CHAPTER-III
EDUCATION AND THE GIRL CHILD

The history of the most of the known civilizations shows that the further back we go into antiquity, the more unsatisfactory is found to be the general position of women. Hindu civilization is unique in this respect, for here we find a surprising exception to the general rule. The further back we go, the more satisfactory is found to be the position of women in more spheres than one; and the field of education is most noteworthy among them. The number of girls going to school in India is still small to quote, though the law now makes education free and compulsory (but can't be enforced fully). Education, until recently, has been considered, 'education for life', not for literacy, and hence for girls it has consisted chiefly of training for marriage. A few girls have always been allowed academic training, but this was usually in the home, under tutors, and the concept of education for girls in outside institutions is a new one for India.¹

We see, Indian girls, then, growing up with strongly maintained family relationships and customs. There is little doubt that they grew up with the feeling that as females they are less fortunate and less exalted than males. It would be incorrect to assume, however, that this fact makes them unhappy. They learn their function, their power, and learn to feel their importance in the home as transmitters of the cultural heritage and as potential creators of a new family group. Furthermore, they do not face agonizing decisions in their daily lives. The pattern is there, and all they have to do is fit into it. As children they have little responsibility, little sorrow, unless the family is very poor, 'in which case all suffer'.²
We can however understand this strange phenomenon when we remember that for a long time education in ancient India meant vedic education, and that it had to be necessarily imparted to all who were expected to take part in vedic sacrifices, irrespective of their sex. What becomes imperative at the very outset is to first understand the meaning of and the subsequent application of education in society in early India. Then alone can we be in position to study the opportunities available or denied to the girl child in our early history.

Nature must have been the first tutor of mankind, who had helped men and women in strengthening the powers of their body and mind. However, man's own nature had propagated it further. In most areas of human activity, definitive roles emerged with one partner assuming the authoritative position even to the extent of decision making on issues pertaining to the other sex. This was extended to educational opportunities for the girls as well. Evolution of women's educational system in ancient India does not show a uniform pattern rather it shows a variegated picture.

Around the 3rd millennium B.C., a highly cultured civilization was found in the Indus valley region. But since the script of the Indus valley people has not been deciphered, little is known regarding the intellectual outlook of the people, including that of the women. Then, after a long interval, we come across the vedic period, where a lot is known about the educational system of those times. The educational pattern of ancient India, on the surface at least, was unique in two respects. It occurred without the benefit of a system of writing; and the motivation for it was exclusively religious. However, recent researches have shown that there could be a high possibility of the prevalence of a script since the vedic authors stressed very much on phonetics.
As R.K. Mukherjee says: "Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may put it, but for the sake, and as a part of religion. It was sought as a means of salvation of self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life, viz., mukti or emancipation".\(^5\) He further added that the aim of education is 'chitta-vritti-nirodha', the inhibition of those activities of the mind by which it gets connected with the world of matter or objects. 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 distraction of the material world by which the mind wears itself out in fatigue. Thus, the primary aim of ancient education was, instilling into the minds of the pupils a spirit of being pious and religious or glory of God and good of man.\(^6\) Education was never regarded as a bread and butter proposition.\(^7\)

The 'Encyclopaedia of Religion' concurs, "from the earliest part of their history the Indians have been accustomed to associate education like all other departments of their social life with religion".\(^8\) The 'Encyclopedia of Education' expresses a specific opinion, "the indigenous gurukul system – the Indian form of liberal arts education, was designed to enlighten and enable rather than to provide career training".\(^9\) Almost identical concept has been echoed in modern dictionaries, which define education as: training to strengthen the mental and moral power.

Like other ancient civilized countries of the world, ancient India recognized the supreme value of education in human life. The Indian thinkers of old felt that a healthy society was not possible without educated individuals. The educational set up was carefully and wisely moulded. It aimed at the harmonious development of the mind and body of students.
Before proceeding to discuss the subject, it should be noted that the social structure of ancient India for the better part of its history rested on four pillars in the shape of the four castes, viz. Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. Brāhmaṇa formed the highest rung of the social ladder and Śūdra the lowest. The Śūdras were to serve the three upper classes. So, they have no place in the educational code.¹⁰ (Extensively discussed in the Chapter V).

Nowhere is this distinctive tendency of Indian thought more manifest than in the sphere of learning and education. The result is that it is religion that creates literature in India and wields it as an instrument for its own purposes, a vehicle of its expression. It fixes its very body and form and determines the course of its evolution.¹¹ As Macdonell puts it since the birth of the oldest Vedic poetry, we find Indian literature, for a period of more than a thousand years, bearing “an exclusively religious stamp; even those latest productions of the Vedic age which cannot be called directly religious are yet meant to further religious ends. This is, indeed, implied by the term Vedic, for Veda, primarily signifying ‘knowledge’ (from root vid, to know), designates ‘sacred lore’ as a branch of literature. Besides this general sense, the word has also the restricted meaning of sacred book”.¹²

Ancient Indian education is also to be understood as being ultimately the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge and a part of the corresponding scheme of life and values. That scheme takes full account of the fact that life includes death and the two form the whole truth. This gives a particular angle of vision, a sense of perspective and proportion in which the material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perishable and permanent interests and values of life are clearly defined and strictly differentiated. According to Vedic world view the world is pervaded by
divinity and the aim of every living being is to achieve liberation. Thus according to the Vedas the aim of education is liberation. According to a famous statement, 'That is knowledge which gives liberation'. Therefore, A.S. Altekar has rightly pointed out, 'The knowledge is a third eye of man, which gives him insight into all affairs and teaches him how to act. In the spiritual sphere, it leads to our salvation in the mundane sphere, it leads to all round progress and prosperity. The illumination given to us by education shatters illusions, removes difficulties and enables us to realise the true values of life'.

Vedic education is to be studied as an integral part of vedic though and life. It will be best understood in the light of certain concepts and technical terms in which are concealed and stored up the traditions governing the general philosophy and scheme of life of the vedic age. These terms came to be established as the outcome of important movements and trends of thought which they reflect.

**Access to Education**

The hymns of the Rgveda are the earliest documents which throw light upon the history of education in ancient India. It consists of 1017 (1028) hymns divided into ten books of unequal size. No definite period can be mentioned with regard to their composition and arrangement. 'It is a mass of literature which had grown up in course of many centuries and was orally handed down from generation to generation'.

It is generally held that position of women was fairly satisfactory in the vedic society (evidenced to some extent in chapter II) and it may have been to a certain extent on account of her access to education. A few points can be highlighted in support of this view. To impart education to all
children, and to help them in settling in life were the twin duties of the vedic parents and in this there was initially no discrimination between a boy and a girl. It was held that Brahmacharya discipline and training was as much necessary for girls as it was for boys. That women are like the Südras and ineligible for the vedic studies is a notion of a later age.

The Rgveda offers the first glimpse of educated women. There are as many as twenty women among the ‘seers’ or authors of the Rgveda. Some of them might have been mythical personages but others like Lopāmudrā, Viśvavāra, Sikātā, Nivāvari were women in flesh and blood, who once lived in society. Even the tenth mandala of the Rgveda (generally regarded as interpolatary), mentions the names of many ladyscholars (Rṣikās) like Ghoshā, Juhū, Vāgāṃbhṛṇi, Pavlamī, Jaritā, Sāvitṛī, Indrānī. The Sāmaveda adds the following names of Nodhā, Akrishtābhāsha, Sikātānivāraṇī and Gaupāyanā.

From the Rgvedic passages we come to know that young maidens who completed their education as Brahmachārinis gained husbands in whom they got merged like rivers in oceans: “In thee, Agni, the accepter of the oblation, the upholder (of all), there is pleasure (from our praise); do thou bestow upon these thy worshippers wealth and food, and a heart (greatful for thy favour)”. The Rgvedic passages mention unmarried, learned and young daughters who should be married to learned bridegrooms: “Let the milch-kine that have no calves storm downward, yielding rich nectar, streaming, unexhausted; these who are ever new and fresh and youthful. Great is the God’s supreme and sole dominion”. Even from the Yajūrvedic passage and Atharvavedic passage we come to know about maidens qualifying or completing their Brahmacharya, the disciplined life of studentship, and then getting married.
we hear of Vāc, daughter of sage Ambrna, who was the one to declare herself as the varitable embodiment of all the major gods. Women sages were called Rṣikās and Brahmavadinis. It is also known from the Rgveda that women were then admitted to full religious rites. The wife was also a regular participator in the sacrificial offerings of her husband. Such situations would demand now just a basic/primary learning. To be able to perform such complicated procedures they would have received complete education for these in their childhood.

In spite of such glaring evidences, we come across certain contrasting passages: "The brown that match the wind in speed, and bright bay coursers fleet of foot, like suns, resplendent are they all", like where Indra himself says, "the mind of women brooks no discipline, her intellect-hath little weight". This façade shows what was to come in future and women were already branded as inferior to men.

Down to about the 3rd century B.C. girls could remain unmarried till the age of 16. The period before marriage would be utilized for imparting education to them. Some women, especially unmarried ones, are seen offering vedic sacrifices all by themselves. We find a maiden taking a shoot of the soma shrub while returning from her bath, and straightway offering it in sacrifice to Indra, when she reached home: "A young woman going to the water found Soma in the path; as she carried it home she said, I will press thee for Indra, I will press thee for Sakra". At another place we find a lady, named Viśvavārā, getting up early in the morning and starting the sacrifice all by herself: "Agni, when kindled, spreads luster through the firmament, and shines widely in the presence of the dawn; Viśvavārā, facing the east, glorifying the gods with praises, and bearing the ladle with the oblation, proceeds (to the sacred fire)."
Two types of female students, 'Brahmavādinis' and 'Sadyavadhus' are mentioned in the texts. The 'Brahmavādinis' went through the initiation ceremony and had the right of studying sacred literature, performing sacrifices and even begged within the precincts of their homes. They remained spinister throughout their lives generally but some of them married after the completion of their education. The 'Sadyavadhus' were married girls of sixteen and seventeen years. They studied the vedic mantras for their prayers and sacrificial rituals, along with other lessons on music, dance and arts. They got training in all vocational and domestic duties and many of them took to the profession of teaching. There is ample evidence to show that, like men, women also used to offer regularly their vedic prayers both morning and evening individually.

The later vedic age or the age of the Brāhmaṇas was an age of sacrifice. Sacrifice reached its heyday in that age and all Brāhmaṇical texts are liturgical or ritualistic texts bearing elaborate records of sacrificial paraphernalia. The social scene had also undergone a tremendous change with a new social order and social attitudes. Hence it may be taken for granted that marriage was looked upon as a compulsory sacrament in that age for the three higher castes for eligibility to the towards this new changes. The evolving caste system and the strengthening of the institutions of marriage, purshārathas and the āśrama system had all changed priorities and privileges for individuals and the society was looked upon as a compulsory sacrament in that age for the three higher castes for eligibility to the performance of sacrifices for by now the sudras had come to occupy a subservient position in the social hierarchy. Education was compulsory for the three higher castes; after initiation ceremony or investiture with the holy thread a student had to go to the preceptor's house or forest-school to study. Only the children from brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and
vaiśya families were eligible for performance of the investiture ceremony. Though there is no explicit mention about the arrangements to impart education to girls it can be taken for granted that education was not denied to them. From the large number of educated ladies mentioned in the vedic literature we can rightly infer that young girls also underwent some sort of training under the able guidance of competent teachers who might have been their fathers, brothers near relations teachers or even professional teachers. The pure Brāhmanical texts mention some female scholars whereas names of many learned women who could hold their own against male scholars appear in the Sarñhitā portion and Upanişad portion of the vedic literature.\textsuperscript{32}

In Aitareya Brāhmaṇa we come across a learned maiden obsessed with a Gāndharva pointing out the defects in the time schedule of the Agnihotra sacrifice. She says, ‘I shall complain to the manes that the Agnihotra which was performed in two days formerly is now performed in one day’.\textsuperscript{33} This is an obvious reference to her having had the knowledge of such sacrifices and also of their proper procedure to be able to point out the changes which took place. This knowledge would have been gained during her studentship.

