

The Essence of Integral Education: Need of Gurukul Tradition of Education to the Contemporary World

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Abstract: *The present article analyses the concept of nation, the essence of the building of a nation, the uniqueness of culture and traditions of India and the setback to the indigenous educational system. The article further trails the facts for the core reasons leading to the requirements, the traditional system of imparting learning and knowledge and the rudimentary requirements to cover the gaps in the present time. Suggestions for the establishment of institutions for imparting holistic education, aim and values imbibed through the proposed system which will help the nation to re-establish its ancient glory.*

Keywords: Tradition, Education, Ancient glory, Vasudeva kudumbakam, gurukul system

1. The Essence

Come to think of it, Bharathvarsh is not a nation, it is a civilization. It has evolved from Indus Valley Civilization (Sindhu as it is called), going back to the evolution of civilization right from Palaeolithic to Neolithic, Chalcolithic (Copper Age) and further to Protohistory. There are discussions presented in literature about a gap from 3500 to 500 BCE in the continuity of the existence of civilization of Indian sub-continent. Finding of many pre-historic sites dating back to these periods discovered in various places in Gujarat, Rajasthan and recently in Raphigraphy (Haryana) has provided evidence that such gap does not exist.

Hinduism, as evolved from Sindhu, has been a way of life and professed faith and worship of the elements associated with life-Earth, Air, Water, Sky, Fire. All the living beings evolved from it, be it plants, birds, animals or insects. Concept of being satisfied and «Vasudaiv Kutumbakam» World/Universe as family. Genetics research has indicated that there is a difference of less than 5% among human species. Importance of mother earth, the nation as a whole and society with the culture of sharing and equality.

2. Colonial Impact and Advent of Modern Education System

As per the British documents, even in the early nineteenth century, India had an extensive education system, free from caste and religious discrimination, and almost all the villages had schools. The British introduced the educational systems to impart education to serve in the civil services. There was less emphasis on knowledge, attitudes and skills that the local people possessed and ignored. This led to indigenous educational system suffered a setback. The new education system alienated seekers from the belief and the value system of the indigenous people and alienated from the tradition. The uniqueness of Indian culture and traditions have been lost.

3. Understanding the Quintessence of the Requirement

Humans are born with a unique biological, social, and spiritual identity, each person learns to embody her or his gifts and life purposes. Education to be complete must have five principal aspects corresponding to the five principal activities of the human being; the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual which is the key outcome of integral education.

Education is the most vital element in the evolution of the nation. Education is the tool which provides people with required knowledge, skill, technique and information and enables them to know their rights and duties toward their family, society, and obviously nation. Education expands the vision; outlook to see the world, and gives knowledge of the world, develops a perspective of looking at life. It helps to build opinions and have points of view on things in life. Information cannot be converted into knowledge without education and education makes one capable of interpreting things, among other things. It is not just about lessons in textbooks and is about the lessons of life. The knowledge acquired by learning and instruction as well as the result of a good upbringing. Learning is the process of acquiring new or modifying, existing knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, or preferences. Many of these are passed from generation to generation. The process of attaining knowledge is what education or the civilization of human beings.

4. The Tradition Existed and Thought Process Involved

The basic goal of Ancient Indian education was to train the youth so that they perform their duties (religious, social and economic) perfectly. Education was focused on cultural enrichment as well as personality development. The main aim of education was to cultivate noble ideas in the minds of the student which was achieved through the Gurukul system. Identifying and giving credential to the aptitude existed. It

can be learnt from Mahabharat Arjun being trained in bow and arrow and Bheem in mace fighting.

Gurukul system of imparting education can be considered as one of the best teaching methods that existed. It ensured a complete understanding of the subject with practical implementations and findings and available to the seekers.

