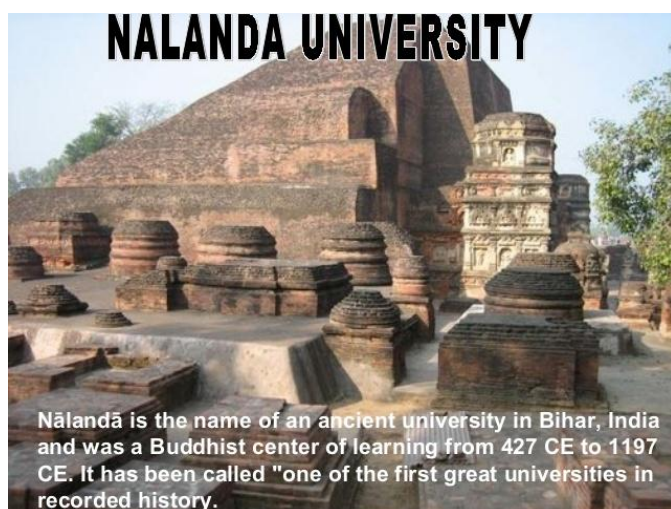


Schooling in Ancient Indian society

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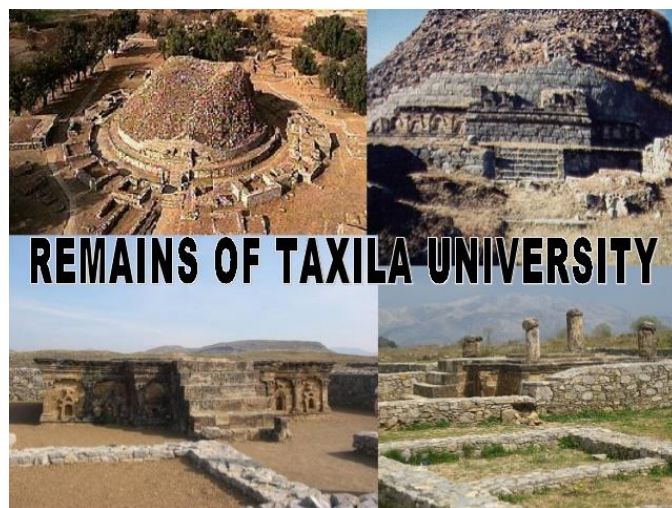
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The most famous centers of learning were the monastic collage founded mostly by the Buddhists. Taxila, Varanasi, Ujjain and Amravati were other famous centers of learning before the Gupta Age. University of Taxila, though had lost its former glory due to Hun invasion, yet had maintained its standard. Vallabhi in Gujarat and Vikramasila in Bihar were other famous centers of learning. Nalanda University was established by Kumaragupta I in the 5th century. The university was one of the important learning centers of the Gupta period and it was situated in the present day Bihar. The university offered a variety of courses for the students. Nalanda university was one of the first universities which provided residential quarters or hostels for the students. The students returned home after the curriculum was completed. Education was imparted orally. The students at the Nalanda University were taught free of cost. The Taxila University was one of the first few centers in the world which offered higher education. The university was however established before the Gupta Empire came into existence, somewhere around 700 BC. Taxila University was a centre where a variety of subjects were taught to the students. These included astronomy, medicine, accounts, politics, mathematics, science, law, music, painting and many other subjects. The students of Taxila University had to pay the requisite fees in order to obtain education. Like Nalanda University, Taxila attracted students from foreign countries.



This university was established during the reign of the Gupta ruler Skandagupta. It was founded by the Maitrakas. They were the descendents of General Bhatpara, who was a military governor of Saurashtra during the rule of Skandagupta. The university was a popular centre for Haryana Buddhism. The Vallabhi University was funded by the Maitrakas kings. There were some other universities which achieved popularity during the Gupta empire period. One of them was the Ujjain

University. This university was known for providing education in the field of astronomy.



Nature and organization of vocational education in Ancient India. There was no educational institution like present day in Ancient India. The ritual of Vidyarambha initiated the learner around the age of five to the primary stage of education imparted by a designated teacher the guru, to whom and to whose house the child was entrusted. There are references to these schools as lipisalas and to the teachers as daakachauya. We also read of the emergence of prakrity. The places of learning called Gurukula. Individual instruction contributed to the strength of the teaching process enabling the teacher to understand the strength and weakness of the learner and to place to process of education accordingly. The strict adherence to duty or dharma and the regulated life of the home of the teacher the Gurukula accompanied by the reverence for the guru, would have been sufficient conditions to maintain discipline in the educational institutions. The decision of the teacher was final and was never questioned.

Ashrams in Hinduism are one of four age based life stages discussed in ancient Indian texts. The four ashrams are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. Brahmacharya represent the bachelor student stage of life. This stage focused on education and included the practice of celibacy. The students went to a Gurukul and typically would live with a guru, acquiring knowledge of science, philosophy, scriptures and logic, practicing self-discipline, working to earn dakshina to be paid for the guru, learning to live a life Dharma.

Taxila, Ujjaini, and Varanasi were famous educational institution. Asoka also encouraged the development of herbal medicine, for men and animals, in their territories. The Gurukul

was the house of the teacher who was a settled house-holder. After the initiation ceremony a child would leave his natural parents and reside in the house of his preceptor or Guru till the end of his studies. *Goshti* or Conferences was a national gathering or Congress summoned by a great King in which representatives of various schools was invited to meet and exchange their views. In one such conference called by King Janaka of Videha, the great scholar Yajnavalkya won a special prize of 1000 cows with horns hung with gold. *Ashrams* or hermitages were another centre where students from distant and different parts of the country flocked together for learning around famous sages and saints. For example the Ashrams of Bharadwaj at Prayag was very big Ashrams where princes like Bharat used to study. Other Ashrams was that of Naimisha located in the forest of Naimisharanya headed by sage Sauna. Here ten thousand pupils and numerous learned teachers and scholars held constant discussions and debates on religious, philosophical and scientific topics. *Ghathikas* was an institution of highest learning where both the teachers and the taught met and discussed and where by the clash and contact of cultured scholars the highest knowledge could be obtained in religious literature. *Agraharas* were settlements of Brahmins in villages where they used to teach. *Mathas* was a place where pupils used to reside and received instructions both religious and secular. These Mathas belonged to both Shiva and Vaishnava sects and were normally attached to some temples or had some temples attached to them. *Brahmapuri* was a settlement of learned Brahmins in parts of towns and cities or in any selected area where education was imparted. *Bihar* was a Buddhist monastery where all subjects concerned with Buddhism and its philosophy was taught. The most famous centers of learning were the monastic collage founded mostly by the Buddhists.

These centers contributed to the building of a harmonious cultural life of the people. Taxila, Varanasi, Ujjain and Amravati were other famous centers of learning before the Gupta Age. University of Taxila, though had lost its former glory due to Hun invasion, yet had maintained its standard.

Vallabhi in Gujarat and Vikramasila in Bihar were other famous centers of learning.

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Ancient India was dominated by the cast system- Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vishay's and Sutras. Each caste had its own vocation and it received that type of education which would be helpful to its vocation. The upper three castes had the right to education according to their vocation but the Sudra had no right to education. The Brahmins were study Dharmasastras, Nitisastra, Arthasastra, Vedas, Vedangas and the Puranas. The knowledge of the arms and of military skill was a must for a young Kshatriya. We know from the Mahabharata how the young Pandu and Kuru princes were instructed in the various kinds of military skills. In the Ramayana we also read how the princes of king Dasarath received training in different types of military art such as archery, fighting on the horseback.

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