Education is the foundation of civilized society. The development or decline of a society depends to a large extent on the system of education prevailing in that particular society. In other words we can say that education system is the mirror of a society as they enable us to understand the spirit of its civilization. Stressing on this point it has been aptly said that it was even more so in ancient times when the schools and colleges were the chief centres, wherein the rising generation could be imbued with the traditions of the race and could be induced to adopt them in its own life. It becomes all the more significant when we see that unlike today paper, printing, media and other means of easy access to information were unknown in ancient times. The primary and perhaps the only source of getting to learn for the advancement of one’s intellect was to join some educational institution and to sit at the feet of the teacher to learn his wisdom by way of oral communication.

Education today is a subject that has been variously defined by scholars in the lexicons as well as through several other channels of learning but forms a complex issue of debate. In the *Collins English Dictionary* it has been explained as an ‘act or process of acquiring knowledge’ but at the same time this work also explains education as ‘the theory of teaching and learning’ as also ‘the act or process of imparting knowledge at a school, college or university’. Though the general character of all these definitions is the same, yet we can see a clear complexity of the term that makes it difficult to explain in one single sentence. It is not only in the modern times of micro studies from various angles that such explanations become difficult issues but even in the ancient times varied views of the same subject were taken by different persons under different circumstances. We can say that both broad and narrow views of education existed right from the beginning and were professed according to place and situation. The maxim ‘Yāvijñātvamadhiñete vipraḥ’ very truly says that a true teacher is a student to the end of his life. It is true that the process of learning continues through the life of a person till death. Examples can easily be given in support of this
view as we know that only basic learning is acquired at a school or college and the rest one gains through experience in life. For example, it is not what is taught to a student of engineering at college that matters but it is what he has to implement by using his knowledge combined with his own intellect and experience. For every situation may be different from the one described in the book or taught at college. On the other hand the second may be called a narrow view of education but is practically the correct one. Accordingly the ideas imparted by teachers to students of young age when their minds are impressionable go a long way and become the parameters of actions and judgement throughout the life. Thus we see a person brought up in a socialist environment sharply differs from a student who was trained in a capitalist ideology. Their respective training becomes their way of thinking and moulds their entire life. However, either way education forms a very significant part of a person’s life as it is a form of illumination of one’s mind and serves as an agency for the improvement of the self. The Rgveda contains a passage that beautifully explains the situation. It says, ‘If a human being is superior to another, it is not because he possesses an extra hand or eye, but because his mind and intellect are sharpened and rendered more efficient by education’². The passage further stresses the need of a learned companion and a learned teacher to sharpen intellect and mind. It goes on to say, ‘those who do not walk (with the learned) in this lower world nor in the upper world, they are neither brāhmaṇas nor offerers of libations; they, devoid of wisdom, attaining speech, having sin-producing speech, becoming ploughmen pursue agriculture’³. Here the contrast drawn between an educated and uneducated person along with the impact of learning on one’s life is very clearly drawn, thus indicating that the primary purpose of education is to sharpen the intellect of a person. Dwelling upon the significance of education the Mahābhārata categorically declares that ‘there is no eyesight equivalent to that of education and there is no penance equivalent to truthfulness’⁴. That is why education is called the third eye of a man⁵.

The ideal of learning and education was always held very high in India. R. K. Mookerji has rightly observed that, “nowhere is this distinctive tendency of Hindu thought more manifest than in the sphere of learning and education. Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may so put it, but for the sake, and as a part, of religion. It was sought as the means of salvation or self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life, viz. Mukti or

1 - Rgveda
2 - Rgveda
3 - Mahābhārata
4 - Mahābhārata
5 - Mahābhārata
It may be clarified here that by ‘religion’ the learned scholar meant *dharma*, which should not be taken in the sense of worship of God according to the rituals prescribed in a particular sect but as the ideal code of conduct in life, which is applicable to and preached by all the sects alike. It revolves around the concept of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* leading to *moksha* through various pursuits of economic and social significance. In the economic sphere the choice of learning, occupation and movement of labour was subordinated to the choice of the ideals and the ends of life. In the social life also it was based on the principle that it should in all its classes, ranks and grades offer the best scope for development of the individual as its centre and chief concern. In other words the acquisition of knowledge for the assigned or chosen field in life was considered to be of prime importance for every human being.

