CHAPTER – 3
CURRICULUM THROUGH THE AGES

“Education has for its object the formation of character”
- Herbert Spencer

3.1 Fundamentals of the Education System of Ancient India

The education system that existed in ancient India is a source of inspiration to all. The world knows that in ancient India, the education was philosophical, logical, religious and utilitarian. Our present system of education lacks what used to be the characteristic features of our ancient system. These features were the policy of taking admissions, the monitoring system of the Gurukul, low teacher pupil ratio, healthy environment and teaching surroundings, the role of punishment in discipline and finally the regulatory factors governing a student’s life.

We shall now discuss some important fundamentals which existed in the education system of ancient India.

3.1.1 Development of a wholesome personality

The main aim of educating a child is the development of his personality which includes his mental and physical capabilities and his persona. The Brahmanic system of education aimed at the development of a fuller personality and most important was raising the character of the student. This system of education stood firmly on the grounds because moral strength and moral excellence were its main tenets, what we lack today. The society today faces moral degeneration in our educated people.

Moral values are at stake, the old values, which held society together are disappearing and as there in no effective programme to replace them by a new sense of responsibility. Innumerable signs of social disorganization are evident everywhere and are continually on the rise. These include protests, increasing chaos due to glaring disobedience, and a careless attitude for public property along with corruption in public life. A moral and polite society which was the high point of our ancient culture is not to be found today.
3.1.2 The Role of Formal and Informal Education in Society

Ancient India witnessed great importance being given to Informal education. Giving of education and receiving of education was considered sacred. Education started with the ritual of ‘upnayan’ and ended with ‘samvartan’. In between this period, the disciple was expected to devote himself completely to the cause of learning. There was no scope of distraction.

It was customary to receive education from his father in ancient India. Every student was not expected to go to the Gurukul and education at home was given importance. Today the child is sent to formal schools, coaching classes, personality development classes and the list is endless.

3.1.3 Academic Sessions in Ancient India

It was usual for a boy to go to a teacher for studentship. If the teacher agreed, it was gracefully accepted. The age of entrance was different for different casts. The Guru Purnima (full moon of Shravana) was considered an auspicious day to start the session with a ceremony called Upkarman. The academic session ended on Rohini (full moon of Pausha) with ceremony of Utsarjan. Holidays were given on the new moon and full moon days of the month.

3.1.4 Duration of the School

In ancient India the student had to spend seven to eight hours in the school. The duration depended upon the intensity of sunlight. In bright sun, classes were held in proper shade. In the rainy season, there were rooms where school continued. There were temple premises which were used for classrooms, hostels for students and residential quarters for teachers. Ashrams and Gurukul were usually found near a water source like a river or a lake. There was a serene atmosphere surrounding the Ashrams. Calmness and peace prevailed which was conducive to learning and knowledge. Human habitation used to be close by but it did not disturb the quietness in the Ashram.
3.1.5 Relationship of the Teacher and the Pupil

A special relationship developed between the teacher and the student. This was the result of close proximity that they had. The duty of the teacher included the duties of a nurse when the pupil was sick, of a mother as he fed and clothed the student and of a spiritual father as he taught his pupil. The students also had high regards for their teachers and treated them as their god. They were united by a special bond in life.

3.1.6 The Importance of Discipline

Strict regulations were there in the school for the students. Teaching was definitely important but alongside instruction, the teaching of discipline was of primary importance. The laws had to be strictly adhered to and the student’s life was well regulated. Discipline was based on morality and religion. Obedience to laws was compulsory for a student and in this way the value of discipline was ingrained in him.

Traits like anger, greed and lust were looked down upon in a student. He was ordered not to gamble or gossip, indulge in backbiting or lying. He was taught to pay utmost respect to the opposite sex. He was also asked to be non-violent and thus not kill animals. Simplicity was the core of Gurukul life whether the student was rich or poor.

3.1.7 Strong Guru and Disciple Relationship

The Guru was able to give individual attention to every student of his as there was a low teacher-pupil ratio. The class of student consisted of fewer students and as such each was known specifically and individually to the Guru. The teacher took personal interest in the child. In case of increased enrolment, the teacher asked senior boys to take charge which they fulfilled dutifully. The teacher had time to give advice on every aspect of the student’s personality. It was a very healthy relationship which led to development of a wholesome personality of the student.

3.1.8 All Round Development of the Child

Teachers were sympathetic towards their pupils and tried to interact more so as to form a closed relationship. Hence punishment had no place in this kind of a school system.
Teachers were gentle, understanding and cooperative towards their pupils. The teachers commanded respect and not demand it. The pupils idolized their Gurus.

3.1.9 The Fee Structure in Gurukul
We find a unique self-sufficient economic system in the Gurukul. Education was free for the students because there were no formal outside agencies involved in the education. Gurukul was an autonomous body. It formed its own rules and regulations without any role of the external authority. There was no politics inside the school system. Student was not required to pay for education that he received in a Gurukul or an Ashram. The student was accepted by the Guru for his talent and not wealth. The student could offer land, cow, horse or vegetables to the Ashram if he wished.

3.2 Characteristics of Education System in Ancient India
Education system in ancient Indian was based on the study of the Vedas. The Brahmans, Upanishads and Dharma Sutras were taught to the students. ‘Amar Kosha’ – the writings of Aryabhatta, Pannini, Katyayani, Kautilya and Patanjali were taught and also the medical treatises of Charaka and Susruta. This education was passed on from one generation to another.

The Brahmanic education infused a spirit of religiousness in the student and developed integrity in character. The study of the Brahmanic literature developed a wholesome personality of the child and inculcated heightened sense of social efficacy and national culture.

Let us discuss these special characteristics developed in the students which till today carry a lot of importance in the society. We must also see that there was no demarcation between boy and girl students. Both were treated equally, though the work was done according to the requirement.

3.2.1 Spirituality and Religion
Reverence for God, faith and belief in Him and goodness of deeds were the basic principles taught to the students. Piousness and religious thoughts and values were the aim of education. The student was expected to pursue the path of ethics and moral values.
Rituals and religious beliefs were an important part of the life of the pupil. Prayers and religious ceremonies were a part of everyday life. All religious festivals were celebrated with great fervour.

Education included religious instructions and here these instructions do not mean only ceremonies or rituals, but the Dharma of the student. A student was taught to appreciate spirituality and Dharma and observance of religious acts could do this amicably.

3.2.2 **Integrity in Character.**

Character building was the most important ingredient of education in ancient India. Good behaviour and conduct should be the outcome of education. It was stated that bravery and vigour would not make a hero out of a man and a woman wise. It is essential to conquer one’s senses to become a real hero which implies complete control over what you say, what you see, what you feel and what you listen to.

Virtuous, meritorious, duteous, righteous, dutiful and moral were the adjectives used for the students in ancient India. Practice of moral values is the path to wisdom. The students had examples in front of them to follow. The Gurus were ideals of morality and they passed it on to next generations.

3.2.3 **Social Efficacy**

An important objective of education in ancient India was the inculcation of civic sense and social ethics. The student after an arduous life in the Ashram and Gurukul went on to lead a dutiful life. He was sympathetic to the poor and the distressed. He was charitable and hospitable as he realized that he was a part of the society and it was his first duty to work and help others.

As a householder, the student looked after his progeny and transmitted his culture to the next generation. In this capacity he realized his responsibility of being moral and pass this morality to others. He understood that being a role model was important and thus he exhibited a supreme personality bearing the golden rules of righteousness and duty towards his family, society and country. Home was the first school where the child received lessons of morality and values informally from his parents.
3.2.4 Literacy and Education Completed the Personality of the Student

Another important aim of education in ancient India was the development of a wholesome personality. Being literate was not enough, there were ideals of Dharma which had to be learnt and practiced. To achieve Godliness was the aim and this could be done by instilling qualities of self-confidence and self-restraint. The Do’s and the Don’ts were clearly laid out for the student to be followed later in his life.

3.2.5 Nationalism and Culture

Love for one’s culture was of great importance. Parts of sacred scriptures were expected to be memorized and passed on to succeeding generations by word of mouth. Each student served as a medium of transmission. The priests learnt the complete Vedic literature by heart and were the best source of knowledge. The Vedic culture thus was passed on to the next generations.

The art of writing was not available to the ancient Indian education system and it was only through the word of mouth that the Vedic literature and culture was preserved and spread in the society. We find cultural unity in India even today as the custom of spreading the basics of our ethos exists as it is since the ancient times. Moral values and ethics also have to be diffused in the society in a similar way. Successful transmission of knowledge and culture is possible only through formal and informal education.

3.3 Education System in Ancient India

Urmila Sharma in her book, ‘Hand Book of Vedic Education’ has given a detailed description about the education system of ancient India. She has given due importance to Vedic education and has drawn similes’ between Modern Indian education and Vedic education.

The Western culture and education has made a great impact on the Indian system of education. Education has been westernized and thus it has become necessary to remember our root values. Modernization is not same as Westernization. Merely aping the West is Westernization which accompanies total disregard for our Indian culture. Modernization should be the ability to comprehend the values which will suitably enhance one’s personality.
The Indian culture has stood the test of times and has proved the uniqueness of our Indian values and ethos. The West having recognized the importance of ancient Indian wisdom are accommodating themselves and are being benefitted by adopting the Indian values and we Indians too much in awe of Westerners are influenced by their glamour that we have forgotten our glorious cultural heritage. We should reconsider our roots and understand the wisdom of Vedas, respect the Guru Shishya relationship and borrow the system of transformation of the Shishya into an ‘ideal man’.

It is no doubt true that Hinduism has some basic good tenets which have enabled it to survive, yet looking at the present position of Indian society in comparison to some Western countries, where economic progress has been rapid and orderly, we find that religious teachings have not played their due role in India. We will have to impart those teaching in a manner that they could help in reviving the old values and making all round progress possible in the country.

The yardstick of measuring the importance of a Nation is not the number of battles fought or the wealth which they acquired. The importance has to be seen in terms of the knowledge, beauty and culture which they contribute to man’s possessions in his journey towards self-realization. India has a culture which can develop strength, tenacity and resilience to fight the forces of disruption in the society. This has to be understood by everybody and retrieve our country from moral degeneration. Indian culture has the ability to equip a man with ideals to achieve a higher destiny and this aspect should be promoted for the wellness in the society.

Foreigners and foreign influences were absorbed. Adjustments were rapidly made. And India continued throughout as living unit, created and sustained by tradition, social institutions, cultural values and the collective will forged by the generations.

