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A Tribute to Hinduism

The Book

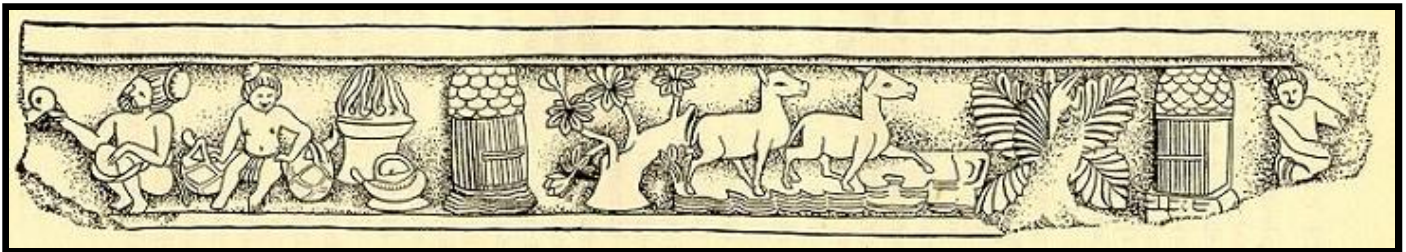
Hindu Wisdom


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"He who is possessed of supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control, like spirited steeds controlled by a charioteer." says the Katha Upanishad (iii, 6). From the Vedic age downwards the central conception of education of the Indians has been that it is a source of illumination giving us a correct lead in the various spheres of life. Knowledge, says one thinker, is the third eye of man, which gives him insight into all affairs and teaches him how to act. (Subhishitaratnasandhoha p. 194). As per classical Indian tradition "Sa vidya ya vimuktaye", (that which liberates us is education).

A single feature of ancient Indian or Hindu civilization is that it has been molded and shaped in the course of its history more by religious than by political, or economic, influences. The fundamental principles of social, political, and economic life were welded into a comprehensive theory which is called Religion in Hindu thought. The total configuration of ideals, practices, and conduct is called Dharma (Religion, Virtue or Duty) in this ancient tradition. From the very start, they came, under the influence of their religious ideas, to conceive of their country as less a geographical and material than a cultural or a spiritual possession, and to identify, broadly speaking, the country with their culture. The Country was their Culture and the Culture their Country, the true Country of the Spirit, the 'invisible church of culture' not confined within physical bounds. India thus was the first country to rise to the conception of an extra-territorial nationality and naturally became the happy home of different races, each with its own ethno-psychic endowment, and each carrying its social reality for Hindus is not geographical, not ethnic, but a culture-pattern. Country and patriotism expand, as ideals and ways of life receive acquiescence. Thus, from the very dawn of its history has this Country of the Spirit ever expanded in extending circles, Brahmarshidesa, Brahmavarta, Aryavarta, Bharatvarsha, or Jambudvipa, Suvarnabhumi and even a Greater India beyond its geographical boundaries.

Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may so put it, but for the sake, and as a part, of religion. (It was sought as the means of self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life. viz. Mukti or Emancipation. Ancient Indian education is also to be understood as being ultimately the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the corresponding scheme of life and values. The scheme takes full account of the fact that Life includes Death and the two form the whole truth. This gives a particular angle of vision, a sense of perspective and proportion in which the material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perishable and permanent interests and values of life are clearly defined and strictly differentiated. Of all the people of the world the Hindu is the most impressed and affected by the fact of death as the central fact of life. The individual's supreme duty is thus to achieve his expansion into the Absolute, his self-fulfillment, for he is a potential God, a spark of the Divine. Education must aid in this self-fulfillment, and not in the acquisition of mere objective knowledge.



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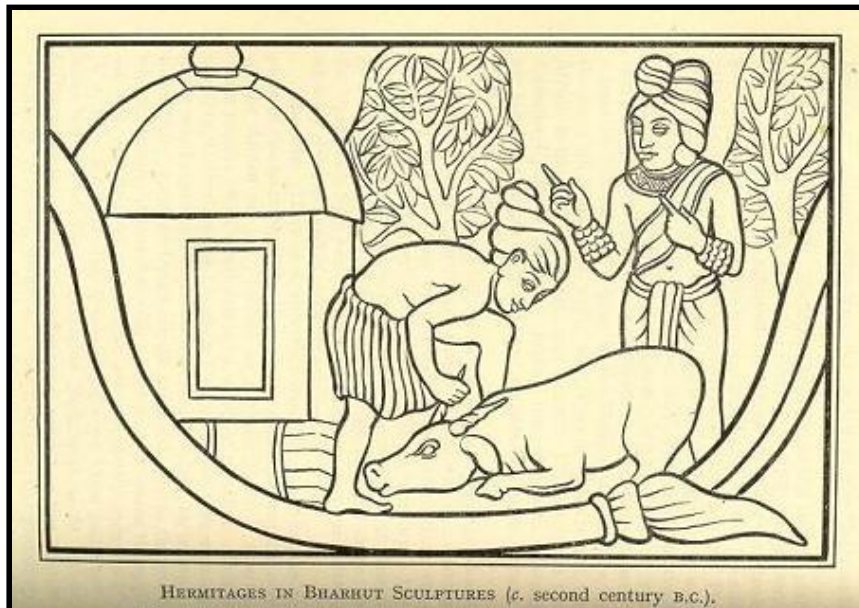
Introduction

It may be said with quite a good degree of precision that India was the only country where knowledge was systematized and where provision was made for its imparting at the highest level in remote times. Whatever the discipline of learning, whether it was chemistry, medicine, surgery, the art of painting or sculpture, or dramatics or principles of literary criticism or mechanics or even dancing, everything was reduced to a systematic whole for passing it on to the future generations in a brief and yet detailed manner. University education on almost modern lines existed in India as early as 800 B.C. or even earlier. The learning or culture of ancient India was chiefly the product of her hermitages in the solitude of the forests. It was not of the cities. The learning of the forests was embodied in the books specially designated as Aranyakas "belonging to the forests." Indian civilization in its early stages had been mainly a rural, sylvan, and not an urban, civilization.

The ideal of education has been very grand, noble and high in ancient India. Its aim, according to Herbert Spencer is the 'training for completeness of life' and the molding of character of men and women for the battle of life. The history of the educational institutions in ancient India shows how old is her cultural history. It points to a long history. In the early stage it is rural, not urban. British Sanskrit scholar **Arthur Anthony Macdonell** (1854-1930) author of [A History of Sanskrit Literature](#) (Motilal Banarsidass Pub. ISBN: 8120800354) says "Some hundreds of years must have been needed for all that is found" in her culture. The aim of education was at the manifestation of the divinity in men, it touches the highest point of knowledge. In order to attain the goal the whole educational method is based on plain living and high thinking pursued through eternity.

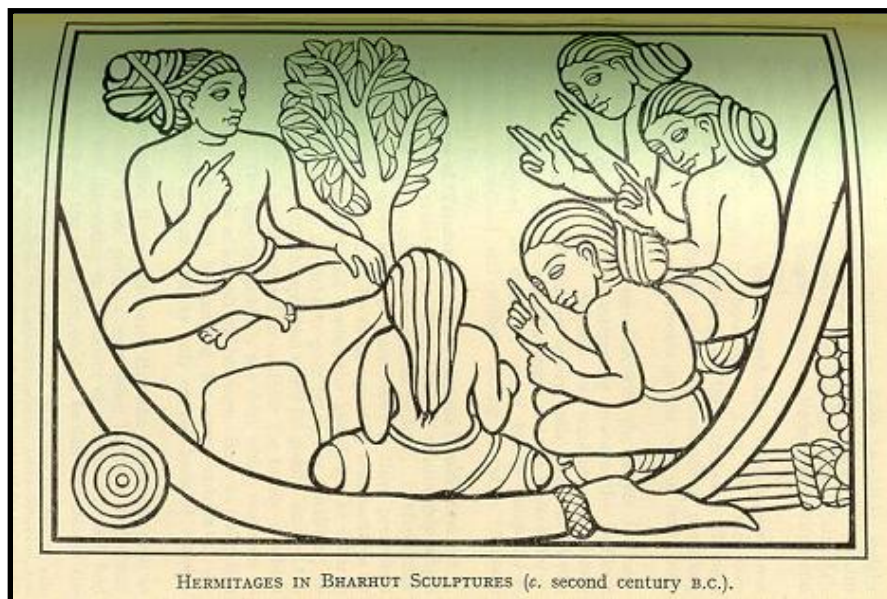
As the individual is the chief concern and center of this Education, education also is necessarily individual. It is an intimate relationship between the teacher and the pupil. The relationship is inaugurated by a religious ceremony called **Upanayana**. It is not like the admission of a pupil to the register of a school on his payment of the prescribed fee. The spiritual meaning of Upanayana, and its details inspired by that meaning, are elaborated in many texts and explained below in the proper place. By Upanayana, the teacher, "holding the pupil within him as in a womb, impregnates him with his spirit, and delivers him in a new birth." The pupil is then known as **Dvija**, "born afresh" in a new existence, "**twice born**" (**Satapatha Brahmana**). The education that is thus begun is called by the significant term Brahmacharya, indicating that it is a mode of life, a system of practices.

This conception of education molds its external form. The pupil must find the teacher. He must live with him as in member of his family and is treated by him in every way as his son. The school is a natural formation, not artificial constituted. **It is the home of the teacher. It is a hermitage, amid sylvan surrounding, beyond the distractions of urban life, functioning in solitude and silence.** The constant and intimate association between teacher and taught is vital to education as conceived in this system. The pupil is imbibe the inward method of the teacher, the secrets of his efficiency, the spirit of his life and work, and these things are too subtle to be taught. It seems in the early Vedic or Upanishadic times education was esoteric. The word Upanishad itself suggests that it is learning got by sitting at the feet of the master. The knowledge was to be got, as the Bhagavad Gita says, by obeisance, by questioning and serving the teacher.



HERMITAGES IN BHARIKUT SCULPTURES (c. second century B.C.).

The ascetic, clad in birch bark, with matted hair bound up into a knot, leaning and grieving over his dead pet antelope.



The inscription: Dighatapasi sise anusasati, "the ascetic of long penance instructs the pupils." Some of the pupils are female rishis. The position of the pupils' fingers show counting called for in Sama Veda chanting.

(image source: [Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji](#)).

India has believed in the domestic system in both Industry and Education, and not in the mechanical methods of large production in institutions and factories turning out standardized articles.

It is these sylvan schools and hermitages that have built up the thought and civilization of India. As has been pointed out in the graphic words of the poet and Nobel prize laureate, **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941):

"A most wonderful thing was notice in India is that here the forest, not the town, is the fountain head of all its civilization. Wherever in India its earliest and most wonderful manifestations are noticed, we find that men have not come into such close contact as to be rolled or fused into a compact mass. There, trees and plants, rivers and lakes, had ample opportunity to live in close relationship with men. In these forests, though there was human society, there was enough of open space, of aloofness; there was no jostling. Still it rendered it all the brighter. It is the forest that nurtured the two great ancient ages of India, the Vaidic and the Buddhist. As did the Vaidic Rishis, Buddha also showered his teaching in the many woods of India. The current of civilization that flowed from its forests inundated the whole of India."

"The very word 'aranyaka' affixed to some of the ancient treatises, indicates that they either originated in, or were intended to be studied in, forests."

(source: [India: Bond Or Free? - By Annie Besant](#) p. 94-95).

"In order to preserve the continuity of this national heritage and add to its richness, India built large institutions of higher learning from time to time. They served as the repositories of her spiritual, philosophical, scientific, artistic and literary achievements and as the media of transmission of this heritage to the future generations. But it was realized by the early Vedic seers that the educational institutions could only discharge their functions properly if they were isolated from the conflicting demands of the rough and tumble of the world. They, therefore, built their universities in forests, or in places of natural beauty. Nature softens the instincts of body and mind, which otherwise become harsh and aggressive when man lives in houses of brick and mortar. When man lives in the lap of nature, his emotional and mental life becomes pure and harmonious; he grows as a part of life that surrounds him. His inner strains and stresses are reduced to minimum, his mind is alert, his intuition awake. **Ancient India, therefore, selected spots of natural beauty for locating its educational institutions.**"

(source: [India: A synthesis of cultures - by Kewal Motwani](#) p. 131).

It is here, in these forest universities, as **Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan** (1888-1975) has said, 'evolved the beginning of the sublime idealism of India.'

(source: [Everyday Life in Ancient India - By Padmini Sengupta](#) p. 161).

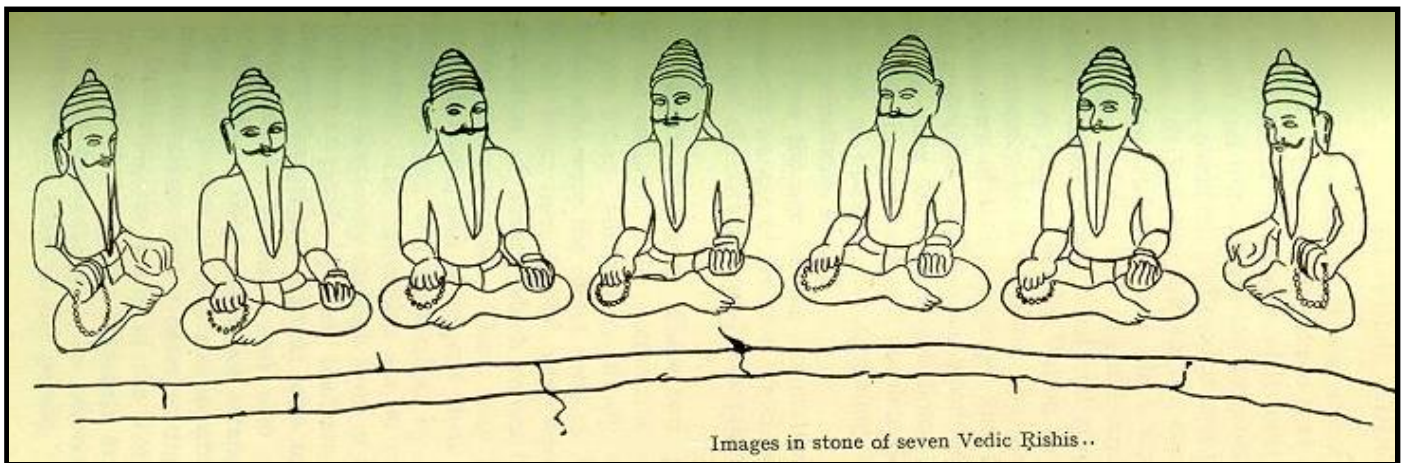
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Rigvedic Education

The Rig Veda as the source of Hindu Civilization

The Rig Veda is established as the earliest work not merely of the Hindus, but of all Indo-European languages and humanity. It lays the foundation upon which Hindu Civilization has been building up through the ages. Broadly speaking, it is on a foundation of plain living and high thinking. Life was simple but though high and of farthest reach, wandering through eternity. Some of the prayers of the Rig Veda, like the widely known Gayatri mantram also found in Samaveda and Yajur veda touch the highest point of knowledge and sustain human souls to this day.

