

**REVIVING THE GURUKUL SYSTEM IN MODERN
EDUCATION: INTEGRATING ANCIENT INDIAN
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES FOR HOLISTIC
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH NEP 2020**

**Dissertation Submitted to the Panjab University, Chandigarh for the award of
degree of Master of Arts in Public Administration and Public Policy, in
partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Advanced Professional
Programme in Public Administration (2024-25)**

Submitted by

Brigadier Vishal Chauhan

Roll No 5001

Under the Guidance and Supervision of
Dr. Saket Bihari



**50th ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMME IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
(2024-25)**

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
NEW DELHI**

CERTIFICATE

It is hereby declared that this dissertation is my original piece of work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person. I am aware of the University's norms and regulations regarding plagiarism including the disciplinary action that it may invite. Any use of the works by any other author, in any form, is adequately acknowledged at their point of use or in the Bibliography.

Date: Mar 2025

(Vishal Chauhan)

Brigadier

Place: New Delhi

Roll No : 5001

CERTIFICATE

I have the pleasure to certify that Brigadier Vishal Chauhan, has pursued his research work and prepared the present dissertation titled '*Reviving the Gurukul System in Modern Education: Integrating Ancient Indian educational practices for holistic development through NEP 2020*', under my guidance and supervision. The same is the result of research done by him and to the best of my knowledge; no part of the same has been part of any monograph, dissertation or book earlier. This is being submitted to the Panjab University, Chandigarh, for the purpose of Master of Arts in Public Administration and Public Policy in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration (APPPA) of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi.

I recommend that the dissertation of Brigadier Vishal Chauhan is worthy of consideration for the award of Master of Arts degree of the Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Date: March 2025

(Dr Saket Bihari)

Place: New Delhi

Indian Institute of Public Administration,

New Delhi-110002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Saket Bihari, my guide, for his invaluable mentorship and encouragement throughout the preparation of my dissertation. His guidance in adopting an objective approach and focusing on evidence-based analysis has been instrumental in keeping me aligned with the research objectives. Moreover, his boundless energy and enthusiasm have significantly enhanced the quality of this research.

I am deeply grateful to Shri Surendra Nath Tripathi, IAS (Retd.), Director General, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), for his steadfast leadership and vision, which have inspired us to transform into effective 'Karmayogis' by the end of this program. I extend my sincere appreciation to Prof. Neetu Jain, Program Director, and Dr. Saket Bihari, Program Co-Director, for their unwavering support throughout the course. Additionally, I am thankful to IIPA for granting me the opportunity to explore a research topic that is both personally significant and professionally fulfilling.

I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Shri H.C. Yadav, Librarian, and the dedicated staff of the IIPA Library, whose prompt help in making reference materials available greatly facilitated my research.

During the course of my study, I had the privilege of interacting with numerous subject matter experts, academicians, teachers, and administrators associated with Gurukul Schools and Institutions, government experts, parents of wards studying in Gurukul schools and Vishwavidyalayas, as well as my peers. Their generous sharing of experiences and insights has greatly enriched my research, and I remain deeply indebted to all of them.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the three pillars of the APPPA Office—Shri Anil Sharma, Shri Manish Rawat, and Shri Rajesh—for their constant support and assistance.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Dr. Omi Tapir, for her unflinching support and for single-handedly managing our two young children, Anahita and Raghavendra, while also taking on additional household responsibilities. Her unwavering dedication allowed me the time and flexibility to travel and gather information for this research. I am also immensely grateful to my mother for her constant encouragement and invaluable support throughout this journey. Her steadfast belief in me has played a significant role in my success. I am truly thankful for the love, understanding, and encouragement of my family, whose support has been instrumental in this endeavour.

Date: Mar 2025

(Vishal Chauhan)

Brigadier

Place: New Delhi

Roll - 5001

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| BCE | Before Common Era |
| CBSE | Central Board of Secondary Education |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| DSVV | Dev Samskriti Vishwavidyalaya |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GES | Gurukul Education System |
| GMIS | Gurukul-Modern Integration Schools |
| ICSE | Indian Certificate of Secondary Education |
| IKS | Indian Knowledge Systems |
| MES | Modern Education System |
| NCERT | National Council of Educational Research and Training |
| NEP | National Education Policy |
| PPP | Public-Private Partnership |
| RTE | Right to Education |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UPSC | Union Public Service Commission |

ABSTRACT

Education has always been a fundamental pillar of Indian civilization, with the Gurukul system representing an indigenous model that emphasized holistic development, moral values, and experiential learning. Rooted in the Guru-Shishya tradition, this system focused on the all-round development of students—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical—creating well-rounded individuals capable of meaningful contributions to society. However, with the advent of colonial rule and the implementation of Western education models, the Gurukul system gradually declined.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a significant opportunity to revive elements of the Gurukul system within modern educational frameworks. This dissertation examines how key principles of the Gurukul system—such as experiential learning, value-based education, personalized mentorship, and a holistic approach to student development—can be adapted and integrated into contemporary education. The study aims to bridge the gap between traditional Indian knowledge systems and modern pedagogical advancements to enhance the quality of education in India.

Using a mixed-methods research approach, the study incorporates qualitative and quantitative data, including case studies of institutions practicing Gurukul-inspired education, expert interviews, and surveys comparing student outcomes in Gurukul-based and conventional schools. The findings reveal that Gurukul-inspired education fosters higher student engagement, deeper moral and ethical reasoning, and better experiential learning outcomes compared to the conventional rote-based education system. However, challenges such as scalability, teacher training, and curriculum standardization remain key barriers to large-scale implementation.

The research concludes that integrating Gurukul principles into NEP 2020 offers a transformative pathway for Indian education. Recommendations include embedding experiential learning methodologies, enhancing moral education components, and fostering teacher-student relationships akin to the Gurukul model. By doing so, India can develop an education system that balances technological advancements with traditional wisdom, creating future-ready individuals rooted in cultural and ethical values.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

'सा विद्या या विमुक्तये'

- विष्णु पुराण

Education has been the cornerstone of ancient Indian civilization, deeply embedded in the Vedic cultural ethos. The Gurukul system, drawing from Vedic philosophy, upheld the belief that *Vidya* is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge but a transformative process leading to self-realization and ultimate liberation (*moksha*). It played a pivotal role in nurturing knowledge across disciplines, ensuring the transmission of intellectual, philosophical, and spiritual wisdom while serving as a holistic process that integrated ethical conduct, self-discipline, and the pursuit of truth. The Vedic education system cultivated expertise in diverse fields such as philosophy, science, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, and economics, significantly shaping India's historical identity as not just a hub of knowledge but also a center of cultural richness, economic prosperity, and architectural brilliance.

India was once the world's leading center of learning, home to renowned universities like Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Vallabhi, etc which attracted scholars from across Asia and beyond. These institutions provided a multidisciplinary education that combined logic, medicine, arts, governance, and spiritual teachings, ensuring that students received well-rounded training. The rigorous curriculum and focus on critical thinking allowed Indian scholars to make groundbreaking contributions in fields such as Ayurveda, metallurgy, astronomy, and mathematics, including the invention of zero and decimal notation. The Gurukuls were not just embodiments of the *Guru-Shishya* tradition but thriving centers of intellectual and cultural

excellence, ensuring that students attained not just theoretical knowledge but also practical wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. During its golden period, India contributed to more than 30% of the world's GDP, demonstrating the strength of its knowledge-based economy. Education played a key role in sustaining this economic prosperity, as the knowledge generated within Gurukuls and universities fueled advancements in trade, commerce, and governance. The deep integration of ethical and spiritual learning with practical disciplines ensured that education was not just a personal pursuit but a means of collective societal progress.

In recent centuries, the colonial education system, designed to serve administrative needs, replaced indigenous knowledge systems, including the Gurukul. Consequently, India's traditional education practices were relegated to the sidelines, as Western educational models gained dominance. However, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a transformative policy, aimed at overhauling India's educational landscape, marks a renewed interest in indigenous knowledge systems. NEP 2020 advocates for holistic development, personalized learning, and the integration of experiential and moral education, all of which resonate with the core principles of the Gurukul system.