It is said that India cannot be measured by tables of her population, area or comparative wealth alone; but her achievements in the literary and aesthetic field and a fabric of religious, philosophic and ethical systems raised by its people are its real achievements. However, we would add that the economic and social development of the country in the modern sense is also essential and this is closely connected with the religious and ethical practices.
“India today stands at a cross section where its cultural development seems to be suffering. There is an all-pervading sense of moral confusion and a steadily enlarging vacuum in the sphere of ethical values, social goals and political objectives. As things are, neither the parents, nor the teachers, nor the religious heads and institutions enjoy the moral influence which they used to have in the past. The restoration of such moral influence is essential for a stable and creative society”. These lines of Dr. Munshi echo the aim of this work.

The Vedic period is said to be approximately between 2500 to 600 B.C. The Aryan culture and civilization expanded and developed in Indian in this time.

Professor Williams uses and explains three words Vedism, Brahmanism and Hinduism for the three principal stages or phases in the development of that complicated system of Hindu religion.

He further traces the evolution of Vedism, Brahmanism and Hinduism. When the Indian branch of the Aryan family settled down in the land of the seven rivers (Sanskrit Sapta Sindhu), now the Punjab, about the 15th century B.C., their religion included the worship of the mystical nature. They were mesmerized by the forces which were everywhere in operation around them for production, destruction, and reproduction. The hymns were composed in an early form of the Sanskrit language, at different times – perhaps from the fifteenth to the tenth B.C. – by men of light and leading (Rishis) among the Indo-Aryan immigrants, who were later on held in high esteem as patriarchal saints. Thus Vedism was the first phase.

The next phase was Brahmanism and it was an outgrowth of Vedism. They are not distinguished from each other. Brahmanism developed gradually from the eighth century B.C. to the twelfth century A.D. It was not a major departure from Vedism but what we can see is that cardinal doctrines got their definite shape. In the Vedic times, the hymn-composers seem to give expression to man’s craving for some unknown but definite ideal. They personified the Sky, Sun, Fire, Air and Earth and asked them to bless us.

In that early period it was emphasized that a Spirit (the Atman) resided in every human being which did not desire material things. Spiritual power could raise this Atman and then the individual attained reality. This spirit was not bound by limitations of personality
and individuality. This Atman was called the ‘Brahman’. Men were manifestations of that spirit.

Every act of man in his social life and domestic life was controlled by rigid rules and regulations to become a Brahman. Philosophical thought developed and achieved great heights in this period. To be a Brahman was the aim of education. The rules to be followed were given under three headings: (1) the code of Manu; (2) that of Yajnavalkya; (3) that of Parashara.

The code of Manu is said to be the most sacred of the three. Yajnavalkya has added many rules to the already written rules of Manu. They may have been written in the first or second century of the Common Era. The code of Parashara is the most modern work.

The three codes are the basis of India’s domestic life. The passing of 2000 years has not diminished their importance. Law, politics and social life is intermingled with religious rules and regulations.

According to Manu, the Vedas are the source of all the laws and traditions of the Indian society. The Manu’s code is full of high moral and religious perceptions. The cycle of birth and death is recognized and thus it is essential for every man to attain highest moral integrity in his earthy existence for the successful transmigration of his soul.

Women are considered to be very important in the society by Manu. He asks the women of the society to be kept pleased through gentle words and good behaviour. Prosperity and happy women go side by side. Manu says that if women are unhappy due to the misbehaviour of their men, that family will be destroyed. If women are insulted or discriminated against, it will act like poison and destroy the family. He has asked us to respect and please women with good ornaments, dresses and food. If this is not done then there would be misery for all.

Women give birth to children and thereby are the source of our progeny. Women bring light, fortune and happiness to home. Wherever women are happy, prosperity will stay. All kinds of happiness emanates from women either in the form of good deeds or marital bliss. A woman as a mother, a wife or a daughter is a blessing. Her participation in religious and spiritual activity is necessary.

Parashara was of the view that Vedic knowledge is for those who have experienced inherent peace and they speak the truth and are devoted to god. A disinterested student or
a person of questionable character should not be taught. According to him experience of complete knowledge is the experience of the bliss of unboundawareness.

3.4 Fundamental principles of Vedic Education – Rita, Satya, Tapas

The control over mind and the ability to concentrate is Tapas. Equally important aspect is detachment. The student leaves his home to stay in the Ashram where he learns the Rita and Satya.

The Rita (Eternal order-Dharma) and Satya (Truth) are mentioned throughout the Vedas. Tapas – the spiritual fire refines the human nature. At the end of the Rigveda, the Vedic concept of spiritual values has been presented in a nutshell. Rita and Satya are the ends and the means to reach them is Tapas. This is the foundation of Vedic culture.

Dharma is the Law of Nature which creates order and symmetry in the society. Rita is the fundamental Moral Law which brings symmetry in the life and character of man. Law of Nature and Law of Morality have to be maintained through Tapas.

Rita as Moral Law is dominant in the Vedas. Sages praise Rita and ask men to win wealth by Rita.

Satya is the ultimate Reality to be realized through the inner vision.

Tapas is the spiritual fire in man which, being kindled, lifts him from the animal to the spiritual (or divine) plane.

Spirituality is of great positive value in the Vedas. It is self-awakening by activating the spiritual power within oneself. Brahmacharya, the first stage of life (Grihastha, Vanaprastha, Sanyas being the other three stages to follow) is the time for Tapas and develop the higher intellect and sound physique with a powerful spiritual personality.

Vedic Code of Life

In addition to the spiritual and moral values the Vedas think in terms of physical and material well-being. It speaks of the optimum duration of life as hundred years. The Yajurveda amplifies this Rigvedic idea by adding that there should be the efficiency of sight, hearing and speech and prosperity going with long life. The Atharvaveda adds to this knowledge and progress. The Veda gives the ideal of an abiding duality. The Vedic ritual requires the presence of both husband and wife. Conjugal love is held sacred and
the wife on the way to maternity is described as most blissful (sivatama). The Veda distinguishes itself from all other Indian literature by the high regard in which it holds woman.

The Veda inculcates the ethics of collective living through mutual love and concord. We find a systematic attempt to build up sam-hridaya (or sahridaya), literally, concord, i.e. the union of hearts, and sam-Jnanam, unity through common understanding, at all social levels. The Atharvaveda wants this sam-jnanam, unity through understanding, this love and concord, to be practiced in relation not only to one’s own people but also to foreign people.

Satya and Rita are pursued through the social activities of Brahman and Kshatra respectively, the functionaries being known respectively as Brahmana and Kshatriya. Brahman is the pursuit of knowledge, especially, spiritual knowledge; and it is the spiritual leadership of the people. Both these are guided by the Veda or Brahman. The following is the call for Brahmana in the Atharvaveda.

Step beyond what is human,
take up the Divine Word,
and establish thy leadership
along with all the friend thou hast.

The comprehensive Vedic view has been very clearly expressed in a Rigvedic prayer.

Quicken the power of knowledge (Brahman)
And rouse the intellect ….
Quicken protective power (Kshatriya) and
Rouse up heroes.
Quicken the milch cow to put strength in the people :
Drive out Rakshas and remove disease.

Here, besides the spiritual and political interests (Brahman and Kshatriya), the economic interest of society is recognized, and the need for military action against aggressors and of medical aid against disease is emphatically stated.
The Vedic Society

The people during the Vedic age were mostly engaged in agriculture, lived generally a peaceful life, performed religious rituals and took part in different kinds of social activities. However, occasionally there was danger to their peace from aggressors who were resisted with all the valor at their command.

There were social institutions which appeared to be very popular—the Vidatha were poets recited their work and extolled the Deity, and where yajnas were performed; of the festive ‘Samana’ attended by men and women; of the ‘Sabha’ where debating contests were held and prizes won, and public deliberations also took place, and in off-time dice-play and gambling went on; and of the ‘Samiti’, where matters of public interest were discussed. The marriage festival, too, was a very colourful thing, with the picturesque procession and the bride in her lovely garments. The funeral was of solemn but graceful affair.

At the background of the urban and rural life there were educational institutions in the quiet atmosphere of the forest where Acharyas taught, and their young pupils lived working in the field and begging from neighbouring villages. The Vedic home was found to be a much loved place in which a family lived and remembered the remote ancestors. Every home had its domestic fire and domestic worship.

The Vedic people, exposed to so much risk, and fighting so frequently, however, preserved a sufficiently peaceful atmosphere to practice their religion with ritual and ceremony. Poetry and other creative arts came to a wonderful flowering in that age. The main clue to such a situation lay in their social organization. The differentiation of the function of the man of religion and the intellectual and spiritual culture that went with it from that of the ruler and fighter was a most significant social measure. All the four Varnas, i.e. Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra pursued their vocations undeterred by external disturbances. It took a long time before this social division of labour hardened into hereditary caste not only through the multiplication of functions but also through the accession of various tribal and racial units into the society. The strength of the Vedic society lay in the differentiation of functions without dividing the people into exclusive social groups. When the occasion arose all took part in battles and the Brahman too
fought along with others and to that extent the whole society possessed the Kshatriya spirit.

3.5 **Methods of Vedic Education**

The system of education that prevailed in the Vedic time is interesting to see. A few contemporary records throw interesting light upon it. We learn from the accounts of Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing (seventh century) that the four Vedas were studied by the Brahmanas, the term of studentship terminating, according to the former authority, at the thirtieth year. Hiuen Tsang speaks with high praise of the learning and zeal of the Brahmana teachers. He also refers to a class of wandering teachers who deliberately adopted a vow of lifelong poverty for the purpose of study and instruction.

The practice of young Brahmanas residing with their teachers is illustrated by an incident in the early life of Bana, the celebrated author of the Harsha-Charita, who speaks of his returning home from his teacher’s house when about fourteen years of age. We find mention of ‘Ghatika’ which probably meant a permanent educational establishment founded by a king or a great noble.

**Teachers and Pupils**

In the Buddhist works on monastic discipline the rule of life of the pupil in relation to his teacher (Upadhyaya) is laid down on lines very similar to the Brahmanical texts. We have the testimony of I-tsing to prove that these rules were closely followed by pupil and teacher alike in the Buddhist monasteries during the latter part of the seventh century.

Describing the manner of the pupil waiting on his teacher in India in his time I-tsing says: ‘He goes to his teacher at the first watch and at the last watch in the night … The pupil rubs the teacher’s body. Then having examined water to see whether insects be in it, he gives it to the teacher. This is the manner in which one pays respect to one’s superior. In case of a pupil’s illness his teacher himself nurses him, supplied all the medicine needed, and pays attention to his as if he was his child.’