The Rig Veda itself exhibits an evolution and the history of the Rigveda is a history of the culture of the age. The Rig veda, in the form in which we have it now, is a compilation out of old material, a collection and selection of 1,017 hymns out of the vast literature of hymns which have been accumulating for a long period. When the Rigvedic texts was thus fixed and appropriated for purposes of the Samhita, its editors had to think out the principles on which the hymns could be best arranged. These show considerable literary skill, originality of design, and insight into religious needs. First, it represents **Rishis** were chosen and their works were utilized to constitute six different Mandalas. **These Rishis are Gritsamada, Visvamitra, Vamadeva, Atri, Kanva, Bharadvaja, and Vasistha.**



Images in stone of seven Vedic Rishis..

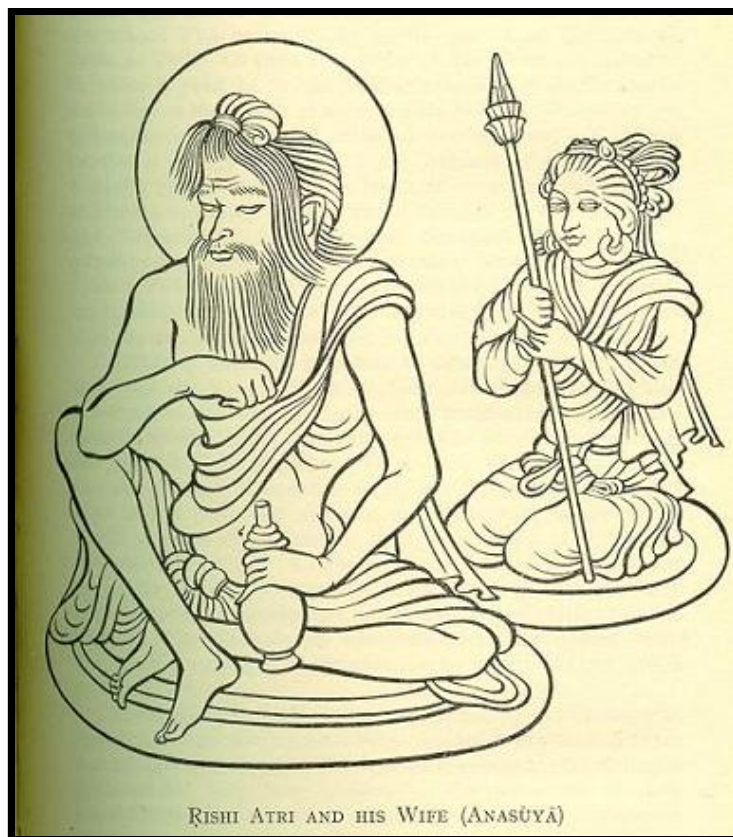
1. Vasishtha 2. Visvamitra 3. Vamadeva 4. Bharadvaja 5. Atri 6. Kanva 7. Gritsamada

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

When the highest knowledge was thus built up by these Seers and revealed and stored up in the hymns, there were necessarily evolved the methods by which such knowledge could be acquired, conserved, and transmitted to posterity. Thus every Rishi was a teacher who would start by imparting to his son the texts of the knowledge he had personally acquired and such texts would be the special property of his family. Each such family of Rishis was thus functioning like a Vedic school admitting pupils for instruction in the literature or texts in its possession. The relations between teacher and taught was well established in the Rig Veda. The methods of education naturally varied with the capacity of pupils. Self-realization by means of tapas would be for the few.

The Rig Veda shows a lively sense of the immutable laws governing Creation. Its best expression is iii. 56, I, a hymn of Visvamitra. It means that the Vratas or Cosmic Laws which are at the root of creation, operate for all time and regularly, which can never be violated by anyone however clever or wise. There is no one in earth or heaven who by his power or supreme knowledge can set them at naught. "They cannot bend like mountains."

"Then at the beginning, before creation, there was neither Being nor non-Being. There was neither the atmosphere nor the heavens beyond. What did it contain? Where? And under whose direction? Were there waters, and the bottomless deep?"



RISHI ATRI AND HIS WIFE (ANASŪYĀ)

(image source: [Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji](#)).

Commenting on these [Vedic hymns](#) Count Maurice Maseterlinck in his book [The Great Secret](#) (Citadel Pub ASIN: 0806511559) says:

"Is it possible to find, in our human annals, words more majestic, more full of solemn anguish, more august in tone, more devout, more terrible? Where, from the depths of an agnosticism, which thousands of years have augmented, can we point to a wider horizon?" At the very outset, it surpasses all that has been said, and goes farther than we shall even dare to go. No spectacle could be more absorbing than this struggle of our forefathers of five to ten thousand years ago with the Unknowable, the unknowable nature of the causeless Cause of all Causes. But of this cause, or this God, we should never have known anything, had He remained self-absorbed, had He never manifested Himself." Thus it is, say the Laws of Manu, "that, by an alternation of awakening and repose, the immutable Being causes all this assemblage of creatures, mobile and immobile, eternally to return to life and to die." He exhales Himself, or expels His breath, throughout the Universe, innumerable worlds are born, multiply and evolve. He Himself inhales, drawing His breath, and Matter enters into Spirit, which is but an invisible form of Matter: and the worlds disappear, without perishing, to reintegrate the Eternal cause, and emerge once more upon the awakening of Brahma - that is, thousands of millions of years later; to enter into Him so it has been and ever shall be, through all eternity, without beginning, without cessation, without end."

"When the world had emerged from the darkness," says the [Bhagavata Puranam](#), "the subtle elementary principle produced the vegetable seed which first of all gave life to the plants. From the plants, life passed into the fantastic creatures which were born of the slime in the waters; then, through a series of different shapes and animals, it came to Man." They passed in succession by way of the plants, the worms, the insects, the serpents, the tortoises, cattle, and the wild animals - such is the lower stage," says Manu again, who adds, "Creatures acquired the qualities of those that preceded them, so that the farther down its position in the series, the greater its qualities."

"Have we not here the whole of Darwinian evolution confirmed by geology and foreseen at least 6,000 years ago?" On the other hand, is this not the theory of Akasa which we more clumsily call the ether, the sole source of all substances, to which our science is returning? Is it true that the recent theories of Einstein deny ether, supposing that radiant energy - visible light, for example - is propagated independently through a space that is an absolute void. But the scientific ether is not precisely the Hindu Akasa which is much more subtle and immaterial being a sort of spiritual element or divine energy, space uncreated, imperishable, and infinite."

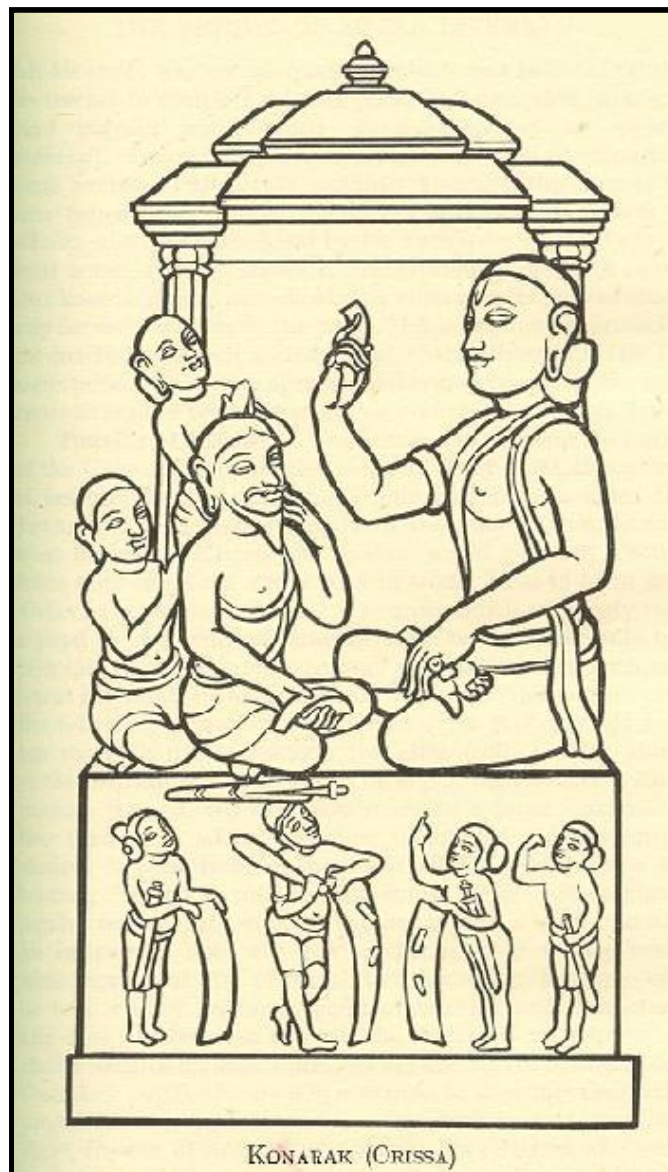
(source: [Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji](#) p. 17 and 49).

Women as Rishis

The history of the most of the known civilizations show that the further back we go into antiquity, the more unsatisfactory is found to be the general position of women. Hindu civilization is unique in this respect, for here we find a surprising exception to the general rule. The further back we go, the more satisfactory is found to be the position of women in more spheres than one; and the field of education is most noteworthy among them. There is ample and convincing evidence to show that women were regarded as perfectly eligible for the privilege of studying the Vedic literature and performing the sacrifices enjoined in it down to about 200 B.C. This need not surprise us, for some of the hymns of the Rig Veda are the composition of twenty sage-poetesses.

Women were then admitted to fulfill religious rites and consequently to complete educational facilities.

Women-sages were called Rishikas and Brahnavadinis. The **Rig Veda** knows of the following Rishikas
 1. Romasa 2. Lopamudra 3. Apala 4. Kadru 5. Visvavara 6. Ghosha 7. Juhu 8. Vagambhrini 9. Paulomi 10. Jarita 11. Sraddha-Kamayani 12. Urvashi 13. Sarnga 14. Yami 15. Indrani 16. Savitri 17. Devajami 18. Nodha 19. Akrishtabhasha 20. Sikatanivavari 21. Gaupayana.



Sculpture showing Vaishanava Guru and his royal discipline at Konark, holding in his right hand a MS, with his attending guards shown below.

Now on display at the Victoria Albert Museum in London, England.

*(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).*

The Brahnavadinis were the products of the educational discipline of brahmacharaya for which women also

were eligible. Rig Veda refers to young maidens completing their education as brahmacharinis and then gaining husbands in whom they are merged like rivers in oceans. Yajurveda similarly states that a daughter, who has completed her brahmacharya, should be married to one who is learned like her. A most catholic passage occurs in YajurVeda (xxvi, 2) which enjoins the imparting of Vedic knowledge to all classes, Brahmins and Rajanyas, Sudras, Anaryas, and charanas (Vaisyas) and women. No one can recite Vedic prayers or offer Vedic sacrifices without having undergone the Vedic initiation (**Upanayana**). It is, therefore, but natural that in the early period the Upanayana of girls should have been as common as that of boys. The Arthava Veda (xi. 5.8) expressly refers to maidens undergoing the Brahmacharya discipline and the Sutra works of the 5th century B.C. supply interesting details in its connection. Even Manu includes Upanayana among the sanskaras (rituals) obligatory for girls (II.66). Music and dancing was also taught to them. Brahnavadins used to marry after their education was over, some of them like Vedavati, a daughter of sage Kusadhvaja, would not marry at all.

Women in Education

Radha Kumud Mookerji (1884 -1964) Indian historian, has noted: "An important feature of this educational system should not be missed. The part taken in intellectual life by women like Gargi who could address a Congress of philosophers on learned topics, or like Maitreyi, who had achieved the highest knowledge, that of Brahma. The Rigveda shows us some women as authors of hymns, such as Visvavara, Ghosha, and Apala."

(source: **Hindu Civilization - By Radha Kumud Mookerji** p. 111 Longmans, Green and Co. London 1936).

The Vedic women received a fair share of masculine attention in physical culture and military training. The Rigveda tells us that many women joined the army in those days. A form of chariot race was one of the games most popular during the Vedic period. People were fond of swinging. Ball games were in vogue in those days by both men and women. Apart from this, a number of courtyard games like "Hide and seek" and "Run and catch" were also played by the girls. Playing with dice became a popular activity. The dices were apparently made of Vibhidaka nuts. From the Rigveda, it appears that the Vedic Aryans knew the art of boxing.

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Education in the Epics

Takshashila was a noted center of learning. The story is told of one of its teachers named Dhaumya who, had three disciples named Upamanyu, Aruni, and Veda.

Hermitages

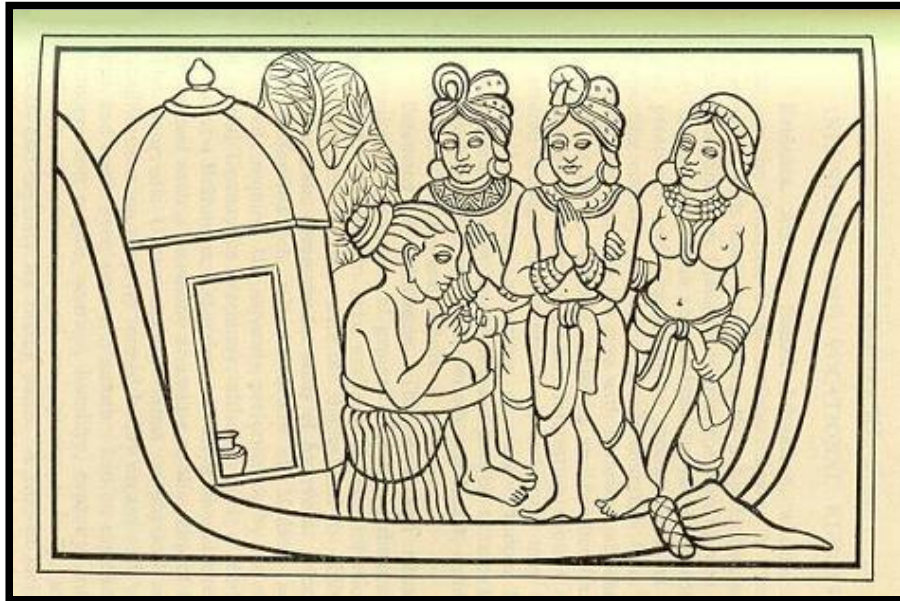
The **Mahabharata** tells of numerous hermitages where pupils from distant parts gathered for instruction round some far-famed teachers. A full-fledged Asrama is described as consisting of several Departments which are enumerated as following:

1. Agnisthana, the place for fire-worship and prayers
2. Brahma-sthana, the Department of Veda
3. Vishnusthana, the Department for teaching Raja-Niti, Arthaniti, and Vartta
4. Mahendrasthana, Military Section
5. Vivasvata-sthana, Department of Astronomy
6. Somasthana, Department of Botany
7. Garuda-sthana, Section dealing with Transport and Conveyances
8. Kartikeya-sthana, Section teaching military organization, how to form patrols, battalions, and army.