Not only individually but as the wife of the sacrificor she had to utter vedic mantras during the performance of sacrifices. Though the mantras were muttered in a very low inaudible voice she had to learn and master the hymns and utter the same. Obviously after undergoing extended formal education. It has been clearly proved that women of the higher castes were invested with the holy thread, uttered Sāvitrī and had access to vedic studies in the vedic age.\textsuperscript{34} Sacrifices in which a woman had an important part to play were Aśvamedha, Varunaprāghasa and Vājapeya.\textsuperscript{35} Women
were allowed to read holy texts and they played the role of a preceptor.\textsuperscript{36} However, the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa explains the significance of a Vrālopānayana, in which the girding of the wife was considered to be similar to the usual upanayana ceremony or initiation of a woman into the sacred rite.\textsuperscript{37} Generally, we find that Brāhmaṇas reflect a transitional development in the status of women limiting her role except in the performance of religious sacrifices. This is probably one of the earliest references referring to linking of marriage ceremony to the upanayana and possibly one of the earliest references hinting denial of education to girls. Normally, now the religious prayers and sacrifices were offered jointly by the husband and the wife. There are several references to couples waxing old in their joint worship of gods. Yet the wife used to take an active and real part in family sacrifices. Like the husband, she too had to perform a special upanayana on the occasion of some sacrifices. She had her own hut in the sacrificial compound, and also her own cow to provide her with sacred milk during the sacrifice to be used.\textsuperscript{38}

During this period, the duty of chanting musically the sāma songs seems to have been usually performed by the wife. This alludes to the fact that earlier the girls would be taught the chants in a methodical manner and would necessitate orientation through formal education. It has to remembered that the chanting had to be exact and confirm to particular rules. Later on it came to be entrusted to a special class of male priests called Udgātris.

The wife was also expected to pound the sacrificial rice, give bath to the animal that was to be immolated and lay in bricks, when altar was to be built: “Of that same (clay) she (the queen); for the invincible one is this earth, and this earth was created first of these worlds. She forms it of the
same clay, for this earth is of these worlds. The consecrated consort forms it; for this earth is a mahishi. She who is first taken to wife is the consecrated consort. She participated with her husband in the preparation of the offering, the consecration of the free, the offering of the oblations and the concluding ceremonies. She herself had to recite some mantras. It is true that sometimes these had to be dictated to her, but the case was probably the same with her husband also with reference to the prayers in many of the sacrifices. Woman’s participation in vedic sacrifices was thus a real and not a formal one; they enjoyed the same religious privileges as their husbands. For such undertaking some knowledge would have had to be imparted. This would lead us to conclude that formal education was given to the girls and the learning process required her to be proficient.

In Brāhmaṇa discussion on Gandharvagrihita is common. Shankaracharya defined Gandharvagrihita as ‘girls having knowledge’. It is stated in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa that a Gandharvagrihita had special knowledge about Agnihotra. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to the practice of girls uttering mantras, after that a certain offering to Rudra and his sister Ambikā is conjointly made. It is stated, let the maidens also walk around thinking ‘may we enjoy prosperity’. That sister of Rudra, named Ambika indeed is the dispenser of happiness. Hence the maidens should also walk around thinking ‘may we enjoy prosperity’. In the Patnisamyajas, when the sacrificer’s wife has to unite the Veda grasscord by which she was girt, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa declares: “she unites it. Should she wish to do so with a Yajus text let her do so with this one”. Obviously this would be a reference to her ability to associates various forms of knowledge or texts. Similarly at another place, “The Veda art thou, whereby thou, o divine Veda, hast become Veda for the Gods, thereby mayest thou become Veda
for me also hints at them getting vedic knowledge. Even in the Aśvamedha sacrifice, when the wives of the sacrifices weave pearls into the mane and tail of the horse, a hundred and one pearls into the hair of each part, they have to weave them in (each) with core of the (sacred utterings) relating to Prajāpati, ‘Bhu, bhuvah etc’. Yet another reference to woman being made to repeat mantras is as follows.

In the Hiranyavati Āhūti and homage to the Soma cow: “The Neshtri makes her (the sacrificer’s wife) say: ‘Thine, thine is wealth,’ then causes her (the soma cow) to be looked at (while) she pronounces the text, I have seen eye to eye, with the divine intelligence, with the far seeing Dakshina; take not my lie from me, nor will I take thine, may I obtain a hero in thy sight”. She thereby seeks a blessing; a hero meaning a son, she thereby means to say ‘may I obtain a son in they sight’. Similarly it is stated that in the Vājapeya sacrifice after the wife is led towards the slaughtered animal which she has to wash, “he makes her say: Homage be to thee O wide stretched etc”. Likewise, in the Pravargya when the adhvaryu uncovers the head of the sacrificer’s wife he makes her say while she is looking at the Mahāvira, “Together with Tvashtri will we serve thee: Bestow thou sons and cattle upon me; bestow thou offspring upon us. May I remain unscathed together with my husband! The Pravargya is a male, and wife is a female, a productive pair is thus produced”. Hence, women were required to utter mantra on many occasions and for utterence of scriptural mantras good education of scriptures is necessary. There were rules for the right pronunciation and emphasis which was to be adhered to seek perfect fulfillment by undertaking those sacrifices. It means that girls were getting systematic scriptural education during these times in preparation for their womanly duties.
The evidence from other later Vedic period also shows that education was not denied to girls. The Aitareya Upaniṣad shows how elderly married women were permitted to hear Vedantic discourses. The Upaniṣads mention several other women as teachers, but it is not clear whether they were married or not. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad mentions an interesting ritual by which a person prays for the birth to him of a daughter who should be ‘pandita’ or a learned lady: "Now, in case one wishes, ‘That a learned (pandita) daughter be born to me! That she may attain the full length of life!’ They two should have rice boiled with sesame and should eat it prepared with ghee. The two are likely to beget (her)." The Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad tells of an Aryan lady Pathyāsvasti proceeding to the north for study and obtaining the title of vāk, i.e. sarasvati, by her learning. The quality of women scholars could be judged very well from the example of Gārgī, given in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, where we find that in the philosophical tournament held under the auspices of king Janaka of Videha, Gārgī had launched a Vehement attack on Yājñavalkya, and cornered him totally. Being absolutely exhausted of his arguments, Yājñavalkya said to Gārgī, "Do not speak any more Gārgī, or your head will fall". Thus silence was demanded of her. This is reflective of an organized quality teaching for girls at a younger age. For unless such complexities are taught at the basic levels and gradual ascendancy taught, nothing can evolve overnight. No doubt besides this intellectual and academic educations, they may have been introduced to other vocations as well. From the evidence of the texts like the Taittirīya Saṁhitā, Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhitā, we come to know that women were taught some of the fine arts like dancing, singing etc., which were regarded as accomplishments unfit for men.
The Epics too cite examples of educated women. The Rāmāyaṇa contemplates women who were Bhikshunis. The most glaring example is Śramani Śābarī, who was described as Chira-Krishnajināmbarā, Jatilā, Siddhā, Tapasi. With her āśrama on the Pampā and guru named Mātanga. Śābarī was not a Śabara by caste. It was only a name. We come across another famous woman named Anasūyā, the wife of sage Atri. The Uttararāmacarita mentions Atreyī, who studied under Vālmīki along with Lava and Kuśa. Later she repaired to the dandaka forest to learn Vedānta from sage Agastya and other teachers. In the Mahābhārata we find that women like Kuntī, Draupādi etc., were allowed to listen to various learned guests of honour in their father's or husband's home. This would not have been merely as spectators but because they may have sought to add to their learning at an early age. The Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata mentions Sulobhā, a Bhiksuni who had a philosophical discussion with King Janaka. Also in the Mahābhārata, Astāvakra converses with an old woman who describes herself as a brahmachārinī.

No doubts that doubts are raised with certain evidences pointing otherwise. In the Āraṇyaka Parva, Draupādi admits, "I learned (in childhood) as a sage priest taught it to my brother, while I sat on my father's lap and listened". The epithet 'Bahurruta' has been ascribed to Draupādi, Vidula etc. But getting formal education to enhance power of intellect is one thing and merely ever dropping while standing at the door step is another, observed Shalini Shah. This can definitely be accepted for it is clearly stated that the sage priest was infact teaching 'her brother' while she learnt by default. Further Draupādi tells Satyabhāmā: "The man that has a wife addicted to mantras would be afraid of her as of a snake that had got into the house". This again indicates that a learned 'wife' would not be really welcome. Therefore, a girl would probably not be
encouraged to study, which should stand against her for marriage. However, in the same work we get reference of Brhannala teaching princess Uttara fine arts in the Virāta parva. But much significance cannot be attached to such types of education since these were meant to enhance her charm probably as an asset in her married life, and not for truly educating her. It is therefore a difficult proposition, for on the one hand we accept that the girls would have received education without discrimination while certain evidences point otherwise. These are references of the elites classes. For the rest it is unlikely that formal education for girls was greatly encouraged.

The Sūtras also suggest that education was not denied to women. The Brhatdevata calls the Rgvedic women rsis (such as Ghoshā, Romāsa, Lopāmudrā, Viśvavāra etc.) as Brahmavadiniś. Some of the Smṛti texts understood by a Brahmavadini a Kumārī who does not marry. Yama says “In times of yore, girls were eligible for ‘Mauñjibandhana (i.e. upanayana), study of veda and śāvitrivāchana (use of Śāvitrī Mantra)”. The Śrauta or Gṛhya Sūtras mentions vedic mantras uttered by the wife at ceremonies along with her husband.63 Even Hemādri says that “kumāris, unmarried girls, should be taught vidyā and dharmanīti. An educated Kumārī brings good to the families of both her father and husband. She should be married to a learned husband (manīshī), as she is a vidusī”.64 Among the authors and scholars to whose memory a daily tribute of respect is enjoined to be paid at the time of brahmayajha, a few ladies also are seen to figure; “They are Sulabha, Maitreyī, Vadāvā Prāthiteyī, and Gārgī, Vāchaknavi”.65 These ladies must have made real contributions to the advance of scholarship; otherwise their names would not have been recommended for daily remembrance by posterity for all time to come. It is a great pity that we should know nothing about these lady scholars except their names; their
works have been all lost, probably forever. This however, clearly indicates the educational opportunities were provided to the girls so that they would continue higher intellectual pursuits, if they so desired during this period of Indian history.

Some students of the vedic Śākhās are referred to by Pāṇini: “Thus ‘a hen’, ‘a she-hog’, ‘Brahmani’, ‘a woman of the Śūdra caste’, ‘a woman of Nadayana class’, ‘a Chārāyani’, ‘a woman of Brāhmaṇas who read the katha’, ‘a woman of the class of Brāhmans who read the Rgveda’”. “Thus Kathi means the female students of the Kathā Śākha; Bahvrchi means the student who studies many hymns, i.e., the Rgveda (Bālamanoramā and Kāṣikā)”.