In another context, I-tsing speaks of how the pupil in accordance with the ‘Vinaya’ law enquired every morning about his teacher’s health, and then going forth to salute his
seniors in their apartments, studied the scriptures and waited for the teacher’s permission to take his meals.

Selecting some passages from the Tripitakas, the teacher gave a lesson in a way that suited the circumstances, and did not pass any fact or theory unexplained. He inspected the pupil’s moral conduct, and warned him of defects and transgressions – crime, misdeed or offense. Whenever he found his pupil faulty he made them seek remedies and repent.

In another context I-tsing says that every morning the pupil after his salutation to his seniors studied a portion of the canon – code, law or decree as well as moral discipline.

According to the same authority the pupil could live apart from his teachers after five summers when he was expected to have mastered the Vinaya, but he had still to place himself under the care of some teacher wherever he went. The pupil’s tutelage ceased after ten summers, but if he still did not understand the Vinaya he had to live under the care of another teacher or sub-teacher during the rest of his life.

To I-tsing we owe the further information that monastic schools had, besides the novices, two classes of lay pupils. The former, called manavas (children) read the Buddhist scriptures with the intention of receiving ordination at some future date, while the latter, called brahmacharin (student), read the secular books along without any intention of quitting the world. Unlike the novices who were maintained by the common fund of the Samgha, the lay pupils had to provide for their own expenses.

The above discussion in Urmila Sharma’s book clearly shows the importance given to the teaching of morality and importance of teacher pupil relationship.

The Nalanda University in Magadha was known for its magnificent establishment and its intellectual as well as moral perfection of the inmates. Generations of the Gupta Empire supported the funding of the University and it is said that revenues of a hundred (or more) villages was specially kept for its maintenance. The monks who resided there were known not only for their learning but also their high character. Nalanda also had students from abroad and a strict admission test was kept to attract rich talent. Debates among the monks and the students were common and routine.
Eminent men thronged Nalanda to discuss their doctrines and once the debate was over, wise men became known for their wisdom.

**Curriculum of Studies**

Education in the Vedic age included sacred and secular learning extending from the four Vedas. Besides this the itihasa-purana was taught. The arts of singing, dancing, snake-charming was taught along with preparing unguents for healing and soothing. The different vidyas were held by some later authorities to be fourteen, and by others, eighteen in number. In the eighteen branches of learning were included the four Vedas, the six Vedangas, Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa, Dharmasastra, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and Arthasastra. The records of the Gupta age prove that the fourteen (or the eighteen) vidyas were regarded as not being beyond the achievements of learned Brahmanas.

A long list of vidyas, with the year of commencement of each by the aspiring student, is given by Brihaspati. The list comprises the arts of acting, painting, soothsaying, the knowledge of cocks, horses and elephants, the sciences of politics, astronomy, grammar and mathematics, the knowledge of the supreme soul and so forth.

In his general account of India, Hiuen Tsang observes that the children, after finishing a work called ‘the Twelve Chapters,’ are introduced in their seventh year to a group of five sciences, as follows –

a) The science of sounds or grammar,
b) The science of arts and crafts,
c) The science of medicine,
d) The science of reasoning, and
e) The science of the Internal.

Elsewhere Hiuen Tsang mentions the grammatical treatises in use in his time as comprising Panini’s Sutras (in 8000 slokas), an abridgement of the same by a South Indian Brahmana (in 2500 slokas), a still shorter summary (in 1000 slokas).

We have a more complete and accurate account in the work of Hiuen Tsang’s junior contemporary I-tsing. The children, we are told, began the work called ‘Siddha-composition’ (otherwise called ‘Siddhirastu’) in their sixth year and mastered it in six
months. In the eighth year they took up Panini’s Sutras and the Dhatupatha which they completed in eight months’ time. In their tenth year they began and finished within three years the three Khilas, namely

i) the ashtadhatu dealing with cases and numbers of nouns, as well as the tenses and endings of verbs,

ii) the manda (or munda) and

iii) the Unadi dealing with the suffixes of verbal roots.

In his fifteenth year the young student began the Kaskavritti on Panini’s grammar which he finished in five years’ time. For the complete mastery of grammar four other works were studied by monks and laymen alike. These were

i) the Churni (otherwise called Mahabhashya of Patanjali,

ii) Bhartrihari’s commentary on the Churni,

iii) his Vakyapadiya, and

iv) his unidentified work called the Pei-na.

After studying the Kasikavritti, I-tsing continues, the students learnt the hetuvidya (logic), the abhidharma (metaphysics) and so forth, while the monks learnt in addition all the Vinaya works as well as the Sutras and Sastras.

If the course of studies sketched above, evidently meant for the higher intellectual classes, appears to be sufficiently comprehensive, it was not less so for the agricultural and mercantile class. A different course of study was prescribed for them even in the early period. Thus, according to Manu, the Vaisya was to have knowledge of the value of gems, pearls, corals, metals, cloth, perfumes, and condiments, of the manner of sowing seeds and the qualities of soils, of weights and measures, of the varieties of merchandise and the probable profit and loss in its traffic, of the means of rearing cattle, of the wages of servants, of different languages and different countries.

The Divyavadana, a collection of Buddhist stories had to be learnt by the sons of rich merchants at that time. The list comprises knowledge of writing and arithmetic as well as coins, debts, and deposits, examination of gems and houses, of elephants and horses, of young people, and so on.

The rise of the science of Arthasastra led at an early date to the concentration of attention upon the education of the Prince who was regarded as the key-stone of the political arch.
In consideration no doubt of the multifariousness of the Prince’s duties, the Smritis and
the Arthasastra prescribed for him a comprehensive course of intellectual training
combined with moral discipline.

In Dasa. pp. 21-22 (NSP, 1951, pp. 23-24), the subjects learnt by the princes at the court
of king Rajavahana comprised all scripts and languages, the Vedas with their auxiliaries,
poetry and the dramatic art, law, grammar, astrology, logic, mimamsa, political science,
music and poetics, the art of war and (strangest of all) gambling, thieving and such other
crooked arts. In Kad. 125f. prince Chandrapida at the age of six is sent by his father to a
specially built and closely guarded school-house (vidyamandira) outside the city. There
he lives for 10 years under the guidance of teachers versed in all branches of learning.
The author may have drawn this part of his description from life, but he surely indulges
in fancy when he says that the royal pupil acquired during this period supreme
proficiency ‘in grammar, in mimamsa, in logic, in the science of law, in the various
branches of political science… in the use of all the difficult weapons … in playing on
various musical instruments … in all the alphabets, all the dialects of the country, all the
mechanical arts, in the Vedas and in many other different accomplishments.’

We can, however, draw some inference from the known literary as well as artistic
attainments of some famous kings of this period. Of emperor Samudragupta we are told
by his panegyrist that he was skilled in music and song, and he earned for himself the title
of king of poets because of his poetical accomplishments. To a later date belong the royal
poets Pravarasena, Harsha, Mahendra-varman and Yaso-varman, not to speak of the
mysterious Sudraka, author of the Mrichchhakatika.

The above discussion throws light on the variety of subjects that were studied from the
Vedic times to the Gupta period. Unfortunately this culture did not continue and has been
lost today. But the pristine position of Indian education should return and the curriculum
should be as per the role to be played in the society with high morality always kept in
view.

3.6 Women as Connoisseurs of Art and Literature

In Vedic times, men and women were treated equally in the field of studies. We have
often heard of Gargi and Maitreyi proving themselves to be masters of Brahmanidya, the
highest knowledge. The performance of the agnihotra sacrifice demanded that the female-folk should be educated. We find reference to women studying the Vedas by Panini and Patanjali. A Kathi was a woman student of the Katha school and Bahvrichi was of the Rigvedic Bahvricha school. Mention of female students studying mimamsa is also found.

Unfortunately the liberal trend of females getting Vedic education declined later on. The ceremony which set forth the Vedic studies, Upanayana for the girls seems to have receded slowly. With passage of time, women education was limited to domestic chores and learning which could make them better housewives.

It is probable that when the local inhabitants of India came in contact with their first foreign rulers, who were far less civilized, the locals adopted the foreign rules concerning the position of women. The outer influences were assimilated which excluded women from higher learning.

However Vatsyayana tells us the duties of a housewife which are a far cry from today’s housewife. The duties included maintaining a kitchen garden with fruits and medicinal herbs along with cooking, spinning, pounding and grinding. The servants of the house had to be maintained and the welfare of cattle was the duty of the housewife. Domestic pets were looked after by the housewife and the daily income and expenditure was maintained by her.

Vatsyayana prescribes for housewives, the sixty four arts which include all the elements of a course of Home Science. This included reading of philosophical books, household remedies for general health, memorizing and recitation of slokas, reading of stories, knowledge of various languages and knowledge of human anatomy and development of physique and body.

Vatsyayana also mentions that these sixty-four arts could also be turned into a vocation. Using the knowledge to earn and maintain herself and her family was the purpose to learn these arts. A widow or remarried widow could use the leisure time to cultivate interest in arts, sports, field activities and festivals which the housewife may miss. The widow or the remarried widow seemed to have leisure time as she could not participate in the religious activities. The courtesans also learnt arts and crafts. They showed dexterity in dancing,
acting, singing, playing musical instruments, preparation of perfumes and also excelled in reading writing and wit along with unusual dressing and use of cosmetics.

The content of the sixty-four arts of Vatsyayana is something to be proud of. Any women’s university today could have these subjects. Needlework and cookery, woodwork and metalwork besides clay-modeling were also taught. The system of education thus evolved included elements which are similar to a Home Science course today.

This age shows the presence of learned women whether they followed Hinduism, Buddhism or Jainism. Poet Rajasekhara in his Kavya-mimamsa states that the culture of that time was connected with the soul and was not gender differentiated. In the times of Asoka, women could become preceptors and ventured outside India to teach principles of Buddhism.

The poems of the enlightened nuns of the time of Buddha known as the Therigatha tell us the intellectual level of the women of that time and the freedom for them to lead a life of celibacy and pursue the religious and philosophical path. Today the Therigatha helps us in developing morality or discipline, concentration and wisdom. They explain the ultimate truths which cannot be differentiated for men and women.

In Jain texts also we find mention of women who were educated and degrees were given to them in the 14th century. Jain texts also tell us about some famous women teachers and preachers.

Women in ancient India were witty and could use the words skilfully. They could understand humour and appreciate literature. Their style of living shows that they were liberated and emancipated. Women then took to charity and also made the people aware of their intellectual capacity. In this way cultural education was given prime importance than being only literate.