Dwelling on the significance of knowledge the *Katha Upanishad* says that ‘He, who is possessed of supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control, like spirited steed controlled by a charioteer’. The *Dhammapada* also recognizes the supremacy of knowledge when it says that ‘Mental states always precede action of which they are the determining factors’. Thus education is a process of control of mind, to drive it down to its deeper layers, its subterranean depths, not ruffled by the ripples of the surface, the infinite distractions of the material world by which the mind wears itself out in fatigue. But this definition of education perhaps is too philosophical than practical. The first part of the statement that it is a process to control mind to drive it down to its deeper layers is fine but to remain oblivious of the surface happenings of the material world is questionable. This becomes clear from an incidence from the Buddha’s life quoted in the Buddhist literature. When Gautama and his companions were learning from his first teacher Āḷāra Kāḷāma who believed in deep meditation, it is said that he would sit by the roadside where a caravan of five hundred carts would pass by without the teacher ever even becoming aware of their presence so deep was he absorbed in his thought. This state of mind ultimately did not lead Gautama to the Buddhahood and he gave up the company of the learned teacher to seek the knowledge elsewhere. On one hand the Buddha claimed to have learned speedily the doctrine of Āḷāra Kāḷāma but on the other it did not fulfil is quest for knowledge. Thus materialism is as much a part of education as spiritualism. There has to be a fine balance between the two.
Aims and Ideals of Education

Education no doubt was a must in the life of a person in ancient times as it is today but it had to be imparted by the teacher with a specific goal and was to be acquired by the pupil for a purpose. The basic idea remained the refinement of the personality of a person and sharpening his intellect. But in this too there were some specific ideals that led our ancients to go deeper into the subject for creating an ideal society and not merely to have more material advancement that is generally sought in the present times. Altekar has listed among the aims and ideals of education, the infusion of piety and religiousness, formation of character, development of personality, self-confidence and self-restraint, discrimination and judgement, awareness of social duties, promotion of social efficiency and happiness and the preservation and spread of culture\textsuperscript{10}. It covers most of the aspects of ancient ideals of education and has been followed by several modern scholars\textsuperscript{11} but it leaves out more mundane topics of materialistic and technical education which also formed the part and parcel of the system.

The role of religion in education in ancient India cannot be over emphasized. Whether Vedic, Brāhmaṇic, Jaina or Buddhist, education was imparted by teachers who were generally religious priests, sages or monks. A student living with them had to strictly observe and imbibe the rules laid down by that particular faith according to the wishes of the teacher. Even at the time of admission a student had to go through some religious observances and as long as he remained a \textit{brahmachārin} these observances were part of his daily routine and training. Naturally a deep sense of religious affiliations developed in the mind of pupils from a very young age. But it must not be forgotten that religious observances of the age were based on an ethical code of conduct and not merely a mechanical procedure to be followed without a purpose. As such this training infused a deep sense of ethical behaviour and piety in to the student. Moreover, as pointed out by Altekar\textsuperscript{12}, no student was expected to remain a lifelong celibate. Only a small fraction of students remained lifelong \textit{brahmachārins}. After the completion of the education he was expected to return home get married and lead the life of a householder performing his religious duties along with his wife. This was possible only after receiving a good training in piety that was the primary aim of education in order to build a healthy society.
The religious piety was used for the character building in students as a coveted aim of education in ancient India. At every step a student was taught to distinguish between the right and wrong and to follow the path of righteousness. During their daily routine in the Āśrama of the teacher or in the monastery pupils’ routine and conduct were devised in such a manner that they should be fully aware of the virtues of righteous conduct. It is perhaps because of this reason that character was given prime place in the life of a man much above his learning. The *Mahābhārata* clearly says the he alone is learned who is righteous\(^\text{13}\). Even Manu declares that a learned person well-versed in the Vedas but of impure life, habits and thoughts is despicable as compared to a righteous person with a mere smattering of the Vedic knowledge\(^\text{14}\). Thus character building was not only the primary aim of education in ancient India but was assiduously followed throughout.