A theologian named Kāṣakritsana had composed a work on Mīmāṃsā called Kāṣakritsni, and the lady scholars, who used to specialize in it, were designated as Kāṣakritsnās. A.S. Altekar rightly concludes that if lady scholars of such a technical branch of study were so numerous as to necessitate the coining of a special term to designate them, is it not reasonable to conclude that the number of young women (girl), who used to receive general education, must have been fairly large. Automatically, the number of girls receiving education at the ‘gurukula’ stage must have been substantial for only a few would have gone on to seek higher and specialized studies. Women also seem to have been admitted to military training as indicated by the formation, Śaktikī, mentioned by Patañjali, which means a female spear-bearer, and in this connection we may indeed refer to the Amāznian bodyguard of armed women which Megasthenes noticed in the palace of the Emperor Chandragupta Maurya.

The smṛti period however witnessed an adverse atmosphere where education for girls was concerned. Manu prescribed that in the case of girls, upanayana should be performed without the recitation of the sacred
texts: "For the purification of their persons, these rites, excepting that of initiation with the thread, shall be done unto women, in due time and in due order, without any vedic Mantras". Besides, marriage appears to have become the aim and end for the females. Therefore it is stated, "The sacrament of marriage is to a female, what initiation with the thread is to a male. The service of the husband is to the wife, what his residence in the preceptor's house, as a religious student, is to the husband; the household duty is to a woman, what the making of burnt offerings is to a man". Since religious merit was withdrawn from her she did not require any special training. The wife who earlier formally performed vedic sacrifices, was denied the right to do so and could not even recite the vedic mantras: "let not a Brāhmaṇa eat anything in a religious sacrifice where in fire offerings have been performed by a Brāhmaṇa, ignorant of the Vedas, or who serves as a village priest, or by a woman (underline mine) or eunuch". Further, "A religious sacrifice in which such persons perform the fire-offerings tends to destroy the prosperity of the Brāhmaṇas, and is not liked by the gods; hence, it should be avoided". "The purificatory rites of women are without the vedic Mantras, this is the decision of the law code. And for this disqualification of Mantra-less-ness, women are like unto in organic things. This is the conclusion". It is further stated that "an unmarried girl, a youthful matron, an unread Brāhmaṇa, one of small learning, one afflicted with a disease, or uninstructed with the holy thread must not perform the Agnihotra Homa (fire offering)". This is in contrast to the earlier periods of our history where in such offerings were permitted to the women. Such references obviously imply that girls were not to be initiated into educational activities since she would not require it in future. Her whole entity revolving around her expected marriage and forth-coming family-'the service to which would lead her to heaven'. This would be expected since if
she received no formal education at earlier stage of her life, she could not do so when she became older. Manu was against women's education. According to him "for women, marriage samskāra, service to husband is equal to living at gurūkula and housework itself constitutes agnihotra for her." He further says that "women need not perform sacrifices, vows etc. to attain heavenly bliss but to do service to their husband's for attainment of the aim". He advocates that the women should be employed in looking after the expenses of the household, in maintaining the cleanliness of their persons and of the house and in looking after the beddings, wearing apparel and household furniture: "Skillful in her household duties, let her maintain a happy and cheerful frame of mind, keeping the furniture neat and tidy, and avoiding extravagance". Yājñavalkya proceeded further and took more logical steps in prohibiting the upanayana ceremony altogether for the girls: "with this (performance of rites) the sin begotten of semen and blood, is dissipated, in case of women these purificatory rites are performed without Mantras (their marriage is only accompanied with mantras)".

The Buddhist sources appear to indicate that women were considered to be a social danger. They had been compared to black snakes, evil smelling, adulterous etc. Thus one may be inclined to presume the magnitude of humiliation and opposition the women had faced while being admitted to the Buddhist order. Yet, probably although contradictory, this had given some sort of impetus to the cause of female education. Similar to the Brahmavadiniś in Brahmanical circles, several ladies in Buddhist families used to lead a life of celibacy with the aim of understanding and following the eternal truth of Buddhist religion and philosophy. Some of them like Saṅhamitra went even to foreign countries like Ceylon and became famous there as teachers of the holy scriptures.
Among the authoresses of the Therīgāthā who were all believed to have obtained salvation, thirty two were unmarried women and ten married ones. Among the former Subhā, Anupamā and Sumedhā belonged to rich families and are said to have been wooed by princes and rich merchants. When a large percentage of girls were leading a life of celibacy, in pursuit of religion and philosophy, it is natural to presume that the general average intelligence and education among them must have been fairly high. The question that arises is whether was education open to girls irrespective of any category in the Buddhist social order? Did all young girls get an opportunity to be educated and provide them the necessary basis to go on to pursue serious philosophies? This does not seem likely for the success by a few must have been attained through great difficulty, since in the Samgha at least, at every step women faced moral and mental inferiority as compared to the monks. The Atthagarudhamma or the Eight chief rules that were to be followed by the nuns, clearly advocates this. This will be examined in a greater detail in the chapter on religions.

In the Jaina literature also the general attitudes towards women were not good. It was even said that a village or a town in which women were strong was sure to come to grief. Jainism, like Buddhism, placed nuns under a more rigourous discipline than monks. They were prohibited to study the chapters on Mahāparijñā Arunapapāta and the Drstvāda etc. but in spite of these we do get references of educated women. Malli, is said to have risen to the status of a Tirthankara. Again, Jayantī, a daughter of king Sahasrāṇīka of Kauśambi, remained unmarried and received ordination at the hand of Mahāvīra after being convinced by him in discussion. A Jātaka refers to the story of a Jain father having four clever daughters touring about in the country and challenging all and sundry for a debate on philosophical matters. This once again reflects that the girls did
enjoy the privilege of studying although it need not be accepted that every
girl child in a Jain household was receiving education. For the paucity of
names of adult women intellectuals do not portray a picture of a total
literacy.

M. Achyuthan mentions that Chânakya warned the pupils to keep
away from girl students who study with them to protect the vow of
celibacy. This shows that not only did the girls attend schools but co-
educations was also prevalent in ancient forest universities. He says
further, during Kauṭṭīya’s time, girls used to tie the sacred cord to study the
Vedas and to recite the sacred prayers. Women were also taught various
languages and the use of signals and that they were employed by the state
in detecting the wicked and in murdering or deluding foreign spies. Kauṭṭīya
says ‘Women artisans or prostitutes should be employed to convey
informations to its destined place under the pretext of taking in musical
instruments or through cipher-writing’. Once again since the women
included here are artisans and prostitutes, it is more likely that they were
given practical training to carry out such works and not necessarily that
they had received formal education at all.

Max Muller cited Megasthenes quotation on women in India which
says “Indians do not communicate their metaphysical doctrine to women,
thinking that if their wives understood these doctrines and learned to be
indifferent to pleasure and pain, and to consider life and death as the same,
they would no longer continue to be the slaves of others. Or if they failed to
understand them, they would be talkative and communicate their
knowledge to those who had no right to it”.

Actually, the cause of women’s education suffered a good deal after
circa. 300 B.C., on account of new fashion of child marriage. By the
beginning of the Christian Era, pre-puberty marriages became the order of the day. Naturally this meant a serious handicap to proper studies which, obviously, could not be finished before the age of 12 or 13 years while formal education would begin around that age.

Another important point that deserves mention is the general character of the people at that period of time. The people were basically very pure at heart. They had an exceptionally high degree of honesty and integrity. Megasthenes observes: "Truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem. Hence they accord no special privileges to the old unless they possess superior wisdom". The ideal of truthfulness permeates the whole literature of the period, and both the epics preserve many classical examples of unswerving adherence to truth, even at the cost of life. It need not surprise us, therefore, when we are told that "they seldom go to law. They have no suits about pledges or deposits, nor do they require either seals or witnesses, but make their deposits and confide in each other". So, if this was the basic nature of the people, then it was obvious that the environment in the house and in the family would also be good. As we say that 'charity begins at home,' similarly the basic education or domestic education also began in the house itself. Formal education at an institution for girls began to disappear or dispensed with as a preparation for future. Instead homestead became their centre for education. This education was complete and comprehensive. Probably this was the reason for the emergence of luminaries like Kuntī, Vidulā, Draupadī, Sāvītri etc. who, in spite of their not receiving any kind of formal education, could still be such great personalities and could acquire great wisdom and practical sense and have engraved their names in the Indian history and command respect and reverence till date. Although, this also proves the fact that education now
became a prerogative of a select few privileged section and was being denied to the daughters of the general masses.

A careful observation shall reveal a unique phenomenon. There has been a concerted move to subjugate the women as completely as possible and denial of education was just one of its ploys. In the early vedic period, life was simple, laws were simple and women were treated with love, respect and dignity. However, during the later days complicated laws and complicated life became complementary to each other. In this chain reaction, the women were totally chained and were deprived of full liberty, property, education, everything from their childhood itself. The commonest plea was protection of women and their chastity. In the patriarchal society the onus of maintaining chastity depended entirely upon the women. Maledom were always allowed to room around freely. Always it had to be the Sītās to prove their fire proof character, no Rām ever dared to perform such an act. Pen is mighter than sword and so the pen was snatched away from the women.

**Beginning of Education**

Having analyzed the historical background to educational opportunities available to the girls child which varied from period to period it would be necessary to ascertain at what age did they begin their educational pursuits. Do we encounter any such rules regarding initiation into formal education from the very beginning? What conditions were needed to be fulfilled in order to be eligible for seeking knowledge. These are questions which we consider now.

Ancient Indians were convinced that no good results would follow if education is begun late in life. A student who begins his/her education at 16
it not likely to bring any credit to his teachers. During our childhood, mind is pliable, memory keen and intellect receptive; it is only at this period of life, that it is possible to form good habits which may be of life-long use to us. It has therefore been insisted that education ought to commence in childhood. It observes that parents themselves would become the greatest enemies of a child, whose education has been neglected during the childhood. It was held that the fifth year and the eighth year would be the proper time for the beginning of the primary and the secondary education respectively. Our educationalists had however recognized that it would be necessary to vary these years in accordance with the cultural traditions of the family.

The tenth mandala of the Rgveda, the Atharvaveda and the Brāhmaṇas furnishes us with more details of the brahmachārya, i.e. the religious studentship which follows it. The word brahmachārya is first found in the tenth mandala of the Rgveda. The age of the pupil at which this studentship began varied, but generally a boy seems to have been initiated some time between the ages of eight and fifteen: "The Brahmachārī goes engaged in duty: he is a member of the Gods' own body. Through him Brihaspati obtained his consort, as the Gods gained the ladle brought by Soma". A.S. Altekar says, 'Ancient Indians were convinced that no good result could follow if education is begun late in life therefore, they insisted that education ought to commence in childhood'. In vedic period education started early in life. They thought it essential to begin the education in early age, for the full development of inner and outer talents of the students.

Brahmanic education was very particular about the age of starting education. It started just after the 'upanayan' ritual which was performed between four and nine years of age. After it, the student was sent to the
guru for the studies. Svetaketu, for instance, was initiated at the age of twelve. The period of this studentship was generally twelve years. It can be gleaned from the Upaniṣads that there were three different levels of education. Primary education was given at home until the age of seven, eight or twelve years. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad shows that the secondary level started at the age of twelve. Thus, from twelve to twenty-four was the period of brahmachārya, when the pupil resided at the teacher’s place and studied vedic lore, the vedāngas and other subjects, received practical training in priest-craft and cultivated high moral values.