In an era of rapid technological advancements, social complexities, and ethical dilemmas, revisiting the Gurukul principles becomes imperative. A system that once produced enlightened scholars, visionary leaders, and pioneering scientists can offer valuable insights into modern education reform. This study seeks to explore how the Gurukul system's principles can be integrated into modern educational practices under the framework of NEP 2020 to foster holistic development in students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The modern education system focuses heavily on academic and technical development, often sidelining moral, spiritual, and holistic growth. There is growing concern that education today is not equipping individuals with the tools to deal with ethical, social, and emotional challenges. This results in a lack of well-rounded individuals who possess intellectual depth, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. The Gurukul system, with its emphasis on a balanced development of mind, body, and spirit, offers a potential solution to the challenges of contemporary education. However, due to historical neglect and the rise of Western education models, the Gurukul system has become marginalized. This proposed study seeks to assess how the principles of the Gurukul system can be adapted and integrated into NEP 2020 to promote holistic development in today's world.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this proposed study is to detail out the core principles of the Gurukul system and explore its potential for integration into modern educational systems. As such, the objectives of this study are as under:

- a) To detail out the core principles and methods of the Gurukul system.
- b) To study the alignment between NEP 2020's holistic development goals and the Gurukul system's approach to education.
- c) To study specific Gurukul-inspired practices (e.g., experiential learning, moral and spiritual education, teacher-student relationships) that can be integrated into modern education.

- d) To explore the potential challenges and barriers of integrating traditional Gurukul values into modern, large-scale educational institutions
- e) To suggest a model for implementing Gurukul principles into contemporary educational institutions under the NEP 2020 guidelines.

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will be conducted in exploratory framework. The study will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative approach will include interviews with educators, administrators, and students, as well as case studies of modern institutions that have integrated Gurukul principles. The quantitative approach will involve surveys and assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of these schools compared to traditional educational systems. This mixed-methods design allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the qualitative experiences and the quantitative outcomes of Gurukul-inspired education. The study will make use of primary and secondary sources of information. The study will also be using predominantly qualitative data points. Combining both primary and secondary sources of data, the study will arrive at evidence based findings.

RATIONALE OR JUSTIFICATION

The rationale behind this study is the growing global demand for educational models that foster well-rounded development, moving beyond intellectual capabilities to include emotional, moral, and spiritual growth. Modern education systems have become largely utilitarian, often producing individuals with technical expertise but lacking the ethical, emotional, and social skills necessary for navigating the complexities of life. NEP 2020 emphasizes personalized and experiential

learning, the development of ethical values, and the inclusion of India's indigenous knowledge systems. These goals strongly resonate with the Gurukul system's holistic approach. Integrating Gurukul principles, such as personalized instruction, moral education, and community engagement, offers a way to enrich the current education system and address the emotional and social deficits seen in today's students.

As India transitions towards a more inclusive and diverse education system under NEP 2020, reviving elements of the Gurukul system aligns with both the country's cultural heritage and the need for educational reforms that promote well-rounded individuals capable of navigating complex social, ethical, and emotional challenges.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will address the following research questions:

- a) What are the key educational principles of the Gurukul system, and how do they align with the holistic development goals of NEP 2020?
- b) How can the Gurukul system's holistic approach contribute to modern educational contexts, particularly in promoting well-rounded development?
- c) What challenges and limitations are faced when implementing Gurukul principles in contemporary large-scale educational systems?
- d) What specific strategies can be implemented to integrate the Gurukul system's values into modern educational curricula, particularly within the NEP 2020 framework?

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Research Design: This study employs a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach to explore the integration of Gurukul educational principles within the NEP 2020 framework. The methodology consists of:

1. Qualitative Analysis:

- **Literature Review:** Analyzing academic papers, historical texts, and policy documents on Gurukul education and holistic learning models.
- **Case Studies:** Investigating institutions that implement Gurukul-style education, such as Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam and Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyala, to evaluate their methodologies and student development outcomes.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Benchmarking Gurukul principles against international holistic education models (e.g., Waldorf, Montessori, Finland's education system) to assess best practices.

2. Quantitative Assessment:

- **Surveys and Interviews:** Collecting primary data from educators, students, and parents in Gurukul-based institutions to measure educational effectiveness and student experiences.
- **Policy Impact Assessment:** Evaluating how NEP 2020's policies align with Gurukul-inspired education models and their measurable outcomes in pilot projects.

3. Ethical Considerations:

- Any primary data collected through surveys or interviews will maintain confidentiality and adhere to ethical research standards. Participants' responses will be anonymized to ensure unbiased reporting.

Data Sources:

- a) **Primary Data:** Interviews, surveys, and case studies.
- b) **Secondary Data:** Academic literature, educational policy documents, institutional reports, and historical analyses of the Gurukul system.

SCOPE/LIMITATIONS/DELIMITATIONS

- a) **Scope:** The research will focus on the core principles of the Gurukul system, specifically personalized learning, moral education, practical experience, and spiritual growth. It will study how these principles can be adapted to contemporary educational settings under NEP 2020 and how they can benefit student development.
- b) **Limitations:** A major limitation of this study is the availability of purely traditional Gurukul institutions for direct comparison. Many modern schools blend Western pedagogical methods with Gurukul-inspired principles, which may affect the purity of the comparison. Additionally, differences in resources and socio-economic factors may influence the outcomes of schools studied.
- c) **Delimitations:** This study will not focus on the vocational training aspects of the traditional Gurukul system, nor will it explore highly specialized subjects like Vedic

studies in depth. The research will be limited to intellectual, moral, and spiritual development within the context of holistic education.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE GURUKUL SYSTEM

The Gurukul system dates back to ancient India's Vedic period and emphasizes a holistic approach to education, prioritizing not only intellectual growth but also moral, spiritual, and emotional development. The system was founded on the "*Guru-Shishya* Parampara," wherein students lived with their gurus, receiving personalized instruction tailored to their individual needs. Education in this context was not merely an academic pursuit but a way of life, deeply rooted in Vedic philosophies.

Altekar (2009) provides a detailed account of the historical context of the Gurukul system, highlighting how this system fostered a close *Guru-Shishya* tradition, which facilitated personalized instruction. In contrast to modern-day schools, which largely focus on academic performance, the Gurukul system aimed to produce well-rounded individuals, imparting knowledge in subjects ranging from the Vedas to practical life skills like agriculture and craftsmanship, moral education, and the development of virtues like self-discipline and self-reliance.

Similarly, Majumdar (2010) further elaborates on the cultural significance of the Gurukul system, noting how education was seen not merely as a means to acquire knowledge but as a path to achieving spiritual and ethical balance. This traditional model fostered self-reliance,

discipline, and strong moral character, which contrasts sharply with the modern focus on academic achievement and standardized testing.

The Gurukul system's approach to education extended beyond individual achievement to encompass community and environmental stewardship, promoting harmony with nature and a sense of collective responsibility. This focus on holistic development laid the groundwork for an educational framework that could potentially address gaps in modern educational systems.

Jain and Shelly (2015) further emphasize the societal impact of the Gurukul system in promoting values like devotion, respect for teachers, and moral integrity. They discuss how ancient Gurukuls focused on developing character and personality, ensuring students became responsible citizens and spiritual beings. The integration of nature with education in Gurukuls created a conducive environment for physical and mental well-being, an aspect largely missing in modern urban educational setups.

RELEVANCE OF THE GURUKUL SYSTEM IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

The Gurukul system's emphasis on holistic learning aligns with modern education's evolving focus on holistic development. Madhekar (2020) explores the perceptions of educators and stakeholders regarding the integration of Gurukul methodologies into contemporary education. He argues that the Gurukul system, with its focus on experiential learning, mentorship, and value-based education, is highly relevant in today's context. However, he also cautions about the need to modernize certain elements to align with current societal and technological demands.

Bhattacharya and Sachdev (2022) highlight the potential benefits of a hybrid education system that merges the strengths of both the Gurukul and modern approaches. They argue that while modern education prioritizes cognitive development, it often neglects social, emotional, and spiritual learning—areas in which the Gurukul system excels. They posit that a combination of the two systems could address many of the educational and societal challenges India currently faces.

NEP 2020 AND ITS EMPHASIS ON HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the need for a more holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary education system that incorporates Indian traditions. NEP 2020 envisions an education system that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, much in line with the Gurukul philosophy of teaching beyond textbooks. The policy encourages the development of emotional, physical, and cognitive aspects, which is in harmony with the Gurukul approach (Government of India, 2020).

Joshi (2021) draws parallels between the NEP 2020 and the Gurukul system, pointing out that the policy's focus on experiential learning, character-building, and ethics resonates with the traditional Indian educational model. Joshi emphasizes that the NEP aims to integrate traditional knowledge systems with contemporary disciplines, thereby encouraging a well-rounded education that prepares students for life, not just exams. Jain and Shelly (2015) also underline the potential for integrating Gurukul principles into NEP 2020, emphasizing the value of character education, community-based learning, and experiential methodologies. They suggest that modern policy frameworks should incorporate aspects like *Guru-Shishya* relationships and nature-based learning for a balanced approach to education.