Development of personality that forms part of or lead to self-confidence and self-restraint has always been considered an integral part of education. A student was taught to develop the power of discrimination and judgement at every step in life. He was made to remember at all times that he is the torch-bearer of the society and culture of his race and was to set a personal example through his actions. It did not matter as to what his actual learning of the texts was. For all we know except for the brāhmaṇa boys the students of other classes such as kṣatriya and vaiśya must have cared little to learn all the Vedas deeply except for what was essential for their daily prayers and rituals. They must have been more interested in learning the crafts of their respective avocations such as military training and agriculture and trade. But in any stream they were to be masters of their own professions through right means, that made them good citizens. The *Atharvaveda* clearly asserts that ‘if a king is successful as a governor or if a warrior shine in the battlefield it is all due to their proper training and education’\(^\text{15}\).

When a student had completed his education, the parting advice to him from the teacher in his convocation address (*samāvartana*) was ‘*satyam vada; dharmam chara*’\(^\text{16}\) that is ‘speak the truth, do your righteous duty’. This advice was naturally based on the concept that with a developed personality based on strong moral character a person must contribute to form a healthy society to live in. It was further said that a person must not lead a self-centred life nor should he be self-indulgent. He
was taught to be responsible towards the persons in other stages of life i.e. brahmacharins, vanaprasthins and the samnyäsins. He was to provide for all of them ungrudgingly as his duty towards the society. With these aims and ideals education in India always remained a primary issue in ancient times.

**Education in the Rgvedic Period**

The picture of education in Punjab during the period of the Rgveda is not very clear. This is despite the fact that a work of such high literary merit was composed during this period and a large number of sages or scholars as composers of the Vedic hymns are mentioned in the text. There is not much to enlighten us on the infrastructure of educational institution or the method of teaching or the contents of curriculum, etc. However, we start getting glimpses of education in the age of the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishads, where some references to the system as well as the subjects taught are available. A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, while admitting to the paucity of sources, have briefly referred to the education of the brāhmaṇas\(^\text{17}\), kshatriyas\(^\text{18}\) and vaiśyas\(^\text{19}\). The most often quoted reference to the educational system during the early Vedic age is glimpsed from the Frog Hymn contained in the Rgveda\(^\text{20}\). It refers to the recitation of mantras by students sounding like the croaking of frogs after the rainy season. This may be taken as a picture of the daily study. Here it can be visualized the picture of a classroom where students were being taught the recitation of texts, their correct pronunciation and accentuation under a system of oral tradition. Students had to memorize the texts by repeated oral recitation. But this was not considered sufficient as they were expected to comprehend the meaning of the learnt text by contemplating on it. Pranati Ghosal has suggested the reference in the Frog Hymn\(^\text{21}\) to the sleeping of frogs in the period of slumber is actually the period of contemplation of the students. After comprehending the meaning of the text they were ready with their speech i.e. to discuss it\(^\text{22}\). Max Muller was of the view that the comparison of brāhmaṇa to frogs is a satire against the former\(^\text{23}\). This view was supported by Geldner who thought that the pun was directed by Vasishṭhas against Viśvāmitras\(^\text{24}\). However, we feel it is just the imagination of the learned scholars who have tried to stretch the simple simile out of proportions. Why should a brāhmaṇa speak against his own profession? It seems that the hymn simply describes the students learning at teacher’s place by method of recitation.
The teachers and students are mentioned as seers and *brahmachārins* a couple of times in the *Rgveda* without enlightening us with any details. However, the names of a large number of seers, both male and females, do occur in the text. It was laid down that their names were to be recited daily at the time of prayers. The commentary of Śāyaṇa on the *Rgveda* written in the medieval period has been used by scholars to find further references to education in the *Rgveda*. Thus we find at one place it is said that ‘classmates who have studied the same texts may be equal in the possession of their senses like the eyes and the ears but betray their inequality in respect of their power or speed of mind or the knowledge or wisdom which is attained by the mind’.