Domingo Paes visited the Vijayanagara Empire around the year 1520. He has written a detailed description of Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. He writes that there were women who were powerful wrestlers and strong enough to blow trumpets and horns. He describes women who could handle the sword. The foreign visitors also write about women being astrologers and soothsayers. Women also used to write the accounts
and record affairs of the kingdom. Ibn Battuta who travelled to India around 14th century A.D. mentions schools for girls.

The discussion above shows that women were free to educate themselves and thereby enhanced their intellect. Women were responsible for spreading morality and culture. They were equal to men and whichever strata they belonged to, they took big strides in education.

3.7 Vedic Education in Today’s Life

Swami Sunishthananda tells us about Vedic education and its main precepts in his lecture in October 2005. According to him, we have a lot to learn from the Vedas and we should be inspired by them to lead a higher life. Vedas give us ideals which can be used for the welfare of humanity because they explain not only about a noble life but also the path towards it. These ideals should form a part of the education system in India based on the teachings of the Vedas.

3.7.1 Vedas and its Educational Philosophy

Various instructions are given in the Vedas for the teachers which form an important guideline for the teachers today.

A teacher should know that every student has inherent potentialities as the Atman (Self) is found in very creature. The teachers should be able to recognize the fact that circumstantial differences will bring about differences in the capacity to learn. Thus every student having the same senses will use it differently and will have unequal intellectual capacity. The teacher should cater to students’ diverse needs. To do justice to teaching, the teacher should have love for knowledge. A teacher has to upgrade continuously and acquire new knowledge with new ideas. A teacher should be capable of learning and accept it as his lifelong duty.

An ideal teacher should have some traits which make him the student’s friend and philosopher. The teacher should not reject the opinion of the students immediately; instead the opinion should be discussed with the class. Interaction in the classroom should be the mainstay. The student should be motivated to think and form his opinion, rather than loading their minds with information. Different opinion of the
students open new areas of thought for the teacher and the teacher should accept it in
the good spirit.

Teaching is learning. Effective teaching nurtures the intellect of the pupil as well as
the teacher. The classroom becomes a place to widen the horizons of the teachers and
students' mental faculties. Both move towards the path of truth without any ill feeling.

A teacher should be a role model for the students. In the Vedic times, a rishi was usually
the teacher. The seers and the rishis attained knowledge through inner vision. Gurukul
life meant living with the Guru who was usually an enlightened sage. Living with noble
people elevated the souls of the students.

\[\textit{Kak chesta, bako dhyanam, swan nidra tathaiva cha.}\]
\[\textit{Alphari, grih tyagi, vidyarthi panch lakshanam.}\]

The above sloka clearly states the five attributes a student should have – hardworking like
a crow, intense concentration like a crane, light sleep like a dog, appropriate diet and a
 celibate. Lethargy and carelessness are enemies of a student. The duty of man is said to
be the quest of knowledge. One should not lag behind as there is no end to learning. To
awaken is to live and to sleep is akin to death.

Regularity in studies is a must for the student. There should be continuous learning with
the help of good books which will purify the mind, enhance the intellect, develop
spirituality and inspire the student to do noble deeds.

Character building was another issue which was emphasized in Vedic education. This
task is monumental and has to be done at home as well as in the school. Teachers not
only make a person literate but also make him a worthy citizen who is virtuous and does
noble deeds.

Vedic students were taught to respect and obey their elders, but it did not imply blindly
following them. They were asked to differentiate between the wrong and the right and
then choose their path. The parents and teacher were to be their role model but still their
actions should be weighed and only the commendable should be followed.

Truthfulness as a quality should be internalized in a student. Untruthful individuals
cannot comprise a strong society, the social system shall collapse. It is vital to train the
student from his youth to speak the truth and progress on the path of truth. In determining
the true path, the path taken by enlightened sages should be followed. He who is true and
is on the path of truth will never be defeated. One should take care to identify the truth from the false and if the truth seems to hurt somebody then to remain silent may be truthfulness because truthfulness always means welfare of others. Speak one must, but speak sweetly. Sweetness of speech will ensure peace and as such criticism and bitterness will create hindrances in life. A person who is always critical of others will himself be criticized and a person who sees evil in others will himself become an evil.

Honesty like truthfulness will ensure peace and social stability. Honesty is the other side of truthfulness and one should be honest in his dealings. Honest labour has been praised and a person is asked to indulge in honest labour to become wealthy. Wealth if procured by dishonesty will be fatal and dishonesty will tear the society apart. Dishonest wealth will degrade the soul whereas true wealth will give peace and joy.

The above qualities improve the personality of the pupil and along with it develop a rational and scientific attitude. Exploration of the ocean of knowledge is important to come out with the pearls of wisdom. The Vedas teaches us to be firm while in adversity and face the storms of life with strength. Bravery is essential for success.

### 3.7.2 Vedas and its Educational Sociology

Patriotism should be instilled in the students so that they are able to solve the problem of their nation and shape the destiny of India based on its ideals and needs. Vedas lay emphasis on the love for one’s country as a child should love his mother. The Vedas ask the citizens to value their inherited culture and spiritual heritage and establish a fair and just rule. It lays emphasis on the fact that our national problems cannot be solved by importing ideologies and methods and as such we should sift our heritage to solve our own issues. A sense of national responsibility should be developed in every child. One should consider oneself as the son of the soil which is the Vedic attitude for one’s motherland. We should be ready and be proud to serve our motherland and should seek happiness in doing so.

India is known to have unity in diversity and as such the students should be taught to remain integrated in face of social turmoil and instability. India has been blessed with
mountains and plains, rivers and lakes, heaps of natural resources and healing herbs – this nature’s bounty should be taken care of with dexterity.

The Vedas advise us to live peacefully. India’s foreign policy has ‘peaceful coexistence’ as one of its main tenets which is again one of the teachings of the Vedas. India has always promoted peace and shall always continue to do so.

National progress cannot be compromised for individual freedom. Students should understand that the rights emanating from our Constitution also lay down ten important duties for the citizen. An individual cannot ignore social responsibility and as such should fulfil all his duties. Dedication towards the nation promotes its development in the economic, social and spiritual direction.

Humanism should be an objective of education. Students should learn the importance of the spirit of service and its advantages. Charitable acts should come naturally to the citizens. Actions aimed exclusively for selfish end are gestures of a small-hearted man and the one who wants everything for him alone is akin to a sin. To help the needy and to share one’s wealth is advised by Vedas. One who helps the destitute is blessed. Brotherhood should exist among the citizens and a well-knit society will lead towards progress and development in all directions.

True education should teach cooperation and to work in a team. Jealousy and hatred should not find place in the society and men should be urged to work together towards a common national objective. Citizens are enjoined by the Vedas to unite their minds for the good of the country. Brotherhood and harmony should prevail and all the citizens should move in accord. All should move towards a common ideal, so that all live as one nation in happiness and peace.

Responsibility of the citizens increases in a democracy. The representatives elected by the people have to look after the welfare of the nation and if these representatives are not educated about their responsibilities, the nation will not progress. The ruler, our elected representatives, is invested with power for the welfare of the country and not to wield power for the sake of themselves. Democracy means benevolent government and knowledge of responsibilities for the representatives is essential. Hence education in a democracy plays a vital role. An educated mind will perform the duties well and keep the welfare of the masses as its foremost responsibility.
Liberty and freedom has been guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and each student should be aware about the meaning of these two words. Education helps the person to know his rights and to live with dignity without exploitation by others. A society is bound to have diversity in economic status, knowledge and profession. But this should not lead to a kind of social stratification which is exploitative in nature. Dignity of the individual is very important and one should be free to take his decisions of life by himself. Mobility in the stratification of the society should be allowed and equality should be the objective. Slavery should not find a place in the society.

All social evils can be removed only by proper education. Vedas enjoined us to be cultured and noble going towards peace and prosperity. Enlightened men are appreciated by the Vedas and these enlightened men can lead the society away from the darkness of superstition and illiteracy. Narrow outlook cannot make a progressive society. Educated and enlightened men will lead us on a path that is in keeping with the changes in the world. Education helps to sustain the old values and absorb the new values.

3.7.3 Vedas and its Educational Psychology

Purity of mind is necessary to be developed in a student because only then pure thoughts will reside and lead to constructive deeds. Impure thoughts in the mind of a student are destructive for his personality and will result in destructive acts. Thoughts can make or break a person: good thoughts and positive nature creates a satisfying and peaceful persona whereas bitterness and negative nature leads to nowhere. A student should cultivate virtues which bring goodness to all the beings of the world. Mind is the energy of the brain which the student should be taught to control. Mind wanders but it should lead to good and virtuous path.

Mind has the tendency to fluctuate at every moment; education should help in the concentration of mind. Knowledge is the objective of education but how this knowledge is achieved is also important. The student should learn to focus on the object – let me mention how Arjun could aim directly in the eyes of the rotating fish above – this technique or art of concentration is to be cultivated in the students. Mind is often distracted either due to some past incident or anticipating the future. The mind can be and has to be trained to focus on the present given task rather than wandering aimlessly.
Vedic psychology trains an individual to look for inner peace and hence no reason for clash remains. He attains true balance and peace; perfect for progress and prosperity. The above discussion about the Educational Philosophy, Educational Sociology and Educational Psychology of the Vedas show us the central theme of the Vedic education in ancient India. However besides cultivating values and acquiring knowledge, education has as its essence the development of spirituality. Ultimately man has to attain supreme peace which can come through true wisdom alone. Thus besides acquiring knowledge, a student should understand that life is a personal adventure towards attaining immortal reality. When one achieves spirituality, he is taken away from the darkness towards the light of reality. Thus Vedic education develops a complete personality and the student excels in the art of living leading to peace and prosperity for all.

3.8 Education in the Epics

The two Epics – the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are stories of action and thus profound thought and philosophy of education is not seen in them. A large quantity of data related to the society is given but educational evidence is very little. The Epics are known for their military interests rather than the intellectual. The Ashrams were the home of the intellectual life which is mentioned only when required in the story. The life is divided into four stages and the first Ashram of life is that of studentship: Brahmacharya Ashram. Epics mention some ideal students found in the homes of the Rishis which were centres of learning, schools of those days. The tender youth is the stage of the student where through rigorous discipline, his mind is purified and body is freed from imperfections. The student is so trained that there are no obstructions in his growth as an individual and he becomes an integral constructive part of the society and country.