Kaur and Prasad (2024) further argue that the policy's focus on integrating cultural and philosophical teachings is aligned with the Gurukul system's holistic objectives, thereby fostering a sense of rootedness in Indian tradition while also preparing students for global challenges.

However, there exists a research gap in terms of effectively implementing these traditional practices, particularly the Gurukul system, in contemporary education. While the policy references the importance of experiential learning and integrating traditional knowledge systems, it does not provide a concrete framework for reintroducing Gurukul-based principles, such as the *Guru-Shishya* relationship, moral and spiritual education, and community-centric learning, into modern curricula.

HOLISTIC LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF NEP 2020

Kaur and Prasad (2024) discuss the importance of integrating Indian cultural and philosophical teachings within the modern curriculum as part of holistic education. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for cultural rootedness while being globally aware, which is in alignment with the Gurukul system's objectives. They propose that integrating cultural and spiritual teachings can foster a sense of identity and purpose among students, helping them navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Adhikari (2023) expands on this idea by examining the day-to-day operations of modern Gurukuls, particularly focusing on how their daily routines and lifestyle practices contribute to the holistic development of students. Adhikari suggests that these practices, when adapted to

modern settings, can play a significant role in shaping well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also emotionally and spiritually balanced.

CHALLENGES IN REVIVING THE GURUKUL SYSTEM

While the potential benefits of integrating Gurukul methods into modern education are significant, there are also challenges to consider. Jain and Shelly (2015) identify structural and cultural hurdles, such as the rigidity of modern education systems, resistance from stakeholders, and the lack of infrastructure for implementing personalized education models. They also critique certain aspects of the Gurukul system, such as its exclusivity and reliance on Sanskrit as a medium of instruction, which may be impractical in today's diverse and secular educational environment. Sharma (2021) also acknowledges the same.

Similarly, Pareek (2021) discusses the logistical challenges, particularly in terms of scaling the Gurukul model for a large and diverse population. He suggests that while small-scale pilot programs could be effective, nationwide implementation would require substantial changes in teacher training, curriculum design, and assessment methods.

Adhikari (2024) also highlights the importance of inclusiveness in the Gurukul system. Historically, access to Gurukul education was limited to certain social groups. For the Gurukul model to be relevant today, it must evolve to include students from all backgrounds, ensuring equity and inclusivity in education.

PRACTICAL INTEGRATION OF GURUKUL PRACTICES IN MODERN EDUCATION

Integrating Gurukul practices into the modern education system involves rethinking curricula, teaching methodologies, and the student-teacher dynamic. Selvamani (2019) explores how some elements of the Gurukul system, such as close-knit learning communities, personalized mentorship, and life skills training, can be adapted within the framework of modern schools. He suggests that such integration can address gaps in emotional and social development often found in conventional education systems, which tend to focus more on cognitive achievements.

Jain and Shelly (2015) propose situating schools in natural environments, away from urban distractions, to foster a deeper connection with nature and enhance physical and mental development. They also emphasize the importance of character-building, discipline, and philosophy in education.

Pal (2022) discusses the psychological underpinnings of the Gurukul system, noting that its educational psychology centered around student well-being, mindfulness, and learning through nature. These aspects, Pal argues, are missing in today's education system, which tends to prioritize academic success over personal development. By reintroducing these elements through NEP 2020's holistic focus, students can achieve a more balanced and fulfilling education.

Comparative analyses also reveal that while modern education systems prioritize cognitive development, they often lack the comprehensive approach to emotional and spiritual growth found in the Gurukul system. Sharma (2021) identifies the challenge of adapting these practices

on a large scale, noting that the modern system's rigidity, standardized curricula, and lack of infrastructure may hinder the reintroduction of Gurukul principles.

While several scholars have identified parallels between the Gurukul system and NEP 2020, it is essential to critically examine these assertions rather than assume an inherent alignment. The NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic development, experiential learning, and value-based education, concepts that resonate with the ancient Gurukul system (Joshi, 2021). However, Kulal et al. (2024) highlight concerns regarding the feasibility of integrating traditional educational frameworks into modern institutional structures, particularly in the absence of clear implementation guidelines. The challenge lies in ensuring that such integration does not merely serve as a symbolic reference to heritage but contributes meaningfully to contemporary educational needs.

Moreover, some researchers caution against romanticizing the Gurukul model without addressing its limitations. As noted by Datta & Mete (2024), the teacher-student dynamic in Vedic education was deeply personal, with a strong emphasis on moral and spiritual training. However, the large-scale formalization of education today necessitates standardization, assessment metrics, and inclusive access, all of which require adaptation beyond the traditional Gurukul structure. Similarly, Srivastava & Atreya (2024) argue that while experiential learning from ancient traditions has valuable takeaways, modern pedagogical methodologies must also accommodate digital tools, interdisciplinary studies, and global competencies.

Thus, while the literature supports the idea that aspects of the Gurukul system could enrich modern education, the extent to which this can be practically achieved without compromising contemporary academic rigor remains an open question. This research, therefore, aims to

critically assess whether and how the principles of the Gurukul system can be meaningfully incorporated into modern educational policy and practice, rather than presupposing that such integration is inherently beneficial.

CHAPTER III

THE GURUKUL SYSTEM - AN OVERVIEW OF INDIAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

अमंत्रं अक्षरं नास्ति, नास्ति मूलं औषधं

अयोग्यः पुरुषो नास्ति योजकः तत्र दुर्लभः ॥

-चरक संहिता

Ancient Indian civilization, one of the most significant in the world, upheld education as a cornerstone for physical and spiritual upliftment. The education system not only preserved the culture for over four thousand years but also guided individuals towards fulfilling social and moral responsibilities. From the Vedic era, education was seen as a guiding light, with *Subhashit Ratnasandoh* stating, “knowledge is the third eye of man which helps him to know the origin of all the elements and shows the method of doing the right thing.” The *Mahabharata* reinforces this by affirming, “there is no asceticism like eye and truth like wisdom.”

नास्ति विद्या समं चक्षु नास्ति सत्य समं तपः।

नास्ति राग समं दुखं नास्ति त्याग समं सुखं ॥

Education was regarded as a means of salvation and self-improvement, with the belief that “the eye of knowledge that does not get rid of all the difficulties and obstacles of life is virtually blind.” The ancient Indians strongly believed that intelligence gained and developed by education is the real power of man.

तत्कर्म यन्न बंधाय सा विद्या या विमुक्तये ।

आयासायापरं कर्म विद्यऽन्या शिल्पनैपुणम् ॥

It was considered a unique wealth, with the saying, “neither the thief can steal, nor the brother can share, nor the king can snatch nor is it indelible to man. It is a type of wealth that increases even when spent” (Patel, 2021).

न चोरहार्यं न च राजहार्यं न भ्रातृभाज्यं न च भारकारि।

व्यये कृते वर्धत एव नित्यं विद्याधनं सर्वधनात्प्रधानम्॥

The Gurukul system embodied these values, providing holistic education that encompassed intellectual, moral, and physical growth. Ancient Indians believed that education was a lifelong pursuit, and a true teacher remained a student throughout life, emphasizing the all-encompassing nature of learning in shaping an individual’s life and society.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF ANCIENT INDIA

Education in ancient India was largely guided by the principles enshrined in the Vedas, which dictated the aims, methods, and organization of learning. The ultimate goal was to attain liberation (*moksha*), as education was considered the path to emancipation from ignorance and illusion (Panda, 2024). Rooted in the Vedic tradition, it emphasized both formal and informal means of education, with the ultimate goal of self-realization, knowledge acquisition, and character formation (Panda, 2024). Formal education was imparted through temples, ashrams, and gurukuls while informal education was received through family, priests, pandits, sannyasis and festival themes, etc.

Spiritual Foundation: Vedic education was divided into two kinds of knowledge—this-worldly (*Apara vidya*) and other-worldly (*Para vidya*). The former addressed practical aspects of life, indicating the material knowledge which was needed to become an expert for the welfare and the development of the society while the latter was concerned with intellectual and spiritual pursuits meaning life-knowledge or spiritual-knowledge which is related to being a good human being by developing a set of values through a set of practice in order to attain *mokṣa* (Panda, 2024; Pal, 2022). Moreover, Indian philosophy, deeply rooted in spirituality, emphasized concepts such as *Atman* (the true self), *Brahman* (the ultimate reality), *Karma* (the law of cause and effect), and *Dharma* (righteous duty), which collectively shaped the foundation of education in India (Kaur & Prasad, 2024).