Likewise three categories of students are alluded to – *Mahāpraśān*, *Madhyamapraśān* and *Alpapraśān* as the student of high, medium and low ability. Mookerji also finds references to the student approaching a teacher called *vachas* to be instructed by the latter, the initiation of a student and the picture of their being instructed. Collecting all these references from the *Rgveda*, Mookerji has traced the following picture, “In the primary stage the school would be marked by noisy recitation and repetition of texts by pupils in the manner of frogs lustily croaking after the rain. In the second stage the collective work of the pupils in a class ceased, and their individual work commenced. Each had to achieve for himself by his individual effort, by his own *tapas* and *yoga*, by his silent and solitary meditation, the truth of the texts which had been taught to the class in common. Very soon differences manifested themselves among these *sakhās* or class-fellows in regard to their mental powers, like tanks of varying depths. The more unfit were weeded out, sent back to plough or the loom. They were not meant for higher learning and spiritual life.”

With the meagre references at our disposal, it is not possible to have a better picture of education during the early Vedic period than given above. But it is sufficient to note that all essential features of education such as *Upanayana* or initiation, *brahmachārin* or student, teachers, class-fellows, even the recitation method by the students existed in the time of the *Rgveda*. Several scholars like Pargiter, Hopkins and Mookerji has also discussed the area of the spread of the early Vedic education and have pointed out that it has to be contained within the limits of Saptasindhu.
Education in the Later Vedic Period

An elaborate and clear picture is available from the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishads during the later Vedic period. To these works references from the works of scholars like Yāska may be added to further elaborate the picture. As the major portion of these texts was also composed in the north-west it can easily be applied to the region of ancient Punjab. Education here, as in the earlier period, was taken not as an end but as means to an end. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that by study and teaching of the Veda one becomes calm in mind, independent of others, the best physician for himself, with his restraint of the senses, uniformity of mental attitude, growth of the intelligence, fame and the power of perfecting the people. The texts further lay down the rules regarding place and time for the purpose. For example, the Taittiriya Āranyaka says that ‘one should go outside the town or village, north or north-east, until the roofs cease to be seen and after sunrise and then repeat to himself the Vedas and other subjects’. The Atharvaveda also specifies certain times, places and conditions when one must not undertake the Vedic studies. Some more details of the same are to be found in the Aitareya Āranyaka. From these references it is clear that a lot of importance was given to the environment for serious studies for correct comprehension. This must have applied to the students of advanced learning for all we know that a child began his initial education by learning the basics from his father. Several of the Upanishads say that a brāhmaṇa must impart education to his son both in the Vedas and rituals. It goes without saying that in other classes also children must have received their professional education from their fathers even at an advance stage.

The need of going to a teacher for formal education was a must. Thus the Katha Upanishad says with reference to learning that “Apart from the teacher, there is no access here”. The Mandaka Upanishad also says, “Let him in order to understand it take fuel in hand and approach a teacher who is learned and dwells entirely in Brahman”. The Chhāndogya Upanishad refers to it at several places. One example given here definitely refers to Punjab when it says, ‘Just as a person who has been brought blindfolded from Gandhāra and set at liberty in a solitary place goes astray in all directions because he has been brought there blindfold and then set at liberty; but after that someone has removed the bandage and has told him, ‘in this direction
Gandhāra lies, go to this direction’ instructed and prudent now asking his way from village to village he reaches Gandhāra. Thus the requirement of a teacher for proper learning was fully recognized during this period. The teacher occupied the central position in the realm of education. Right from the initiation in to the formal education, a student had to reside with a teacher throughout the period of brahmacharya and learn from him. Jogiraj Basu has drawn attention to a category of teachers who were known as charakas and probably moved from one place to another imparting knowledge. The Brhadāranyaka Upanishad refers to a band of wandering scholars who travelled to the land of Madras (Central Punjab) and were involved in discussion and disputation.