The most important of such hermitage was that of the **Naimisha**, a forest which was like a university. the presiding personality of the place was **Saunaka**, to whom was applied the designation of **Kulapati**, sometimes defined as the preceptor of 10,000 disciples.

The hermitage of **Kanva** was another famous center of learning, of which a full description is given. It is situated on the banks of the Malini, a tributary of the Sarayu River. It was not a solitary hermitage, but an assemblage of numerous hermitages round the central hermitage of Rishi Kanva, the presiding spirit of the

settlement. There were specialists in every branch of learning cultivated in that age; specialists in each of the four Vedas; in sacrificial literature and art; Kalpa-Sutras; in the Chhanda (Metrics), Sabda (Vyakarana), and Nirukta. There were also Logicians, knowing the principles of Nyaya, and of Dialectics (the art of establishing propositions, solving doubts, and ascertaining conclusions). There were also specialists in the physical sciences and art. There were, for example, experts in the art of constructing sacrificial altars of various dimensions and shapes (on the basis of a knowledge of Solid Geometry); those who had knowledge of the properties of matter (dravyaguna); of physical processes and their results of causes and their effect; and zoologists having a special knowledge of monkeys and birds. It was thus a forest University where the study of every available branch of learning was cultivated.



Hermitage of Rishi Bharadvaja at Prayaga, or at Atri at Chitrakuta; showing Rama, Lakshmana and Sita standing before the Rishi.

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

The hermitage of Vyasa was another seat of learning. There Vyasa taught the Vedas to his disciples. Those disciples were highly blessed Sumantra, vaisampayana, Jamini of great wisdom, and Paila of great ascetic merit." They were afterwards joined by Suka, the famous son of Vyasa.

Among the other hermitages noticed by the Mahabharata may be mentioned those of Vasishtha and Visvamitra and that in the forest of Kamyaka on the banks of the Saraswati. But a hermitage near Kurkshetra deserves special notice for the interesting fact recorded that it produced two noted women hermits. There "leading from youth the vow of brahmacharya, a Brahmin maiden was crowned with ascetic success and ultimately acquiring yogic powers, she became a tapassiddha", while another lady, the daughter not of a Brahmin but a Kshatriya, a child not of poverty but affluence, the daughter of a king, Sandilya by name, came to live there the life of celibacy and attained spiritual pre-eminence.

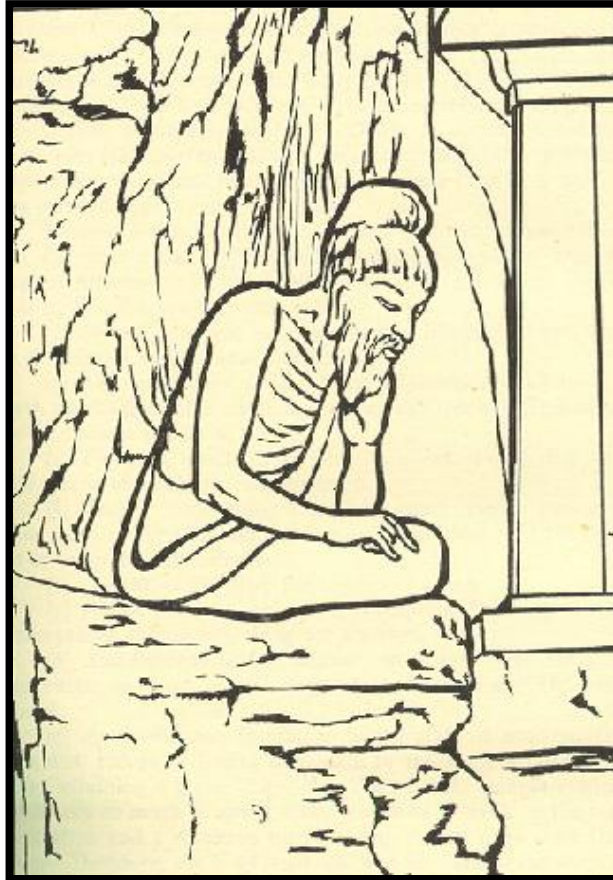
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[Period of Panini](#)

When we study how these institutions grew we find that students approached the learned souls for the acquisition of knowledge. Parents, too encouraged it and sent their boys to the institutions. When their number began to increase the institutions formed with these students began to grow gradually. With the lapse of time these institutions turned into Universities and were maintained with the munificent gift of the public and the state. In this way many institutions were formed of which Taxila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Benares, Ballavi, Ajanta, Madura and Vikramsila were very famous. Taxila was famous for medicine and Ujjain for Astronomy. Both were pre-Buddhist. Jibaka the well known medical expert and the state physician of the King of Magadha of the 6th century B.C. and Panini the famous grammarian of the 7th century B.C. and Kautilya, the authority on Arthashastra, of the 4th century B.C. were students of Taxila.

Education as revealed in the grammatical Sutras of Panini, together with the works of Katyayana and

Patanjali. The account of education in the Sutra period will not be complete without the consideration of the evidence of the grammatical literature as represented in the works of Panini and his two famous commentators, Katyayana and Patanjali. Panini throws light on the literature of his times. Four classes of literature are distinguished.



Bhagiratha in Meditation - Pallava relief of 7-8th century A.D. at Mamallapuram. The Yogi (who was a king) appears to be petrified by his prolonged penance and has become a part of the rocks round him. His penance moves Goddess Ganga who melts and descends from Heaven to Earth, pouring out Her bounty in streams of plenty.

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

There is evidence that girls have been admitted in Vedic schools or Charanas. **Panini refers to this specially. A Kathi is a female student of Katha school. There are hostels for female students and they are known as Chhatrisala.** Each Charana or school has an inner circle of teachers known as Parisad. Their decisions on doubts about the reading and the meaning of Vedic culture are binding. Pratisakyas are said to be the product of such Parisad.

The academic year has several terms. Each term is inaugurated by a ceremony called Upakarnmana and ends by the Utsarga ceremony. Holidays (Anadhyayas) are regularly observed on two Astamis (eight day of the moon) two Chaturdasis (fourteenth day of the moon), Amavasya, Purnima and on the last day of each of the four seasons, called Chaturmasi. Besides these Nitya (regular) holidays there are Naimittika (occasional) holidays due to accidental circumstances, eg. storms, thunder, rain, fog, fire, eclipses etc.

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Buddhist Education

Buddhism as a phase of Hinduism

Buddhist education can be rightly regarded as a phase of the ancient Hindu system of education. Buddhism, itself, especially in its original and ancient form, is, as has been admitted on all hands, rooted deeply in the pre-existing Hindu systems of thought and life.

Max Muller in [Chips from a German Workshop](#) i 434), "To my mind, having approached Buddhism after a study of the ancient religion of India, the religion of the Veda, Buddhism has always seemed to be, to a new religion, but a natural development of the Indian mind in its various manifestations, religious, philosophical, social, and political."

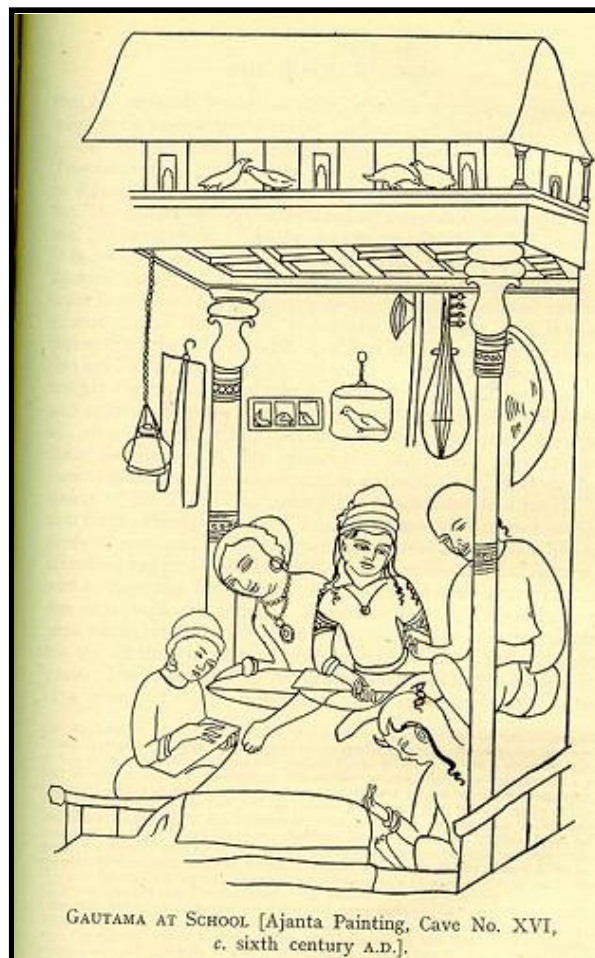
Auguste Barth (1834-1916) in [The Religions of India](#), p. 101 calls Buddhism: "a Hindu phenomenon, a natural product, so to speak, of the age and social circle that witnessed its birth", and "when we attempt to reconstruct its primitive doctrine and early history we come upon something so akin to what we meet in the most ancient Upanishads and in the legends of Hinduism that it is not always easy to determine what features belong peculiarly to it."

T. W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) in [Buddhism](#) p. 34 calls Gautama Buddha "the creature of his times", of whose philosophy it must not be supposed that "it was entirely of his own creation." He wrote: "The fact we should never forget is that Gautama was born and brought up and lived and died a Hindu. On the whole, he was regarded by the Hindus of that time a Hindu. Without the intellectual work of his predecessors, his work, however, original, would have been impossible. He was the greatest and wisest and best of the Hindus and, throughout his career, a characteristic India."

Edward Washburn Hopkins (1857-1932) goes so far as to assert ([The Religions of India](#) p. 298) that "the founder of Buddhism did not strike out a new system of morals; he was not a democrat; he did not originate a plot to overthrow the Brahminic priesthood; he did not invent the order of monks."

Hermann Oldenberg (1854-1920): "For hundreds of years before Buddha's time, movements were in progress in Indian thought which prepared the way for Buddhism."

(source: [Ancient India - By V. D. Mahajan](#) p. 197).

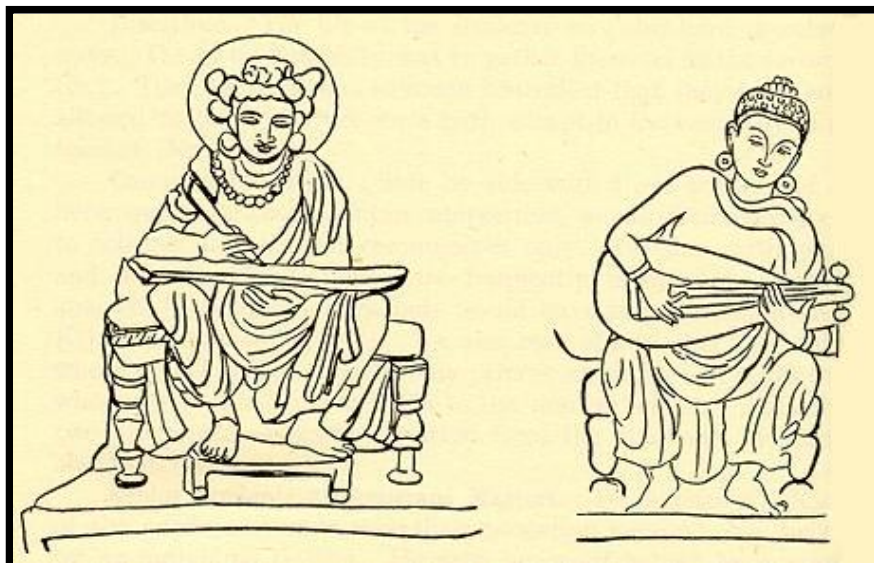


The school is "in a verandah in his father's palace; Gautama Buddha being instructed, with three other boys, by a Brahmin teacher. On their laps are tablets...caged birds, musical instruments, a battle-axe, bows. Gautama, a prince, was given, along with literary education, education in music and military arts like archery.

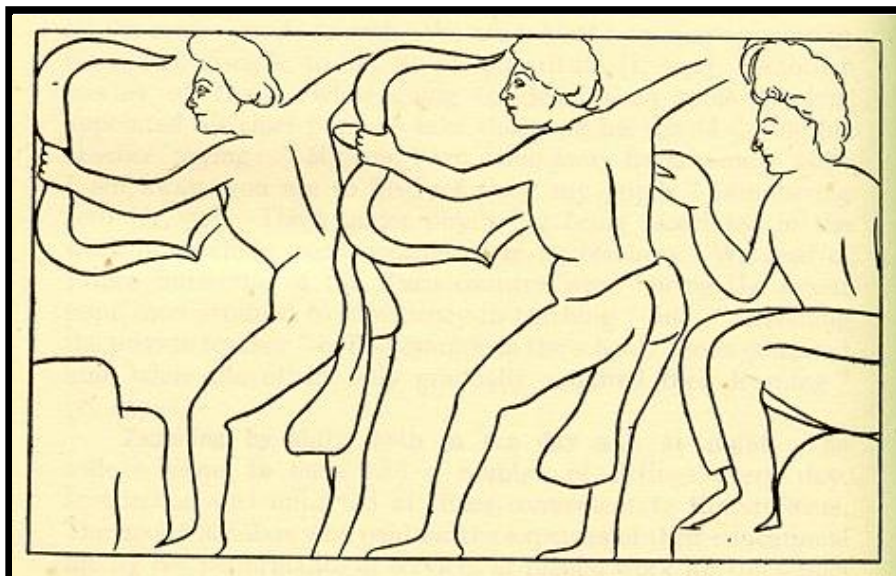
(image source: [Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji](#)).

The Buddha was a product of the Hindu System

The thesis also receives a most conclusive confirmation from the details of the Buddha's own career as preserved in the traditional texts. The details show how largely **Buddha was himself the product of the then prevailing Hindu educational systems**. We see how in the very first step that he takes towards the Buddhahood, the renunciation of the home and the world, the world of riches to which he is born, he was not at all singular but following the path trodden by all seekers after truth in all ages and ranks of society. Our ancient literature is full of examples of the spirit of acute, **utkata, vairagya** under which the rich, the fortunate, and the noble not less than the poor, the destitute and the lowly, the young with a distaste for life before tasting it as much as the old who have had enough of it, even women and maidens, as eagerly leave their homes and adopt the ascetic life as a positive good as their dear ones entreat them to desist such a step. The Buddha's next step was to place himself under the guidance of **two successive gurus**. The first was the Brahmin, Alara Kalama, at Vesali, having a following of 300 disciples who taught him the successive stages of meditation and the doctrine of the Atman, from which the Buddha turns back dissatisfied on the ground that it "does not lead to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom and Nirvana, but only as far as the realm of nothingness". Next he attaches himself to the sage of Rajagaha with 700 pupils, Uddaka, the disciple of Rama but "he gained no clear understanding from his treatment of the soul." As **Rhys David** points out "Gotama, either during this period or before must have gone through a very systematic and continued course of study in all the deepest philosophy of the time."