Aim of Education: The fundamental objectives of education in ancient India were:

- **Self-Realization and Supreme Consciousness:** The highest aim of education was to facilitate the realization of Brahman and the ultimate truth (Behera, 2024).
- **Moral and Religious Development:** Righteousness (dharma) and ethical values were central to the education system, preparing individuals for a virtuous life (Panda, 2024).
- **Vocational Training and Skill Development:** Education prepared individuals for their respective social roles based on the varna system, ensuring self-sufficiency (Behera, 2024).
- **Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking:** Discourses, debates, and discussions (shastrarth) were integral to knowledge acquisition (Panda, 2024).

- **Preservation and Transmission of Culture:** Education was a means to sustain traditions, customs, and knowledge systems (Panda, 2024).

Types of Educational Institutions: The earliest references to the Gurukul system are found in the Rigveda and Upanishads, which emphasize the *Guru-shishya* tradition, where knowledge was transmitted orally through recitation, memorization, and discussion. There were various types of educational institutions in ancient India, each serving different purposes and levels of education. These included:

- **Gurukul:** A residential school where students lived with their teacher and studied various subjects ranging from scriptures to sciences.
- **Sabha (Council):** Gatherings where scholars and learned individuals would engage in discussions and debates, sharing knowledge and refining their understanding of different subjects.
- **Tapasthali (Hermitage):** These were centers for advanced learning where intellectual discourses were held, often attended by scholars and students from distant lands. Naimisharanya was one such renowned tapasthali.
- **Shastrarth (Debate):** Shastrarth was a traditional method of debate and discussion on philosophical and scientific topics. It played a crucial role in the refinement and development of ideas, ensuring that knowledge was constantly evolving.

THE GURUKUL SYSTEM

The Gurukul system, one of the earliest forms of organized education in India, played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Indian subcontinent. This ancient

system of learning, prevalent during the Vedic and post-Vedic periods around 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, emphasized holistic education that blended academic instruction with life skills, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development. Unlike the modern schooling system, which often compartmentalizes subjects and focuses on achieving academic excellence through examinations, the Gurukul system aimed at developing a well-rounded individual with a strong moral foundation, practical skills, and spiritual awareness.



Figure 3.1 Gurukul Schooling

In the Gurukul system, students lived with the guru (teacher) in his ashram (residence), forming a close-knit community. The Upanishads mention multiple Gurukul, including that of Guru Drona (Adhikari, 2023). The environment fostered a deep, personal bond between the teacher and the student, where education extended beyond classroom learning to every aspect of life. This system produced some of India's greatest scholars, such as Aryabhata, Chanakya, and Brahmagupta, who made significant contributions to fields such as mathematics, astronomy,

economics, and political science. Despite its eventual decline due to foreign invasions and the imposition of colonial education systems, the Gurukul tradition remains a subject of admiration and a source of inspiration for integrating values and life skills into modern education.

Etymology and Concept

The term *Gurukul* is derived from two Sanskrit words: *guru*, meaning teacher or master, and *kula*, meaning family or home (Alex, 2020). Together, they signify the residence of the teacher where the students lived and learned. This concept emphasized that the guru was not merely an instructor but a mentor and guardian who provided not only academic knowledge but also moral and spiritual guidance. The essence of the Gurukul system was its communal living arrangement, where the students (shishyas) learned through their close interaction with the guru, observing and emulating his way of life.

The educational experience in a Gurukul was personalized and adaptive, allowing the guru to teach each student according to their capacity and interests. This individualized attention ensured that students were not rushed through a standardized curriculum, as is often the case in modern education systems, but were given the time and space to fully understand and internalize the teachings.

Structure and Functioning of Gurukuls

A Gurukul was not just a place of learning but a self-sustained community that emphasized simplicity, discipline, and self-reliance. The main constituents of a Gurukul included:

- **Guru (Teacher):** The guru was the central figure in the Gurukul system, responsible for imparting knowledge, guiding moral and spiritual development, and overseeing the overall well-being of the students.
- **Shishya (Student):** The students, or disciples, lived with the guru, assisting with daily chores such as cooking, cleaning, and maintaining the ashram, fostering a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, and humility. In the Gurukul system, students were divided into three categories, which are as follows:
 - **Vasu** - having attained education till the age of 24 years.
 - **Rudra** - Educated till the age of 36 years.
 - **Aditya** - Educated till the age of 48 years (Patel, 2021).
- **Ashram (Physical Structure):** The Gurukul was typically located in serene, natural surroundings away from urban distractions, allowing students to focus on their studies, and spiritual development. The ashram served as both a home and a classroom, where learning was integrated into every aspect of daily life.
- **Daily Routine:** The daily routine of students in Gurukul was highly disciplined and spiritually enriching. They woke up early before sunrise, performed purification rituals, and engaged in prayers and *Havan* (fire rituals). Students led a simple life, ate twice a day, and followed strict self-control and discipline. Students also participated in the maintenance of the ashram, which was considered an important part of their learning (Jain & Shelly, 2015).

Fee Structure: Education was primarily free, as it was considered a sacred duty rather than a commercial endeavour. The Gurukul system ensured that knowledge was accessible to all, irrespective of economic status. Teachers did not charge any fixed fee; instead, students were expected to contribute to the Gurukul by assisting in daily tasks, such as gathering firewood, cooking, and maintaining the ashram. Additionally, *Gurudakshina* was given at the end of education as a voluntary offering to the guru, symbolizing respect and gratitude rather than a mandatory fee (Panda, 2024).

Autonomy and State Control in Education: The ancient Indian education system was largely autonomous, with minimal interference from the state. Education was primarily managed by Brahmans, scholars, and religious institutions, with kings and rulers providing occasional financial support in the form of land grants or donations but without imposing conditions on the curriculum or pedagogy. Teachers enjoyed immense respect and academic freedom, and kings would often rise from their thrones to receive distinguished gurus such as Narada, Vashishtha, and Vishwamitra. This autonomy ensured that education remained focused on intellectual and spiritual development rather than political agendas (Panda, 2024).

Location: Gurukuls were typically situated in secluded areas, away from urban distractions, often in forests or near rivers. This allowed students to focus on their studies in a peaceful environment while also being in harmony with nature.

Accessibility and Curriculum

Initiation into Gurukul – Upanayana: Students entered Gurukul through the Upanayana ceremony, a sacred rite of passage that marked their initiation into formal education (Behera,

2024). This initiation was particularly significant as it conferred the status of *Dwijja* (twice-born) upon the student, signifying their second birth into a life of learning and spiritual discipline (Panda, 2024). The Upanayana ceremony was a vital step in preparing the student for the rigorous intellectual and moral training of the Gurukul system, reinforcing their commitment to a life of knowledge and self-restraint (Behera, 2024). This ceremony, performed at different ages, Brahmans at 8, Kshatriyas at 11, and Vaishyas at 12, symbolized the student's rebirth into a disciplined and scholarly life. It marked the beginning of their *Brahmacharya* phase, a period of celibacy, austerity, and rigorous academic pursuit. The student, after undergoing Upanayana, was expected to live in the Gurukul under the guidance of the guru, leading a life of simplicity and service while immersing themselves in their studies.

Accessibility: The Gurukul system was accessible to students from various backgrounds, although Varn played a significant role in determining the subjects taught. The Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, and Shudras children of all Kulas, Varnas, and Samajas were seated alongside the Guru and received education as *Brahmachari*. The Brahmans were primarily educated in scriptures and philosophy, the Kshatriyas in warfare and governance, the Vaishyas in trade and commerce, and the Shudras in crafts and manual skills. However, once in Gurukul the students were treated equally regardless of their social standards.

Education for Women: In the earlier Vedic and Upanishad times girls were free to go through the Upanayan ceremony, live a life of celibacy, they studied Vedas, Vedangas and other subjects along with their brother pupils (Panda, 2024).

Changes in Post Vedic Period: In the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods, this inclusivity declined as societal norms became more rigid. The Upanayana ceremony was increasingly

restricted to Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, effectively barring Shudras and women from Vedic education. These changes reflected the increasing stratification of education along caste and gender lines in the post-Vedic period (Smriti, 2023).