A teacher was, it seems, not free to do as he liked but was duty bound by an ethical code. In the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka the teacher is advised to teach the student with utmost care. Even the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa lays down that a teacher was duty bound to explain everything to a student who stayed with him for a whole year. This is supported by the Upanishads also. In the Praśna Upanishad also says that a teacher’s duty is to impart knowledge to the student without concealing anything, otherwise he would be ruined. The righteous attitude of the teachers of the age is reflected from the fact that sometimes they sent their students to consult other teachers when some specialized knowledge was required. The Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa tells the story of one Āruṇi who was sent to consult Plaksha Dayyāmpāti to learn about twenty-four sources and twelve joints of sāvitri. A similar story of Maitreya and Maudgalya is contained in the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, where the former consulted the latter after stopping his class in between.

Though generally students flocked to a good teacher yet every teacher seems to have desired that good students should come to him. This is best illustrated by a prayer contained in the Taittiriya Upanishad wherein it is said, “May the brahmachārins come to me from all sides. May the brahmachārins come to me in various ways. May the brahmachārins come to me in the proper way......as the water flows down a slope, as months roll down into an year similarly O Lord, may the students come to me from all directions.” It is evident that teachers were as keen on having good and intelligent students as the latter wanted to have competent teacher.
A student was called a *brahmachārin* and the period of studentship was called *brahmacharya*. We have already discussed the details of *brahmacharya* and its significance as the first stage of life in the previous chapter and need not repeat it over here. But it is to be noted that it was a crucial stage as the entire future of a person depended on the learning received during this period. When a child came of the prescribed age he was sent to the āśrama of the teacher in a ceremonial way to be accepted and initiated. The initiation ceremony was called *Upanayana*. Its earliest reference is available in the *Atharvaveda*⁴⁹. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*⁵⁰ contains details of the ceremony. Herein we are told that a desirous student approaches the teacher with declaration of his intention and requesting to be accepted as a pupil. The teacher then asks the name of the student and then grasping his right hand places his own right hand on the student. Prajāpati and Sāvitṛi are invoked and Gāyatrī is recited. The student then becomes initiated. According to one view the student was to stay with the teacher for twelve years but in reality it appears that there was no fixed tenure of studentship. It varied according to the requirement of a particular student and courses he wanted to learn.

Every *brahmachārin* was expected to lead a life of rigorous discipline while staying with the teacher. There were detailed rules of his conduct describing his daily routine from the morning till the end of the day. A long list of do’s and don’ts existed that every student was expected to follow. He was to do whatever task was assigned to him by the teacher and sit near him to receive lessons when asked to do so. In short his duties included i) hard work; ii) not sleeping during the day time; iii) service to the teacher in the form of tending his fire, cattle and other works; iv) begging alms; v) study; and the vi) development of self-control⁵¹.

Besides these, a student was to find time for self-study called *svādhyāya* as we already discussed above. A long list of subjects to be studied is contained in various texts. They included the Vedic texts, *vedāṅgas* or the limbs of the Vedic studies, precepts, various sciences⁵² (*vidyās*), theological discourses, cosmological myths, *itihāsa-purāṇa* and *gāthānārāśanīs*⁵³. This list is not comprehensive as we have many more subjects that were taught and figure in various texts. Astronomy, mathematics, astrology, science of portents, polity, divination, Vedic rituals, etc. also formed part and parcel of education.
There were no established institutes of education during this age what may be called colleges or universities in the modern sense of the term. But several places had emerged as known centres of education. It must have been due to the reason that some renowned scholars resided there or they received patronage from the rulers of these places. The scene was gradually shifting from the Punjab to the Gangetic plains. Kāśi and Videha were known centres outside Punjab. In the latter case King Janaka of Mithila was a great philosopher himself and patronised learning. The king of Kāśi too was a known teacher. However, Punjab continued to occupy important place in the realm of learning and sacrifices during this period. King Āśvapati of Keykaya was a paragon of learning. Not only education was flourishing during his rule but he himself was a philosopher-teacher of high degree. Even seers repaired to him to learn the lesson of ātman and brahma. The region of Kuru-Pañchāla also figures prominently in this connection. The former comprised roughly the land to the north of Delhi up to the Satluj. Scores of renowned teachers are said to have been living here imparting education from their āśramas. The Naimisha Forest was known for this purpose. It has been identified with Kurukshetra by O. P. Bharadwaj who has also pointed out that it was home to the Naimishyas, known for their learning and performance of sacrifices, during the later Vedic period. Because of its popularity the name seems to have shifted to Pañchāla region at a later date. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa provides the name of Āsandāvat, modern Asandh, as the place where king Janamejaya performed sacrifice. The same is mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa also.