Gautama at School: practicing writing. Gautama at School: learning music



Gautama at school: being instructed in Archery - Gandhara Sculptures - 2nd century A.D.

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

In the **Lalitavistara Sastra**, the education of Buddha as a child, aged eight by the **Sage Vishvamitra**, who says:

Let us turn to Numbers. Count after me
 Until you reach lakh (= one hundred thousand):
 One, two, three, four, up to ten
 Then in tens, up to hundreds and thousands,
 After which, the child named the numbers,
 Then the decades and the centuries, without stopping.
 And once he reached lakh, which he whispered in silence,
 Then came koti, nahut, ninnahut, khamba,
 viskhamba, abab, attata,
 Up to kumud, gundhika, and utpala
 Ending with pundarika (leading)
 Towards paduma, making it possible to count
 Up to the last grain of the finest sand
 Heaped up in mountainous heights.

(source: [The Universal History of Numbers - By Georges Ifrah](#) p. 421 - 423).

Takshasila/Taxila - The Most Ancient University

Takshasila was the most famous seat of learning of ancient India. Takshasila was also the capital of Gandhara and its history goes back into hoary antiquity. **It was founded by Bharata and named after his son Taksha, who was established there as its ruler.** Janamejaya's serpent sacrifice was performed at this very place. As a center for learning the fame of the city was unrivalled in the 6th century B.C. Its site carries out the idea held by the ancient Hindus of the value of natural beauty in the surroundings of a University. The valley is "a singularly pleasant one, well-watered by a girdle of hills." The Jatakas tell us of how teachers and students lived in the university and the discipline imposed on the latter, sons of Kings and themselves future rulers though they might be! The Jatakas (No. 252) think that this discipline was likely "to quell their pride and haughtiness". It attracted scholars from different and distant parts of India. Numerous references in the Jatakas show how thither flocked students from far off Benares, Rajagaha, Mithila, Ujjain, from the Central region, Kosala, and Kuru kingdoms in the North country. The fame of Takshasila as a seat of learning was of course due to that of its teachers. They are always spoken of as being "world renowned" being "authorities", specialists, and experts in the subject they professed. Of one such teacher we read: "Youths of the warrior and brahmin castes came from all India to be taught the art by him" Sending their sons a thousand miles away from home bespeaks the great concern felt by their parents in their proper education. **As shown in the case of the medical student, Jivaka, the course of study at Takila extended to as many as seven years.** Jataka No. 252 records how parents felt if they could see their sons return home after graduation at Taxila. One of the archery schools at Taxila had on its roll call, 103 princes from different parts of the country. King Prasenajit of Kosala, a contemporary of the Buddha, was educated in the Gandhara capital. Prince Jivaka, an illegitimate son of Bimbisara, spent seven years at Taxila in learning medicine and surgery.

Takshasila a Center for Higher Education: The students are always spoken of as going to Takshasila to "complete their education and not to begin it." They are invariably sent at the age of sixteen or when they "come of age".

Different Courses of Study

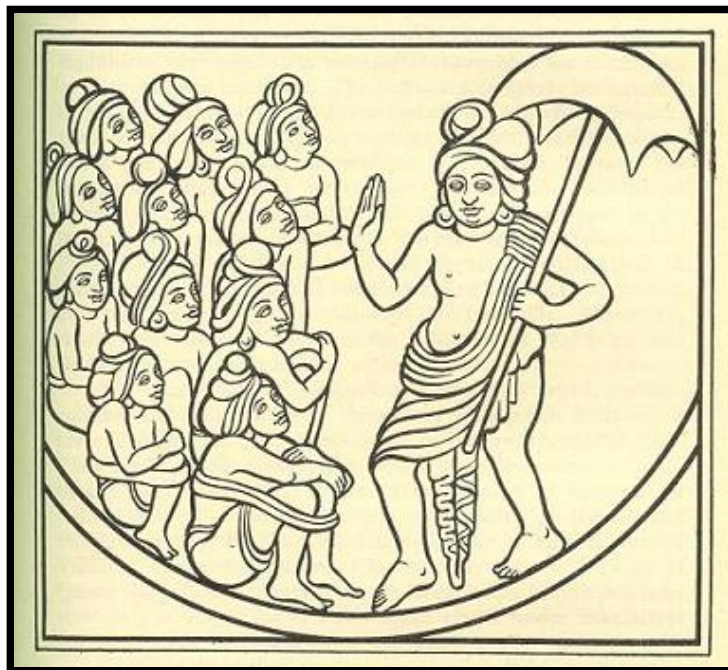
"The Jatakas contain 105 references to Takshasila. "The fame of Takshasila as a seat of learning was, of course, due to that of its teachers. They are always spoken of as being 'world-renowned,' being authorities, specialists and experts in the subjects they professed. It was the presence of scholars of such acknowledged excellence and widespread reputation that caused a steady movement of qualified students from all classes and ranks of society towards Takshasila from different and distant parts of the Indian continent, making it the intellectual capital of India of those days. Thus various centers of learning in the different parts of the country became affiliated, as it were, to the educational center or to the central University of Takshasila, which exercised a kind of intellectual suzerainty over the world of letters in India." Takshasila was destroyed by the Huns in 455 A.D."

(source: [India: A synthesis of cultures – by Kewal Motwani](#) p. 133).

The Jatakas constantly refer to students coming to Takshasila to complete their education in the three Vedas and the eighteen Sippas or Arts. Sometimes the students are referred to as selecting the study of the Vedas alone or the Arts alone. **The Bodhisatta (Buddha) is frequently referred to as having learned the three Vedas by heart.** Takshila was famous for military training, wrestling, archery and mountain- climbing.

Science, Arts and Crafts: The Jatakas mention of subjects under scientific and technical education. Medicine included a first hand study of the plants to find out the medicinal ones. Takkasila was also famous for some of its special schools. One of such schools was the Medical Schools which must have been the best of its kind in India. It was also noted for its School of Law which attracted student from distant Ujjeni. Its Military School were not less famous, which offered training in Archery. Thus the teachers of Takkasila were as famous for their knowledge of the arts of peace as for that of war. Much attention was paid to the development of social and cultural activities in all possible ways. Dancing and dramatic groups, singers and musicians and other artists were given encouragement and offered employment. During the Sangam epoch in South India, the three principal arts, Music, Dance and Drama were practiced intensively and extensively throughout the country, and the epic of Silappadikaram contains many references to the practice of these arts.

Next, to Takkasila ranks **Benares** as a seat of learning. It was, however, largely the creation of the ex-students of Takkasila who set up as teachers at Benares, and carried thither the culture of that cosmopolitan educational center which was **molding the intellectual life of the whole of India**. There were again certain subjects in the teaching of which Benares seems to have specialized. There is an expert who was "the chief of his kind in all India."



Assembly of monks seated in three rows and addressed by their leader standing, with a parasol, in his left hand indicating his rank. Pre - Gandhara period.

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

Hermitages as Centers of Highest Learning

Lastly, it is to be noted that the educational system of the times produced men of affairs as well as men who renounced the world in the pursuit of Truth. The life of renunciation indeed claimed many an ex-student of both Takksila and Benares. In the sylvan and solitary retreats away from the haunts of men, the hermitages served as schools of higher philosophical speculation and religious training where the culture previously acquired would attain its fruitage.

There are accounts of education written by eye witness who were foreigners, like the pilgrims from China who regarded India, as its Holy Land. **The very fact of the pilgrimage of Chinese scholars like Fa-Hien or Hiuen Tsang to India testifies to the tribute paid by China to the sovereignty of Indian thought and culture which made its influence felt beyond the bounds of India itself in distant countries which might well be regarded as then constituting a sort of a Greater India.** The duration of Fa-Hien's travel in India was for fifteen years. "After Fa-Hien set out from Ch'ang-gan it took him six years to reach Central India; and on his return took him three years to reach Ts'ing-chow. A profound and abiding regard for the learning and culture of India was needed to feed and sustain such a long continued movement. Indeed, the enthusiasm for Indian wisdom was so intense, the passion for a direct contact with its seats was so strong, that it defied the physical dangers and difficulties which lay so amply in the way of its realization. Besides, Chinese scholars, I-tsing refers to "the Mongolians of the North" sending students to India.

The teachers themselves were most exemplary. Hiuen Tsang says of the Brahmins: "The teachers (of the Vedas) must themselves have closely studied the deep and secret principles they contain, and penetrated to their remotest meaning. They then explain their general sense, and guide their pupils in understanding the words which are difficult. They urge them on and skillfully conduct them. They add luster to their poor knowledge and stimulate the desponding." Studies were pursued unremittingly, and Hiuen Tsang says: "The day is not sufficient for asking and answering profound questions. From morning till night they engage in discussion; the old and the young mutually help one another."

(source: [Life of Hiuen-Tsiang - by Samuel Beal](#) vol. I p. 79 and vol II p. 170).

Attached to the university was a kind of post-graduate department, a group of learned Brahmins known collectively as a parishad. A parishad seems usually to have consisted of ten men; four 'walking encyclopedias' each of whom had learnt all the four Vedas by heart, three who had specialized in one of the Sutras, and representative of the three orders of brahmachari grihastha and vanaprastha - student, householder and hermit. The parishad gave decisions on disputed points of religion of learning. I-Tsing reports that at the end of their course of studies, 'to try the sharpness of their wit' some men 'proceed to the king's court to lay down before it the sharp weapon of their abilities: there they present their schemes and show their talent, seeking to be appointed in the practical government..."

(source: [Everyday Life in Ancient India - By Padmini Sengupta](#) p. 162-169).

It is interesting to note that the study of Sanskrit was continued in Buddhist monasteries. At the Pataliputra monastery Fa-Hien stayed for three years "learning Sanskrit books and the Sanskrit speech and writing out the Vinaya rules." Archery is found mentioned in the Jataka stories. The Bhimsena Jataka tells that Boddhisatva learnt archery at Takshila. Wrestling was popular and descriptions of such breath-holding bouts in wrestling are available in the Jataka stories. Two kinds of games called Udyana Krida or garden games and Salila Krida or water sports are also mentioned. Archery was also popular among the women during this period, as can be seen from the Ahicchatra images. Hunting, elephant fighting, Ram fighting, and Partridge fighting were the other important games of this period.

Takshashila, the most ancient Hindu University, was destroyed by the barbarian White Huns in 455 A.D. Sir John Marshall, Director General of Archaeology in India, has given a most interesting account, but he says regretfully,

"The monuments of Taxila were wantonly and ruthlessly devastated in the course of the same (fifth) century. This work of destruction is almost certainly to be attributed to the hordes of barbarian white Huns, who after the year 455 A.D. swept down into India in ever increasing numbers carrying sword and fire wherever they went, and not only possessed themselves of the kingdom of the Kinshans, but eventually overthrew the great empire of the Guptas. From this calamity Taxila never again recovered."

(source: [India: Bond Or Free? - By Annie Besant](#) p. 94-97).

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[Universities of Ancient India](#)

1. Takkasila - also known as Taxila - for information on this university, please refer to the above passages.

2. Mithila - Mithila, was a stronghold of Brahminical culture at its best in the time of the Upanishads, under its famous **Philosopher-king Janaka** who used to send out periodical invitations to learned Brahmins of the Kuru-Panchala country to gather to his court for purpose of philosophical discussions. Under him Eastern India was vying with North-Western India in holding the palm of learning. In those days, the name of the country was not Mithila but Videha. **In the time of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and Buddhist literature, Mithila retained the renown of its Vedic days.**

Its subsequent political history is somewhat chequered. When Vijaya Sen was King of Bengal, Nanyadeva of the Karnataka dynasty was King of Mithila in A.D. 1097. King Vijaya defeated him but was defeated by his son Gangadeva who recovered Mithila from him. This Karnataka Dynasty ruled Mithila for the period c. A.D. 115-1395, followed by the Kamesvara Dynasty which ruled between c. A.D. 1350-1515. It was again followed by another dynasty of rulers founded by Mahesvara Thakkura in the time of Akbar, and this dynasty has continued up to the present time.

Mithila as a seat of learning flourished remarkably under these later kings. The Kamesvara period was made famous in the literary world by the erudite and versatile scholar, **Jagaddhara**, who wrote commentaries on a variety of texts, the Gita, Devi-mahatmya, Meghaduta, Gita-Govinda, Malati-Madhava, and the like, and original treatises on Erotics, such as Rasika-Sarvasva-Sangita-Sarvasva.

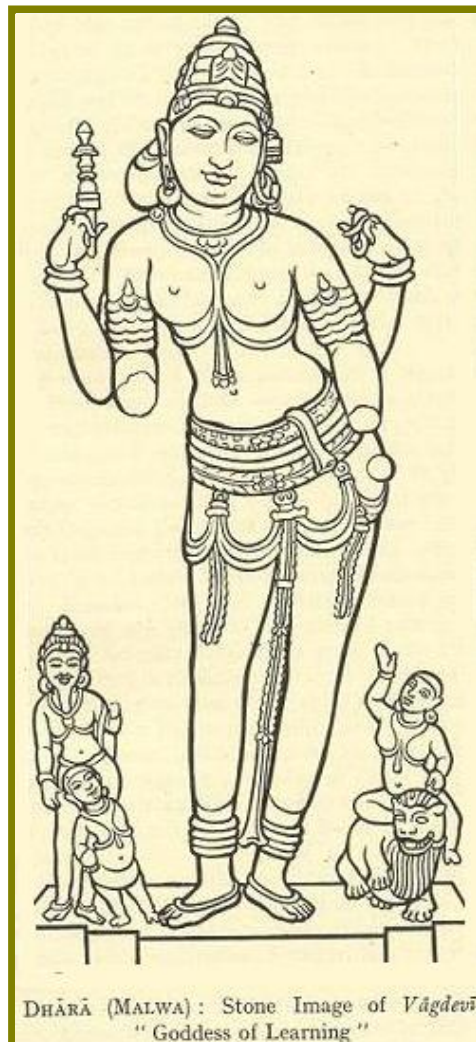
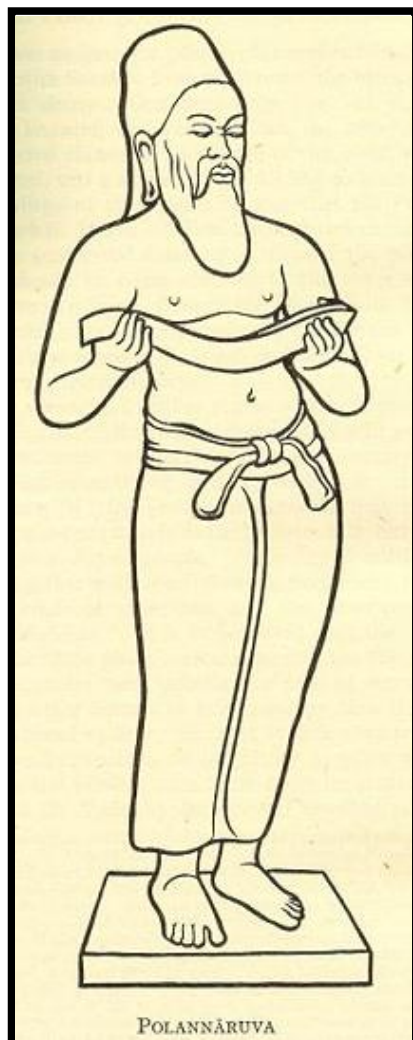
The next scholar who shed luster on Mithila was the poet Vidyapati, the author of Maithili songs or Padavali generally. He has inspired for generations the later Vaishava writers of Bengal.