Subjects Taught: The curriculum in a Gurukul was comprehensive and designed to impart both spiritual wisdom and practical knowledge. The subjects taught in Gurukuls were wide-ranging and included:

- **Vedas and Vedangas:** The foundational religious and philosophical texts forming the core of spiritual and moral teachings.
- **Mathematics and Astronomy (Jyotisha and Ganita):** Study of numbers, planetary movements, and celestial phenomena.
- **Science and Ayurveda (Cikitsavidya):** Study of natural sciences and medicine, including surgical techniques and herbal treatments.
- **Dhanurveda (Martial Arts and Warfare):** Training in military strategy, archery, and weaponry, particularly for Kshatriyas.
- **Arthashastra and Dharmashastra:** The study of economics, governance, and legal frameworks.
- **Grammar and Linguistics (Vyakarana and Sanskrit Studies):** Mastery over Sanskrit language and literature.
- **Performing Arts (Gandharva Veda and Natya Shastra):** Music, dance, and drama, which were considered vital for cultural expression.

- **Environmental and Agricultural Sciences (Vrikshayurveda):** Knowledge about farming, horticulture, and sustainable ecological practices.
- **Architecture and Engineering (Vastu Shastra):** The study of traditional building techniques and town planning.
- **Self-Sufficiency Skills:** Training in agriculture, trade, craftsmanship, and other vocational disciplines essential for societal functioning., which formed the core of spiritual and moral teachings (Panda, 2024; Behera, 2024).

Medium of Instruction: The medium of instruction in institutions conducted by Brahmans was Sanskrit.

Chief Centers of Education: Some of the chief centers of education during the Vedic period included:

- **Urban Educational Hubs:** Taxila, Pataliputra, Mithila, Dhar, Kannauj, Kaikay, Kalyani, Tanjore, and Kanchi were prominent centers of learning, attracting scholars from across the region.
- **Pilgrimage Centers as Learning Hubs:** Prayag, Kashi, Ayodhya, Ujjaini, Nasik, Karnataka, and Kanchi were significant pilgrimage centers where religious and philosophical education flourished alongside traditional temple learning.

These centers played a vital role in preserving and disseminating Vedic knowledge, contributing to India's reputation as a global center of learning (Panda, 2024).

Pedagogy

Education in the Gurukul system was largely based on oral traditions (*Shruti*) and relied heavily on interactive methods of teaching, such as discourses, debates, and discussions. The guru would impart knowledge through direct interaction with students, ensuring that the learning process was dynamic and flexible. This method encouraged critical thinking, memorization, and a deep understanding of the subjects, as students were not just passive recipients of information but active participants in the learning process.

- **Discourses and Debates:** Knowledge was imparted through discourses led by the guru, who encouraged students to ask questions, engage in debates, and discuss different viewpoints. This method of interactive learning nurtured critical thinking and analytical skills (Shanwal, 2023).
- **Practical Application:** Unlike modern rote learning, the Gurukul system placed a strong emphasis on experiential learning. Students were encouraged to apply what they had learned in real-life situations, whether through performing rituals, engaging in agricultural activities, or solving practical problems.
- **Holistic Education:** The education provided in Gurukuls was not limited to academic subjects but extended to spiritual practices, physical training, and life skills. Students were taught the importance of balance in life, combining intellectual pursuits with physical well-being and spiritual growth.
- **Personalized Learning:** One of the unique features of the Gurukul system was its emphasis on personalized learning. Since the guru lived with the students, he could assess their individual strengths, weaknesses, and interests, and tailor his teachings accordingly.

This ensured that students learned at their own pace and focused on mastering concepts rather than just completing a curriculum (Shanwal, 2023).

- **Self Sufficiency:** The system was built on the values of discipline, respect, and humility. Daily activities included learning, self-reflection, meditation, and participation in household chores, reinforcing the importance of self-sufficiency (Shanwal, 2023).

Teaching Methodology: The teaching methodology was based on the oral tradition (*Shruti*), which was the foundation of Vedic knowledge transmission. *Shruti*, meaning 'that which is heard,' refers to the Vedas and Upanishads, which were passed down orally through precise recitation. In contrast, *Smriti*, meaning 'that which is remembered,' includes texts such as the Puranas, Dharma Shastras, and Itihasas (Ramayana and Mahabharata), which were written to preserve and interpret *Shruti* knowledge (Behera, 2024). This distinction ensured the preservation of sacred wisdom while allowing practical adaptation for future generations. The Gurukul system followed this model, emphasizing oral recitation, memorization, and interpretation to maintain the authenticity of teachings. The system followed three progressive stages:

- **Sravana (Listening):** Students attentively listened to the teacher's recitations.
- **Manana (Reflection):** They internalized and analyzed the teachings.
- **Nididhyasana (Meditation):** Through contemplation, they attained deep understanding (Panda, 2024).

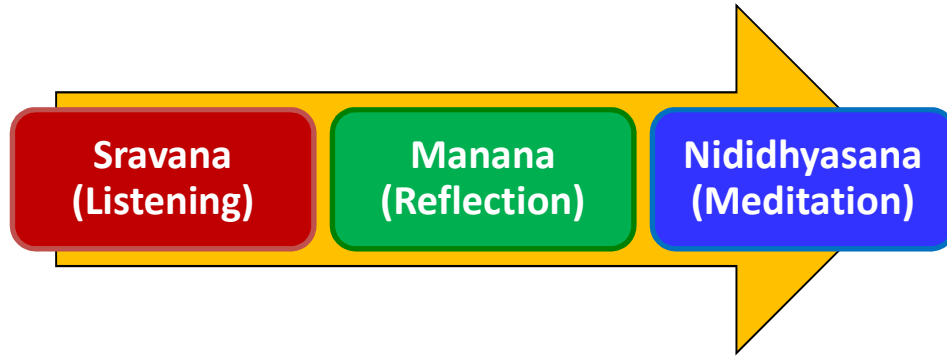


Figure 3.2 Three Steps of Vedic Learning

Samaptvartan Ceremony: The Samaptvartan Ceremony in the Gurukul education system marked the completion of a student's education, typically around the age of 25. Unlike modern convocation ceremonies, this event included a farewell speech by the Guru, advising students to uphold honesty, fulfill their duties, maintain self-discipline, continue self-study, follow righteous deeds, and donate with faith (Jain & Shelly, 2015). This ceremony emphasized lifelong moral and ethical responsibilities rather than just academic achievements.

SPECIFIC TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

Traditional Sitting Postures

In the Gurukul system, students primarily sat on the ground in cross-legged positions while learning. This was not just a cultural practice but also had significant physiological and cognitive benefits. Scientific research has now shown that cross-legged sitting stabilizes the lower back and pelvic area, improves posture, enhances blood circulation, and reduces stress on the cardiovascular system. Specific postures such as *Padmasana*, *Sukhasana*, *Svastikasana*, and *Siddhasana* were commonly used in Gurukuls and have been associated with improved focus, mental clarity, and physical endurance (Srivastava and Atreya, 2024).

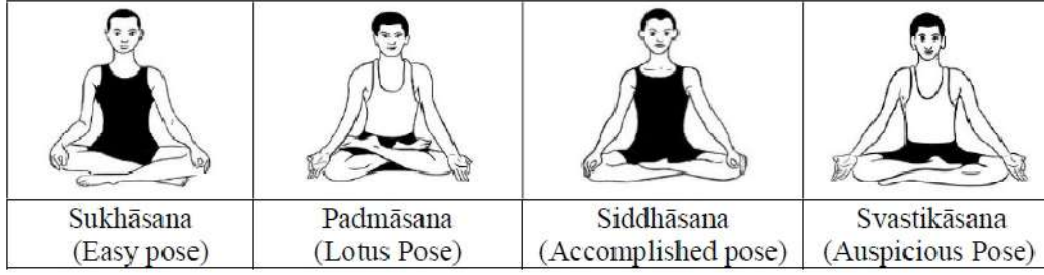


Figure 3.3 Cross-legged Asanas for Sitting

Brahmacharya

The concept of *Brahmacharya* was intrinsically linked with the *Upanayana* ceremony, which marked the student's initiation into the Gurukul system. Through *Upanayana*, the student formally entered the phase of *Brahmacharya*, dedicating themselves to acquiring knowledge and developing self-restraint, which were considered essential qualities for their future roles in society. During the Vedic period, education was considered a sacred duty rather than a means for employment. The education system was structured around the concept of *Brahmacharya*, which emphasized discipline, celibacy, and devotion to learning. This phase was crucial for character-building and self-restraint, preparing students for a life dedicated to knowledge and ethical living (Panda, 2024).

Stature of the Guru

“गुरु ब्रह्मा गुरु विष्णु, गुरु देवो महेश्वरा गुरु साक्षात् परब्रह्म, तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः”

The guru held an exalted position in the Gurukul system. Revered not only for their knowledge but also for their moral and spiritual wisdom, the guru was seen as a father figure who guided the student through all aspects of life. The relationship between the guru and *shishya* was one of

deep respect, trust, and devotion. The guru was responsible for nurturing the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth of the students, preparing them for their future roles in society (Behera, 2024).