Post-Vedic to the Mauryan Period

The Vedic tradition of learning continued in the post-Vedic and even in the historic period of Indian history. Punjab had to face a number of foreign incursions like that of Achaemenians and the Greeks during this period which must have had an impact on its education system also making the land and its people more materialistic than they were in the earlier times. We shall see glimpses of the same in the following pages. The post-Vedic period known by the name of the Sūtras in the literary history and that of the Sixteen Mahājanapadas in the political annals saw the composition of excellent works like the Ashtādhyāyī of Pāṇini in c. sixth century BCE that was followed by the Arthasastra of Kautilya at slightly later date in the fourth century BCE, both of which may be attributed to Punjab, testifying its prime position in
learning. It was this period which saw the emergence of the best university that ancient India can boast of as an international centre of learning at Taxila in the western Punjab, which was the capital of Gandhāra at that time.

By the time of the end of the Brāhmaṇa-Upanishad period the Vedic literature had become too vast to be handled easily by memorizing the whole and it was feared that it may get lost or get distorted. So the thinkers of the time devised a new method, must be after great research, of ‘concise collective summaries’ in place of ‘diffuse discussion of details’. The result was the creation of the Sūtra literature. The word literally means a thread. In this system utmost brevity was applied for storing the vast mast of literature so that the memory might not be overburdened. Not only the formulae of sacrifices and social and religious laws were written afresh by this method but even the subjects like grammar (Pāṇini and Patanjali) and polity (the Arthasastra of Kautilya) were also composed in the sūtra form. Thus a new method of learning developed. The introduction of Buddhism during this period too must have affected the method of learning and teaching with the establishment of the Buddhist monastic institutions. A vast literature in the form of Buddhist canonical and non-canonical texts also emerged during this period. In addition subjects like Śikṣā, Chhanda, Vyakaraṇa, Nirukta, Kalpa, Jyotisha, etc. gained importance in addition to the Vedic studies. Even the study of medicine through the Āyurveda was popularized. It came to gain the status of the fifth Veda. Though the system of education remained the same, more details were added wit respect of the beginning and continuance of learning, conduct of students, routine of students and the discipline to be maintained by them. Hardening of the caste system also had its effect on education. The Śūdras were now barred from initiation and those of the three higher varṇas were distinguished by their age of initiation, dress, speech and even the subjects taught to them. Even the categories of the teachers increased. They were Āchārya, Upādhyāya, Pravakta and Adhyāpaka in the descending order. The first were the most respected and the highest in degree of knowledge. There were teachers known as Yaujana Śayika. Patanjali has explained the term to mean the teachers to whom students flocked from hundreds of miles. The term finds mention in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad earlier. The homes of teachers were the colleges as well as hostels where students resided to learn but with the expansion of the subjects it is visualized that more than one teacher might have been required to teach. Under the circumstances a
group of teachers set up their āśramas close to each other and the area became known as centre of learning. It was perhaps the first step towards the setting up of formal universities as centres of higher learning that later on took shape in the form of universities of Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramashila and others.