Mithila made conspicuous contributions in the realm of severe and scientific subjects. It developed a famous **School of Nyaya** which flourished from the twelfth to the fifteenth century A.D. under the great masters of Logic, Gangesa, Vardhamana, Pakshadhara, and others. This School of New Logic (Navya Nyaya) was founded by **Gangesa Upadhyaya** and his epoch-making work named "**Tattva Chinatmani**", a work of about 300 pages whose commentaries make up over 1,000,000 pages in three centuries of its study. Gangesa is supposed to have lived after A.D. 1093-1150, the time of Ananada Suri and Amarachandra Suri, whose opinions he has quoted.

By its scholastic activities Mithila in those days, like Nalanda, used to draw students from different parts of India for advanced and specialized studies in Nyaya or Logic, of which it was then the chief center.

3. Nalanda

Nalanda was the name of the ancient village identified with modern Baragaon, 7 miles north of Rajgir in Bihar. The earliest mention of the place is that in the Buddhist scriptures which refer to a Nalanda village near Rajagriha with a Pavarika Mango Park in Buddha's time. The Jain texts carry the history earlier than the Buddhist. It was the place where Mahavira had met Gosala and was counted as a bahira or suburb of Rajagriha where Mahavira had spent as many as fourteen rainy seasons. Nalanda, when Fa-hien visited it, was called Nala and was known as the place "where Sariputta was born, and to which also he returned, and attained here his pari-nirvana. Nalanda was not a sectarian or a religious university in the narrow sense of the term, imparting only Buddhist thought. Subjects other than Buddhism were taught as fervently. Almost all sciences, including the science of medicine were taught. So were the **Upanishads and the Vedas. Panini's grammar**, the science of pronunciation (Phonetics), etymology, Indology and Yoga were all included in the curricula. Surprisingly, even archery was taught at Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang himself learnt Yogasastra from Jayasena.



(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

Knowledge of Sanskrit was essential for all entrants in spite of the fact that Sakyamuni delivered his sermons in Pali. Knowledge of Sanskrit meant complete mastery of Sanskrit grammar, literature and correct pronunciation, and was compulsory to enter the portals of the university. On the authority of Hiuen Tsang, we can safely say that the entrants to Nalanda were supposed to be well-versed in "Beda" i.e. Veda, Vedanta, Samakhya, Nyaya and Vaisesika. I-Tsing also confirms this in his accounts. Nalanda was an example of the **Guru-Shishya parampara, a great Indian tradition**. The authority of the Guru (teacher) over the shishya (student) was absolute, and yet, dissent was permitted in academic matters. Free education: Out of the income of the estate. In Nalanda, swimming, breathing exercises and yoga formed an integral part of the curriculum. Harshavardhana, of the Gupta dynasty was a great sportsman and he encouraged his subjects as well. Another great contemporary of Harsha, Narasimhan or Mamallah was also a great wrestler. He belonged to the Pallava dynasty.

Yuan Chawang, a Chinese student at Nalanda, wrote: "In the establishment were some thousand brethren, all men of great learning and ability, several hundreds being highly esteemed and famous; the brethren were very strict in observing the precepts and regulations of their order; learning and discussing, they found the day too short. Day and night they admonished each other, juniors and seniors mutually helping to perfection....Hence foreign students came to the institution to put an end to their rounds and then become celebrated and those who shared the name of Nalanda, were all treated with respect, wherever they went."

(source: [On Yuang-Chwang's Travels in India - By Thomas Watters](#) (1840-1901) volume 2 p. 165).

Though Buddhism and Hinduism became arrayed in opposite philosophical camps, they were both given their places in the university curriculum. There was **no intellectual isolationism** of the type that characterizes modern sectarian institutions of the Christian world. According to eminent Indian historian, **R C Dutt**, "Buddhism never assumed a hostile attitude towards the parent religion of India; and the fact that the two religions existed side by side for long centuries increased their tolerance of each other. Hindus went to Buddhist monasteries and universities, and Buddhist learnt from Brahmin sages."

(source: [Civilization in Ancient India - By R C Dutt](#) p. 127).

According to **Alain Danielou** (1907-1994) son of French aristocracy, author of numerous books on philosophy, religion, history and arts of India: "Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveler, stayed five years at Nalanda University, where more than seven thousand monks lived. He mentions a very considerable literature in Sanskrit and other works on history, statistics and geography, none of which have survived. He also writes of officials whose job it was to write records of all important events. At Nalanda, studies included the **Vedas, the Upanishads, cosmology (Sankhya), realist or scientific philosophy (Vaisheshika), logic (Nyaya), to which great importance was attached**, and Jain and Buddhist philosophy. Studies also included grammar, mechanics, medicine, and physics. Medicine was highly effective, and surgery was quite developed. The pharmacopoeia was enormous, and astronomy was very advanced. **The earth's diameter had been calculated very precisely. In physics, Brahmagupta had discovered the law of gravity.**"

(source: [A Brief History of India - By Alain Danielou](#) p. 165-166).

4. Vallabhi

Vallabhi in Kathiawad was also a great seat of Hindu and Buddhist learning. It was the capital of an important kingdom and a port of international trade with numerous warehouses full of rarest merchandise. During the 7th century, however, it was more famous as a seat of learning. I-tsing informs us that its fame rivaled with that of Nalanda in eastern India.

5. Vikramasila

Like Nalanda and Vallabhi, the University of Vikramasila was also the result of royal benefactions. Vikramasila, founded by king Dharmapala in the 8th century, was a famous center of international learning for more than four centuries. King Dharmapala (c. 775-800 A. D) was its founder, he built temples and monasteries at the place and liberally endowed them. He had the Vihara constructed after a good design. He also erected several halls for the lecturing work. His successors continued to patronize the University down to the 13th century. The teaching was controlled by a Board of eminent teachers and it is stated that this Board of Vikramasila also administered the affairs at Nalanda. The University had six colleges, each with a staff of the standard strength of 108 teachers, and a Central Hall called the House of Science with its six gates opening on to the six Colleges. It is also stated that the outer walls surrounding the whole University was decorated with artistic works, a portrait in painting of Nagarjuna adorning the right of the principal entrance and that of Atisa on the left. On the walls of the University were also the painted portraits of Pandits eminent for their learning and character.

Grammar, logic, metaphysics, ritualism were the main subjects specialized at the institution.

Destruction of Vikramsila by Moslems: **In 1203, the University of Vikramasila was destroyed by the Mahomadens under Bakhtyar Khilji.** As related by the author of **Tabakat-i-Nasari**:

"the greater number of the inhabitants of that place were Brahmins and the whole of these Brahmins had their heads shaven; and they were all slain. There were a great number of books on religion of the Hindus (Buddhists) there; and when all these books came under the observation of the Musalmans, they summoned a number of Hindus that they might give them information respecting the import of these books; but the whole of the Hindus had been killed. On becoming acquainted (with the contents of those books), it was found that the whole of that fortress and city was a college, and, in the Hindu tongue, they call a college a Bihar (Vihara)."

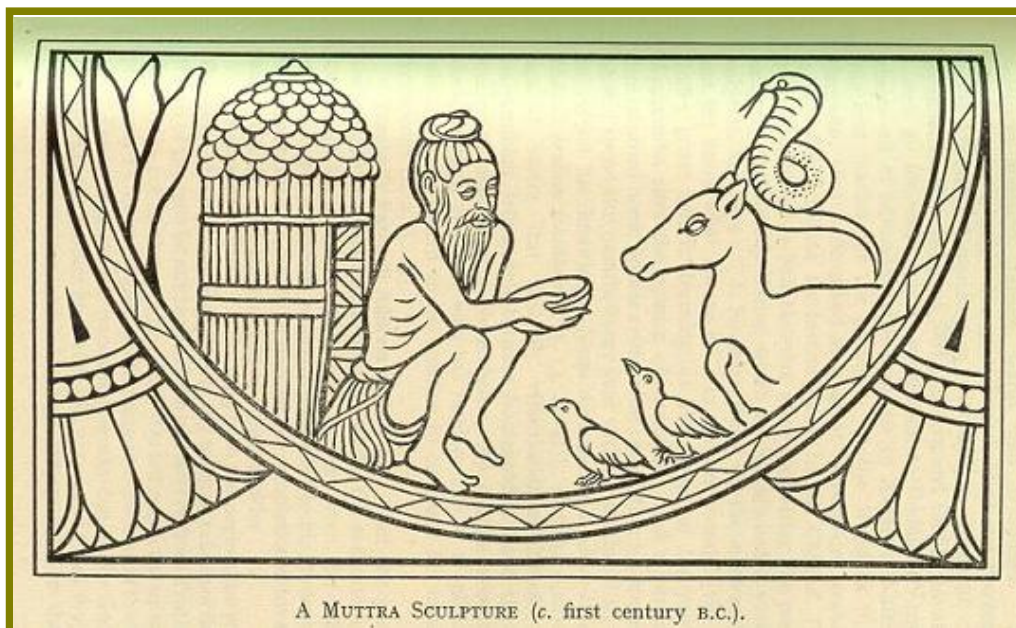
After the destruction of the Vikramsila University, Sri Bhadra repaired to the University of Jagadala whence he proceeded to Tibet, accompanied by many other monks who settled down there as preachers of Buddhism.

6. Jagaddala

Its foundation by King Rama Pala. According to the historical Epic Ramacharita, King Ram Pala, of Bengal and Magadha, who reigned between A.D. 108-1130, founded a new city which he called Ramavati on the banks of the rivers Ganga and Karatoya in Varendra and equipped the city with a Vihara called Jagadala. The University could barely work for a hundred years, till the time of Moslem invasion sweeping it away in A.D. 1203. But in its short life it has made substantial contributions to learning through its scholars who made it famous by their writings.

7. Odantapuri

Very little is known of this University, although at the time of Abhayakaragupta there were 1,000 monks in residence here. Odanatapuri is now known for the famous scholar named Prabhakara who hailed from Chatarpur in Bengal. It appears that this University had existed long before the Pala kings came into power in Magadha. These kings expanded the University by endowing it with a good Library of Brahmanical and Buddhist works. This Monastery was taken as the model on which the first Tibetan Buddhist Monastery was built in 749 A.D. under King Khri-sron-deu-tsan on the advice of his guru, Santarakshita.



A typical Brahmin with a high chignon, beard, short garments, seat of mat, round leafy hut; four fellow denizens of his hermitage, a dove, a crow, a kneeling doe, and a coiled snake, all living at peace as friends in the atmosphere of non-violence.

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

8. Nadia

Nadia is the popular name of Navadvipa on the Bhagirathi at its confluence with Jalangi. Once it was a center of trade borne by the Bhagirathi between Saptagrama (on the river Sarasvati near Hoogly) and the United

Provinces, and in the other direction by the Jalangi between Saptagrama and Eastern Bengal.

9. Madura Sangham - was another seat of learning. The Sangham was known for its learning and academic prestige. Writing about the Tamil institutions, **Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar** (1871-1947) remarks: "There are two features with regard to these assemblies that call for special remark. The first, the academics were standing bodies of the most eminent men among the learned men of the time in all branches of knowledge. The next, it was the approval of this learned body that set the seal of authority on the works preserved to it." Scholars were honored irrespective of sex. Aiyangar continues: "A Ruler of Tanjore, poet, musician, warrior, and administrator, did extraordinary honor to a lady of Court, by name **Ramachandramha**, who composed an epic on the achievements of her patron, Raghunatha Nayaka of Tanjore. It appears that she was accorded honor of **Kanaka-Ratna Abhisheka** (bath in gold and gems). She was, by assent of the Court, made to occupy the position of "Emperor of Learning."

(source: **India: A synthesis of Culture - By Kewal Motwani** p. 138).

10. Benares - Benares has always been a culture center of all India fame and even in the Buddha's day it was already old. Though not a formal university, it is a place unique in India, which has throughout the ages provided the most suitable atmosphere for the pursuit of higher studies. The method of instruction as also the curriculum followed there in early times was adopted from Taxila. Benares University was famous for Hindu culture. Sankaracharya as a student was acquainted with this university. Benares is the only city in India which has its schools representing every branch of Hindu thought. And there is no spiritual path which has not its center in Benares with resident adherents. Every religious sect of the Hindus has its pilgrimage there. In ancient days, Sarnath figured as a recognized seat of Buddhist learning. Rightly, therefore, it is this holy city the very heart of spiritual India. **Alberuni**, the noted Arabian historian, mentioned Benares as a **great seat of learning** and **Bernier**, who visited India, described it "as a kind of university, but it resembled rather the school of ancients, the masters being spread over different parts of the town in private houses."

11. Kachipuram was another such institution of learning in South India. It came to be known as Dakshina Kasi, Southern Kashi. Huien Tsang visited it about 642. A.D. and found Vaishnavite and Shaivite Hindus, Digambara Jain and Mahayan Buddhists studying together.

12. Navadvip belonged to comparatively recent times and was founded by Sena Kings of Bengal in about 1063 A.D. and soon rose to be a great center of learning. It imparted instruction in Vedas, Vedangas, Six Systems especially Nyaya. Chaitanya was a product of Navadvipa. It had 500-600 students, when A. H Wilson visited it in 1821, drawn from Bengal, Assam, Nepal and South India.

In 1867, **Edward B Cowell** (1826-1903) professor of Sanskrit in Cambridge and author of **The aphorisms of Sandilya or The Hindu doctrine of faith**, recorded his opinion in these words: "I could not help looking at these unpretending lecture-halls with a deep interest, as I thought of the pundits lecturing there to generation after generation of eager, inquisitive minds. Seated on the floor with his 'corona' of listening pupils round him, **the teacher expiates on those refinements of infinitesimal logic which makes a European's brain dizzy to think of, but whose labyrinth a trained Nadia student will thread with unfaltering precision.**"

(source: **India: A synthesis of Culture - By Kewal Motwani** p. 134-145 and **Indian Education in Ancient and Later Times - By Key** p.145).