In the Grihya sutra, the pupil’s first introduction to education was made by his/her performance of a ceremony called ‘vidyārambha’ (also called akshora-svākaranam) at which he was to commence the learning of the alphabets for the first time. The ceremony was to be performed when the child attained his/her fifth year and was open to children of all the castes. Since the castes system had taken firmer roots by now, distinction on this account was natural and the brahmins taking precedence over other castes was also to be accepted. For a brāhmaṇa child the time varied from the fifth to the eighth year, though the eighth year from the conception seems to be widely accepted as the best time. For a kṣatriya child the tenth or the eleventh year and for a vaiśya child the eleventh or the twelfth year (from conception) is generally recommended. Baudhāyana Grihya Sūtra recommends that the pupils from all the three castes could start their vedic education before they reached the age of eleven. This is an important step towards education since according to this boys and girls were granted equal opportunity to get educated. Caste variations and distinctions do emerge, (this is discussed in chapter on caste variation).
Things began to change in the post Sūtra period. It is interesting to note that formal instruction, in Manu’s system of thought, does not begin till the eighth year of the student’s life. In the first seven years the child has to ‘sense’ the world around him. He should be left free to build his body and gain control of his instruments for co-ordinated activity. There is enough of strain and stress on him during the first seven years of his life while the outer world is impinging upon him for attention all the time, and the strain of mental education should not be added to these. Education should, therefore, begin after the period of childhood is over.  

Manu too like the sūtrakāras does not prescribe the same age for entering the educational institution for students coming from different categories of society. He provides different age-limits for different caste. A child of a brahmin who himself is to undertake the work of education in alter life must not tarry long at the childhood stage. The child of a kṣatriya who has to develop his muscle for service of the group can begin a little later, at about eleven and the child of a vaiśya in whom desire predominates can begin still later, and that is at twelve: “The rite of initiation with the thread shall be done unto a brāhmaṇa boy in his eighth year, unto a kṣatriya boy in his eleventh year, and unto a vaiśya boy in his twelfth year, counted from the day of conception”. However, if these different categories of children show signs of mental alacrity, they may begin earlier which would of course be exceptions. What is worth consideration is that here it is clearly stated that the upanayana ceremony is to be performed for boys only. The girls would obviously be denied the right and freedom to acquire education. Whether it is a section in theory or applied in practice as well needs consideration. The latter, was more likely situation but lack of source material by way of secular texts makes it difficult to conclude.
In Jainism 5th year and the 8th year were considered to be the proper time for the beginning of primary and secondary education respectively. No such rules regarding the beginning of educational activities appear to have been laid down in the Buddhist traditions.

**Upanayana: Meaning and Significance**

Upanayana literally means taking a student to a teacher in order to hand him/her over to the latter for formal education. The ritual was originally performed when a student commenced his vedic education under the supervision of a teacher, with whom, he/she usually lived. It was not an obligatory ritual; the evidence of the Dharmasūtras shows that down to c. 400 B.C. there used to be occasionally some families in society where it was not performed for a generation or two. If a student was unfit by character or caliber to receive the vedic education, she/he was also not admitted to this privilege. If, on the other hand, during the course of his/her education, he/she had to go to a different teacher, the ritual had to be repeated. Nay, it was felt that it should be performed again even in the case of married men, if they wanted to pursue further studies under a new teacher. If was thus essentially an educational ritual and bore some resemblance to the formality of the admission procedure in modern schools and colleges in the present day times. In course of time however, its significance changed. It was felt necessary that the service of the whole Ṛṣya community should be conscripted for the preservation of the vedic literature which had grown to considerable dimensions in the course of centuries; upanayana and vedic studies were therefore made obligatory for all. If it was not performed in time, it was declared that the person would loose his Ṛṣya status and became unfit for marriage and social intercourse. This threat no doubt helped the spread of vedic learning and
gave an impetus to primary education, which was in later times presupposed by vedic studies; but it also tended to transform this educational function into a bodily (śārīrika) ritual. It began to be argued that it should be performed even in the case of dumb and deaf persons in order to render them eligible for marriage.\textsuperscript{102} Some late Smṛti writer felt that the ritual was primarily for the purification of the body, they have therefore recommended that it should be repeated in case the body is defiled by the bite of a dog or a jackal. And if the holy Brāhmaṇa can be rendered holier by the saṁskāra, why should it fail to perform a similar miracle in the case of other inanimate objects. All these, however, are later anomalies that crept into society when the original purpose of upanayana was being gradually forgotten.

The scheme of education framed by the ancient Indians to initiate the young for preparing them for full citizenship of the community marked a great advance over the primitive idea of initiation. Here we find that the conception of race was cultural, and it was on the basis of cultural fitness that one could seek admission into and claim the full rights and privileges of the community. Without the upanayana none could call himself a twice-born. One who would not undergo this samskāra was excommunicated and debarred from all the privileges. It was also a means of communion with the society, because without it none could marry an Aryan girl. Thus the Indian ideal made universal education the indispensable test and insignia of their community. The most striking fact in connection with the upanayana is that by virtue of its performance the initiated began to be ranked as a Dvija or twice-born. This transformation of man's personality by means of religious ceremonies compares well with the Christian rite of baptism, which is regarded as a sacrament and carries with it a spiritual effect to reform the life of man. If we look beneath the surface of the ceremonies, we cannot
but recognize in it the expression of a deep human conviction that man, due to his contact with the world, loses his native purity, and that he must be born again to enter the spiritual kingdom again.¹⁰³

Upanayana is also known as "sacred thread" ceremony and it is the exclusive privilege of the first three high castes. A cord of "mūnja-grass" is made for a brahmin, a bow of string for a ksatriya and a bow of wool for a va śya, usually 2¾ yards long, made in strings to be tied across the shoulder of the prospective student after reciting certain prayers over it.¹⁰⁴

**The Antiquity of the Upanayana**

The antiquity of this ritual goes back to prehistoric times. It existed in the Indo-Iranian period and is clearly presupposed by the Rgveda.¹⁰⁵ The Atharvaveda describes it in detail and attributes the proper functioning of society and nature to its mysterious efficacy. If a warrior shines on the battle field, or a king is successful in the administration, or a merchant prospers in his trade it was all regarded as due to the training of the studentship. Without its help a maiden could not hope to get a suitable partner in life; it was therefore as necessary for girls as for boys. Even the proper functioning of the cosmic powers was attributed to the mysterious efficacy generated by brahmacharya observed in society: "By Vedic-studentship, by fervor, a king defends his kingdom; a teacher by Vedic-studentship seeks a vedic student". A distinction is made as to its relevance for the girls. By Vedic-studentship a girl wins a young husband; by Vedic-studentship a draft-ox, a horse strives to gain food". "By Vedic-studentship, by fervor, the gods smote away death; Indra by Vedic-studentship brought heaven for the gods". The strength and power of the brahmacharya after having undergone upanayana gives one immense power and pride. "The vedic student goes on setting in motion both firmaments; in him the gods..."
become like-minded; he maintains earth and heaven; he fills his teacher with fervor (tapas)". Details about the students' life and paraphernalia, more or less similar to those given later in Smṛtis, are to be seen in several passages of the Brāhmaṇa literature. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, it is stated, “I have come for brahmacharya; he thereby reports himself to the Brahman. He says, 'let me be a brahmacharin (student), he thereby makes himself over to the Brahman. He (the teacher) then says, what (Ka) is thy name?' Now ka is Prajāpati: he thus initiates him after making him one belonging to Prajāpati”. In the early period, the ritual was a simple one; even a verbal acceptance by the teacher was sufficient. While seeking acceptance he informs, 'Thou knowest well, I have enough of gold, of cows and horses, female slaves, dependants and garments. Do thou not withhold from us the gift which is great, permanent, and extends (to many generations)'. He said, 'verily according to rite thou desirerest, O Gautama (to obtain knowledge from me).’ He said, 'I approach thee as pupil according to the rite'. With words others also approached of old (their teacher). He resided there through the mere name of a respectful gift.

This clearly indicates the simple procedure required of in the ceremony. For a long time the father himself acted as the teacher: “The three-fold offspring of Prajāpati, gods, men and āsūras followed as religious students their father Prajāpati. The gods, having finished their time of learning, said (to Prajāpati), ‘Tell us, O Venerable, (our duty)’, he proclaimed to them the syllable, ‘Do you comprehend’. They answered, 'We do comprehend. Restrain your desires, hast thou said to us”. He said, "Om! You have fully comprehended”. This process of teaching depicted here for gods would possibly be in vague for the human children as well.
Eligibility for Upanayana

While initially there may have been no taboos or restrictions on who was to have the right for performance of upanayana, it must have been performed for all (seeking knowledge), the situation must have begun to change in the later vedic period. With the caste divisions emerging on the social scene, lines of demarcation must have been drawn. Now, the brāhmins, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas were eligible for the upanayana. They were collectively called dvijas, because they were all believed to get a second birth, a spiritual one, at the time of the upanayana. When the ritual became obligatory, it seems to have been regularly performed by all these castes for several centuries. Śūtras and the Sṛṣṭis give detailed rules about the different kinds of girdles, staffs, sacred threads, etc., which were prescribed for the members of the various castes. Details about these minor variations would not have been evolved if the ritual had not been a general one among the kṣatriyas and the vaiśyas. In the course of time, however, vedic studies fell into background, partly owing to the setback which the vedic religion received by the rise of the Upaniṣadic, Jain and Buddhist movements, and partly by the development of other branches of knowledge in the Hindu community itself. upanayana then began to fall into disvetitude among the kṣatriyas and the vaiśyas, with whose professions in subsequent life vedic studies were but remotely connected. This happened at about the beginning of the Christian era, when the theory that only the brāhmaṇas and śūdras exist in the Kāli age seems to have gained ascendancy.¹¹⁰

Age for the Performance of Upanayana

The upanayana marks the beginning of the vedic education, which in several respects resemble the secondary education of modern times. Naturally therefore some age between 8 and 12 was regarded as suitable
for it as already stated above. Since this ceremony had to be performed prior to the beginning of formal education it is accepted to have been performed during this period.

In the beginning since the upanayana marked the commencement of the primary education. Therefore, an early age was preferred and the earliest possible age for the upanayana was fixed at five. But when the upanayana ceased to signalize the primary education and was performed at the beginning of the secondary education, higher age was prescribed for this purpose, though it was always within the period of educational suitability. The age should be such that the mind of the student be still respective and the child may get sufficient time to study. The same age, however, would not suit every child. So, intermediate options were allowed to meet the need of every type of children. But at whatever time it may be performed, it was regarded always meritorious, because it was considered to be a sacrament full of religious significance. The last limit for the performance of the upanayana sar\textsc{n}sk\textsc{\`a}ra in the case of a brahman student was sixteen, of the k\textsc{\`a}triya twenty two and of the vai\textsc{\`a}ya twenty-four.\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{111}}

When the upanayana became a compulsory bodily samsk\textsc{\`a}ra, it had got to be performed howsoever late it may be, presently normally being performed at the time of marriage. The underlying purpose was to enlist all the possible youth of the community and stamp them with the peculiar culture of the race.

The general rule given in the G\textsc{\`r}hyas\textsc{\`u}tras and endorsed by the later authorities was that the upanayana ceremony of a brahman child should be performed in the eighth year, that of a k\textsc{\`a}triya in the eleventh and that of a vai\textsc{\`a}ya in the twelfth.\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{112}} This was a period when formal education was being withdrawn for the girls. Whether it was infact being performed for the girls is
still a moot point. Some writers\textsuperscript{113} regard it as a fancy and self conceit of the brahman\ṣ. As the number of letters in the Sāvitrī mantras of the brāhmaṇs, kṣatriyas and the vaiśyas happened to be eight, eleven and twelve.\textsuperscript{114} The brāhmaṇs took fancy to them and determined the respective ages of the boys of the upper three classes for initiation at eight, eleven and twelve. According to another set of scholars\textsuperscript{115} the differentiation was based on the intellectual superiority of the brāhmaṇs; the brāhmaṇ child was supposedly more intelligent than the kṣatriya and the vaiśya children.