With reference to education in ancient Punjab during this period two names stand out as the glittering examples. The first is that of Āchārya Pāṇini, who made the Sanskrit grammar immortal through his *Ashṭādhyāyī* written in c. 6th century BCE and the second is that of Kautilya, the great exponent of polity, who wrote the famous *Arthasastra* in the beginning of the Mauryan period. Pāṇini belonged to Śalātura in the western Punjab and Kautilya was a professor at the Taxila University. It is quite possible that Pāṇini also taught at the same university.

Pāṇini throws some welcome light on the education system during his time, when explaining various rules of grammar, which obviously was prevalent in Punjab. The system continued through the method of *brahmacharya*58. Students of the three higher castes were called *varṇī*, a term unknown in the Vedic period59. There were two types of students. First called *dandaṁanaṇa*, who did not reside with the teacher but flocked around him and the second were *antevāsī*60 who stayed with the teacher to study the Veda after Upanayana. The relations between the teacher and taught were always very sweet. Teacher treated students like his own children and the latter in their turn gave all respect to the teacher. But there existed some bad students also and Pāṇini gives several terms for those who were unstable, lazy, gluttonous, attracted towards girls and greedy for freebees61. There were several terms for a teacher as well as students in different situations. For example at the time of lectures a teacher was called *pravachaniya*62. He also refers to four types of teachers viz. Āchārya, *Pravakta*, *Śrotriya* and *Adhyāpaka*63. He also talks of proper time and place for study, days for holidays and other such things. In nutshell Pāṇini portrays a picture of education that was a continuation of the Vedic learning but more elaborate in structure. It is evident from the explanation of a *sūtra* of Pāṇini64 given by Patañjali65 where he says that Kaṭha and alāpa Charāṇas were spread over all the villages where teachers were settled.

Kautilya who flourished in the last quarter of the fourth century BCE does not throw much light on education but we do get some glimpses from his work. He talks
of Ānivikshaktī, Trayfī, Vārtā and Daṇḍanītī as subjects of study. The first of these is metaphysical speculation involving keen introspection. Kautilya is familiar with three schools of philosophy in this connection viz. Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Lokāyata. The second is the study of the three Vedas and their limbs. He lists phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, prosody and astronomy amongst auxiliary sciences. Vārtā is work for livelihood and covers all material sciences including trade and commerce, cattle rearing and agriculture. Daṇḍanītī is the main subject of his work where in all aspects of polity and state administration are covered. He upholds the principle of higher education for the three upper castes and deprives the Śūdras of the same. He further enumerates the subjects to be mastered by students of each varṇa. Talking about the duties of the students, he recounts, worship of fire, ablation, begging of alms and service to the teacher for all his life. Some mental and moral qualities for studentship are also referred to. He definitely talks of a child to be taught alphabet (lipi) and numbers (sāṃkhya) immediately after his tonsure at home. This is perhaps the first reference to the teaching of alphabet as a primary subject though Pāṇini alludes to it in his work earlier. It would thus be wrong to assume that the Arthaśāstra does not dwell upon the subject of education. Kauṭliya, himself being an Achārya could not ignore it though the limitations of the subject being enumerated by him did not permit him to go into details of the system.

The University of Taxila

No discussion on education in ancient Punjab nay in ancient India can ever be complete without a detailed reference to the University of Taxila which is the earliest known seat of higher learning. Located in the present day Pakistan about twenty miles west of Rawalpindi, Taxila was the capital of Gandhāra Mahājanapada. The legend says that the city was founded by Bharata, the younger brother of Rāma, and named after his son Taksha who was made its first ruler. Not going into the legends, we know that it was a prominent seat of learning as well as centre of political, commercial and cultural activities at least from the seventh century BCE. Hundreds of students flocked to this place from far and wide to learn various disciplines but there is no evidence of the existence of a centralized institution here in the sense of a modern university. Probably a large number of eminent scholars of
various disciplines were residing here and were in close contact with each other. Their concentration in Taxila made it a famous centre of learning.