Libraries in Ancient India

The great seats of learning in ancient India like Nalanda, Vikramasila, Pataliputra, and Tamralipti are said to have contained libraries of their own and striven hard for the promotion of education and learning in the country, the evidence for which comes from the writings of Hieun-Tsang and It-Sing who spent some time in some of the centers and studied the Buddhist philosophy. They were given all facilities to copy down the manuscripts which they wanted from the libraries. Each of these institutions must have maintained a well equipped library for the use of teachers and students. The library in ancient times was called either Saraswati-bhandara or Pustaka bhandara. Many libraries were located in temples. In South India, records contain references to Nagai, Srirangam, Sermadevi and Cidambaram, Kacipuram and Sringeri. In this connection it may be mentioned that libraries in ancient Cambodia were all located in temples and the inscriptions from some temples in the area bear evidence to that. Library is mentioned for the first time in the inscriptions of the king Indravarman at Preah Ko and Bakong (Cambodia). They were rectangular with gabled ends and at first with a single vaulted hall. **The temples of Prasat Bantay Pir Chan, and Angkor Wat contained libraries in which the main deity of the temples were oriented. It is also interesting to note that the walls of the library were sculptured with panels depicting scenes from the epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata.**

"India has lost much of its great treasures of ancient texts during the successive invasions by foreign rulers. Our great libraries at Nalanda and other places were burnt to ashes. Sachan who collected and edited **Al Beruni's** works said: "It was like a magic island of quiet and impartial research, in the midst of a world of clashing swords, burning towns, and plundered temples. The work of many eminent scholars contained thousands of volumes of translations of Indian texts, whose original were lost in India owing to the

depredations of Mohammedan iconoclasts who destroyed hundreds of Hindu and Buddhist seats of learning, in India including the world famous Nalanda University." "The Christian missionaries in the West coast took away and burnt many valuable manuscripts. Many great scholars died without passing down their knowledge to the descendents. In their quest for livelihood during the nine hundred years of foreign rule, the descendents did not care to preserve their knowledge."

(source: **Hindu Superiority - Har Bilas Sarda** p. 150 and **Vision of India - By Sisir Kumar Mitra** p. 186 and **The Temple Empire - By Vidyavisarada Garimella Veeraraghuvulu**. Printed in Sri Gayathri press. Kakinada. India 1982 p. 136-137)..

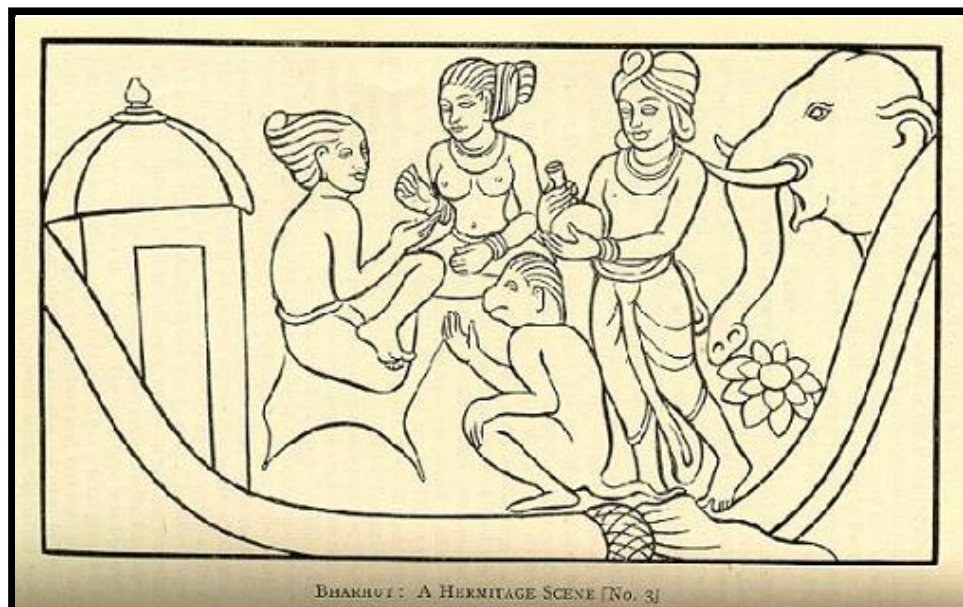
(Note: The fall of Nalanda at the hands of the Turks is a story too deep for tears. Like Nero, Bakhtiar Khilji, its destroyer in 1205 A.D., laughed while Nalanda burnt. The City of Knowledge, which took several centuries to build, took only a few hours to be destroyed. Legend has it that when some monks fell at the feet of the invader to spare at least its world-famed library, *Ratnabodhi*, he kicked them and had them thrown in the fire along with the books. The monks fled to foreign lands, citizens became denizens and Nalanda was relegated to a memory.

(source: **Nalanda - The City of Knowledge**).

Many of these universities were sacked, plundered, looted by the Islamic onslaught. They destroyed temples and **libraries** and indulged in most heinous type of vandalism. These were particularly heinous crimes. The burning of the Library of Nalanda ranks with the destruction of the Library of Alexandria as the two most notorious acts of vandalism in the course of Islamic expansion. Nalanda, Vikramshila, Odantapura, and Jagddala as the universities destroyed by Mohammed Bakhtiar Khilji around 1200 A.D. For more refer to **The Sack of Nalanda**).

Gertrude Emerson Sen (- 1982) historian and journalist and Asia specialist, wrote on the plight of the universities: "Night was to descend on all the great centers of traditional Indian learning, however, when the untutored Muslims of Central Asia poured into India with fire and sword at the beginning of the 11th century."

(source **The Pageant of India's History - By Gertrude Emerson Sen** p. 275 - 276).



Hermitage scene

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

Arrival of the British in India

Later when the **British** came there was, throughout India, a system of communal schools, managed by the

village communities. **The agents of the East India Company and the Christian missionaries destroyed these village community schools, and took steps to replace education by introducing English and western system of education. In October 1931 Mahatma Gandhi made a statement at Chatham House, London, that created a furor in the English press.**

He said, **"Today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and left the root exposed and the beautiful tree perished".**

Mr. Ernest Havell (formerly Principal of the Calcutta school of Art) has rightly said, the fault of the Anglo-Indian Educational System is that, instead of harmonizing with, and supplementing, national culture, it is antagonist to, and destructive, of it.

Sir George Birdwood says of the system that it "has destroyed in Indians the love of their own literature, the quickening soul of a people, and their delight in their own arts, and worst of all their repose in their own traditional and national religion, has disgusted them with their own homes, their parents, and their sisters, their very wives, and brought discontent into every family so far as its baneful influences have reached."

(source: **Bharata Shakti: Collection of Addresses on Indian Culture - By Sir John Woodroffe** p 75-77).

As **Max Mueller**, the propagator of the Aryan invasion theory, wrote to his wife, **"It took only 200 years for us to Christianise the whole of Africa, but even after 400 years India eludes us, I have come to realize that it is Sanskrit which has enabled India to do so. And to break it I have decided to learn Sanskrit." The soul of India lies in Sanskrit. And Lord Macaulay saw to it that the later generations are successfully cut off from their roots.**

(source: **Assaulting India's pluralist ethos - by D. Harikumar** The Hindu).

Tremendous harm done by Colonist history education of India

Colonial construction of its history denied India both learning and unlearning experience. The colonists' version of India's past harmed its present and threatened its future. Take a glaring instance, the Aryan-Dravidian theory constructed by the colonialists that virtually split India racially and regionally, almost fomenting a huge secessionist movement in the South.

A society should not get obsessed with its past just for pride. Nevertheless it becomes inevitable for colonised societies to review the colonialist version of its history that demeans its faith, philosophy, forefathers, traditions and economy, and pervades the society's academic, intellectual and public discourse.

After an in-depth study, **Kaisa Illmonen** of **University of Turku** in Finland writes:

"Post colonial subjects will be imprisoned in their colonial history unless they can find or figure out their own place in history. History must be retold and rewritten in such a way that a person excluded from the records of the Western history can still have knowledge of his or her own past." This not just about the history of identity. A society's economic history is critical in a world that is increasingly driven by global economic agenda.

The Indian people ought to know whether they have a history of worshipping poverty as the colonialists had made their elites believe or do they have a tradition of building prosperity. Modern Western history has universalised the perception that prosperity building was the preserve of the West. The rest of the world, particularly Asia, including China and India, was ever steeped in poverty — almost claiming that colonialists had actually improved their lot!

(source: **Indian history is relevant, even for economists – By S. Gurumurthy**).

Modern Indian education is inherently perverse

The current system of education -- allegedly 'modern' -- is inherently perverse: It was imposed upon India by the British imperialists, with the single-minded purpose of creating coolies and clerks to help them run the country. That their system was meant to **perpetuate colonialism** is demonstrated in the book **Masks of Conquest** by Columbia's Gauri Viswanathan: indeed, English itself was a mask of conquest -- an inferior language thrust upon conquered nations: First India, then Ireland.

The system has succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of Thomas Babington Macaulay's infamous **Minute on Indian Education**, which wanted to produce little brown sepoys to be the cannon-fodder of Empire, metaphorically speaking. **Such Brown Sahibs -- deracinated, laughable imitations of their white masters -- still rule the roost. You merely have to turn on Indian television to see these people strut about flaunting awful 'convent accents' and an utter lack of comprehension about what the**

world is all about, other than pre-digested nonsense about ye olde Englande or America.

These 'beautiful people' have internalised utterly moronic ideas about distribution without ever worrying about production, quality, or excellence. Which is precisely the reason why Indian education has, after Independence, produced nothing whatsoever -- yes, absolutely nothing -- of global calibre. **Not one earth-shaking discovery or invention, not one outstanding theoretical insight!**

That this is much worse than under the imperialists -- in their days, there were world-class discoveries and inventions coming out of India, by **C V Raman**, **J C Bose** and **Srinivasa Ramanujan** to name just three -- should be reason for the education establishment to hang its head in shame.

In an earlier time, before the imperialists damaged the system, Indian education was far more balanced; and no wonder ancient India was the most creative and innovative civilisation in the world. There was an efflorescence of creative activity, unmatched even by the Western gold standard: Their Renaissance. Out of this came things as diverse as **Panini's grammar**, the infinite series of **Madhava**; the **Aryabhatiya**, the **Hortus Malabaricus**, and the **Yogasutras**.

In his landmark work, **The Beautiful Tree**, **Dharampal** has quoted the imperialists themselves about the quality and quantity of indigenous education. There was a school in every village, and all groups enjoyed the benefits of **gurukula**-style education that created citizens, not drones. That high-quality, individualised system has been abandoned for today's education factories churning out ill-prepared, ill-equipped, second-rate graduates.

(source: [Rethinking education in India – By Rajeev Srinivasan - rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com)).

Dalits and Indigenous System of Educaiton

Dharampal (The Beautiful Tree) has **effectively debunked the myth that Dalits had no place in the indigenous system of education.** Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras, ordered a mammoth survey in June 1822, whereby the district collectors furnished the caste-wise division of students in four categories, viz., Brahmins, Vysyas (Vaishyas), Shoodras (Shudras) and other castes (broadly the modern scheduled castes). While the percentages of the different castes varied in each district, the results were revealing to the extent that they showed an impressive presence of the so-called lower castes in the school system.

Thus, in Vizagapatam, Brahmins and Vaishyas together accounted for 47% of the students, Shudras comprised 21% and the other castes (scheduled) were 20%; the remaining 12% were Muslims. In Tinnevely, Brahmins were 21.8% of the total number of students, Shudras were 31.2% and other castes 38.4% (by no means a low figure). In South Arcot, Shudras and other castes together comprised more than 84% of the students!

In the realm of higher education as well, there were regional variations. Brahmins appear to have dominated in the Andhra and Tamil Nadu regions, but in the Malabar area, theology and law were Brahmin preserves, but astronomy and medicine were dominated by Shudras and other castes. Thus, of a total of 808 students in astronomy, only 78 were Brahmins, while 195 were Shudras and 510 belonged to the other castes (scheduled). In medicine, out of a total of 194 students, only 31 were Brahmins, 59 were Shudras and 100 belonged to the other castes. Even subjects like metaphysics and ethics that we generally associate with Brahmin supremacy, were dominated by the other castes (62) as opposed to merely 56 Brahmin students. It bears mentioning that this higher education was in the form of private tuition (or education at home), and to that extent also reflects the near equal economic power of the concerned groups.

As a concerned reader informed me, the 'Survey of Indigenous Education in the Province of Bombay (1820-1830)' showed that Brahmins were only 30% of the total students there. What is more, when William Adam surveyed Bengal and Bihar, he found that Brahmins and Kayasthas together comprised less than 40% of the total students, and that forty castes like Tanti, Teli, Napit, Sadgop, Tamli etc. were well represented in the student body. The Adam report mentions that in Burdwan district, while native schools had 674 students from the lowest thirty castes, the 13 missionary schools in the district together had only 86 students from those castes. Coming to teachers, Kayasthas triumphed with about 50% of the jobs and there were only six Chandal teachers; but Rajputs, Kshatriyas and Chattris (Khatris) together had only five teachers.

Even Dalit intellectuals have questioned what the British meant when they spoke of 'education' and 'learning'. Dr. D.R. Nagaraj, a leading Dalit leader of Karnataka, wrote that it was the British, particularly Lord Wellesley, who declared the Vedantic Hinduism of the Brahmins of Benares and Navadweep as "the standard Hinduism," because they realized that the vitality of the Hindu dharma of the lower castes was a threat to the empire. Fort William College, founded by Wellesley in 1800, played a major role in investing Vedantic learning with a prominence it probably hadn't had for centuries. In the process, the cultural heritage of the lower castes was successfully marginalized, and this remains an enduring legacy of colonialism. Examining Dharampal's "Indian science and technology in the eighteenth century," Nagaraj observed that most of the native skills and technologies that perished as a result of British policies were those of the Dalit and artisan castes. This effectively debunks the fiction of Hindu-hating secularists that the so-called lower castes made no contribution to India's cultural heritage and

needed deliverance from wily Brahmins.

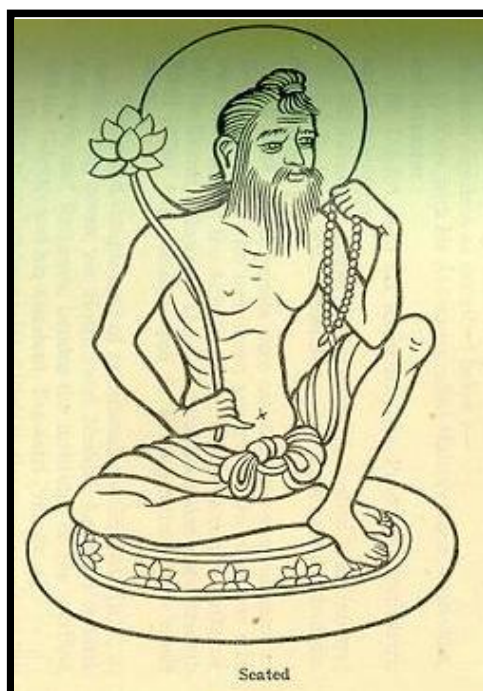
Indeed, given the desperate manner in which the British vilified the Brahmin, it is worth examining what so annoyed them. As early as 1871-72, **Sir John Campbell** objected to Brahmins facilitating upward mobility: "...the Brahmans are always ready to receive all who will submit to them... The process of manufacturing Rajputs from ambitious aborigines (tribals) goes on before our eyes."