The more plausible basis of differentiation seems to be that, in early times, the father was the teacher in case of the brahman brahmachārins. Therefore, it was inconvenient to them if they were initiated at an early age, because they did not to have leave their homes for education. But quite different was the case with the kṣatriya and the vaiśya children. They had to part with their parents for receiving education. Therefore, they would have been put to troubles, had they been separated from their parents at a very young age. Thus paternal feelings were responsible, to a great extent, for the higher age at which the initiation should be performed for the kṣatriya and vaiśya children.

There was one more operative factor in fixing the age of the kṣatriya and the vaiśya children. The brāhmanical education that began after the upanayana was mostly religious and priestly and consisted of vedic and allied studies. The brāhmaṇs had to busy themselves earlier with this kind of education, because their future prospects depended on the knowledge of the vedic lore. Optional ages were prescribed for securing special merits. In the opinion of Baudhāyana "one desirous of holy luster should perform the upanayana in the seventh year, of long life in the eighth year, of glory in the ninth year, of food in the tenth, of cattle in the twelfth, of talent in the
thirteenth, of strength in the fourteenth, of brothers in the fifteenth and of all in the sixteenth". Manu also says, "The upanayana of a brähmana child desirous of holy luster should be performed in the fifth year, that of a kṣatriya child desirous of power, in the sixth year and that of a vaiśya child desirous of wealth in the eighth year".

Girls Upanayana

Women were eligible for the study of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices as already stated above. Upanayana, the vedic initiation of girls had been as common as that of boys. Girls were free to go through the Upanayana ceremony, wear the sacred thread and even live a life of celibacy. They were free to study the Vedas, Vedāngas and other subjects studied during those days along with their brother pupils.

Quoting from the Atharvaveda, Veda Mitra has stated in Education in Ancient India, "just as boys acquire sound knowledge and culture by the practice of 'Brahmacārya and then marry girls of their own choice, who are young, well educated, loving and of like temperament, so should a girl practise 'Brahmachārya', study the Veda and other sciences and thereby perfect her knowledge, refine her character, give her hand to a man of her own choice, who is young, learned and loving".

Every girl had to pass through it and so long as she lived with her preceptor, she had to live as an ascetic. The women of higher three castes were also invested with the holy thread and were allowed to utter the Sāvitṛi verse so that they could study the Vedas and take part in the sacrifices with their husbands. This practice was in vogue since the days of the Rgveda Saṃhitā down to the age of the Sūtra literature."
During the period of Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣad in the higher sections of society the sacred initiation (upanayana) of girls was common, and they subsequently used to go through a course of education. The spiritual significance of the details of the upanayana ceremony is also indicated in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: “The teacher lays his right hand on the head of the pupil whereby he becomes pregnant with him and then in the third night the embryo issues out of the teacher and, being taught the Sāvitrī, obtains true Brāhmiṇhood”. The request to be received by the preceptor was to be duly made, according to the Brhadāraṇyaka with the words-‘upaimi aham bhavantam’: “He said, ‘verily according to rite thou desirest, O Gautama (to obtain knowledge from me)’. He said, ‘I approach thou as pupil according to the rite’. With words others also approached of old (their teacher). He resided there through the mere name of a respectful gift”. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the student has to say formally: “May I enter upon brahmacarya and let me be a brahmachārin”. The student has also to take the fuel in his hand as a taken that he is willing to serve the teacher, and especially to maintain the sacred fires.

The upanayana sarñskāra became fully established in the time of the Gṛhyasūtras. All the Gṛhyasūtras presuppose that upanayana was universal and incumbent on every twice born. They lay down all the regulations and every possible detail of the ceremony. Gṛhyasūtras give full information and discussions about the age of the child to be initiated, the lawful recipients, the duties of a student and his conduct.

The initiation ceremony was followed by a period of discipline and education, which was regarded as very essential to secure a suitable match. The Atharvaveda observes that a maiden can succeed in her
marriage only if she has been properly trained during the period of
studentship (brahmacharya). That women are, like śūdras, ineligible for
vedic studies is the view of a later age; in prehistoric times lady poets
themselves were composing hymns, some of which were destined to be
included even in the vedic Sarḥhitās. It was apprehended that if the most
important religious sāṁskāra of upanayana was not performed in the case
of girls, women would be automatically reduced to the status of śūdras;
how then could brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas be born of them.
Upanayana of girls was absolutely indispensable, if the cultural tradition of
the different Āryan classes was to be preserved.

The upanayana (initiation) of girls used to take place as regularly as
that of boys at the normal time. This was the case as early as the Indo-
Iranian age. The Parsis have still preserved this custom; Naujat ritual,
which corresponds to hindu upanayana, is even now performed by them
regularly in the case of girls as well.

Moreover, it is very clear in the Rāmāyaṇa that women of that age
had not lost even a bit of their religious rights. As in the times of the
Ṛgvedic period so in the days of Vālmīki a wife was held indispensable for
the performance of sacrifices. She could by herself perform the daily
Sandhyā and worship the gods and manes, offer śrāddha to her
deceased son, receive a guest according to the vedic rites, and with
the recitation of the vedic verses perform the svastyayana for her husband
or son proceeding on a journey or to the battle-field. All this presupposes
upanayana, for without it she could neither acquire the ability nor the
eligibility to pronounce the vedic mantras. The presence of female ascetics
like Svayamprabhā, Vedavati and Anasūyā also points to the same fact.
These ladies were leading a similar religious life as men of their age were
doing. They observed similar vows, practiced similar austerities and acquired similar merit. To argue that all this was possible for them without upanayana would be taking away of the upanayana all its importance and significance.\textsuperscript{133}

Mahābhārata depicts a society changed still further in comparison to that of the Rāmāyaṇa. Now the, women were no longer considered independent, their primary fulfillment was in marriage. Women did not have the upanayana (investiture with the sacred thread), for them marriage was taken as an equivalent of it. For there the husband was the 'guru' and going to his home was thus like a second birth.\textsuperscript{134} Thus a clear change is evidenced as now the marriage was being regarded as the important stage for a girl and the upanayana was gradually being dispersed with for them. Obviously, this meant a denial of the opportunity of formal education to the girls.

The Smṛtis too hold that the initiation ceremony should apply to girls as well as to boys but not necessarily for the same purpose. The future mother has to be prepared for the task of daily life as much as the father, though differences in physical and psychical endowments and function involve a corresponding difference in her education. After the initiation ceremony, Manu would have the boy go to the teacher's house, while the girl should continue to stay with her parents for her training to prepare her for future responsibilities of a housewife, mother and other roles. The initiation ceremony should be performed for the female also, in order to sanctify her body, at the proper time and in the proper manner, but without sacred texts. The marriage ceremony is the sacrament for her, residing with the teacher, and due discharge of the household duties constitutes her daily worship: "For the purification of their persons, these rites excepting
that of initiation with the thread shall be done unto women, in due time and
in due order, without any vedic mantras'. "The sacrament of marriage is to
a female, what initiation with the thread is to a male. The service of the
husband is to the wife, what his residence in the preceptor's house, as a
religious student, is to the husband, the house-hold duty is to a woman,
what the making of burnt offerings is to a man".\textsuperscript{135}

We have thus the same fundamental principles of education for the
two sexes-formation of character. Initiation is just an introduction to that
arduous task. But the contents of education for the two sexes should be
different, their training-grounds should also be different. They boy should
stay with the teacher and be trained in service and endurance, while the girl
should live with her parents and learn the art and science of house
keeping.\textsuperscript{136}

He explicitly forbids a girl and a married women to offer on
Agnihotra: "An unmarried girl, a youthful matron, an unread brāhmaṇa, one
of small learning, one afflicted with a disease, or uninitiated with the holy
thread must not perform the Agnihotra Homa (fire offering)".\textsuperscript{137} No sacrifice,
no vow, no fast was to be observed by women separately from their
husband: "As a river in contact with the sea becomes briny, so a woman
acquires traits of mind and character similar to those of the man she is
united with".\textsuperscript{138} Even the recitation of vedic hymns is forbidden in the case
of women: "women are created to conceive pregnancies, and men are
created to impregnate women. Hence, like the act of procreation, the
religious duties of the husband and wife are correlated. This is said in the
Veda".\textsuperscript{139} With such motivations for their future, it is unlikely that either the
girls or their families would have been anxious to undertake the upanayana
for them. Yājñavalkya is forthright in prohibiting altogether the upanayana
ceremony in the case of girls: "With this performance of rites the sin begotten of semen and blood, is dissipated in case of women these purificatory rites are performed without. Mantras (their marriage is only accompanied with mantras)."^140 He is of the opinion that all religious rites in the case of a woman must be carried out in silence. The marriage ceremony alone should be conducted with recitation of the sacred texts.\textsuperscript{141} Upanayana therefore was unnecessary for girls. It had been prescribed for them in a former age, but that rule was a dead letter in the present one. It is interesting to see how later writers like Medhātithi proceed to explain away clear passages in earlier texts permitting women’s upanayana: "A wife has no other religious rite or vow of her own than an unflinching devotion to her lord, where by she will be glorified in heaven."^142

Along with decimal of the society made the sacred scriptures inaccessible to them.\textsuperscript{143} This resulted in the curtailment of the religious rights of women.

Women had practically been reduced to the status of śūdras. Like the latter, they were debarred from the right of initiation and investment with the sacred string: "The initiation is the consecration in accordance with the texts of the Veda, of a male who is desirous of (and can make use of) sacred knowledge."\textsuperscript{144} They has no right to offer burnt oblations: "A female shall not offer any burnt-oblation."\textsuperscript{145} For female children the ceremonies of jātakarman, namadheya, adityodarshana, annaprāśana, churākaraṇa should be performed without the sacred texts. The marriage ceremony only has to be performed with the sacred texts for them: "These rites shall be done unto women without mantras". "Marriage of women shall be done with Mantras".\textsuperscript{146} "Women are considered to have no business with the sacred texts".\textsuperscript{147} "A woman is never independent with respect to the fulfillment of
the sacred low". Do not such references indicate to us the coming situations that is that the education for the boys now became important rather than the earlier position of both, the girls and the boys getting similar opportunity.

There are indication of Samāvartana ceremony in Āsvalyan Grhya Sūtra which is impossible without upanayana ceremony: "One who has performed the samāvartana should live according to the rules and regulation for brahmacāris". "The others according to the rule". "Some say that (after samāvartana) he should marry". There was no difference between girls and boys of lower caste and higher caste regarding upanayana saṁskāra. Ladies underwent the initiation ceremony. This initiation ceremony of girls necessarily demanded of them certain amount of vedic and literary education for the fulfillment of its objective. However, it may be surmised that the affluent of the higher caste under took to hold the ceremony for their daughters as a ritual to be performed not necessarily associating it with initiation to a formal and organized studies but merely as the performance of a saṁskāra. Vālmīki has left no appreciable information regarding the education of girls. The commentators of the Rāmāyaṇa who invariably belong to a period posterior to the latest of smṛtis, and following them the modern scholars too, advocate a similar state even in the times of Vālmīki. Commenting on the words, 'saṁskāram apannām' occurring in a verse of the Sundara-kānda, Nāgoji-Bhatta opines that by saṁskāra in the verse under reference is meant the pāni-grahaṇa saṁskāra (and not the upanayana saṁskāra), for the former (viz. pāni-grahaṇa) in case of women (of the upper three varnas) caused regeneration (dvitiya-janma). A dispassionate consideration of the context in which the verse under reference occurs will reveal that on seeing Sītā in that miserable state Hanūmān felt that the misfortunates suffered by Sītā were incompatible
with her birth and accomplishments. The last quarter of the verse expressly states that the sufferings of Śītā were like those of one who had been born and bred in a law (or degraded) family which was devoid of education and culture in other words, of a śūdra who was denied the right of upanayana and vedic studies. In the light of this the meaning upanayana will be found to be more appropriate.