Most of the references to Taxila as a great centre of learning are contained in the Buddhist literature. The Jātakas tell us about the ‘world renowned’ teachers of Taxila some of whom had as many as five hundred students studying under a single teacher. The Sutasoma Jātaka tells that 103 princes of various countries were learning the science of archery under a single teacher. Altekar has doubted the large number of students mentioned elsewhere because the archaeological remains have not yielded any large structures which may be big enough to accommodate such a large number of students. Here it may be pointed out that number of princes learning archery was 103 and there must have been other Kshatriyas learning the same art though they were not royals. There number could be quite large. As to the archaeological evidence of structures it must not be forgotten that most of the brahmachārins were required to live in the āśramas of their teachers and not in large hostel buildings like of the present day. We know from the same source that king Prasenajīta of Kośala, a contemporary of the Buddha, received his education at Taxila.

Most interesting story about the place given by the Buddhist literature is that of Jivaka. He was an illegitimate son of Bimbisāra the king of Magadha, who repaired to Taxila from Rājgrha in Bihar to learn medicine and surgery. After a tough entrance examination he was admitted to the University where he spent seven years learning various aspects of the subject. On completion of the course he had to undergo an examination and only after he was successful that he was permitted to practice the profession. Later on he became the most famous surgeon and doctor who cured several important patients including the Buddha by his skill. This shows that Taxila was a great centre of military training as well as medical sciences and other such technical subjects. However, the Vedic studies as well as Buddhist studies were important subjects taught here. We have already referred to Pāṇini and Kautilya who must have been associated with this place both as students and teachers of fame.

The University was at its peak during the Mauryan period and even the Macedonian invader Alexander, the Great, is said to have sought a meeting with the philosophers of this place, Dandamis being one of them. But in subsequent centuries probably due to constant foreign invasions it fell on bad days and completely
disappeared by the Gupta period. Hsiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited this place in the seventh century did not find anything of educational importance at Taxila. It had already met its doom by then.
Notes and References:

2. RV., X. 71. 7.
3. Ibid., X. 71. 9.
4. Śāntiparva, 329. 6.
7. III. 6.
8. I. 1.
11. See for example, Gupta, Devendra Kumar, *Sutra Sahitya mein Varnita Bharatiya Samaja evam Sanskriti*, 397-400.
13. Śāntiparva, 321. 78.
15. XI. 15. 17.
18. Ibid., 207.
19. Ibid., 334.
20. VII. 103.
21. VII. 103. 5.
Cf. Vedic Index, II, 121.

For example RV. I. 8. 6; I. 112. 2; I. 116. 3, VII. 103.


I. 112. 2.

RV., III. 8. 4; X. 109. 5.

Ibid., I. 116. 13.


He is of the view that education during the Rgvedic age spread from the east to the west. Cf. Mookerji, op. cit., 53.

Mookerji, op. cit., 53-54.

7. 1.

II. 9-15.

VII. 66.

V. 3. 3.

II. 8.

I. 2. 3.

VI. 14. 1-2; IV. 9. 3; III. 11. 5.


India of the Age of Brāhmaṇas, 48.

III. 3. 1.

VII. 4.

XIV. 1. 1. 26.

VI. 1.

III. 10. 9. 5.

I. 1. 31.
They contained several specializations such as science of snakes, venoms, demonology, magic and so on.

For details see above, chapter III, section on Brahmacharya.

I. 4. 2-3.
XI. 5. 3.
XI. 5. 4. 1-17.

Studies in the Historical Geography of Ancient India, 129-135.

SB, XI. 5. 6. 8.

VIII. 14. 4; 19. 2.

Mahābhāṣya, V. 1. 74 (2).

V. 1. 54.

Agrawala, V. S., Pāṇini kalīna Bhārata, 275.

Pāṇini, IV. 3. 130.

Ibid., II. 1. 36, 41, etc.

Ibid., III. 2. 109.

Ibid., II. 1. 65.

Ibid., II. 4. 3.

Mahābhāṣya, IV. 3. 101.

Arth., I. 2. 10-12.

Arth., I. 3.

Arth., I. 4. 1-2.

Arth., I. 4. 3-16.

Mookerji, op. cit., 246.

Arth., I. 3. 3.
The proper name of the place is TakshaSilā. However, the popular spellings are used here.