Sir Alfred Lyall (1796 - 1865) was unhappy and he wrote:

"...more persons in India become every year Brahmanists than all the converts to all the other religions in India put together... these teachers address themselves to every one without distinction of caste or of creed; they preach to low-caste men and to the aboriginal tribes... in fact, they succeed largely in those ranks of the population which would lean towards Christianity and Mohammedanism if they were not drawn into Brahmanism..."

So much for the British public denunciation of the exclusion practiced by Brahmins!

(source: **The Brahmin and the Hindu - By Sandhya Jain - dailypioneer.com** - December 14 2004).



Sage Vasistha

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

Dharampal (- 2006) was a Gandhian in ceaseless search of truth like his preceptor Gandhi himself. He has demolished the myth that India was backward educationally or economically when the British entered. Citing the Christian missionary William Adam's report on indigenous education in Bengal and Bihar in 1835 and 1838, **Dharampal established that at that time there were 100,000 schools in Bengal, one school for about 500 boys; that the indigenous medical system that included inoculation against small-pox.**

He also proved by reference to other materials that Adam's record was 'no legend'. He relied on **Sir Thomas Munroe's** report to the Governor at about the same time to prove similar statistics about schools in Madras. He also found that the education system in the Punjab during the Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule was equally extensive. He estimated that the literary rate in India before the British was higher than that in England.

Citing British public records he established, on the contrary, that **'British had no tradition of education or scholarship or philosophy from 16th to early 18th century, despite Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Newton, etc'**. Till then education and scholarship in the UK was limited to select elite. He cited Alexander Walker's Note on Indian education to assert that it was the monitorial system of education borrowed from India that helped Britain to improve, in later years, school attendance which was just 40, 000, yes just that,

in 1792. He then compared the educated people's levels in India and England around 1800. The population of Madras Presidency then was 125 lakhs and that of England in 1811 was 95 lakhs. Dharampal found that during 1822-25 the number of those in ordinary schools in Madras Presidency was around 1.5 lakhs and this was after great decay under a century of British intervention.

As against this, the number attending schools in England was half - yes just half - of Madras Presidency's, namely a mere 75,000. And here to with more than half of it attending only Sunday schools for 2-3 hours! Dharampal also established that in Britain 'elementary system of education at people's level remained unknown commodity' till about 1800! **Again he exploded the popularly held belief that most of those attending schools must have belonged to the upper castes particularly Brahmins and, again with reference to the British records, proved that the truth was the other way round.**

During 1822-25 the share of the Brahmin students in the indigenous schools in Tamil-speaking areas accounted for 13 per cent in South Arcot to some 23 per cent in Madras while the backward castes accounted for 70 per cent in Salem and Tirunelveli and 84 per cent in South Arcot.

The situation was almost similar in Malayalam, Oriya and Kannada-speaking areas, with the backward castes dominating the schools in absolute numbers. Only in the Telugu-speaking areas the share of the Brahmins was higher and varied from 24 to 46 per cent. **Dharampal's** work proved **Mahatma Gandhi's** statement at Chatham House in London on October 20, 1931 that **"India today is more illiterate than it was fifty or hundred years ago"** completely right.

(source: [Not many know the Indian past he had discovered! - by S Gurumurthy - newindpress.com](#)).

Watch video - [Brahmins in India have become a minority](#)

The present education system is, in effect, a legacy of the colonial rule. For more on this tragic destruction of ancient education, please refer to the chapters [Islamic Onslaught](#), [FirstIndologists](#) and [European Imperialism](#). Also refer to [Education: A Beautiful Tree](#) - Indiatgether.com and [The Beautiful Tree](#) - Shri Dharampal - an associate of Mahatma Gandhi (Biblia Impex, Delhi, 1983).

In India, our goddess of learning is **Saraswati**. She who is seated on a white lotus, wearing a beautiful white garment; she who holds a lute in her hand and has a garland of fresh white jasmine buds around her neck; she who is worshipped even by Brahma, Shiva and all gods - **may that Saraswati, Goddess of Learning, remove my ignorance. It is significant that these ideas of beauty and grace, purity, simplicity, and holiness are associated with the goddess of learning.** In the traditional Indian scheme of values, scholarship is not regarded as an end in itself, and education is looked upon as the molding of the complete man. **The educational system established by the British in India was one-sided, and came in for sharp criticism from Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo.**

Rabindranath Tagore wrote: "The Western system of education is impersonal...It dwells in the cold-storage compartments of lessons and the ice-packed minds of the schoolmasters...**It represented an artificial method of training specially calculated to produce the carriers of the white man's burden.**" Man's intellect has a natural pride in its own aristocracy, which is the pride of its culture. When this pride succumbs to some compulsion of necessity or lure of material advantage, it brings humiliation on to the intellectual man. **Modern India, through her education, has been made to suffer this humiliation.** There was a time when India provided her children with a culture which was the product of her own thought and creation. But this culture was brushed aside by the educationists under the British rule." "Our educated community is not a cultured community but a community of qualified candidates."

(source: [The Spirit of Modern India](#) - Edited by Robert A McDermont and V. S. Naravane p. 169 - 171 and 182-185).

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[Professional and Useful Education](#)

Medical science

Medical science is no doubt of hoary antiquity in India. The Vedic literature refers to the healing feats of Asvins, who though originally human beings, were later deified by a grateful posterity. This science was fairly well developed by the 4th century B.C., for the Greeks, who had accompanied Alexander, were very well impressed by the skill of Indian doctors in curing the cases of serpent bites. The Jatakas refer to the medical students at Taxila treating for cranial abscesses and intestinal displacement. Medical education was

usually imparted by private teachers. The student had to be well versed in Sanskrit, for most of the books on medicine were written in that language. Practical training in surgery and pharmacy and constant discussion were some of the important features of the training.

Training in Surgery: The beginners were taught how to hold and use the surgical instruments by practicing upon pumpkins, water melons etc. under the teacher's direction. Puncturing was demonstrated on the veins of dead animals, the manner of holding the probe on dry Alabu fruits, application of bandages on stuffed human figures and the use of caustics on soft pieces of flesh. **Susruta** emphasizes on the importance of dissection for perfecting the student's knowledge; and points out that mere book learning cannot give a clear idea of the actual internal constituents of the human body. Corpses used to be decomposed in water and students were then required to dissect them and visualize the nature of skin, muscles, arteries, bones, internal organs, etc. Anatomical knowledge that was imparted was fairly high when compared with the contemporary standards elsewhere.

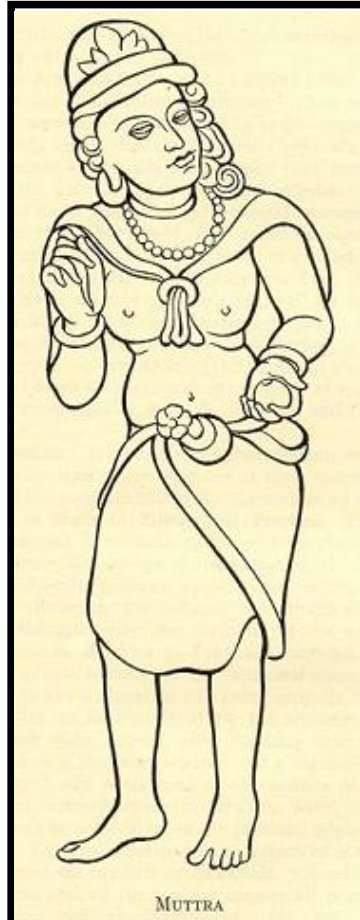


Image in stone of Pingala, attendant of Surya, holding pen in his right hand and an Ink-pt in his left. Gupta period.

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

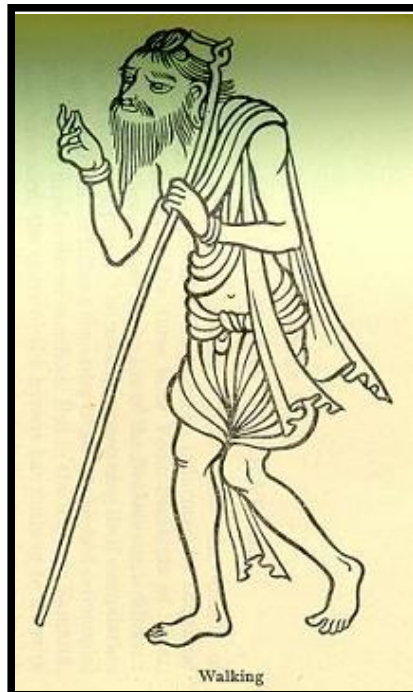
Smallpox inoculation is an ancient Indian tradition and was practiced in India before the West.

In ancient times in India smallpox was prevented through the *tikah* (inoculation). **Kurt Pollak** (1968) writes, "preventive inoculation against the smallpox, which was practiced in China from the 11th century, apparently came from India". This inoculation process was generally practiced in large part of Northern and Southern India, but around 1803-04 the British government banned this process. It's banning, undoubtedly, was done in the name of 'humanity', and justified by the Superintendent General of Vaccine (manufactured by Dr. E. Jenner from the cow for use in the inoculation against smallpox).

Dharmapal has quoted British sources to prove that inoculation in India was practiced before the British did. In the seventeenth century, smallpox inoculation (*tikah*) was practiced in India. A particular sect of Brahmins employed a sharp iron needle to carry out these practices. In 1731, Coult was in Bengal and he observed it and wrote (Operation of inoculation of the smallpox as performed in Bengall from Re. Coult to **Dr. Oliver Coult** in 'An account of the diseases of Bengall' Calcutta, dated February 10, 1731):

" The operation of inoculation called by the natives tikah has been known in the kingdom of Bengall as near as I can learn, about 150 years and according to the Bhamanian records was first performed by one Dununtary, a physician of Champanagar, a small town by the side of the Ganges about half way to Cossimbazar whose memory is now holden in great esteem as being through the another of this operation, which secret, say they, he had immediately of God in a dream.'

(source: **Indian Science And Technology in the Eighteenth Century**; some contemporary European accounts - **By Dharampal** 1971. An Account of the manner of inoculating for the Smallpox in the East Indies. Mapusa, Goa: Other India Press. Chapter VIII p. 142 -164. **The Healers, the Doctor, then and now - By Pollack, Kurt** 1968.English Edition. p. 37-8).



Sage Vasistha

(image source: **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**).

The Hindus were the first nation to establish hospitals, and for centuries they were the only people in the world who maintained them. The Chinese traveler, **Fa-hien**, speaking of a hospital he visited in Pataliputra says: "Hither come all poor and helpless patients suffering from all kinds of infirmities. They are well taken care of, and a doctor attends them; food and medicine being supplied according to their wants. Thus they are made quite comfortable, and when they are well, they may go away."

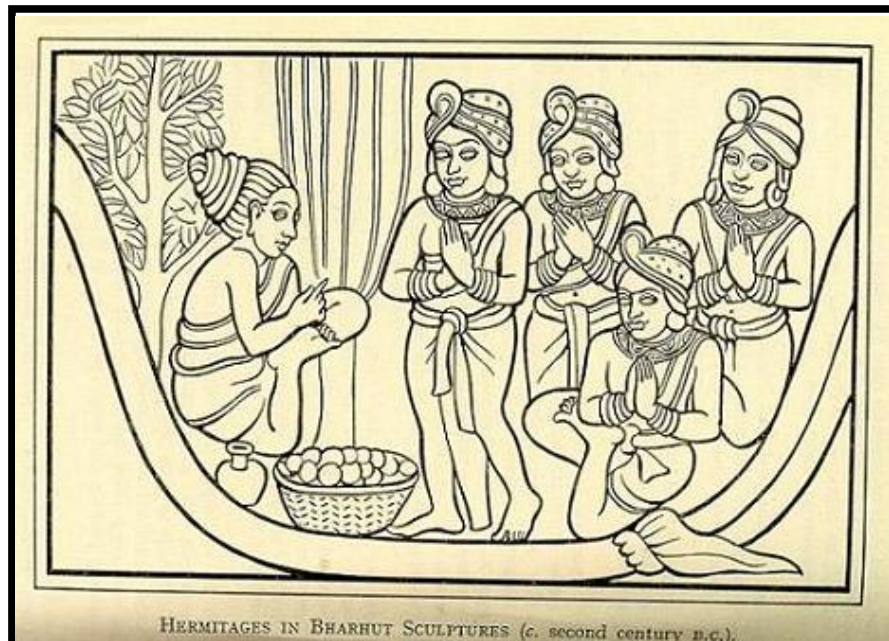
Excavations at Kumrahar near Patna have revealed in 1953 the existence of one university-cum hospital named Arogyavihara. Indian hospitals were well organized, for Hindu doctors were invited by the Abbaside Khalifas to supervise their own hospitals in the 8th century A.D. The medical course at Taxila was fairly long, for his physician Jivaka was permitted to go home very reluctantly by his teacher, though he had spent seven years at that University. The completion of the course was followed by an examination. This is implied by the observation of Charaka and Susruta that it is the king's fault, if incompetent doctors practice as a doctor without possessing king's license.

India continued to be famous for its medical skills throughout the ancient period. Her doctors could perform surgical operations for cataract, hydrocele, abscesses, extraction of dead embryos etc. They were in demand in Mesopotamia and Arabia for guiding and training the physicians there. **Khalifa Harun** sent several scholars to India to study Hindu medicine and pharmacology and induced about 20 doctors to come to Baghdad to become chief medical officers of state hospitals and to translate Sanskrit medical works into Arabic. Most celebrated among them was Manaka (Manikyā) who was originally invited to cure an ailment of Sultan Harun, which defied the skill of Arabian physicians. He succeeded in his treatment and was later induced to become the director of state hospitals and translate the work of Susruta into Arabic. Arabic system of medicine owes a great deal to the Ayurvedic system. (refer to S. K. Nadvi - Arab aur Bharat ke sambandha. p. 103-123).

Veterinary Education had been developed in India fairly early. Since animals were regarded as a part of the

same cosmos as humans, it is not surprising that animal life was keenly protected and veterinary medicine was a distinct branch of science with its own hospitals and scholars. Salihotra is its traditional founder and two of the Pandava heroes, Nakula and Sahadeva are said to have been experts in it. Numerous texts, especially of the postclassical period, **Visnudharmottara Mahapurana** for example, mention veterinary medicine. Megasthenes refers to the kind of treatment which was later to be incorporated in Palakapya's Hastya yur Veda and similar treatises. **Salihotra** was the most eminent authority on horse breeding and hippiatry. **Juadudatta** gives a detailed account of the medical treatment of cows in his Asva-Vaidyaka.