**Upanayana in Secular Literature**

Although, the smṛtikāras had laid sanctions on the performance for girls, the secular literary sources for the post sūtra period is not that categorical. And later of course the rules of the śāastrakāras are accepted, but earlier sources do not seem to have debarred the girls from seeking knowledge. The ceremony of initiation is referred to as āchārya-karaṇa and upanayana. The sense of the latter term, according to Pāṇini, is that the teacher, by bringing, according to religious rules, the pupil unto himself, brings himself up as a teacher through instruction, with the expression, 'mānavakam upanayate'. The Bālamanorama cites an interesting verse defining an ācārya as one who, receiving unto himself (upāṇiṣya) a pupil, teaches him the Veda together with the kalpas and rahasyas. Pāṇini refers to schools for girls and here they would go only after then initiation.

Gradually although the girls may not have been entitled to the upanayana saṁskāra but their education was not neglected. Patañjali refers to the lady scholars of his time, who were well-versed in Mīmāṁsā śāstra, a work written by a lady called Kāśakṛtsni. He also distinguishes between the terms 'upādhyāyā' (lady teacher) 'upādhyāyani' (wife of a teacher).
Kauṭilya gives some new information regarding the preliminary training to be given to a child before he is old enough to be admitted to formal studentship. After the ceremony of tonsure was over, the child was to be taught writing (lipi) and numbers (i.e. arithmetic, saṁkhyā). The studentship begins with the ceremony of upanayana. Then the student is introduced to the different subjects of study connected with the four principal divisions of knowledge under competent teachers. Education appears to have been mainly confined to brāhmaṇa and ksatriya varṇas who constituted the ruling classes. However, vaiśya also as a ‘Dvija’ was entitled to lead student life (brahmachāryāśrama). No information about the actual system of education on the courses of studies are available. Even Kauṭilya does not seem to advocate the importance of education for girls. Their training whenever referred to is more in the nature of utilitarian aspect and intellectual pursuits for the girls had definitely been curtailed. It is unfortunate that the Arthaśāstra does not throw any light on the question of upanayana but since education was not really being encouraged, the initiation ceremony for the girls could not have been performed. The history of the Buddhist system of education is practically that of the Buddhist order or Saṁgha. Buddhist education and learning centred round monasteries as vedic culture centred round the sacrifice. The Buddhist world did not offer any educational opportunities apart from or independently of its monasteries. All education, sacred as well as secular, was in the hands of the monks. They had the monopoly of learning and of the leisure to import it. They were the only custodians and bearers of the Buddhist culture. Thus the rules of Buddhist education are those of the Buddhist order. These rules are not the invention of the Buddha but modeled upon those of numerous other monastic orders professing other faiths and also of brāhmanism itself; the common source from which all such sects arose.
The ceremony of initiation into the Buddhist order closely follows the lines of the Brahmanical initiation of studentship.

**Denial of Upanayana and Right of Education for Girl**

The reason for imposition of such a disqualification on women appears to lie in the historical situation of the earlier times when the old Āryan society was being restructured through marriages with the indigenous people. The latter were not familiar with the Āryan religious rites and could not correctly pronounce the mantras of a language which was alien to them. The brāhmanical priestly class assumed the responsibility of all ritual and sacrificial performances, and the śūdras, the majority of whom were from the indigenous people, were not allowed participation in them. With the intention of preventing the women of non-āryan origin, some of whom were now accepted in the āryan families, from participation in the sacrifices, a general disqualification on women was imposed. Unfortunately, even after the formation of their compact homogeneous society was completed, these disqualifications remained and continued.

Female education received a great setback after 200 B.C. primarily owing to the deterioration of the religious status of women. During the period we are reviewing, however, upanayana began to be gradually prohibited to girls, by about 500 B.C. it had already become a mere formality, not followed by any serious course of vedic education. Yama admit that once upon a time girls used to have the privilege of upanayana and vedic studies. The discontinuance of upanayana was disastrous to the religious education to girls, they were declared to be of the same status as that of the śūdras and unfit to recite vedic mantras and perform vedic sacrifices. The wife's association with the husband in the family sacrifices
became a formal matter and there were some theologians like Aitišayana who were opposed even to this formal participation.\footnote{161}

**Kind of Education**

**Religious Education**

It is rather difficult to dwell on the kinds of education that was being imparted since most intellectual activities were associated with religion. The embryo was treated through the expectant mother and a ceremonial or festivity ensured emphatic attention at every stage to matter of embryonic and baby welfare. Numerous vedic hymns which are outside the regular collection impress on the parents the need for complete concord and agreement and for harmony with the laws of Nature, to ensure the real happiness of the babe to be born. It is clearly recognized that the mother, as she is the first, is also the most powerful of educators whose influence just before and during pregnancy would make or mar the child's welfare in after life. If she thinks of things holy and serene, enjoys peace and happiness and finds her atmosphere congenial, she can stimulate the child's mental faculties, induce patriotic and other virtues and instill spiritual force into its mind. When she is enceinte the prayer is to secure her health and that of the foetus, so that both might be alive after the parturition. The expectant mother has her surroundings solemn and silent, which lay the foundations of the spiritual training of the future child.\footnote{162}

They enjoyed equal shares in learning Vedas and in the performance of religious rituals, as vedic religion required propitiating supernatural powers and the rituals demanded performance of them jointly by husband and wife.\footnote{163} The term 'patni' is indicative of her equal share in the socio-religious life of her husband.\footnote{164} Singing of the vedic hymns during
the sacrificial session was long considered as the most appropriate function of the wife. Hence initially womanhood was not regarded as an impediment in religious pursuits. Women used to receive vedic education. They therefore could recite vedic mantras as a matter of course.

Women were allowed to read holy texts and they played the role of preceptor. In the vedic literature we have a story of Sitāsāvitri, who agreed to marry Soma only if he gave her the three Vedas. It is evident from this tale that women were interested in religious education. We have many references in vedic literature of females uttering mantras on many occasions and this could have been achieved only through a regular school like system and regimentation at the girl level. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa too refers to the practice of girls uttering mantras.

Difficulties arose because by this period the volume of vedic studies became very extensive, as a number of subsidiary sciences were developed and lengthy commentaries were written on vedic texts. The spoken dialect of the age had begun to differ considerably from the language of the vedic hymns, and the theory had found universal acceptance that to commit a single and even a most minor mistake in the recitation of a vedic mantra would produce disastrous consequences to the reciter. As a natural consequence, society began to insist that those who wanted to undertake vedic studies must be prepared to devote a fairly long period, of about 12 to 16 years to the task. At this time women used to be married at about the age of 16 or 17, and could thus give only 7 or 8 years to their vedic studies. So short a period was quite insufficient for an efficient grounding in the vedic lore. Society was not prepared to tolerate dilettante vedic studies, and as a consequence, lady vedic scholars began to become rarer and rarer. Yet references to exceptional women undertaking
intellectual pursuits are still found. We find statements that some ladies were chosen to learn Purvamīmāṁsā. Again a lady Gandharvagrhitā is spoken of as having specialized in a certain branch of knowledge Viseshavina.\(^{169}\) This indicative of girls from a particular section of society may be that brāhmaṇa girls continued to be permitted to receive education even religious vedic education. Names of women having studied and become learned continue to exist e.g. Maitrey, Gārgi.

It can be gleaned from the Upanishads that there were three different levels of education.\(^{170}\) Primary education was given at home until the age of seven, eight or twelve years. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad shows that the secondary level started at the age of twelve.\(^{171}\) Thus, from twelve to twenty-four was the period of brahmacarya, when the pupil resided at the teacher’s place and studied vedic lore, the Vedāngas and other subjects, had practical training in priest craft and cultivated high moral values. Once again raising the query that could a girl remain unmarried till the age of twenty four? Not likely so and there would have very few who continued to study too long after puberty.

Yet that specialized religious or varied religious thinking and emerged is evidenced and we have the beginning of different schools or śākhās. Some students of the vedic śākhās are referred to by Pāṇini.\(^{172}\) Thus Kathi means the female students of the katha śākhā; Bahurchi means the student who studies many hymns, i.e. the Ṛgveda (Bālamanoramā and Kāsikā)\(^{173}\) Patañjali refers to the lady scholars of his time, who were well-versed in Mīmāṁsā śāstra, a work written by a lady called Kāśakṛtsni (cited above). The Mahāvastu refers to the literary accomplishments of ladies. Amarā, an artisan’s daughter had literary talents.\(^{174}\) The same source
further refers to a banker's daughter, educated by an ascetic in religious subjects.\footnote{175}

Certain passages in the epics prove that the maidens were given vedic education. Since they could perform sacrifices alone, even without their husbands. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Kauśalyā, Tārā offered oblations with mantras. Women recited daily vedic prayers (Sandhyā): "(The morning has set in) and surely the beautiful and graceful daughter of Janaka fond of performing morning oblations, shall come to this river of pure water to perform them".\footnote{176} In the Mahābhārata there is mention of a learned brāhmanī who wanted to be enlightened on the mysteries of religion, life and death, ‘Why did word first arise and why did mind arise afterwards, seeing that word comes into being after having been thought upon by mind’. Even ṛṣis, deities and the manes went to Arundhatī to learn the secrets of religion and duty and were duly instructed by her: “having penances for wealth Arundhatī was equal to her husband the high-souled Vaśiṣṭha in energy, for both in vows and conduct she was her husband’s equal”.\footnote{177}

Since the Epic record many strata of societies, perhaps this period, in which vedic religious and philosophic education is mentioned to have been imparted to women, corresponds roughly with the Upaniṣad and the Śūtra period. These works contain enough evidence of the intellectual activities and educational attainments of women. Draupadi’s lively discussions reminds one of Gārgī and Maitreyī of Brhadārāṇyaka Upaniṣad.\footnote{178} In the commentary on Gobhila Ğṛhya Śūtra we are told, “The women folk should be taught, for without such study, they cannot perform Agnihotra”. And Agnihotra was definitely performed by the ladies\footnote{179} in the epics, Kauśalyā could quote from a Dharmasūtra.\footnote{180} True, the mere fact
that these women could recite mantras does not warrant the conclusion that they had an indepth knowledge of the Vedas.