India has been bestowed with the world-class economists or doctors, be it the jurist Chanakya or the great mathematician Aryabhata, who gave the world, the concept of zero. Chanakya's Nitishastra (Moral science Lessons) and Arthashastra (Financial Management Lessons) are the famous works which are of great value even in the present-day context. The Guru is seen as the one who "dispels the darkness of ignorance" and in pan-Indian traditions, the guru is someone more than who teaches. Traditionally a Reverential figure to the student, with the guru serving as a "counsellor", who helps mould values, shares experiential knowledge as much as literal knowledge, an exemplar in life, an inspirational source and who helps in the spiritual evolution of an individual. In the Indian culture the Guru is given the highest place which can be seen in the following shloka:

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः।

गुरुः साक्षात् परं ब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः॥

The word, Gurukul, literally means the 'family' (kula) of the teacher (Guru). Gurukul is an ancient Indian concept of education, wherein the student imbibed knowledge by residing with his Guru as part of his family. The word, kula, indicates the close relationship that existed between the teacher and students. Since kula means a 'family', Gurukul did not mean the 'school' of a teacher but the 'family' of a teacher. The Guru was more than merely a teacher; he was a parent, a guide and role model for all the students.

5. Rudimentary Requirements: Then and Now

In this context, what is the purpose of the curriculum structure and what needs to be imparted to us / our children, what is being given to the society, needs to be considered. In the ancient method of education had the training which included the knowledge of Vedas, Vedanga, Vidyas, craft art, grammar-sutra language, choreography, metal, Upanishad, Vedic dictionary, Chhanda Shastra and Pingal Shastra, Manusmriti, Valmiki Ramayana, Mahabharata, Geeta, Six Sages and, Brahmana Texts, Astrology, Arithmetic, Geographical, Geology, Sub-Ved, etc. . Students who were imparted such training could search for Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram, a spiritual practice of achieving ultimate power, along with the development of all forms-physical, mental and spiritual development. There were educational concepts related to harmonizing soul and human life etc. But the elements of ancient practices were gradually lost in the modern system. Even learning of languages of India, such as Sanskrit, Hindi and other Indian languages, was lost to English.

6. The Requirement Now

The right Education System that should be followed, is the one which roles be clarified to all those involved in learning, be it teachers, administrators, students, policymakers, implementers as it would lay the foundation for national unity. There is a need to understand the 'socio-cultural roots' which can be achieved by Indianising education and place the school curriculum in its local or regional context. The students need to understand the culture and natural diversity of India and must be exposed to the diverse strands of political argument/thoughts that have gone into the making of the Republic.

The nation needs well-qualified, trained manpower who would become future leaders in various walks of life. It is therefore imperative to focus on qualities such as:

- Faith in values enshrined in the law of the land.
- Development of physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent.
- Self-esteem and national identity.
- Character development.
- Cooperation instead of competition.
- Perseverance.
- Ability to discern (neer kshir vivek).

7. Suggestions for Establishment of Institutions for Holistic Education

It is an undeniable fact that the present-day society is facing serious shortcomings in terms of moral, ethical, spiritual and Dharmik values. Parental pressures on children are increasing at an alarming rate, with stress to focus on the competitive examinations alone and taking a greater toll on the mental framework of youth. Children are getting alienated from the crucial aspect of personality development. The pointless pressure has taken the reallocation of educational parlance from a holistic approach towards education to farcical rote learning and practising to crack the examination only. Unfortunately, the standard of education has drastically deteriorated in the last couple of decades due to lack of infrastructure and degradation of moral capacities. Consequently, both teachers and students have been completely deprived of the exceptional amenities and opportunities that could foster a better conducive environment of constructing knowledge.

8. The Aim of Educational Institutions and Leadership: A Comparison

Any educational institution aims to create such a youth power for the nation, which can play an important role in the unequalled service of home, society and nation, in addition to making a leading and dignified place in our study area. Leadership in the academic institutions be it primary, secondary or higher is very important. It forms the moorings of the entire institute and there should be no compromise as a wrong person at a responsible position would make a huge irreparable dent on the system. A competent person will induce a spark in the entire team which will be enlightened.