(source: [Indian and World Civilization - By D. P. Singhal](#) p.187-188).



Hermitage of Kapila, who gives it away to four exiled Ikshvaku princes.

(image source: [Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji](#)).

According to **Stanley Wolpert**, "Veterinary science had developed into an Indian medical specialty by that early era, and India's monarchs seem to have supported special hospitals for their horses as well as their elephants. Hindu faith in the sacrosanctity of animals as well as human souls, and belief in the partial divinity of cows and elephants helps explain perhaps what seems to be far better care lavished on such animals... A uniquely specialized branch of Indian medicine was called **Hastyaurveda** ("The Science of Prolonging Elephant Life").

(source: [An Introduction to India - By Stanley Wolpert](#) p. 193-194).

Military Education

In modern times military training is usually given only by the state authorities when recruits join the army. Such was not the case in ancient India. The average citizen and villager was expected to be able to defend his own hearth and home: The Arthashastra expressly lays down that every village ought to be able to defend itself. That such was actually the case in several parts of India would become quite clear from the accounts of Alexander's invasion, as given by the Greek historians. In several places the Macedonian was opposed not so much by state forces as by the whole population in arms. There can be no doubt that in many of the republican states of the Punjab, the Kathas, the Malavas, the Sibis, etc. every adult used to receive military training of a fairly high order.

Military Training: There were also some cities in the country, famous as centers of military training. Taxila, situated in the north-west, had naturally become a center of military training. Kshatriyas and Brahmins from all over the country used to go to this frontier city for getting mastery in the military profession. In one military college of the city there were 103 princes receiving training in the different branches of the military art, which included elephant-lore, horsemanship, and cavalry training, and the instructions in the use of the different weapons then in use.

Commercial Education

There was considerable inter provincial and foreign trade going on in the ancient times. The maritime activity of ancient India were considerable, and the trade with South East Asia, Egypt, Greek and Rome was very profitable to India during the early centuries.

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[Conclusion](#)

The Hindu Synthesis of the Transcendental and Education:

Author **Benoy Kumar Sarkar** writes: "The ideal of realizing the infinite in the finite, the transcendental in the positive, manifested itself also in the educational system of Hindu India. The graduates trained under the 'domestic system' of the Gurukulas or preceptors' homes were competent enough to found and administer states, undertake industrial and commercial enterprises; they were builders of empires and organizers of business concerns. It was because of this all-round and manly culture that the people of India could organize vast schemes of colonization and conquest, and not content with being simply confined within the limits of mother India, could build up a Greater India beyond the seas, and spread culture, religion and humanity among the subject and hospitable races. It is not for education, how else can we account for the remarkable progress of the nation in architecture, sculpture, medicine, dyeing, weaving, mathematics, ship building, chess, navigation, military tactics, and implements and all such aspects of socio-economic and economico-political life as have to depend on the help of physical and natural sciences?"

(source: **Creative India - By Benoy Kumar Sarkar** p. 60-63).

The majestic Saraswati River ran through northwestern India till it dried up 4,000 years ago. **The goddess of learning is Saraswati.**

Only a nation who had highly educated people would call a river - a goddess of learning.

Louis Revel (?) French author of **The Fragrance of India : landmarks for the world of tomorrow** has observed:

"India, in her glorious past, has understood that the greatness of a nation, its virility, its moral value, depend entirely on the system of education that is given to it. Ancient India furnished us examples of schools, universities, Brahmanic or Buddhist, which brought to this nation most glorious harvests - harvests fallen, alas! today into oblivion. Let us take such centers of culture as Taxila, Ujjain, and Nalanda. These universities where thousands of students came from all parts of Asia to drink at the source of learning - based their system of education on individual contacts between master and pupil, but the masters themselves were pupils in the great University of Life. What they gave to their students was the honey of their moral and intellectual experiences received through masters still more experienced in spiritual science, in the true knowledge of the laws of life. Do we not see the famous Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsang, coming to perfect himself at Nalanda in the study of Yoga-sastra, the knowledge of the laws of being? Did he not have, at Nalanda, the celebrated vision of the vicissitudes through which India would have to go? Thus, there passed through these universities great winds of free Spirit and free Intelligence which swept away the miasms of false conceptions, which formed real men, noble men, in whom joy sparkled."

(source: **The Fragrance of India : landmarks for the world of tomorrow - By Louis Revel** p. 99 - 114).

The percentage of literary people in India was more than that at present. At least up to the 7th century A.D. this system worked most satisfactorily. People showed brilliancy in all departments. eg. Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Chemistry, Poetry, Drama, Grammar and Philosophy. No nation could excel these people at that time. From the 4th century B.C. to the 11th century A.D. all foreigners who came in contact with India and studied her civilization critically were very much impressed by it. They spoke highly of Indian character specially their truthfulness, honesty, and sense of justice. The influence of the system of education was very great among the people in general. **Megasthenes**, the Greek ambassador who came to India in the 4th century B.C. remarked " for whereas among other nations it is usual in the contests of war, to ravage the soil, among the Indians it is on the contrary. They never use the conquered as slaves." **Idrisi**, the Arabian traveler and scholar in his Geography written in the 11th century A.D. says, "The Indians are naturally inclined to justice and never depart from it in action. Their good faith, honesty and fidelity to their engagement were well known and they were so famous for their qualities that people came to their country from every side." **Abul Fazi**, the author of Aini Akbar, in the 16th century notes, "The Hindus are admirers of truth and showed unbounded fidelity in all dealings."

The Hindus were conscious about their ideal. Though spirituality is their goal they never neglected the material affairs. They were in the words of Wordsworth, "true to the kindred points of heaven and home' and knew fully that matter and spirit are interrelated, one cannot be conceived without the other. **This ideal is maintained by the system of education which is based on a sound method.'**

Dwelling on this wonderful effect of this system of education unparalleled in history **Sir Monier Williams** says, "And here I may observe circumstances in the history of India is more worthy of investigation than the antiquity and perseverance of her institutions. It has existed almost unaltered since the description of its organization in Manu's code two or three centuries before Christian era. It has survived all religious, political and physical convulsions from which India suffered from time immemorial. **Invader after invader has ravaged the country with fire and sword** but the simple self-contained township has preserved its constitution intact, its customs, precedents, and peculiar institutions unchanged and unchangeable amid all other changes." (source: Brahmanism and Hinduism p. 455).

The realization of the ultimate Reality was the ideal of India. Material progress was never the end in itself but was considered as a means to the realization of the end. Aparā Vidya dealing with material progress could never bring peace. From all these it appears that the aim of education was not only material progress but also spiritual growth. Regarding the system of education in ancient India it is known from the account of Ewan Chowang, the Chinese traveler, that boys at the age of seven began studying grammar, arts, painting, logic and scriptures and Brahmin and Buddhist teachers were highly efficient and persevering. The doors of education was open to all whether they belonged to the order of monks or of householders.

Ramesh Chandra Dutt, in his **Civilization in Ancient India**, p. 127, writes: "Buddhism had never assumed a hostile attitude towards the parent religion of India; and the fact that the two religions existed side by side for long centuries increased their toleration of each other. In every country Buddhists and orthodox Hindus lived side by side. **Hindus went to Buddhist monasteries and Universities, and Buddhists learned from Brahmins sages.** The same Kings favored the followers of both religions. The Gupta Emperors were often worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu, but loaded Buddhists and Buddhist monasteries with gifts, presents and favors. One king was often a Buddhist and his son an orthodox Hindu; and often two brothers followed or favored the two religions without fighting. Every Court had learned men belonging to both the religions, and Vikramaditya's Court was no exception to the rule."

Mr. Ernest Binfield Havell says that the system of education during the seventh century was very much improved and better than was under the British. Even up to the fifteenth century, the educational institutions in every Hindu village were maintained either from the income of some temple or from the produce of land set aside for the purpose in villages.

From this, a picture of the educational system of ancient India can be derived and also come idea of the high standard of civilization then prevailing in the society.

Books Used for this Chapter

1. **Ancient Indian Education - By Radha Kumud Mookerji**
2. **Education in Ancient India - By Dr. A. S. Altekar**
3. **Ancient Indian Culture at a Glance - By Swami Tattwananda**
4. **Creative India - By Benoy Kumar Sarkar**
5. **Education in South India - By S. Gurumurthy** - New Era publication - 1979 Madras
6. **Hindu Civilization - By Radha Kumud Mookerji** Longmans, Green and Co. London 1936

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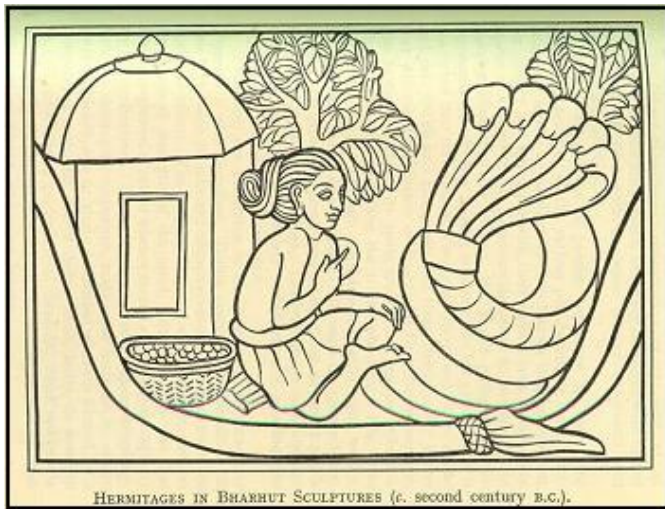
Did You Know?

England's debt to India in Pedagogics - The So-called Bell-Lancasterian Pedagogics

During the formative period of the modern educational systems in Europe and America, the pedagogy of the Hindus, especially on its elementary side, has played an important part.

It is well-known that primary education was grossly neglected in America during the first half-century of her independence. In England even so late as 1845, 3.2 percent of men and 49 per cent of women had to sign their names on the marriage register with a cross. In the age of paucity of "public schools" private educational efforts naturally elicited the people's admiration. And none drew more sympathy and support than **Andrew Bell's** (1775-1823) "mutual-tuition" or "pupil teacher" or "monitorial"

system of school management.



What, now, is the origin of this much-applauded mutual instruction or monitorial system, the so-called Bell-Lancasterian "discovery" in pedagogy.

Historians of education are familiar with the fact that the plan of making one boy teach others has been indigenous to India for centuries.

Bell, himself, in his **Mutual Tuition** (pt. I. ch. I, V). describes how in Madras he came into contact with a school conducted by a single master or superintendent through the medium of the scholars themselves. And, in fact, in England the monitorial system or the method of making every boy at once a master and a scholar is known as the "Madras system."



Bell, a Christian missionary in Madras took the Indian system of education back to England, and introduced it there. Until then, only the children of the nobles were given education there and he started education for the masses in England. So, we gather that it is from India that the British adopted the system for educating the masses.

England's debt to India in pedagogies has been fitly acknowledged in the tablet in Warminster Abbey, which describes Andrew Bell as

"the eminent founder of the **Madras System of Education**, which has been adopted within the British empire, as the national system of education for the children of the poor."

(source: **Creative India: From Mohenjo Daro to The Age of Ramakrsna-Vivekananda - By Benoy Kumar Sarkar** p. 108-110 and **Education in India Under The Rule of the East India Company - By Major B. D. Basu** 1934 2nd edition. Calcutta and **The Destruction of The Indian System of Education**).

For more on education under the British Rule, refer to chapter **European Imperialism**)



Did You Know?

Link between Myths of the Scandinavians and the Hindus:

The Scandinavians are the descendants of the Hindu Kshatriyas. The term Scandinavian and the Hindu "Kshatriya" or the Warrior caste are identical, "the former being a Sanskrit equivalent for the latter: "Scanda Nabhi" (Scanda Navi) signifies Scanda Chiefs (Warrior Chiefs).

Colonel James Tod says: "The Aswas were chiefly of the Indu race, yet a branch of the Suryas also bore this designation." In the Edda we are informed that the Getes or Jits who entered Scandinavia were termed Asi, and their first settlement was Asigard (Asi garh, fortress of the Asi)."

John Pinkerton says: "Odin came into Scandinavia in the time of Darius Hystaspes, 500 years before Christ, and that his successor was Gotama. This is the period of the last Buddha or Mahavira, whose era is 477 before Vikrama, or 533 before Christ. Gotama was the successor of Mahavira."

"In the martial mythology and warlike poetry of the Scandinavians a wide field exists for assimilation."

"We can scarcely question," says **Count Bjornstjerna**, "the derivation of the **Edda** (the religious books of ancient Scandinavia) from the **Vedas**."

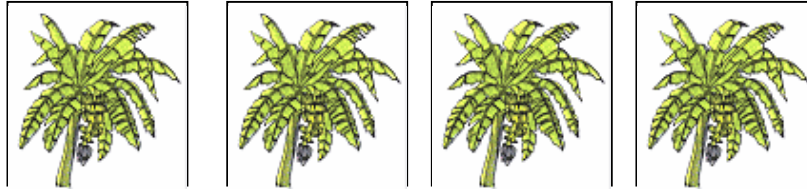
The principle on which the seven days of the week are named in India is the same on which it has been done

in Scandinavia:

1. Sunday is called by the Hindus Aditwaram, after Addit, the sun, after which also the Scandinavians call the day – Sondag.
2. Monday is called by the Hindus Somawaram, from Soma, the moon. Among the Scandinavians it is called Mondag.
3. Tuesday is called Mangalwaram in India after the Hindu hero, Mangla. It bears the name Tisdag amongst the Scandinavians, after their hero, This.
4. Wednesday is termed Boudhawaram by the Hindus, after Boudha; by the Scandinavians, it is denominated after Odin (Wodan, Bodham, Budha), Onsdag.
5. Thursday is called Brahaspativaram by the Hindus, after Brahspati, or Brahma, their practical god; it bears the name Thorsdag amongst the Scandinavians, after the principal god, Thor.
6. Friday is called by the Hindus Sucrawaram, after Sucra, the goddess of beauty; it is named by the Scandinavians after Freja, the goddess of beauty, Frejdag.
7. Saturday is called Sanivaram by the Hindus after Sanischar, the god who cleanses spiritually; it is named Lordag by the Scandinavians from loger, bathing.

"We have here," says Count Bjornstjerna (author of [The Theogony of the Hindoos with their systems of Philosophy and Cosmogony](#) p. 169), himself a Scandinavian gentleman, "another proof that the Myths of the Scandinavians are derived from those of the Hindus.

(source: [Hindu Superiority - By Har Bilas Sarda](#) p. 173 - 174).



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