Later of course with the lowering of age for marriage religious education began to be beyond the reach of even the women from the elite classes. And it was believed that if there was a single mistake in accentuation or if a vedic mantra was misapplied it would not only fail to produce the desired result but would also bring about the ruin of the reciter.\textsuperscript{181} To protect women from this dreadful consequences, resulting from defective recitation of the vedic mantras, she was exempted from the compulsory study of the Vedas.\textsuperscript{182} This view can find support from Manu's views about different types of education laid down for even the male members belonging to the different classes of people.\textsuperscript{183} All education was not for all people. Here, it is evidently made clear that Manu has not debarred women from vedic studies because of any prejudice against them or that he thought them to be of inferior intellect but due to practical problems. The students had to reside at the teacher's house till the completion of their studies Yājñavalkya's enumeration of various restrictions imposed upon students shows that student-life had more hardships in his age. Regarding the courses of study, Yājñavalkya mentions the four Vedas, vākovākyam (Vedic sayings in the form of questions and answers), the dharmaśāstras, nārāśamsī or prayer of Rudra, and itihāsas by name. He further inserts the word 'vidyāśca' whereby he covers many other sciences.\textsuperscript{184} Thus it may be asserted that there was a full-fledged educational system in that age. In spite of such an advancement in the field of education there had been a greater emphasis of vedic studies. Yet, for the women, education was considered sufficient by means of which they could manage the household properly. No mention of their higher education is found in Yājñavalkya Śmṛti.\textsuperscript{185}
The causes of the prohibition of the vedic education to women during this later period have nowhere been specifically stated; they can only be inferred. When vedic literature came to be regarded as revealed, it was insisted that it should be very meticulously and accurately committed to memory. The vedic course also became a lengthy one, requiring a long period of study, and could not be finished till about the age of 24. The marriages of girls, as a rule, were never postponed to this advanced age even during the vedic period. Girls in well-to-do families therefore could get only about six or seven years for their vedic studies but even this period was reduced further with pre-puberty marriages being sanctioned. They could not therefore carry them out with that exactitude and thoroughness which was insisted upon by the priestly gurus. In poor families, the exigencies of the household work must have resulted in only very little time being available for vedic studies. Girls in such families were often unable to recite even the formulae in the marriage ritual prescribed for the bride; they had to be recited by the priest or the bridegroom. Dilettante vedic studies were regarded as not only useless, but also dangerous; even the slightest mistake in the recitation of the vedic hymns was regarded a very disastrous in its consequences. It was therefore probably felt that since women could not study the vedic literature in the proper manner due to time constraints, its study should be prohibited to them in order to avert spiritual disasters to the family arising out of the mistakes of amateurish vedic girl-students. Spoken dialect had by this time become completely differentiated from the vedic speech, women were unable to speak even ordinary Sanskrit and used to express themselves in Prākrits or vernaculars. They must have experienced greater difficulties in correctly pronouncing the vedic hymns than men, who could speak vedic Sanskrit correctly. Leaders of society
therefore felt that correct transmission of the vedic literature necessitated the prohibition of its study to women.

Vedic sacrifices also became very complicated at this period of time; they could be properly performed only by those who had studied their minute intricacies very carefully. As a consequence, the participation of women in sacrifices gradually became a mere matter of formality. For some time wives continued to perform the duties that were formerly allotted to them in sacrifices, but gradually a tendency arose to allot most of the sacrificial work to males. Many sacrificial duties that could be once discharged by the wife alone, came to be assigned to male substitutes in the age of the Brāhmaṇas itself. In some rituals like the Srastarārohana, women continued to take a prominent part and recite the vedic mantras down to 500 B.C., but the practice became gradually unpopular thereafter. She continued to perform the evening sacrifice down to the beginning of the Christian era but the recitation of the vedic mantras was prohibited to her on the occasion and obviously denied to her the right to education. Therefore she required no formal religious/vedic education in her girlhood as preparation for future duties.

It may have been in order to debar the non-āryan favourite wife from performing vedic sacrifices that the junior wife and low-caste wife lost the right of religious partnership with the husband. With the specialization of vedic sacrificial religion, women were altogether denied vedic religious education and thus could not take part in sacrifices. It was also due to impurity attached to them that they were excluded from performing sacrifices and śrāddhas in the didactic portion. Asceticism degraded the religious status of women so much that religious pursuits could be taken only by abandoning women. They were regarded as devoid of nobles
sentiments and were thought incapable of religious and intellectual pursuits.\textsuperscript{190} The only harm done to women, which was of course a formidable one, was that after the denial of vedic education women were generally classed with the sūdras, a condition which is found as early as the Epics.\textsuperscript{191}

It is very difficult to gather the reasons which led to the degradation of women education in the Smṛti period, because they have nowhere been specifically stated. Even then many reasons have been advanced by scholars for the fast disappearance of vedic education from amongst women. Women could not be imparted vedic education due to the lowering of their marriageable age and the vedic education took years to be completed. So due to the complexity of vedic literature and lowering of the marriageable age the Smṛti writers decided to stop women from undertaking such difficult studies. It was in their interest and for their well-being alone that the Smṛti writers put on a son the vedic studies for them.

Further, we can point out that at the time of her marriage no consideration of her educational qualification was made at all as it was in the vedic period. According to Yājñavalkya she was to be a virgin, handsome and not related to the bridegroom upto the seventh degree.\textsuperscript{192} But he does not mention that she should also be well-versed, intelligent and well accomplished before she is married as was the case earlier cn. Manu\textsuperscript{193}, too, does not make illiteracy as a disqualification for the bride. He mentions same good qualities as condition for bride marriage but literacy, intellect is not the one. Obviously, society no longer supported girl child education. He takes a low view of women's intelligence which may be inferred from a verse wherein he observes that the understanding of women is apt to waver and they do not make good
witness. According to him, "The two sexes are unequal strength, stamina and psychology." Such attitude was bound to lead to a decline in women's education.

In the Buddhist literature, the women attained remarkable success and achieved glory in the sphere of religious education and spiritual potentialities. The education imparted to female novices and nuns was the same as that to the male monks. The nuns were provided with the knowledge of deepest problems of philosophy, subtle mystical experiences and intense meditative exercises. It is claimed that the religious status of women was comparatively raised under the Buddhist sects. A large number of ladies from these circles joined the order and became lifelong students of religion and philosophy. The only problem witnessed here is that we are not in a position to ascertain the age or how early was this education made available to them. The permission that was given to women to join the church by Jainism and Buddhism raised a new and respectable career before them. And their number, however, seems to have been much larger in Buddhist and Jain circles. Among the nuns of the Therīgāthā the majority consists of women, who had renounced the world during their maidenhood itself and had belonged to well to do families. The career of preaching and evangelizing that was thus opened before women Buddhism attracted a large number of talented ladies, who distinguished themselves as teachers and preachers.

Jaina women enjoyed equal privileges with men and were given full facilities for the highest kind of religious education which was spiritually oriented. These girls after having received and studied and achieving of eminence, undertook to preach their faith of universal love and brotherhood. Jaina nuns, included rich and respectable ladies, even
queens like Paumāvi, were held in great reverence. Thus, it is evident that Jaina nuns received a high standard of religious education, even at such an early age.\textsuperscript{197}

The Buddhist and Jain text also refer to women of the Brahmavādinī class, i.e. those who remained unmarried to carry on their religious studies. Most of the Buddhist for the sake of spiritual salvation. The jain texts refer to Jayanti, daughter of the king of Kauśāmbi, who remained unmarried in order to devote herself to religion and philosophy. She carried on discussions with Mahāvīra himself on abstract questions of philosophy, and eventually became a nun.\textsuperscript{198}

**Military and Physical Education**

During the vedic period the military profession must have been a popular one, as the Āryans were engaged in subjugating the non-Āryans (dasyus) and establishing their supremacy in the country. We have however no information as to how military education was imparted. The superiority in horsemanship and chariot-fighting constituted the key to the Āryan success, considerable time must therefore have been devoted to give proper training in these subjects to the members of the fighting force. Chariot races, which were very popular in the age, must have played an important part in increasing the military efficiency of the chariot corps. Practice in the use of the bow and arrow, the shield, the mace and the spear, which were the main offensive and defensive weapons of the age, must have played an important part in the training of the infantry.\textsuperscript{199}

It is no less interesting to find that some women also had some knowledge of military arts and sciences. From the hymns of the Rgveda we find that non-Āryan girls joined the army in large numbers. In their case some military training may be presumed to have been imparted as they
played their part so well that men of the time did not regard it as uneasy or ungallant to war with women: "She who discerns the weak and worn, the man who thirsts and is in want, she sets her mind upon the Gods". Elsewhere it is stated, "The daughter of the sky, like some chaste woman, bends, opposite to men, her forehead downward. The maid, disclosing boons to him who worships, hath brought again the daylight as aforetime". It is important to note that in the early Vedic period there was no system of female seclusion. They appeared even in tournaments like horse and chariot races and publicly attended feasts and gatherings: "The sister quitteth, for the elder sister, her place, and having looked on her departeth. She decks her beauty, shining forth with sunbeams, like women trooping to the festal meeting".

Moreover, in the Rgveda we come across women of military profession like Mudgalinī, Viśpalā and Saśīyasī who were either victorious or wounded in the battle. Again, in the Rgveda Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, has been described as Vṛtragha or the slayer of Vṛtra and is said to have taken part with Indra in his fight against that demon. In the devīsukta of the same scripture, the goddess Vāk is mentioned as representing the primordial force of the universe: "penetrated Earth and Heaven". There is reference to woman warriors: "Women for weapons hath the Dasa taken. What injury can his feeble armies do me. Well he distinguished his two different voices and Indra then advanced to fight the Dasyu" and it may therefore be surmised that women received some sort of military training which enabled them to become soldiers. In the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa an allusion is made to Indrāṇī, who is said to be a goddess of army.
The teacher was not only responsible for the development of the intellectual powers of the students, but also their physical and moral training. As the gurukulas were resident universities, the students never had chance to relax, with the guru or the senior students on the campus. When the students were not under the direct eye of the teacher, they were given arduous tasks that would occupy the whole of their energy and time. The teachers were like fathers. Their wives, like mothers, took care as to what they were eating and how they were feeling. Thence, it was truly a home away from home. The Upaniṣads contain several lists of subjects of study, and these give us a good idea of the wide range of knowledge in those days. One such list mentions not only Veda, Itiḥāsa, Purāṇa and spiritual knowledge, but also Military science. Whether such arduous physical standards would have been enforced on the female students can not be held with certainty.

Although later a Kṣatriya woman was given military education, in the epics themselves there is no evidence that such education was imparted. A few cases that might be cited in favour of such a presumption would not bear close scrutiny. For instance there is a case of Kaikeyī helping Daśaratha. But Kaikeyī's help to Daśaratha in the war was in the form of tending to his wounds: “Then king Daśaratha warred with the asuras most heroically. And that mighty armed one, O worshipful lady, losing his senses in consequence of wounds received from weapons, was removed from the field by you. In that imminent danger, your husband, sadly cut by weapons, was preserved by you.” The fact that she accompanied the king to the battle field has to discerned with that she may have had access to basic military knowledge, similarly, Subhadrā’s being skilful chariot driver, which she was according to the Kumbhakanam edition of the Mahābhārata does not necessarily imply military education. Rather
as in the later periods it is specifically derived to them earlier they may have acquired rudimentary techniques perchance and not by way of a curriculum. If military education had been imparted in those days Sītā and Draupadī too would have certainly offered some resistance to Rāvana and Jayadratha respectively but they both appear quite helpless before abductors. The position, however, is different in respect of physical education. The epic-women were definitely trained in physical exercises. The game of ball as one of the amusements of the girls has often been referred to. Kunti and some other women played this game with fine coloured balls: “By him I was given away to Kuntibhoja like wealth given away by a rich man. While yet a girl playing with a ball in my hand, your grand-father”. The Rāmāyaṇa represents girls going to the gardens in the evening with their friends for playing. The slaughter of the sacrificial horse by Kauśālyā is evidence of her excellent physical power: “Then Kauśalyā, having performed the preliminary rites, with three strokes slew that horse, experiencing great glee”.

