

ANCIENT INDIAN GURUKUL EDUCATION SYSTEM- LEARNINGS FROM THE PAST FOR A NEW DAWN

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Abstract:

In ancient times India was a major player in learning and education. It is no secret that individuals seeking high-quality education travelled to India from the Middle East, Europe, and Portugal. One of the most well-known educational programmes ever implemented in India is the Gurukul system. This type of residential schooling dates back to around 5000 BC (<https://leverageedu.com/blog/gurukul-education-system/>).

A student (shisha) would approach a teacher (Guru) under this educational system to request enrolment at the event of acceptance, the student would reside at the teacher's home. The Gurukul was actually a teacher's house and the Guru was the centre, where students lived until they completed their education. Student equality was a top priority in Gurukul, and gurus (teachers) and shishas (students) lived in the same house or near each other. This relationship between Guru and Shishya was so blessed that no fee was charged from the disciples. However, students had to offer Guru Dakshina, which was considered a sign of respect to the teacher, in the form of special tasks that had to be performed according to the teacher's instructions. (Chadwani, 2019). Apart from learning from the Guru, the students helped with all the household chores and developed an emotional bond with the Guru. The Guru taught important subjects such as mathematics, science, philosophy, and metaphysics. Communication took place in Sanskrit. The training was not just reading books and memorizing information, but was practical and connected to nature and real-life situations. The aim was the overall development of students, including cognitive, physical and mental health. This helped students to apply their knowledge in practice to find solutions to real-world problems. (Chadwani, 2019)

Every year, while residing at the Guru's residence, his disciple acquired every knowledge and skill. In contrast to the current Guru Shishya Parampara, which is organised, this instruction was rigorous yet unstructured. Even now, there is still a knowledge exchange between Gurus and Shishyas, but it is a restricted, impersonal, subject-specific, and purely technical interchange. There is either very little or no emphasis on developing the human perspective and a holistic approach. (<https://santoshiyogainstitute.com/the-ancient-gurukul-system-of-india/>)

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A quick review of the main features of the Gurukul system makes it possible to identify some of its principal strengths as well as its weaknesses. For example, Gurukuls sought to build the character of students, make them well-versed in Vedic Philosophy, and help them to grow as excellent human beings with holistic development. As the classrooms were inside forests, the system helped students to be around nature all the time, become aware of and sensitive to the relationship between nature and human beings, and kept them healthy. The teacher and the disciples spent most of their time together in the residential system, this helped to develop strong bonds between them, instil values, and develop character. On the debit side, it is noteworthy that girls/young women were not admitted to the Gurukul. The Guru's words were final and the

shishya could not argue or put across his point to the Guru, nor disagree publicly with the Guru. There was no standard syllabus and conventional evaluation and examination system. They led a sheltered life at the Gurukul and were not sufficiently exposed and could not gain much knowledge about the outside world.

Introduction of modern education system in the colonial period:

Unfortunately, before independence the British rulers worked to abolish the Gurukul education system and in 1835 the modern education system focused on the introduction of Western (English) education by Lord Macaulay. (Devender Kumar, 1st March 2018) The Gurukul education system was replaced by the modern school system. Lord Macaulay stressed that English should be the medium of communication in government and courts This system led to classroom learning where the close emotional bond between teachers and students was broken Communication took place in English and focused on topics such as mathematics, science, and metaphysics. (Devender Kumar, 1st March 2018)

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-20):

The Indian Educational System will be based on the 10+2 system as of July 2020, with Higher Secondary Education available after classes and the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) issued after the tenth grade. For classes 10 and 12, a Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) is awarded. In line with the New Education Policy (NEP), the present school system has been replaced with a 5+3+3+4 system in which students are grouped into levels based on their stage of cognitive development. (Kasturirangan, 2020) The emphasis on holistic education in this new education strategy has the potential to revolutionise education and bring back the former grandeur of the Indian educational system. It reintroduces a love of India, Indian languages, and the Indian educational system into the curriculum. The goal is to attain more efficient education. It is worth mentioning some important elements promoted in the new policy to make learning effective and meaningful. (Kasturirangan, 2020)

- (a) Materials - NEP-2020 encourages learning in the mother tongue. This is one of the main points. Because people definitely think best in their native language. As technology advances, acquiring native language resources will no longer be a big problem. (Education, 2022)
- (b) Critical Thinking and Experiential Learning – Memorization, must be replaced by critical thinking and rational learning. Experiential learning is an important aspect, and learning must be extended to real-life experience when applying knowledge in practice. (Education, 2022)
- (c) Skill development - The most important part of learning is the development of skills to apply the knowledge acquired. It must be related not only to the main subject of study but also to other areas of interest, including areas close to the student's heart. In art, the mind and soul of the body work together to produce the best result. (Somani, 2023)
- (d) All are equal to one. The best educational systems are those in which groups of students feel that the curriculum is tailored solely to their needs and abilities. Outcome-based learning, continuous assessment and monitoring are part of such a learning environment. (Somani, 2023)
- (e) Interdisciplinary Approach - NEP-2020 requires all institutions of higher education to be interdisciplinary in nature. Vocational institutions also have departments in the arts, sciences, humanities, and languages. It

not only helps developers in all fields, but also provides better resources for comprehensive learning. (Education, 2022)

