

Highly educated

I was the only child.

My mother was a very sick lady, she died when I was only 5 years old, just 5 years .

One of my first memory was I have seen my mother bedridden.

When I started going to school at the age of 4 and came back home she would ask me, "what did you learn in school?" I used to rattle off "A B C D E F G H I J" and she used to be so happy, I remember those things. "Come on say your ABCD again." .

She was an educated girl. She studied up to the 6th standard and then sat at home till she got married at the age of 12. They also educated her in 2 languages, Sanskrit and Kannada.

She was the only daughter for her mother who was an old lady. So, my grand mother remained with us with my father and me to look after me.

My father started taking me to the school in which he was working because I was a lonely child at home with my grandmother.

He did not get married again.

When I was born, my grandfather was there at home in the village and he had seen my horoscope. So,he said this child is going to be highly educated. That is the most important part. No girl in our family will be as educated as she, is and it will be a foreign education, not ours.

In my father's family, there were many ladies like grandmother aunts and all with the name of Lakshmi who is the goddess of wealth, but when it came to naming me, my grandfather said "We have enough of Lakshmis in the family and Lakshmi has not brought us any wealth, not much wealth, but we will name her Saraswathi because Saraswathi is the goddess of learning. So, it was my grandfather who named me Saraswathi because he said by the horoscope, it is the goddess Saraswathi who will bless her and she will go up to higher educations.

When my mother died, we moved to the town at that time, I remember all those things, burning of the corps. Then after that, those ceremonies at home, the death ceremonies and all that. But, I do not know why, but even if I think that, those things did not hurt me much. I was involved in the ceremonies too because my father was performing the ceremonies. I had to hold his hand like that, meaning to say I am taking part in the ceremony, even in the lighting of the fire, and actually, the girls or the women do not take part in these things, but my father said you are the

only daughter, come on, you do it, it does not matter if you are not a boy, that is what I remember, and throughout the ceremonies, my father had me touching him as he was performing the rites.

My grandmother, made it a point to take me home during the holidays every year twice a year.

So, 2 months in a year, I spent in a village with very orthodox people, but they all taught me, and the best part was the women in the orthodox home were all educated, not in a school, but because their elders were educated, they all learnt the language Sanskrit, our ancient language, and the first thing they started doing was what is called Aksharaabhyasa, sitting before Ganapathi, the God, the grandparents will make the child who is about 5 years, whether it is boy or girl, no difference, sit between them, take a plate of rice, and the grandfather or the grandmother will hold the child's fingers and make them write the name of God first, Ganapathaye Namaha, that is Namaskara to God. First, they make you say it and make you write it.

I do not think I missed my mother at all at that time, but as I grew up, at 13 and 14, during those years, I started missing my mother.

The girls when they get their first period, there is a ceremony but it is a very private ceremony.

Those ceremonies have a certain meaning, and it makes you more responsible to the nature life, not to the modernized life but actual human life in relationship to God or whoever who is a creator and all that. You may not believe in a creator, you may not believe in those things, but if you think of the ceremonies, indirectly, each ceremony is the beginning of a part of your life, which will stick in your mind.

So at that ceremony, the girls would be kept in a separate a room, they are fed there, no moving out with anybody for 5 days, that is till the periods flow finished off. After that, they had to have a ritual bath after 5 days and then, there is a pooja formed and everything attended by women except the purohit who will say the mantras and later on, some elderly women will tell her what exactly is happening, but without the men, what is happening to her.

After that if the girl is already married, there are poojas offered and that is when she has to spend her first night with her husband, not until then.

By that time, especially, her mother or grandmother, somebody, will tell her what exactly has happened. Because they do not know anything.

They do not know the meaning of this. The modern girls know all that. But at that time, they did not know anything, but once this happens, it is the elderly women of the house who will take on the responsibility of telling them what is happening and then what happens after marriage so that she does not have to go unprepared.

When I got married I was probably the first girl in the family to get married so late

My father saw my horoscope and said, "No, let her be prepared to face life after marriage. I do not want her to become a poor widow depending on others for her living. She is good in studies. Let her finish some kind of training. In case if she needs to work, she can go back to a job."

I got married at the age of 23, you will not believe.

So, my father did one thing. Before I got married, he bought me some books, which explains sexual life, what it means, and all those things. So, theoretically I knew, but still, you miss the human touch, especially the girls miss the human touch, the mother, the mother's touch I missed then when I got married, not before.

Whatever books I read, I know everything about all the married life and things, but a human being, a mother, to help you in all that, I missed that very much.

Luckily for me, my husband and my mother-in-law said "She may have to work for 2 years" because my husband was just beginning practice, he is a lawyer, and was not earning much. "So, we would be happy if she continue working." That was the greatest point in my life, happiest point, because I had a feeling, once I take up a job, I do not think I am going to stop and that was one thing. It happened like that.

Then, once I started work, life was not difficult, but life was not easy And then, during my service, within one year, I became pregnant and the usual morning sickness and all that. In spite of that, I went. I have 4 children, 2 daughters, son, and then another daughter.

Also I was used to have so many friends and all that, and my father just did not bother whether I talked to boys or not.

He knew that I would know how to keep myself, that moral base or whatever you call it, in youth. My father was quite sure. He never said "Don't talk to that boy, don't look at that boy." He never did that

My mother in law lived to be 101 years old. We used to have misunderstandings, naturally, some things. She used to think one way and I used to think one way, but we never quarreled about those things. And then, later on, when she became very old, she lived with my husband's brother, her son, in the village, but all the time, she used to say, "I must go back to my eldest daughter-in-law, that is me.

Why? Because she is the one who is really educated and I want to see the children

Education means, it is not just going to school and college.

Education is something which teaches you how to face life, how to live.

Education gives some shape to your thoughts, your way of thinking, and the way your emotions are, you learn how to control your emotions, you learn how to develop your emotions.

But you must do a bit of thinking.

Book knowledge is not enough. You should be able to see, read, mix with people, exchange views, and come to some kind of how to do things.

The greatest blessing in my life is the education I have received. If I am what I am today, it is because of my education.

Thinking back of my career, even now I meet students. “ A teacher like you who can remember us, we have not met”. I do not think they will lie to me at this age. They are speaking from their heart.