The Grihastha Ashram is the stage of the householder. Here the man leads a life of a noble man and experiences varied facets of life. The householder’s stage requires moral steadfastness and wisdom. Here man uses his knowledge to attain wealth and prosper. Religious rituals and spiritual practices are done in this worldly life.

The Vanaprastha Ashram is the stage where man detaches himself from the worldly things. Here he must find ways to cut himself off from his home and family to wander of
in search of universal truth and reality. This is the time to develop inner spirituality through contemplation and prayers. A simple lifestyle is followed and the couple may seek a calm, peaceful place to practice spirituality.

The Sanyasa Ashram or renunciation is the final stage of life. There are no social engagements and the person has only higher spiritual knowledge as his goal.

The first period of life is the Brahmacharya Ashram where education is the main objective. But we must know the preparatory processes, the curriculum and how the education would be imparted. In the Epics, education is as the caste of the student is and as such education becomes more practical or vocational.

3.8.1 The study of the Vedas is the duty of the Brahmanas. A Brahman has to lead a life of austerity and self-control. If these two are done then their education will be complete. It is mentioned that while engaged in the Grihastha Ashram, if a Brahman is bestowed with wealth, he can marry and have children but should also practice social service and perform ritualistic sacrifices. He is allowed to share his wealth but on the path to charity.

When a Brahman completes the study of the Vedas, he is regarded as a true Brahman who is the friend of this universe. Thus the life of a Brahman revolves around studies and education, thereby making him the custodian of our ancient culture and responsible for promotion of it throughout his life.

The life of a Brahman is bound by the rules and duties especially in the first stage of life. A pure soul will lead to the purity of conduct and hence a Brahman in the Ashram has to perform Vedic rights and take vows of restraint and humility. Procrastination cannot be resorted to and idleness cannot be indulged in by a Brahman. Greeting his guru early in the morning and in the evening is his duty. A Brahman must follow the instructions of his preceptor. Cleanliness and purity of the body is most essential. A Brahman is asked to lead a celibate life; look after the Ashram and his Guru; go out to get means to live by and give everything to the preceptor. In return for this service, a Brahman shall be taught as per the wishes of his preceptor.

All acts of the Brahman are that of a menial servant for his preceptor which includes going to bed after him and getting up before him. Even after attending to all the needs of
the Guru, the Brahman shall stand humbly besides him. The desire to learn should continue along with a simple life. Evil speech should be avoided and a Brahman should do what his preceptor asks him to do. After having done his duties and given the preceptor’s fee, he can return home.

A sacred relationship existed between the teacher and pupil. Parents create the body but the mind is made by the preceptor. The Guru has to be respected in every way and a disciple should engage in studies with complete attention. The first step of being a student is to perform any task given or expected by the preceptor. Earn, work and learn seems to be the mainstay of a student.

The second step of being a student is to perform any task in the Ashram at the cost of body or mind for the preceptor and his family.

The third step of being a student is said to be complete when the student realizes that he is what his preceptor has made him to be. The student should cherish the benefits and knowledge given by his preceptor which will absolve him of all pain in his life.

The fourth step and the last one is the duty of the student to pay the fee due to his preceptor for the vast knowledge given by him. The presence must be given with humility to the teacher and the presence must be what the pupil has himself acquired.

We find mention of the eligibility of a student who can be accepted by the teacher. The teaching of the Vedas is sacred and cannot be imparted to one of impure soul. The Guru has the liberty to choose his disciple. A disciple had to have a sound character known to the Guru to be accepted.

The capacity to learn of the student was seen and it was said that the student should be able to comprehend what was taught. Knowledge should be in proportion to the understanding of the child.

3.8.2 The duties of the Kshatriya included giving rather than begging. A Kshatriya should celebrate sacrifices but he cannot hold a ritual like a priest in the sacrifices held by others. He should study the Vedas with a Brahman but he cannot teach the Vedas. A Kshatriya had to prove his bravery in the battlefield and in protecting his people by killing thieves and enemies. A Kshatriya can be prosperous having a wish for spirituality.
His spirituality lies in doing his duty as a warrior. Defending his people is the prime duty of a Kshatriya and it is unbecoming of him to leave unscathed from a battle. The three attributes of an ideal Kshatriya are: performing sacrifices, having the Vedic knowledge and victorious in wars.

The Shastras and the literary sources are in accord that studentship should be the first stage for a Kshatriya like a Brahman. For a Brahman, teaching, performance of sacrifices for others are special whereas for a Kshatriya protection of the people is his foremost duty. Thus it is clear that studies for him included proficient knowledge of the Vedas which he could use to teach a Brahman student who is unable to find a suitable Brahman teacher.

The education of the Princes was different from the Brahmans. Bhishma taught Kuru and Pandu Princes. The Pandus are said to have studied all the Vedas and the Sastras. Bhishma brought them up like his own sons. They performed all the ceremonies deemed for a Kshatriya, received discipline and completed the vows of studentship and then emerge skilled in Vedic studies and as a warrior. They specialized in archery, Veda and Vedangas, in the art of wielding of swords and shields, in Politics and History with the knowledge of Puranas. Dhritarashtra excelled in personal strength.

A Kshatriya being sons of kings had to follow a curriculum. It was prescribed that they should have the knowledge of family-laws, the Vedas; riding of elephant and horse, learn chariot-driving, knowledge of rules of propriety, science, music, arts and the legends.

Military training was the most important part of education of a Kshatriya Prince. The art of warfare had to be learnt as a tradition. An army in the ancient times included people on foot, the horse, the elephant and the chariot and thus a Kshatriya had to know all these. The general science behind weapons and warfare had also to be known by a Kshatriya. He had to be clever in using arms and weapons. The training also included the art of mounting, running a chariot and jumping down easily from it. Weapons had to be learned to be used with dexterity. This was the Astrasiksha.

The skill of saving oneself and his war-car was imparted oral. Drona gave oral instruction about the use of the breastplate. The learner had to practice in isolation with arms and
may seek his teacher’s help in doing so. Ekalavya had left home to practice to become the perfect marksman.

3.8.3 The Vaisya could study the Vedas and perform sacrifices. He had to acquire wealth honestly which was his principal duty. He was not required to have an intellectual career nor learn to defend. It mainly consisted of the merchant class and was to give alms to the Brahmans and assist in the construction of temples, hospitals and other facilities for the public. The Vaisya community focused on farming, agriculture and trading. Later on, they started to focus more on trading and land ownership. They always had to value education, especially the religious education. They also encouraged artisanship and technical education.

3.8.4 The educational and the cultural aspect of the Sudras are indicated in the Mahabharat in some passages. The Sudra had the privilege of performance as well as participation in sacrifices. These sacrifices were different from that performed by the Brahmans. Anything performed in spirit is accepted by God. It was virtuous to perform a sacrifice.

The Mahabharat declares humanity equivalent to divinity. The underlying ideas in the Mahabharat speak about the ultimate realities of this universe. It celebrates the triumph of good over evil. To kill the evil and to restore peace in a chaotic world; an incarnation of God comes to help.

In this modern age we should understand the Omnipresence of God in the world. Peace and prosperity, knowledge and spirituality should be the aim of education. Dharma should be understood in its entirety which will ultimately lead to the path of salvation. In the Mahabharat, Vedic education and vocational education has been given importance along with physical education. The caste system in the times of Mahabharat was not inelastic. Ideal studentship is described in the Mahabharat as discussed earlier.

3.8.5 The Ramayana mentions the system of Brahmacharya Ashram as the studentship and also the Bhikshunis. Ayodhya is shown as having a high educational and cultural tradition. It had Vedic schools teaching the Vedas. The Brahmans in Ayodhya were
literate and were proficient in Vedic knowledge. Students resided in the Ashrams like the Public schools today.

According to the author, Ayodhya Ladies’ Clubs called Vadhu-samghas were found in the cities, Drama societies were found which celebrated festivals. Education seems to have been given privately also by citizens attended by students related to accounts, arts and crafts and trading.

The Ashram of Rishi Bharadvaja situated at Prayaga is mentioned. It was a lavish setup which included elephants and horses, mansions and palaces, huge gateways and a guest-house which was well furnished. The royal guests received lavish hospitality.

3.9 Three Types of Educational Institutions

For the spread of learning, there were three different types of institutions according to the author. These are as follows –

1) Homes of Teachers as Schools
   As is usually seen in the ancient period, the teachers’ homes served as schools. The teacher was a householder, admitted pupils of tender age who left their parents and stayed with the teacher. The teacher’s home nourished the mind and soul of the pupil whereas his parents’ home nourished their mind. The entry into the Ashram was considered to be a rebirth where the student became a dvija.
   The Upanayana ceremony was performed at the time of the admission of the pupil. The pupil was expected to develop a spiritual character and learn the Vedas.

2) Debating Circles and Parishads (Academies)
   The advanced students wanted to further enhance their knowledge by debates with senior philosophers. The search for truth and knowledge did not end with the studentship of the Ashram. As a householder also the quest for ultimate reality continued. Such students, though not many, help discussions with renowned literary people who wandered throughout the country. Many examples are found of such debates being held. Yajnavalkaya taught his wife, Maitreyi, by discussion method. King Janak also invited learned men for discussions in his court to gain knowledge.
3) Conferences

A third type of learning institution is also found in ancient times. The debating circles for philosophical discussions were held in different localities, but sometimes a king invited renowned literary men and thinkers to his court. They gathered for meeting and exchanging of views on Vedic philosophy. Again the example of King Janak of Videha can be cited who held such a congress of learned men. He offered, for the most learned and the wisest man, a special prize. Many scholars attended the congress and a variety of points and perplexing problems were discussed. Ritualism, Godliness and the goodness of soul was discussed. Yajnavalkya won this debate of learned men. The Brahman ladies also attended the congress regarding the Highest Truth.

In the book Women Education in Ancient and Medieval India, Edited by Usha Sharma and B. M. Sharma, Chapter No.2, in ‘Female Education’, A. S. Altekar, says and I am proud to say that as we go further back into the study of ancient India, the general position of women is found to be very satisfactory. The uniqueness of our civilization is that we are an exception to the general custom where we find position of women including the field of education unsatisfactory as we look back. Ancient India was the period where Vedic education was imparted to all without any gender disparity. The position of women in all spheres including education is noteworthy. The further we look back towards ancient India, the more satisfactory position of women is found.

Vedic Sacrifices and Women

It is to be noted and believed in that the women were eligible to study the Vedic Literature. The philosophical books and our Shastras are full of examples of women being a part of the Vedic sacrifices and having the knowledge of the Vedas. Some of the hymns of the Rigveda have been composed by women. The author gives the names of Vishwavara, Sikata, Nivavari, Ghosha, Romasa, Lopamudra, Apala and Urvasi as examples of Stri Vedadhikara.