- (f) Research Environment – The academy and research are two sides of the same coin of effective learning. Learning is effective when research is an integral part of teaching. NEP-2020 encourages universities to create research environments. (Education, 2022)
- (g) Character and Values Education - The core of learning is ultimately the development of skills in the key areas of education. In the ancient Indian education system, this was possible thanks to dedicated and experienced teachers, a dynamic curriculum, and a continuous monitoring and evaluation system. (Somani, 2023)

The goal of **The National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** is to set out and integrate the profound teachings of the ancient Indian wisdom-based Pancha Kosha system into modern education. This innovative approach aims to reimagine the educational environment and empower students with tools to succeed and thrive in the 21st century. (Frameworks, 2023)

Unlocking the Wisdom of Pancha Kosha:

The Central Government recently released the draft national curriculum for school education. The National Education Policy 2020 is the "philosophy", the National Curriculum Framework is the "way", and the mandatory document "Curriculum Framework" provides specific guidance to textbook developers. (Samudrala, 2023) In fact, NCERT textbooks are specially developed according to the National Curriculum (NCF). The current draft is a 625-page document which states that it has been developed based on the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and aims to enable its implementation of NCF 2023. This provides a detailed plan of what needs to be taught in different curricula at different stages of school life. Such detailed, teaching-ready materials represent the development of the profession and a clear departure from the vision where teacher autonomy ensures a learning environment that meets the various needs of children according to modern pedagogy. (Frameworks, 2023)

This innovative approach promises to develop well-rounded individuals who are not only academically rich but also mentally and emotionally well-rounded. **Pancha Kosha, or "Five Sheaths"**, is a profound concept in Indian philosophy that describes the layers of existence that make up an individual. (Samudrala, 2023) These layers include the physical (Anamaya kosha), energy (Pranamaya kosha), mental (Manomaya kosha), intellectual (Vijnanamaya kosha), and spiritual (Anandamaya kosha). These ancient teachings provide a holistic understanding of human development and emphasize the harmonious growth of mind, body, and soul. NCF's pedagogy focuses on the need for engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to prepare students for the complexities of today's world. The implementation of NCF pedagogy will improve student outcomes and would enable students to become lifelong learners and positive contributors to the nation. (Maharaj K. Raina, 2016,)

NEP 2020 offers a number of assets to assist implement conventional values within the current and instructive framework. The Gurukul instruction framework centered on all-encompassing advancement of understudies not

fair scholastics in same way NEP2020 too emphasizing physical, otherworldly, cognitive, social advancement of understudies. In display time NEP 2020 can offer assistance in making a perfect combination of academics and extracurricular exercises besides instructing mindfulness and spiritual awareness to make the students better individuals (Maharaj K. Raina, 2016,)

A few challenging aspects as well as a number of beneficial ones of NEP 2020 ,as it is currently envisioned. For instance, it aims to strengthen students' physical, mental, and social abilities as well as their overall growth. It offers adaptable learning paths and lets students select courses according to their interests. It also prioritises giving students the critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities necessary for the twenty-first century. It also offers skill-based learning. The strategy offers teachers opportunities for professional growth via cooperation and training, enabling them to keep current with changing educational approaches. NEP may encounter difficulties due to undertrained personnel and a disconnect in the spirit of the policy's creation and execution. The absence of precise instructions for, the gap in the spirit with which the policy is drafted and implemented. The inadequate teacher training. The quality of education may be impacted by the absence of defined criteria for teachers' ongoing professional development and incentives. It appears that the policy does not pay enough attention to the challenges posed by efforts at standardization, especially as it may overlook the cultural diversities. The “one-size- fits-all approach” might not cater to the unique needs of the students coming from different socio-economic, cultural and other diverse backgrounds, and this policy is not being sufficiently sensitized to them.

Identifying the strength of the Gurukul system and incorporating it into NEP2020:

NEP 2020 provides various resources to help introduce traditional values into the current education system. Gurukul's education system, like NEP 2020, focuses not only on academics but also on the all-round growth of the students and also focuses on the physical, mental, cognitive and social development of the students. In today's era, NEP2020 provides the perfect combination of academics and extra-curricular activities, as well as lessons in mindfulness and spiritual awareness to help students become better people. Therefore, NEP 2020 can be the best way to integrate traditional values into today's education system. (K, 2024)

- Focus on Gurukul education system: NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of ancient Indian knowledge systems and aims to integrate them into the mainstream education system. The policy emphasizes the need to incorporate traditional subjects such as yoga, Ayurveda and Indian philosophy into the curriculum. (Samudrala, 2023)
- Promoting multilingualism: This policy promotes the use of Indian languages, especially regional languages, in education and aims to create a multilingual society. This not only preserves traditional values but also helps students connect with their roots and educational activities in rural areas. (K, 2024)
- Promoting critical thinking: NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By connecting students to traditional values and information systems, we can deepen their understanding of their culture and traditions. (K, 2024)
- Emphasis on life skills training: NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of life skills training, including values

such as empathy, compassion, and responsibility. By promoting these values, students can develop a sense of social responsibility and grow into well-rounded individuals. (K, 2024)

- **Experiential Learning:** While in the Gurukul education system, students learn through practical exercises and hands-on experience, NEP2020 also focuses on experiential learning and problem solving through skill courses. (Samudrala, 2023)

In conclusion, the Gurukul system provides many resources and instruments that can be leveraged to facilitate effective implementation of NEP 2020. Additionally, it will also help address some of the deficiencies identified in the conceptualization of NEP 2020 by allowing for amendments during implementation.

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