Gurukul system has a vibrant significance in Indian history, holding prominence over the sheer quality of education disseminated. Traditionally, Gurukuls have always emphasised on the importance of practical knowledge. Similarly, the Gurukul system believes that bookish knowledge and rote learning are mere tools of the time, not sufficient enough to demonstrate the true value of human existence. Gurukuls provide practical knowledge under modern infrastructure including practical laboratories with state-of-the-art facilities and technology. The curriculum prepares the student to excel in all fields of life, creating a perfect blend of academics and extra-curricular activities, making the educational journey remarkable

Students need to have supple minds that are capable of analytical thinking while integrating complex core concepts that aid them to evolve as human beings. They need to build a reliable foundation of scientific and technological knowledge while staying true to their roles on the planet. This is possible through deep levels of determination, focus and concentration, that is enshrined in Gurukul learning. This is the reason why Gurukul systems are considered to be the best places to facilitate a sound learning environment.

9. Values Imbibed Through the Proposed System

Students are driven by the feeling of animosity by competing with their peers. Replacing the rank-based system, Gurukul builds a value-based and value-added education system which identifies and promotes the uniqueness of each student, allowing them to excel in their area of interest. One can visualise a better educational environment which builds the character of a student, and not drag them down.

- Education-For the Life, through life & throughout the life
- Holistic development of five H-Head, Hand, Heart, Health & Honour
- Learning by doing, experimenting, experience, new creation & innovation
- Learning from society, and its surrounding atmosphere
- Correlation between knowledge & work
- An integrated approach to personality development & character built up
- Learn & Earn-Engage in productive work

The first requirement is to be a good human being which is the prime motive of education and is a continuous process and the involvement of the society including parent, teacher, and neighbour is required. A child is to be made through the practical experience, the involvement of understanding the importance of e. g. cleanliness, upkeep of house, school, heart, mind and soul to be developed in addition to being physically fit.

Self-reliance is one of the most crucial values that one need to imbibe and one of the greatest values to inculcate as a human being. The serene ambience of such schools is ideal for education and holistic growth as a human being cannot exist in aloofness and peaceful co-existence can only be achieved when the level of struggle and disparity is least,

which can be observed in the essential elements of our ancient tradition and culture which is as follows:

- Learn to know (ज्ञान प्राप्ति के लिए, ज्ञानम तृतीय नेत्रम)
- Learn to do (ज्ञान + कर्म- व्यक्ति पूर्ण)
- Learning to live together (संगच्छध्वंसंवदध्वं)
- Learning to be human (शिक्षामानवबनाने के लिए मनु भवः)

This includes and inculcates 5H in education Head (Cognitive), Hand (Motor), Heart (Affection, Health (Environmental & Physically sound atmosphere) & Honour (Respect to own self, person, society & nature with just)

Importance of basic education in the environment one lives, the language one speaks (mother tongue) is to be preferred, community schooling is a guiding line of such system and it always stresses the education to lead to:

- Self-sustainable
- Skill training
- Education in mother tongue/regional language
- Education in values, tradition open for all
- Integration
- Self-Discipline-Keep things in the queue, neat & clean
- Decision making
- Problem-solving. With collective dissuasion & participation
- Creative thinking/lateral thinking.
- Critical thinking/perspicacity.
- Effective communication with society & villagers
- Interpersonal relationships.
- Self-awareness/mindfulness.
- Empathy & sympathy
- Coping with emotions & stress
- Scientific temperament,
- Gender consciousness

Today, the world is talking about the system which has its roots in our ancient traditional system of education i. e the Gurukul System. Many universities around the globe (almost eighty of them) are offering Sanskrit as a subject in higher education.

The Asia Society which is the leading global and pan-Asian organization working to strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders, and institutions of the United States and Asia wherein the Society seeks to increase knowledge and enhance dialogue, encourage creative expression, and generate new ideas across the fields of arts and culture, policy and business, and education is also emphasising on the concept imparted in the traditional Gurukul system by equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

To re-establish the ancient glory, the Indian knowledge tradition needs to be reinstated and re-established in the school educational system.

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