In ancient India women had similar rights as men to study the Vedas. Gurukul in Ancient times taught mostly the Vedic literature and this right was not denied to women. Based on Vedic education, women were known as Brahmavadini and Sadyovadhu.
Brahmavadini meant a woman who studied the Vedas post Yajnopavitam sanskara (sacred thread ceremony) and she married later or did not marry at all only to pursue the Vedic knowledge. She who studied Vedas after Upanayana and then marries is brahmavadini whereas she who marries immediately after upanayan and then pursues the Vedic knowledge is sadyovadhu. This implies that women had access to Vedic knowledge after the sacred thread ceremony.

In Rig Veda, there are women Vedic scholars known as ‘rishikas’ to whom the Vedic hymns are attributed. This shows that all the Vedic hymns were revealed to various Vedic scholars including men and women. Panini also mentions that females were admitted for the study of Mimamsa (V. S. Agrawala; *India as known to Panini*, Lucknow, 1953, page 287).

The Vedic sacrifices could be performed by a man with his wife only. There was a special initiation for that occasion and both had to take part in that procedure. Up till 200 B.C. we find the housewife offering oblations in her house without her husband, in the evening as well as in the morning. The Ramayana tells us that Kausalya by herself was performing a sacrifice on the morning of the day when her son was to be appointed the heir-apparent.

In ancient India the sages’ life was meant for the welfare mankind. It was their duty to study the Vedas and passed it on to their students. Their homes were Tapovanas where religious rituals and sacrifices were performed as a daily routine. We find mention of Uddalaka living with his wife in a Kutir. He was a learned sage who took pleasure in feeding others. Vishwavaradevi did her household work besides helping her husband in performing sacrifices.

The contribution of women to the classical Sanskrit and Prakrit literature has to be appreciated. Women occupied a very significant position in the society and had a high calibre not less than men. Vedic women have required fame for their excellence in Vedic studies. 2000 scholars are said to have popularized with Rig Veda and 24 of them have been women. Some of the names need to be mentioned here– Lopamudra, Apala, Jahu, Mandhatri, Madhvi, Sasvati, Sasiprabha, Anulaxmi, Reva, Pahai and Roha who were also poetic seers of the hymns. M. Vijayashree in her article ‘Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature’ says that it is difficult to comprehend the nature and value of literary
achievement of these women scholars. She is not impressed with the quantity and quality of their contribution to Sanskrit poetry and says that they are concerned with light erotic topics. The theme of the poem is usually ‘love’ and generally speaking they could have been written by men.

Silabhattacharika is known for her graceful style of writing and her sense of sound and rhythm. Vijayanka’s fame in Berar was said to be next only to that of Kalidasa. The poet Rajasekhara compared her to Goddess Saraswati. Some lady scholars also indulged in critical analysis. Rajasekhara’s wife was a critic as well as a poetess. She must have been well accomplished in Vedic literature to have done so.

We also hear of queens and princesses taking active part in the looking after of their kingdom. Nayanika of Andhra dynasty in 150 B.C. looked after her kingdom when her sons were not old enough. The queen of Masaga defended her capital from Alexander the Great, when her husband was no more. Several queens of Kashmir also have proven their mettle in battlefield. We also find in the Chalukya dynasty, names of Mailadevi, Akkadevi and Lakshmidevi being mentioned as governors of towns and districts. Thus we can say that women of royal families up till 200 B.C. underwent administration and military training besides their Vedic education.

**Girls and the Upanayana Ceremony**

The initiation ceremony to study the Vedas is known as the Upanayana. Without Upanayana nobody was allowed to recite Vedic prayers or perform Vedic sacrifices. Thus Upanayana for girls was common in ancient India just as for the boys. The Atharveda refers to girls following the Brahmacharya discipline which means that the Upanayana had been performed and they were pursuing Vedic study. Manu also includes Upanayana as an obligatory sanskara for girls.

In the Vedic period we do not find mention of child marriages. Most of the girls got married at the age of 16 or 17 after completing Vedic studies. Some of the girls would pursue their Vedic studies even after that age. As mentioned above the girls who studied after marriage were known as Sadyovadhus girls who studied after the Upanayana were
called Brahmavadinis. Thus the girls did study and there was no question of child marriage.

We find deterioration in the religious status of women from 200 B.C. to 1200 A.D. Thus female education suffered a setback during this time. Manusmriti which was composed around 200 B.C. declares that for girls, the Upanayana can be performed without reciting the Vedic Mantras and it also says that the marriage ceremony for girls correspond to the Upanayana ceremony for the boys. We can assume therefore that Upanayana for girls became a formality and by the beginning of the Christian era as dying down. Yajnavalkya around 200 A.D. prohibits Upanayana for the girls and later Smriti-writers follow him.

Upanayana was mandatory for the Vedic studies and when it was not perform for the girls, it was disastrous for the status of women as far as religion is concern. They were compared to Shudras who were unfit to recite Vedic Mantras and offer Vedic sacrifices. At home the wife no longer was compulsory in the family sacrifices and her presence became a mere formality.

It can only be inferred that the women were prohibited from Vedic education as Vedic education meant a long period of studies. Vedic literature was revealed to the Rishis and as such had to be very carefully and accurately memorized. This required a long period of study may be till the age of 24. The girls as a rule were married at the age of 16 or 17 and as such their marriage could not be postponed and so their education suffered. Whenever possible, the girls studied for nearly six or seven years, but unfortunately could not complete their Vedic studies. The girls of the poor families suffered more as the household work prevented them to give time to Vedic studies. The condition became such that they could not even recite the hymns related to the marriage ceremony.

The correct and perfect recitation of the Vedic hymns is very important. The slightest mistake can be disastrous. It was therefore felt that if women could not pursue the Vedic studies in a proper manner, it is no use to continue with the practice and incorrect recitation could be avoided. The vernaculars or the local dialect had become very common and women totally lost touch with Sanskrit. So to avert any kind of spiritual disaster befalling the family, girls were stopped from learning the Vedic literature.
Classical Sanskrit had to be learnt by men to correctly pronounce the Vedic hymns. Thus the leaders of the society prohibited the study of Vedic literature on grounds of incorrect transmission. Their Upanayana was also discontinued.

**Education of Women in Cultured Families**

The women of rich and royal families fortunately continued their education though their religious education was ignored. Girls in rich families received literary education, though not Vedic literature, and could read and understand Sanskrit. They were given proper instructions in domestic affairs including the culinary art. The fine arts including music, dancing, and painting were taught. Garland-making and decoration of the house was also a subject of learning at home. Specialized teachers were appointed for women in rich families for this kind of training. This was done also to prepare her for her later life and marriage. Some continued their education even after marriage.

Educated ladies in good families made their contributions to literature. We find mention of poetesses in South India though they composed their poetry in Prakrit.

It is not true that women did not enjoy a good status in the Vedic period. In fact the above discussion proves that they studied the Vedic literature and pursued their education even after marriage. It is to be noted that domestic affairs were taught to them after their literary education. Women are said to be worthy of worship. The women hold the fate of the household in their hands and it is them who are responsible for the lamp of enlightenment in the household. They are the source of solace for family members and are an integral part of the Dharmic life. The woman is blessed, at the time of her marriage, with a good life making use of the knowledge learnt in her Brahmacharya Ashram. She is asked to be benevolent and bring good fortune, health and dignity to her husband’s home.

The positive tone towards women is found everywhere in the Vedic times. The wife is accepted to do the Agnihotra, Sandhyavandana and other religious daily rituals. Harmony is said to prevail where women reside. She is able to absorb the full power of the Vedic mantras.

The Rig Vedic women also seemed to enjoy economic independence as spinning, weaving and needle work was known to them. The social customs made by the lawgivers
later on looked down upon women and the status of women declined. The ideal womanhood became a trap for the women. A woman was supposed to be a selfless giver and gracefully, smilingly should give, however unreasonable and harmful to herself. Her services should be given ungrudgingly even at the cost of her health. Her duty to her husband, children and the rest of the family was above her.

There have been great debates on the status and the role of women in ancient India. The orthodox tradition is given in Tryambakayajvan’s Stridharmapaddhati, or Guide to the Religious Status and Duties of Women. It tells us the viewpoint of an orthodox pandit in eighteenth century Thanjavur (Tanjore) in southern India. It examines the daily duties of women. A woman must prepare the day’s quota of cereal and clean the house. She is asked to perform the threshold worship and attend to the cows. She should assist her husband while performing the morning Agnihotra. She should attend to her duties at home while her husband studies the Veda or is at work. When the husband eats, she should serve him and finished whatever is left. The washing, sweeping and cleaning should continue during the day. In the evening while her husband is away visiting his friends, she should prepare fresh evening meal. She should again assist him in the evening sacrifice. Finally it is her duties concerning going to bed. No specific timing is given when a woman may rest. As it is understood that the women were not educated, no time is devoted to studies. Going out of the house and roaming around is prohibited by Tryambaka. This kind of serving is similar to the student serving his teacher in the Brahmacharya Ashram. From this point of view the household tasks become similar to religious observance for the wife and her duties as her Dharma.

Tryambaka goes to the extent of saying that a widow should die with her husband for her virtue must be protected. A widow’s virtue should be safe and as a widow she should live a subdued and restricted life like a celibate student. She should not show outward signs of happiness and ornamentation. She should live on fruits, vegetables and barley and eat only once a day. She should observe severe fasts and wear raw garments. She should sleep on the ground and never ever have any contact with a man. Her lifestyle is comparable to that of an ascetic.

Buddhism exposed many flaws that existed in the Brahmanical society. Buddha claimed that an individual was more important than rituals and the same soul is present in all
human beings. Buddhism did improve the section of women who embraced it. Buddhism never criticized the Brahmanical social order. The traditions which went against the interest of women were considered and a radical psychological change from the Brahmanical period started.

3.10 Buddhist Education System
Since the beginning of the fifth century, the Buddhist system of education has undeniably been the most important system of education as it enabled the common man to not only chose and practice a religion of their choice but it also gave them the extremely important right to educate themselves. The teachings of Lord Buddha broke the rigid bonds which had been cast upon society by other religions, thus imparting a wave of freedom to the oppressed common man. This monastic system of education made no distinction between the various castes of the people. The Buddhist monasteries and Vihara which were constructed at the time of the emergence of Buddhism in ancient India were the major centres of religion and education at that time and played a pivotal role in the initiation of people into the Buddhist brotherhood also known as the Sangh. The Buddhist monasteries were responsible for the spread of Buddhism in India.