Gurudakshina

Upon the completion of their education, students were expected to give *Gurudakshina* as a mark of gratitude and respect to the guru. This offering could take various forms, from material gifts to services, depending on the student's circumstances. The concept of *Gurudakshina* was symbolic of the value placed on education and the respect accorded to the teacher. It also reflected the guru's selflessness, as they often accepted students regardless of their ability to pay (Panda, 2024). *Gurudakshina* was deeply connected to the concept of *Rishi Rina*—the debt owed to sages and teachers for imparting wisdom. Hindu philosophy emphasized the importance of repaying this debt, which was considered one of the fundamental duties of an individual seeking enlightenment. The story of Eklavya sacrificing his thumb as *Gurudakshina* to Guru Dronacharya exemplifies the reverence accorded to this tradition (Sahal, 2022).

HISTORY OF THE GURUKUL SYSTEM

Prominence in the Vedic Period

The Gurukul system was at its zenith during the Vedic period, serving as the foundation of India's education system. During the Mauryan and Gupta periods, the Gurukul system saw significant advancements with institutions like Takshashila and Nalanda emerging as prominent centers of learning. These institutions followed the principles of the Gurukul system while

incorporating a more structured and advanced curriculum that attracted students from across the world to come and study under renowned gurus. This period saw the development of key intellectual traditions in subjects like metaphysics, mathematics, and medicine. Gurukuls were central to the flourishing of knowledge in ancient India, producing scholars whose works had a profound influence on later civilizations.

Decline of the Gurukul System

Impact of Muslim Invasions

The decline of the Gurukul system began during the medieval period, notably with the arrival of Muslim rulers in India. One of the most devastating blows to traditional Indian education came during the invasion led by Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1193. Khilji's army destroyed the great universities of Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Odantapuri, which were not just centers of Buddhist learning but also taught various subjects from the Vedic tradition. Nalanda, in particular, was renowned for its vast library and scholarly pursuits, attracting students from across Asia. Its destruction signaled a turning point in the history of Indian education, leading to the systemic decline of knowledge institutions and the Gurukul system.

The new Islamic rulers established madrasas as centers of education, which focused primarily on Islamic teachings, law (Sharia), and language (Persian and Arabic). The shift to an Islamic education system, which prioritized theological studies over the traditional Vedic curriculum sidelined the traditional Gurukuls, leading to their marginalization. The disruption of the traditional patronage system, where kings and wealthy patrons supported Gurukuls, further contributed to their decline. However, despite these challenges, the Gurukul system persisted in a

fragmented and localized manner, continuing to impart Vedic and Hindu knowledge within smaller, secluded communities.

Colonial Rule and Macaulay's Influence

“A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.”

Thomas Babington Macaulay

The situation worsened during British colonial rule, which dealt the final and perhaps most fatal blow to the traditional Indian education system. The British colonial government introduced Western-style education aimed at producing an English-educated administrative class to serve in the colonial bureaucracy. This new education system was promoted at the expense of indigenous institutions, including Gurukuls, which were seen as outdated and irrelevant in the new world order shaped by British rule.

A key moment in this transformation was Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute on Education in 1835. Macaulay, a British politician and member of the Supreme Council of India, argued that English education should be prioritized over traditional Indian forms of learning. Macaulay's recommendation led to the establishment of English-medium schools, where Western science, literature, and history were taught, while Indian languages, philosophy, and religious texts were largely ignored. Macaulay's minute effectively marked the beginning of a systematic attempt to dismantle India's traditional educational systems, including Gurukuls. As a result, funding for these indigenous institutions was drastically reduced, and official support shifted toward Western-style institutions. Colonial policies further exacerbated this shift, as the British

government actively promoted Western education while withdrawing support for Gurukuls and other indigenous schools.

Under the new system, English became the language of power, governance, and prestige, which led to a cultural and intellectual shift among the Indian elite. The social status associated with English education caused many families to favor Western-style schools over traditional Gurukuls, hastening their decline. Furthermore, the economic interests of the British Empire played a crucial role in this transformation. The colonial government sought to create a class of Indians who would serve in administrative roles, which required proficiency in English rather than in Sanskrit or other Indian languages taught in Gurukuls.

Thus, by the mid-19th century, the Gurukul system had been almost entirely replaced by a British-imposed education system that prioritized Western knowledge, scientific progress, and English proficiency. The legacy of this shift can still be seen today, as English-medium education continues to dominate India's educational landscape.

Attempts at Revival

Despite its decline, the Gurukul system witnessed efforts for revival in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, driven by the Indian cultural renaissance. Reformers like Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Shradddhanand founded new Gurukuls under the Arya Samaj movement. These institutions aimed to revive Vedic learning and values while adapting to modern educational needs. Although they never regained the widespread prominence of the ancient Gurukuls, these efforts ensured that the spirit of the Gurukul tradition survived. Some modern

educational institutions, such as the Chinmaya Mission and Ramakrishna Mission, have incorporated Gurukul-style learning into their curricula.

The Gurukul system was more than an educational framework; it was a way of life that shaped the moral, intellectual, and physical aspects of an individual. Its holistic approach, integrating academic learning with spiritual and practical life skills, makes it an enduring model of education. Though it declined during foreign rule, the legacy of the Gurukul system continues to inspire modern educational reforms. In an era where modern education often emphasizes competition and academic achievement, revisiting and integrating elements of the Gurukul system, such as personalized instruction, moral education, and experiential learning, offers valuable insights for shaping well-rounded, socially conscious individuals.

CHAPTER IV

THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE GURUKUL SYSTEM AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN MODERN TIMES

काकचेष्टा बकध्यानं श्वाननिद्रा तथैव च ।

अल्पाहारं ब्रह्मचर्यं विद्यार्थीपंचलक्षणम् ॥

The Gurukul system, which flourished in ancient India, represents a unique and comprehensive approach to education that integrates the development of the intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of students. Rooted in the Vedic traditions, the system's emphasis was on cultivating individuals who were not just well-versed in academic knowledge but also morally sound and spiritually grounded. It provided a framework that nurtured holistic development, producing well-rounded individuals who could contribute meaningfully to society.

In today's world, where education often emphasizes cognitive development and measurable outcomes like grades and standardized test scores, there is a growing recognition of the need for a more holistic educational model. The NEP 2020 has opened the door to revisiting traditional Indian educational systems like the Gurukul system. The policy promotes the integration of holistic development practices, much like those found in the Gurukul system, into modern educational frameworks to create a more balanced and all-encompassing approach to learning.

This chapter explores the core principles of the Gurukul system, their philosophical foundations, and their relevance in the context of modern education. Drawing on historical and contemporary

literature, this chapter will discuss the essential elements of the Gurukul system and how these can inform current educational practices under the NEP 2020.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE GURUKUL SYSTEM

The philosophy of the Gurukul system was deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition, which emphasized the realization of one's full potential through education. The main aim of education during the Vedic period was the realization of truth, not just intellectual learning but the pursuit of ultimate knowledge leading to self-liberation. Vedic education was deeply rooted in spiritual wisdom, guiding individuals from unreality to reality, darkness to light, and mortality to immortality (Panda, 2024). This goal of truth-seeking shaped every aspect of the Gurukul system, which emphasized a holistic model of learning, integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. The basic tenets of Gurukul educations are discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

1. **Distinction between *Shiksha* and *Vidya*:** The Vedic system of education made a fundamental distinction between *Shiksha* and *Vidya*. *Shiksha* referred to the formal process of learning disciplines, including the study of the Vedas, grammar, logic, and sciences, ensuring students acquired practical and intellectual knowledge. *Vidya*, on the other hand, signified wisdom and self-realization, focusing on the spiritual and moral dimensions of education (Behera, 2024). True education was not confined to acquiring worldly skills but aimed at transcendence and inner enlightenment.
2. **Vedic Philosophy and the Concept of Self-Discovery:** The Vedic philosophy of education centered on the belief that knowledge is within and must be discovered through introspection,

meditation, and self-discipline. The Upanishadic dictum “*Tat Tvam Asi*” (Thou Art That) encapsulates the idea that the self (*Atman*) is one with the ultimate reality (*Brahman*) (Kaur, 2024). The Vedic system encouraged students to engage in deep contemplation under the guidance of a Guru to realize the ultimate truth. The Gurukul’s residential model provided an ideal setting for such learning, ensuring an experiential and immersive approach to self-discovery.

