However, after the 1857 mutiny, the Queen took over the reigns as new ruler of India, from The East India Company. New and more army units with native Indian sepoys were raised. Far reaching changes took place in army education under the Crown. These were as follows:-

- (a) Aims and objectives of educational training were defined for the first time.
- (b) Organizational set up was worked out to keep pace with the developments of educational training from time to time.
- (c) Army certificates were introduced and linked with pay and promotion.
- (d) Roman Urdu was adopted as the medium of instruction for the army.
- (e) Training directives were issued for implementation of the educational training.
- (f) Army Educational Corps was raised in 1921 to train instructors for the British and Indian troops.

2.3.5 Indianization of Military Training

During the pre-independence period, the Indian army had a two fold pattern of training. The soldiers were recruited from different regions such as Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, etc. Each of these regiments had Regimental Centres where the troops received formal education and training. Separate Academies were built for officers.

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Apart from these centres, a number of schools were also set up. These were:-

- Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun was founded in March 1922. This college provided basic school education and physical training for those who wanted to become officers in the Indian Armed forces.
- Chail Military School (oldest military school) was established in February 1922.
- Ajmer Military School
- Belgaum Military School
- Dholpur Military School
- Sainik Schools were opened in each state as feeder institution for National Defence Academy, Pune after 1962 war.



ACTIVITY 2.2

Use the internet and see the link given to understand the history of sports.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/552878/history-of-sports/>

Make a brief report of about one page.



Intext Questions

2.3

1. In the Islamic system of education the schools were called _____ and _____.
2. What were the subjects taught in Military studies to the soldiers in Medieval India?
3. Describe the three-tier training for armies in Medieval India.



What You Have Learnt

- Concept of learning Military Studies in Ancient India was through the system of Ashrams and Gurukul.
- There were specialised schools for combat training.
- Games were considered important part of a soldier's life. It helped in physical fitness and in increasing battle skills.
- Soldiers were trained in individual skills as well as collectively as a unit. Battle drills and manoeuvre were taught and practiced everyday.
- The training of soldiers for war changed with time and with invention of new weapons and ammunition.
- In the medieval period, Muslim system of education was followed. However, army training was done as a three-tier system.

- British India changed the form of training army sepoys. The system of education of soldiers was formalised. Regimental centres became the backbone of soldier training.
- British also started a number of military schools for basic education of children wanting to join the army.



Terminal Exercises

1. Explain the importance of physical education for the army.
2. Explain the meaning of "collective Training".
3. Differentiate between Soldier training and unit training, followed in Medieval India.
4. Name any four schools started by the British for children.
5. State the benefits of games in military?

Answers to Intext Questions

2.1

1. (a) It was a residential school;
(b) The Guru and student stayed together;
(c) Military related subjects was taught by the Guru.
2. Takshashila, Nalanda and Vallabhi schools.
3. Kalari.
4. 10 years.

2.2

1. Mahendrasthana.
2. Dhanurveda, Nitishastra, Siksha (lore) of elephants and chariots

2.3

1. Maktabas and Madarsas.
2. (a) Personal weapon(sword, spear, bow and arrow)
(b) Horsemanship
(c) Musketry



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3. (a) Training for combat
- (b) Sports and Competitions
- (c) Inspections