3.10.1 Characteristics of Buddhist Education

a) The Importance of Buddha’s teaching
The teachings of the Buddha contain three major aspects of education - discipline, meditation and attainment of wisdom. Wisdom is the ultimate goal and deep meditation or concentration in the pathway towards achieving wisdom. Discipline maintained strictly through observing the precepts, is the only way to go into deep meditation, wisdom comes automatically. Buddha in his sermons always emphasized these three points. The entire preachings of Buddha Shakyamuni is called the Tripitaka, which is categorized into three sutas. Vinaya Pitaka is the Discipline Basket and it defines the rules and regulations for the Sangha. Sutra Pitaka is the Discourse Basket which lays down the meditation techniques. Abhidharma Pitaka is the path to Higher Intellect and contains Buddhist philosophy.
b) The Aim of Buddha’s teaching
At the heart of his teachings lies this indisputable fact that the Buddha wanted us to attain wisdom. This Buddhist wisdom was called “Anuttara-Samyak-Sambhodi” meaning the perfect ultimate wisdom. According to The Great Buddha everyone has an innate potential by means of which one can obtain wisdom, as it is part of our cultural, genetic and henceforth in natural progression an intrinsic part of our inherent nature. The Buddhist education system taught us to harness and activate our intrinsic nature. The Buddha believed in absolute equality which arose from his belief that all human beings are equal with the same capacity to possess this innate wisdom. With this wisdom, we can change our mind set and turn sadness into happiness.

c) Admission in a monastery
Monastery was a place where an austere way of life was followed. Students were selected to receive Buddhist education. In keeping with our ancient system, monasteries were the place where education was imparted during the Buddhist period. This demanded complete surrender from the student, who presented himself before the teacher or Bhikshuk and wholeheartedly accepted his orders, sayings and instructions. The teacher was in total charge of his student. This demanded an equal reciprocation from the pupil. The student was only answerable to his own Bhikshuk in the monastery.

d) Pabbajja
One of the oldest and the most important traditions of the Buddhist monasteries is Pabbajji. Pabbajji means ‘total renouncement’. The initiated while being admitted to a monastery had to renounce all his worldly belongings and family. Anybody was welcome to join a monastery irrespective of caste. There were absolutely no restrictions on joining, after being admitted the pupil did not belong to any caste. Upon gaining admission his entire way of life changed, which began with the initiate changing and renouncing his old clothes. The Pabbajja ceremony required the child to be a minimum of eight years old.
e) **Upasampada**

The Pajjbajja initiation was followed by inculcating Buddhist principles, ethics and education for twelve years. After the completion of these twelve years of education, the student or Shraman underwent the Upasampada ceremony, which was wholly democratic. The Shraman, after enduring and accepting all the hardships of his new life was admitted in the presence of all the other monks senior in the monastery. It is only when they decided that he was ready and a majority voted for him that one found admittance for the Upasampada ceremony. After these acceptance rites were completed the Shraman was considered to be a full-fledged member of the monastery. The full and final renunciation of worldly-goods, family and society was now complete.

f) **Duration of Education**

The procedure of initiation and education totalled twenty-two years. Of this, twelve years were spent in Pabbajja and ten years in Upasampada.

g) **Curriculum**

The syllabus was comprised of primary education and higher education. During primary education emphasis was placed on reading, writing and arithmetic. During higher education subjects like religion, philosophy, martial arts and Ayurveda were some components of the curricula. The Shraman had complete freedom of choice as far as the subjects were concerned.

The curriculum was mainly spiritual in nature. The chief aim of education was to attain salvation. So the study of the religious books was most prevalent. To attain salvation, this type of curriculum was meant only for the monks. Other than this religious education, sketching, accountancy, medicines, spinning, weaving, printing of the clothes, tailoring, surgery and coinage were the other subjects of Buddhist education.

h) **Method of teaching**

The syllabus was spiritual since the goal was nirvana or salvation. Subsequently the study of scriptures and religious books was of utmost importance. Sutta, Vinaya and Dhamma Pitaka were the main prescribed subjects deemed the worthiest for students. The teaching
was mainly in the form of sermons and prayers. The teachers expected good behaviour, attention during lectures and discipline from the students. An interactive method was used wherein the disciples were encouraged to ask questions freely and this helped accelerate the learning process. Attendance was compulsory. In order to maximize the spread of the Buddhist culture, the common language ‘Pali’, was the medium of instruction so that Buddhist education was imparted to one and all, irrespective of their caste and position in society.

i) Education of Women.
Unfortunately as far as education for women was concerned, this period is regarded as one of the worst phases for them. Amazingly the Buddha regarded women as the primary source of all evils. Initially he did not allow women into monasteries but due to the pleading of his pupil Anand, the Buddha finally permitted around five hundred women which also included his step mother. It was extremely difficult to gain admission in the Vihars. Life here was extremely difficult with many curbs and restrictions. There was a strict code of discipline for women initiates. Their first two years was spent in isolation and this was their probationary time. They were not allowed to meet any male monk alone. They were assigned quarters far away from the other residents. The women monks could not hold any permanent or important post in the Sangh. They were at the most permitted to hold discourses twice a month, that too in the presence of a senior male monk.

j) Qualities and Responsibilities of the teacher
Great discipline was required of the Bhikshuk or teacher. He was required to have spent at least ten years as a monk. Great strength of character, purity in thoughts and a forgiving nature was the minimum expected of a bhikshuk. He was expected to not only follow the tenets of Buddhism but also show great maturity and display a yielding nature. The teacher and student were both responsible for looking after the monastery. However the Bhikshuk was responsible for the education, clothing and food of the resident monks. The teacher was also responsible for the health of all the resident students and also of those who fell ill.
k) **Daily routine of students**

The student had to follow a rigorous and disciplined way of life. He was expected to get up at the crack of dawn and carry out daily chores for his teacher. These included fetching water, cooking food, washing his clothes and utensils and other sundry tasks. He was also to beg for alms, which were to be dutifully placed before the teacher. He was required to clean the monastery and its surroundings also. Unflinching devotion and loyalty were traits demanded of the Shraman. This was in addition to his daily Buddhist education at the hands of the teacher.

l) **Boarding and Lodging of the Students**

Buddhist education was imparted through monasteries and viharas. The teacher and the students lived together. These viharas were extremely spartan with just the basics for survival but were adequate for carrying out daily routine of cleanliness, studies and debates on Buddhism. “Simple living and high thinking” was their guiding mantra. Their lives were dedicated to following the principles of purity, truthfulness and humanity.

m) **Ashtanga Marg**

The word Samma means ‘integral’ or ‘complete’ and ‘perfect’ -

1. The process of acquiring perfect or complete vision is known as Samma-Dhitti.
2. Gaining complete control over ones emotion is known as Samma-Sankkapa.
3. Acquiring mastery in vocal skills is known as Samma-Vaca.
4. Performing integral actions is known as Samma-Kammanta.
5. Leading a perfect life is known as Sama-Ajiva.
6. Leading a fit and energetic life is known as Sama-Vyayama.
7. Enriching one’s mind to acquire complete and thorough awareness is known as Samma-Sati.
8. Acquiring perfect full and integral samadhi is known as Samma-Samadhi.

n) **Four Nobel Truths**

1. Life is full of suffering
2. Desire is the root cause of suffering.
3. We can easily endeavour to end our suffering
4. The Eightfold path is the pathway to end suffering.

Dhamma is the core of all spiritual endeavours.

The four vital meanings of the word “Dhamma” are
“Nature” - includes the nature of everything and humanity
“Law” - the law of nature encompassing and responsible for everything
“Dhamma” - the guiding principles of life taught by the Buddha.
“Duty” - the discipline required of each human being, and all other beings, with every breath and at every opportunity, by the law of nature
“Fruit” - the outcome of duty performed well pertaining to the law of nature.

0) Rules for Shramner
1. He should not kill any living being.
2. He should refuse all materialistic things him offered to him.
3. He should lead a pure life.
4. He should always speak the truth.
5. He must have meals at the proper time.
6. He must abstain from using all luxurious devices, thus maintaining his simplicity.

3.10.2 Method of Teaching
The ultimate aim of Buddhist education was aimed at attaining the state of Bodhisattva. Buddhist education wanted to enhance the moral, spiritual and psychological traits in the student. These were the methods of teaching followed.

a) Verbal Education
During this period, although the languages and art of writing were well developed, the sermons and discourses by the monks and The Buddha himself were extremely popular. There was also a shortage of writing material in those times. Hence education in such verbal forms was the norm. This verbal medium of instruction was used by the teachers
to impart lessons to the monks. They learnt them by heart. Questions and answers were encouraged.

b) Discussion
One of the most popular methods of teaching in this Buddhist period was debates and discussions. There was a lot of interaction between the ordinary people and scholars. Encouragement was given whole-heartedly to healthy discussions to clear all doubts.

c) Evidence
Eight kinds of evidence were required as proof. They were - cause, example, theory, parallelism, argument, contradiction, evidence and induction. These were required as further proof in case of any disputes.

d) Prominence
Logic was the core of each and every discussion during the Buddhist period. This formed the basis to decide and settle any controversial matters.

e) Tours
One of the most important tasks for the Buddhist monks was to spread Buddhism all over the world. Acharyas like Rahul and Sariputta realised that travelling to far-off lands was of utmost importance to educate people. On completion of his formal education in the viharas the students actively participated in strenuous and long tours to meet people whereby gaining practical knowledge.

f) Seminars and Debates
An extremely interactive conference was scheduled wherein all queries would be taken up, the students were free to voice their uninhibited opinions and all doubts were cleared. These took place on full moon days and the first day of the month according to the Buddhist sangh. Monks of different sangh were free to assemble and put forth their queries. Strict discipline was followed as regards attendance. An annual interesting
function was a well arranged debate in which a senior monk would take on the entire Sangh and challenge his credentials.

g) Meditation
Although all monks craved spiritual meditation in isolation retiring to inaccessible forests and remote caves, only a few passed muster. Those monks were deemed worthy for lonely meditation who were senior and had completely and utterly devoted themselves to the Sanghs. Such monks were free from all worldly attraction and had a long while ago renounced the world.