Later in place of higher education, the women generally received military training. This is indirectly proved by the term Śāktikī, a female spear-bearer mentioned by Patañjali. But a more direct evidence is furnished by Megasthenes who refers to the Amāzonian bodyguard in attendance on Chandragupta Maurya, when he went out to hunt. “Of the women”, we are told, some are in chariots, some, on horses and some even on elephants, and they are equipped with weapons of every kind, as if they were going on a campaign”.

The female bodyguards of the king is also mentioned in Kauṭilya’s Arthaśāstra which directs that the king, on getting up from his bed, shall be received by troops of women armed with bows: “When risen from the bed,
he should be surrounded by female guards bearing bows, in the second hall by eunuch servants wearing robes and turbans, in the third by humpbacks, dwarfs and kiratas, in the fourth by ministers, kinsmen and door-keepers, lances in hand".\textsuperscript{218}

The Arthasastra states that every village ought to be able to defend itself.\textsuperscript{219} There may have been military schools as such for this purpose. With the voluntary help of the elderly experts in the village, most of its youths could be trained in the use of the bow and the arrow, and the lance. Many villages were exempted from taxation on agreeing to supply a certain quota to the army. Did the youthful girls also render such services can not be stated with any degree of certainty. Taxila was a great center of military training brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas from all over the country used to go to this city for getting mastery in the military profession. At one military center there were 103 princes receiving training in the different branches of the military art,\textsuperscript{220} i.e. elephant lore, horsemanship, cavalry training and use of weapons. In 500 BC many enterprising captains started private military coaching classes and supplied trained soldiers to kings and received from them lands, money, horses etc. by way of reward.\textsuperscript{221} Whether the girls were enrolled into such syllabai is not definitely evidenced and the probability appears less. Yet since they participated as guards obviously they would have received regular training and study. Kautilya's Arthasastra contains many references to military training.\textsuperscript{222} But he too fails to directly refer to females being extended military training.

**Education in Fine Arts (Dancing, Music and Playing Instruments)**

It is reasonable to infer from all direct references that there must have been quite a number of girls who underwent all the courses of studies. They were free to be educated not only in spiritual subjects but also had freedom
to get mastery over the secular subjects. The secular side of their education consisted of fine arts and domestic crafts as well.

It would have been rather difficult to excel in all these arts. Thus it seems that dancing, music and playing on instruments were the most common of all these. The cultivation of fine arts like music, dancing and painting was encouraged in the case of girls since early times. The dancing girl bronze images of the Harrapan civilization attests to the girls having learnt from Mohenjo-daro this art. Music and dancing were certainly taught to women of vedic India. We have definite indications in the Rgveda to permit us to conclude that a few of the fine arts formed subjects of women's syllabus of study. It is, however, a fact that many of the fine arts which are now counted in the class had not yet developed. For example, sculpture and painting were perhaps little known and there are but few instances of the Aryan architecture furnished by the Samhitā.

The interest of the Indo-Āryans in music is well evidenced by the existence of the Sāmaveda which deals entirely with the music of the vedic hymns. Music, besides being an acquisition of the priests, must also have been a necessary equipment of women. Songs were sung on all important occasions and functions, for example even at the time of squeezing out the Soma juice. The following verse is a case in point: "Driving thee in Vivasvān's course, the seven sisters with their hymns. Made melody round thee the sage." "They sing their song like women active in their tasks, along their common path hither from far away. Bringing refreshment to the liberal devotee, yea, all things to the worshipper who pairs the juice." Another reference to music is preserved in the passage, "Ten dames have sung to welcome thee, even as a maiden greets her lover."
Dancing is a necessary auxiliary to music as an art. Urvasī and others of her profession must have maintained dancing along with music, for, after all, the profession of courtesans was not unknown to the authors of the Śāhāṭhā or even earlier. The posture of the bronze images of the dancing girl from the Harappan site mentioned above exemplify rhythm and portray an act dance movement. We have direct references to female dancers in the Rgveda. Ushā has been compared to a female dancer. The female dancers put on peśāmsi and was called nṛtā and while dancing she kept her bosom uncovered. The following is an interesting verse pointing to the above inference: "She like a dancer, puts her embroidered garments on. As a cow yields her udder so she bares her breast".²²⁷

Musical recitation of the Śāma hymns was originally the special task of ladies: "And that cow which yielded the fast milk for the (sacrificer’s) wife he gives to the chanters, for it is they, the Udgātris, that do, as it were, the wife’s work on this occasion; therefore he gives it to the chanters".²²⁸ It is clear that they must be specializing in music in the early vedic period; otherwise this important duty would not have been assigned to them. Some legends in the vedic literature make caustic references to women’s partiality to music. Once Devas and Asuras both wanted to win over the Goddess of speech; gods succeeded in their effort because they were clever enough to realize that the best way to achieve their object was to sing and dance before her. The author of the legend cannot resist the temptation of observing that women can be easily won over by one who sings melodiously and dances gracefully before them.²²⁹

From the evidence of the texts like the Taittīriya Śāhāṭhā,²³⁰ Maitrāyaṇī Śāhāṭhā,²³¹ Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa²³² etc., we come to know that girls continued to be taught some of the fine arts like dancing, singing
which were regarded as accomplishments unfit for men. In their girlhood, women must have learnt household chores and acquired some smattering of education. Those of them who were of a more scholastic trend of mind, tried their hands at poetry and philosophy. Most of them, however only had what Kātyāyanī is credited with, the knowledge which women have Striprajaṇā. This must have included knowledge of cooking, cleaning, weaving, sewing, embroidery and looking after the household, for these arts have been, one way or the other, connected with women throughout Vedic literature. Singing, dancing and playing musical instruments were additional accomplishments. The Kaṭhoupaniṣad mentions women with musical instruments. Moreover, they had to have enough education to ensure correct pronunciation of the mantras and efficiency in sacrificial duties.

These arts have been described as ‘unmanly’ in the later Vedic texts, and were forbidden for male students in the Sūtras. In the Sacrifices and marriages, dancing and music were associated with women according to older traditions. In the Epic these arts were part and parcel of the females. So much so that even their manner of talking and wailing was considered musical. We find that the girls were trained and were well versed in these arts: “And another dark-eyed which was asleep with her ‘mudduka’ (a kind of musical instrument) on her lap, like a loving mother having a boy”. “Hemā, skilled in dance and song, is my dear friend, having received her blessing, I guard this vast forest”. Kuśanābha’s daughters, Hemā as well as the wives of Rāvana are also said to have been adept in these arts: “And it came to pass that they endowed with youth, beautiful and lie to the lighting in the rainy season, decked in excellent ornaments, coming to their garden were merrily singing and dancing and playing on musical instruments”. The royal households resounded with the music of
women. We come across the name of various instruments like manduka, pataha, vina, vipanchi, muruja, chhelika, mrdanga, dimdima, adamvara, in the description of Rāvana’s palace. All these were played by women: “another damsel possessed of graceful limbs and a shapely bust, was lying down, hugging her kettle-drum, like a woman embracing her lover obtained after a long time”. The three octaves were well known to them: “Moving from house to house, that foremost of monkeys observed on all sides various dwellings of diverse forms and colour, and heard charming songs chanted in the three octaves, by damsels maddened with amour, resembling celestial Apsaras.” Uttara used to learn dancing along with other girls in the hall during the day time: “Behold there is the dancing hall erected by the king of the Mātsyas. Here the girls dance during the day and retire to their respective homes at night”. Such systematic and specialized arts would require perfection to be learnt only on if practised on a regular basis. Further, women, it seems, had a fairly wide knowledge of ancient legends and folk literature.

Manu has assigned them many household duties for which girls were trained. Besides they were given some training in the cottage industries such as weaving, spinning and lace making to earn a subsistence for themselves and for their children in crucial time. Thus women is not to be kept ignorant or uneducated. Only her line of education had now differed from that of men.

Buddhist sources also through some light on the subject. Mahānāma, a rich citizen of Vaiśāli, had a daughter named Ambapāli. She agreed to lead the life of a courtesan. She became the chief courtesan of Vaiśāli and an object of admiration in the contemporary society. They, the courtesan were not only a means through which the nobles satisfied their
quest for beauty but they were also the real custodians of fine arts such as singing, dancing and music, through which the aesthetic emotions of the people were aroused and satisfied.\textsuperscript{246} It is very probable that music and dancing were the two allied subjects in which women held sway in those days. Whenever a reference is made in praise of women, she is invariably referred to as skilled in singing and dancing. It is Kanha and not Jali, who can sing.\textsuperscript{247}

According to the Arthśāstrā also the females received training in the fine arts of painting, music and dancing. Teachers who gave training in these arts were maintained by the state.\textsuperscript{248} However it appears that sons and daughters of higher castes were not taking to these forms of public entertainments. Courtesans and female slave were trained by competent instructors in music, playing on flute, drums and lute, in dancing, singing, calligraphy acting and painting, and in the art of conversation, of preparation of perfumes and garlands. There were courtesans and female slaves whose livelihood was acting on stage.\textsuperscript{249} These training/education must have begun at an early age for it would require years of patient learning to make accomplished performances. How early or at what young age cannot be gathered. Music, dancing and painting were encouraged in the case of girls.\textsuperscript{250}

The early foreign invasions on India, were also considered responsible for the degradation of women education. We find reference for the first time of a foreign invasion on India in the Śmṛtis. Mānu speaks of the Yavanas (Greeks), Śakas (Indo-Scythians), Pāradas, Pahlavas (Persians), Cīnas (Chīnese): "(They are) the Paundrakas, Andras, Dravidas, Kamvajas, Javanas, Śakas, Parandas, Pandavas, Chinas, Kiratas, Daradas, Kashas. (Kṣatriyas of these countries have become
śūdras for having renounced the religious rites). In the next verse, he speaks of the Mlechchhas (Barbarian) as distinguished from the Āryan: "Member of castes, respectively originated from the face, arms, thighs and legs of Brahman (i.e. brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra) who have been comprised outside the pale of these four castes for the extinction of their religious rites, are all called dasyus, whether they speak an Āryan or a non-Āryan tongue." Had the foreigners not invaded India, Manu would not have mentioned them. But we do not find any reference of foreign attack in the early vedic literature. According to S.K. Das, "In almost every nation of the world in the primitive stages of its development, the early ideas about the inferiority of the female sex prevailed, women was not regarded as a person, she was not recognized as a citizen. 'In fact, she was not a unit but a zero in the sum of human civilization' and it is very probable that the conquering Mlechchhas entertained these nations. When people of Hindustan who had already attained a high degree of civilization came in contact with their foreign rulers far less civilized than they, they might have adopted these rules concerning the position of women which belonged peculiarly to an imperfect civilization."

It must be here pointed out that the exclusion of women from vedic studies and sacrifices was not due to any deliberate plan to lower their status. Custodians of the vedic lore honestly believed that no one should be allowed to recite and use the vedic mantras who had not studied them properly. Women found it impossible to devote the necessary time for this purpose on account of their early marriages. It was therefore but fair that they should not be allowed to invite on themselves and their relations those dreadful calamities, which were honestly believed to result from an incorrect recitation of the vedic stanzas. The desire was not to humiliate women, but rather to save them from dire consequences.
Nuns continued to figure in the Buddhist and Jain monastic life down to the 3rd century A.D., but do not seem to have distinguished themselves as authors or poets. The institution of nunnery went out of vogue in Buddhism and Jainism from about the 4th century A.D. Female education received a setback from Buddhism between 300 BC to 800 AD. 255
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