3. **The Role of Dharma:** Dharma, meaning righteous duty, was the guiding principle of the Gurukul system. The Vedas and Smritis emphasized that true education must cultivate dharmic values, including truthfulness, self-discipline, non-violence, and compassion (Behera, 2024). Education in the Gurukul system was not just about acquiring knowledge but about learning how to live righteously. The concept of *Dharma*, or the ethical and moral responsibilities of an individual, was a fundamental part of the curriculum. Students were taught to act with integrity, follow moral principles, and contribute positively to society (Sharma, 2015). The *Guru-Shishya* tradition also played a pivotal role in ensuring that students not only excelled in intellectual pursuits but also adhered to high moral and ethical standards.

4. **Varna-Ashrama Vyavastha and Its Interconnection with Purusharthas:** The Vedic social system was structured around the Varna-Ashrama Vyavastha, aligning an individual’s education and duties with their innate tendencies (*gunas*) and actions (*karma*). The theory of *Purushartha* determines the values ascribed to human actions and behaviour. ‘*Purushartha*’ implies ‘object of human pursuit’ that guides the human lives and provides meanings and aims to his purpose in the life (Sahal, 2022).

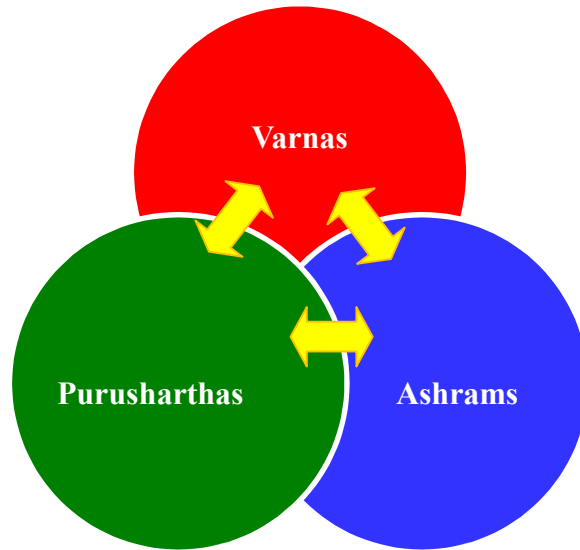


Figure 4.1 Vedic Culture Assemblage

The four varnas namely Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra were not rigid hierarchies but functional classifications aimed at ensuring harmonious social order. Alongside, the four ashramas, Brahmacharya (student life), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (hermit), and Sannyasa (renunciate) provided a structured lifelong learning system. This system lent itself to Gurukul education which was intrinsically linked to the Purusharthas, the four objectives of life:

- a. **Dharma (righteousness):** Ensuring that education cultivated ethics and moral responsibility.
- b. **Artha (economic prosperity):** Preparing individuals for self-reliance and livelihood.
- c. **Kama (fulfillment of desires):** Guiding individuals to channel desires ethically.

- d. **Moksha (liberation):** The ultimate aim of education—freedom from ignorance and self-realization (Pal, 2022; Sahal, 2022).

By integrating varnas, ashramas, and purusharthas, the Gurukul system ensured balanced development—where education was not merely a tool for livelihood but a means to fulfill one’s cosmic duty.

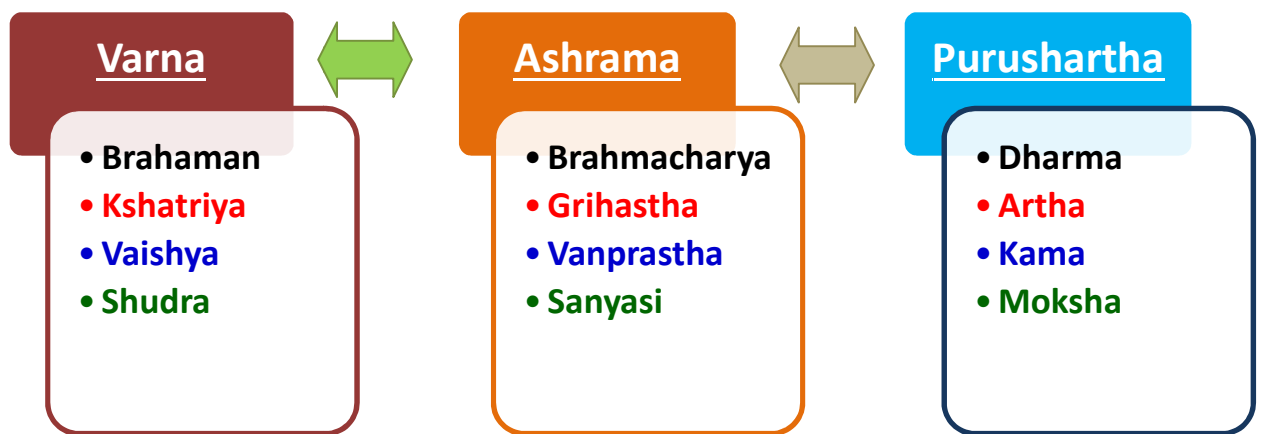


Figure 4.2 Interconnections between Varna, Ashrama and Purushartha

5. **The Concept of Karma:** The law of Karma, a cornerstone of Vedic thought, was deeply embedded in Gurukul education. Karma meaning ‘action and its consequences’ was understood as a principle of self-accountability, ensuring that students were taught to act righteously without selfish motives. The Bhagavad Gita’s teaching of *Nishkama Karma* ie performing duties without attachment to results was a key lesson in the Gurukul’s ethical training (Kaur, 2024).
6. **The Concept of Rina:** A unique feature of Vedic education was the concept of Rina (debt), which recognized an individual’s responsibility toward various entities:

- a. **Rishi Rina:** Debt to sages and teachers, repaid through preserving and spreading knowledge.
- b. **Pitri Rina:** Debt to ancestors, honored through continuation of righteous lineage.
- c. **Deva Rina:** Debt to cosmic forces, fulfilled by leading a life of gratitude and righteousness.
- d. **Manushya Rina:** Debt to society, repaid through selfless service and ethical conduct (Sahal, 2022).

The Gurukul system emphasized fulfilling these debts through education, ethical living, and knowledge dissemination. Gurudakshina was live manifestation of Rishi Rina.

7. **The Integration of Knowledge and Karma (Action):** Education was not just about gaining knowledge (jnana) but applying it through righteous action (karma). Learning without action was considered incomplete, reinforcing that scholarship must translate into societal welfare. This integration of knowledge and action was the foundation of a responsible and enlightened society (Singh, 2017).

THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE GURUKUL SYSTEM

The Gurukul system's foundation rests on a few key principles that distinguish it from other educational systems, both ancient and modern. These principles not only shaped the educational journey of the students but also prepared them for a balanced and meaningful life. The core principles include:

1. ***Guru-Shishya Parampara***: Central to the Gurukul system is the *Guru-Shishya Parampara*, or the teacher-student relationship. Unlike contemporary teacher-student dynamics, which are often limited to structured classroom interactions, the Gurukul system emphasized a deep, personal bond between the guru (teacher) and the shishya (student). This relationship extended beyond academic learning to include moral guidance, personal mentorship, and spiritual instruction (Tewari, 2024; Shanwal, 2023). Students lived with their gurus, fostering a sense of respect, trust, and lifelong learning. This close relationship allowed the guru to provide personalized instruction, catering to each student's unique strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations (Altekar, 2009).
2. **Holistic Development (Intellectual, Moral, Physical, and Spiritual Growth)**: The Gurukul system emphasized holistic development, aiming to cultivate every dimension of a student's personality – intellectual, moral, physical, and spiritual. The curriculum was broad and diverse, including subjects like the Vedas, Vedangas, philosophy, Ayurveda, astronomy, and the arts. Physical education, meditation, yoga, and the practice of self-discipline were also integral parts of the system, ensuring that students developed their physical and mental faculties alongside their academic knowledge (Majumdar, 2010; Tewari, 2024). The ancient objectives of Gurukul education explicitly included spiritual growth, self-discipline, social awareness, character building, and intellectual advancement, among others (Behera, 2024).
3. **Experiential Learning and Apprenticeship**: A hallmark of the Gurukul pedagogy was its emphasis on experiential learning, learning by doing and observing, rather than by rote memorization. Gurukul students learned through hands-on experience and real-life practice under the guru's supervision. Lessons were often imparted in interactive ways: through storytelling, dialogues, debates, and practical activities that engaged the pupils actively

(Adhikari, 2023). Subjects like agriculture, craftsmanship, and even warfare were taught through practical engagement, which allowed students to internalize knowledge and develop real-life skills (Selvamani, 2019).