3.10.3 Merits of Buddhist Education
a) Places of learning and meditation. The bhikshuks imparted education in austere places like monasteries and Viharas which were suitable for the same.

b) Cosmopolitan – Since the foundation of Buddhist principles was to rise above caste and creed, it naturally followed that Buddhist education was above such petty-mindedness.

c) Simplicity – A normal way of life for the Bhikshus who led an austere and monastic life.

d) All round development – The basic core of their education paid equal importance to not only their spiritual development, but also emotional and physical well-being.

e) Rigorous and hard-working life – the bhikshuks and students alike led an ascetic way of life.

f) Communication-The teachers tried to build an interactive and strong relationship with their students.

g) Spreading their message all across the world was their goal in which they succeeded-countries like Japan give testimony to the fact that cultural and other exchanges took place between India and other countries of the world. India emerged as a very strong religious and educational centre of the world.
Effect of Buddhism on Female Education

Women finally broke free from the shackles of society and were free to lead their lives in the way they decided and desired. After gaining admittance to the Sangh and under the benevolent gaze of The Buddha, not only did ladies from the royal families but also those belonging to the upper strata and extremely rich did all they could to propagate and spread Buddhism afar. They helped spread the tenets of Buddhism among the ladies of the elite, aristocratic and rich communities. Like Brahmavadinis, these ladies followed the path of celibacy, with the view to inculcate and understand the eternal truths of life, religion and philosophy. Countries like Ceylon benefitted majorly. Due to the encouragement given to travelling, to spread Buddhism, these ladies went there as teachers of the Holy Scriptures and gained fame and prominence there. Amongst them, 32 unmarried women and 18 married ones attained salvation. The unmarried ones like Subha, Anopama and Sumedha were heiresses and princes and rich merchants were keen to marry them. Such women who chose to lead a life of celibacy of their own accord in pursuit of Buddhist religion and philosophy are extremely rare and are ample proof of the fact that they must have had an unusually high percentage of intelligence, understanding, compassion and education- rare traits attributed to women in those times. Amrapali, a very famous courtesan was accepted into the fold when the monks thought that she was ready for the fold. Sanghamitra, the emperor Ashok’s daughter spread far and wide the tenets of Buddhism, she was one of the famous Bhikshunnis.

3.11 Islamic Education

“Every day try to make something beautiful and useful. A single sentence will do. The determination to create something against all odds is in and of itself a form of inspiration.”

- David Young.

When a child is born, after a few years it is an accepted norm that she will begin schooling a few years down the line. Parents wait in anticipation to see their toddlers take their first steps to school. Why? It is because education as an important part of life for many years. A tool if well utilised can work wonders in an individual’s life. A few
generations ago education till the eighth grade was sufficient to lead a simple life with family.

According to Thomas Moore, Education develops the latent potential inherent in a person. It has the potential to harness this dormant energy and create something utterly magical and supremely spectacular! Initially it was supposed to develop the physical aspects only and was also applicable to animals. At a deeper level, education is the art of enriching and uplifting the soul, just the way a caterpillar emerges from its cocoon to turn into a beautiful butterfly. Similar is the effect of education. An individual emerges from a dark and musty cave into light—which is enlightenment. Education is not just about memorising by rote tonnes of manuscripts and skills but is all about making the right choices and decisions in the real world. It is not about being a human calculator or a gravity defying gymnast or even a mind reader! Education has a higher purpose and that is to gain the knowledge necessary to make informed and reasonable decisions. Any other skills are merely the by-products in this life altering reaction.

Islam realises the importance of education, which is the process of acquiring the correct knowledge. God has created each one of us for a purpose; Education makes every individual realize the very purpose of life.

Hence great importance was given to knowledge and education. When the Koran was revealed, the first word of its first verse was ‘Iqra’ meaning read. An alim is accorded great respect in the Hadith. According to a Hadith the ink of the pen of a scholar is more precious that the blood of a martyr, because a scholar builds individuals and nations along positive lines. When the Almighty himself has not differentiated between men and women, then why it is that knowledge has been restricted within the purview of ordinary man. The acquisition of knowledge is fervently opposed by some ulemas. It has been relegated to a secondary place or encumbered with so many obstacles along the way so as to make it impossible for women to study. Allah has not said that women should be kept away from education; on the contrary it should be binding in character. The benevolent hand of God is always revered since all the creature comforts and factors which are necessary in the path of education have been provided by Him.
3.11.1 Need of Islamic Education in Modern Education System
Islam is not only a religion; it teaches us how to lead our lives. It teaches us spiritual and ethical values, the correct way of managing family, elders and children. It teaches us honesty in all matters like business. In accordance with its principles, even governments which govern will succeed. The problems of civilized nations arise from not following these values imparted through the centuries. People are endlessly searching for answers to many questions; Islam is the answer. This gives us peace of mind and has the power to control collapsing family life and social values. Islam is the complete solution to emotional, physical and social needs. However unscrupulous elements are twisting the correct teachings, presenting an extremely distorted view to mislead people. There is an urgent need for mankind to follow the correct Islamic teachings and create a happier and properly educated world.

3.11.2 The Concept of Education in Islam
A most profound question which is extremely relevant in these times also is ‘What is education?’ This is an on-going process in every human beings life, like a river which flows in to an ocean, it does not end: Ever. Education is an art of imparting knowledge in any field to a human being. This giving or imparting follows a method and the system by which this knowledge is imparted is called ‘Education’. A ‘human being’ refers to the recipient of both, the process and the Knowledge. The need for Education is present in every human being, for however small a thing. Sometimes one is not aware of this thirst for knowledge, one just automatically accepts every morsel thrown. This education could be related to any field, this is something progressive. There exist three fundamental elements inherent in education, the most important element being the content and not the process.

3.11.3 Growth of Education during Muslim Period Patronage
To propagate Islam, education received great patronage of the state and the Muslim rulers. They established numerous Maktabs, Madarsas and libraries. They patronized eminent scholars. Scholarships were given to deserving students.
Arabic and Central Asian culture led to a marked difference in the mode of education followed. Muslim educational models were at the forefront in both the medieval and early modern periods. Intercommunity relations were established within a few decades of the Prophet Muhammad’s death in 632 C.E. The Arab mariners began to trade, dwell, and intermarry within the local community in South India. The Turks invaded northern India around 1000 C.E. These Muslim rulers having plundered the wealth of the country were generous with their stash of loot and gave generous endowments to schools, libraries and literary societies, in order to actively propagate Islam. Advanced language skills, prophetic traditions and Islamic law were also taught. These madarsas were attached to local mosques. Islamic schools did not discriminate on social or financial grounds, however gender segregation was practised. These schools were basically only for boys. Muslim girls received education only for namesakes, that too of a religious nature to indoctrinate them thoroughly and brainwash them into thinking that this was enough for them. Women from rich and royal families studied at home; mainly they learnt to recite the Koran. From 1526, which marked the beginning of the Mughal Empire till 1848, Persian was accepted as the court language. Rich boys were well versed in literature, history, law, administration, ethics and court protocol, the medium of instruction being Persian. Topics like medicine, mathematics, and logic found favour in these learning centres. The Sufis or the mystical bards preferred to spread their teachings and ideas in the khanquahs. These too were blessed with royal patronage. Boys were well versed in skills needed for business. In these Mughal times, girls were indirectly deterred from educating themselves.

Muslim Period: The beginning of the eighth century A.D witnessed continuous attacks by Mohameddans. Mahmud of Ghazni plundered India repeatedly and with this substantial loot established a large number of schools, religious centres and libraries in his own country. Subsequently when the Muslims ruled India, they set up a new system of education. They succeeded in changing the ancient system of education, unfortunately for the worse. Akbar, in spite of being illiterate himself did a remarkable job of not only improving the educational sector tried his best to foster communal harmony.
These were the Different Aspects of education during the Muslim period.

Aim: The main goal of education during this period was the propagation of Islam. Women were solely educated for the purpose of propagating religious views and were imbibed with a sense of religious and social acceptance and respectability. Islamic principles and laws governed their lives. The main aim of Education was to make women strictly religious minded. It was also aimed at material gains.

Organization: Primary education in this period was given in Maktabs and higher education in Madarsas. These centres imparted primary education to children like the basics of arithmetic apart from reading and writing. They also had to by heart the tenets of The Koran. Not only were traditional and ancient stories of The Prophet and the fakirs narrated, they were schooled in the wisdom of Arabic and Persian languages and scriptures. They learnt the art of writing and conversation, although oral education was highly prevalent. After completing their primary education they progressed to Madarsas. Knowledge of Islamic tenets, laws and religion were of the utmost importance. Secular subjects were also taught here. Different subjects were taken up by different competent teachers. The study of The Koran and The Prophet Mohammed, his disciples, Islamic laws and Islamic history was given emphasis. These studies included Arabic literature, history, philosophy, mathematics, geography, politics, economics and also Greek language and agriculture.

3.11.4 Education of Women

There emerged two opposing features in Islam which ultimately proved to be a detrimental factor in the field of education for women. The Muslim clerics allowed young girls to study but imposed certain restrictions like the Purdah system which effectively led to girls studying at home after a certain age. Thus women were free to receive education but ultimately these restrictions proved to be a major hurdle to overcome for women.

Unfortunately hardliners who oppose education for women are absolutely unable to comprehend that education not only opens many doors for women, creating better
citizens but also mothers who nurture their children in a much more efficient manner. The progeny of such mothers is undoubtedly a compassionate human being and a good Muslim. Developing countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan need to understand this basic fact. To enable this, Arabic Girls College For Islamic Studies was founded in 1995. This College is a non-commercial, non-sectarian organization not affiliated to any political organization, aiming to provide quality education to the students since 1995. This is a non-profit college and it operates without any charges. Fatima-al-fihri, a princess was one of the pioneers in this field; she started one of the first colleges for women, which also provided degrees.

In the book, Women Education in Ancient and Medieval India, Edited by Usha Sharma and B. M. Sharma, A. S. Altekar, says –

Unfortunately, this era saw the rapid downfall of the general condition and not only education amongst Muslim women. The self-appointed guardians of the Muslim clergy ensured that very few women received education. The percentage of literacy amongst Muslim women was downhill all the way. Aristocratic and rich families had been ruined because of the political revolution, and they were in no position to open schools for girls. Some Hindu families did try to educate their daughters however their number was very small and they were in a miniscule minority. They did not possess sufficient funds or the ability to appoint teachers for their girls. Girls belonging to families of Rajput chiefs and Bengal Zamindars were educated; however this too was in a minority. If widowed, these women would devote themselves to prayers and further education and even become teachers. In some exceptional cases Jain widows too were educated so as to enable them to read their scriptures. Society frowned upon female education. There were a lot of superstitions attached to the education of women. This decline in literacy after the 18th century was extremely rapid. This decline led to hardly one woman in hundred being literate.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
- Nelson Mandela.