4. **Value-Based Education:** Moral and ethical education formed a cornerstone of the Gurukul system. The teachings of Dharma (righteousness), respect for others, humility, self-discipline, and the importance of service to the community were woven into the everyday lives of students. Through community service and collective living, students learned the values of cooperation, responsibility, and empathy (Tewari, 2024). The Gurukul system was designed to deliver knowledge (Jnana) based on intelligence (Dhi), values (Dharma), and dexterity (Daksha) (Pareek, 2021). This triad ensured that education was transformative, combining theoretical learning with practical application and ethical reflection.

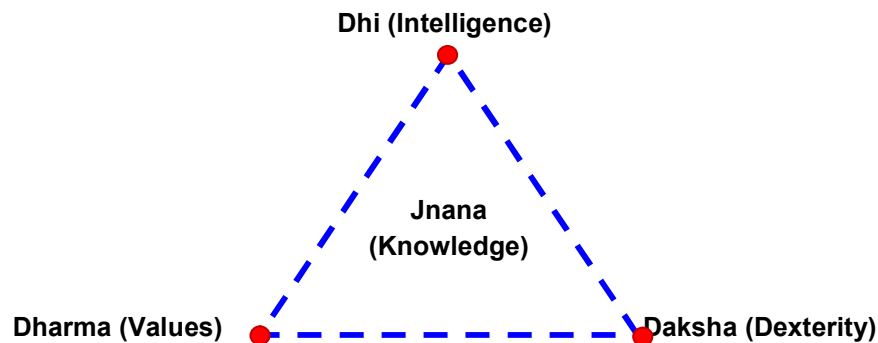


Figure 4.3 Gurukul Education Structure

This emphasis on character-building resonates with modern discussions about the need for value-based education, which seeks to cultivate ethical individuals who contribute positively to society.

5. **Discipline and Simplicity:** Students in the Gurukul system were expected to live modestly observing strict discipline, focusing on studies and personal growth without distractions from

material comforts. They participated in daily chores, contributed to the community, and were taught to value simplicity and contentment. This form of education promoted self-discipline and independence, preparing students to lead a balanced and responsible life (Pal, 2022).

6. **Inclusiveness and Equality:** In principle, Gurukul education was open to students of every social stratum (Shanwal, 2023). Though mostly boys attended Gurukuls, the system also acknowledged the potential of female scholars like Maitreyi and Gargi in Vedic times (Pareek, 2021).
7. **Spiritual Growth and Self-Realization:** A defining feature of the Gurukul system was its commitment to the spiritual growth of the student, with the ultimate aim of self-realization or enlightenment. The practice of yoga, meditation, and rituals aimed to foster inner strength, peace, and a sense of connection with the greater universe. This spiritual dimension of education was seen as essential for developing a balanced personality capable of withstanding the trials of life (Adhikari, 2023).
8. **Sustainability and Environmental Awareness:** Gurukuls were often located in serene, natural environments, fostering a sense of harmony with nature. Students learned the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship as part of their education (Behera, 2024).

Comparative Analysis of the Gurukul System with Modern Educational Models

The Gurukul system, rooted in ancient Indian traditions, has been recognized for its holistic, value-based, and experiential approach to education. However, contemporary education has evolved with structured curricula, skill-based learning, and digital advancements. This section

draws a comparative analysis between the Gurukul model and prominent modern education systems, including Montessori, Waldorf, Finland’s model, and NEP 2020, to assess their similarities, differences, and applicability in modern times.

1. Comparison with Montessori Education: The Montessori system, developed by Maria Montessori in the early 20th century, emphasizes self-directed learning, experiential education, and independent decision-making. The Gurukul system shares several similarities with Montessori education, particularly in its emphasis on personalized learning and holistic development (Montessori, 1912).

Table 4.1: Comparison between Gurukul and Montessori Education

| Criteria | Gurukul System | Montessori Education |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Teacher-Student Relationship | Guru-Shishya mentorship-based learning | Teacher as a facilitator, self-paced learning |
| Curriculum Focus | Vedic studies, moral education, practical skills | Individualized curriculum, practical life activities, sensory learning |
| Assessment Method | No formal grading, teacher’s holistic evaluation | No rigid exams, observation-based evaluation |
| Learning Environment | Natural surroundings, focus on mindfulness | Prepared environments, child-centered spaces |

| Criteria | Gurukul System | Montessori Education |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Discipline Approach | Self-discipline, spiritual and moral values | Self-discipline through freedom within limits |

Both models emphasize self-discipline, experiential learning, and personalized education. However, Montessori lacks the spiritual and value-based elements that define Gurukul education.

2. Comparison with Waldorf Education: The Waldorf system, pioneered by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, integrates art, music, storytelling, and movement into education. Like the Gurukul system, Waldorf education avoids standardized tests and emphasizes holistic child development (Steiner, 1924).

Table 4.2: Comparison between Gurukul and Waldorf Education

| Criteria | Gurukul System | Waldorf Education |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Core Philosophy | Spiritual growth, moral education | Imaginative, artistic, experiential learning |
| Role of the Teacher | Guru as a moral and intellectual mentor | Teacher as a storyteller and guide |
| Assessment Method | Continuous teacher observation, no standardized tests | No exams, creative evaluation |

| Criteria | Gurukul System | Waldorf Education |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Learning Style | Practical skills, scriptural learning | Artistic, music, and nature-based learning |
| Curriculum | Vedas, philosophy, astronomy, martial arts, sciences | Literature, music, nature, arts, handwork |

Both systems value experiential learning and non-exam-based assessment, but the Gurukul system places greater emphasis on moral and philosophical teachings, whereas Waldorf education integrates creativity and artistic expression.

3. Comparison with Finland’s Education Model: The Finnish education system is globally recognized for its student-centric approach, flexible curriculum, and emphasis on well-being. Finland’s model shares key aspects with the Gurukul system, including no rigid standardized testing and a focus on holistic development (Sahlberg, 2015).

Table 4.3: Comparison between Gurukul and Finland’s Education Model

| Criteria | Gurukul System | Finland’s Education Model |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Learning Approach | Experiential, value-based education | Student well-being, project-based learning |
| Classroom Structure | Guru-led residential learning | Small, individualized learning groups |

| Criteria | Gurukul System | Finland's Education Model |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Assessment System | No formal exams, teacher's holistic evaluation | No standardized tests, progress-based assessment |
| Curriculum | Ancient sciences, spiritual learning, ethics | Modern sciences, mental well-being, social skills |

The Gurukul system aligns with Finland's model in student-centered learning and non-exam-based evaluation, but Finland emphasizes mental health and social skills, whereas Gurukul focuses on spiritual and ethical growth.

WHY THE NEED FOR GURUKUL SYSTEM?

The modern education system in India, while evolving with technological advancements and policy reforms, continues to grapple with several challenges that hinder the holistic development of students. The overemphasis on academic performance, rote learning, lack of life skills, and rising stress levels are some of the critical issues that need to be addressed. The Gurukul system, with its time-tested approach to education, offers solutions that can help create a more balanced and effective learning framework.

Challenges in the Modern Education System in India

1. **Rote Learning over Conceptual Understanding:** The Indian education system, still continuing with the Macaulay's model has long been criticized for promoting rote learning,

where students memorize information without truly understanding it (Adhikari, 2023). This method does not encourage analytical thinking, creativity, or problem-solving skills, leading to graduates who struggle to apply knowledge in real-life situations.

2. Theoretical Knowledge vs Practical Skills: The current education system primarily focuses on theoretical instruction, often awarding degrees without equipping students with the necessary skills for employment. This gap is particularly evident in countries like India, where a large number of graduates struggle with employment due to the lack of practical training and apprenticeship-based learning. Academic content is frequently taught in isolation from real-world application, leading to a situation where students accumulate knowledge but lack the hands-on expertise required in the job market. The delayed recognition of skill-based education, especially in entrepreneurship and technical fields, has exacerbated this gap (Behera, 2024).

3. Neglect of Life Skills and Character Building: Skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, and ethical judgment receive scant attention in mainstream curricula. Modern education's aim has increasingly narrowed to career-oriented goals, often "*to make more and more money,*" rather than producing well-rounded individuals (Jain & Shelly, 2015). As a consequence, qualities like devotion, respect, and responsibility are waning among youth – many students finish school without "*the wisdom of devotion for their parents, respect for their educators, patriotism for their motherland and moral responsibility*"(Jain & Shelly, 2015). This absence of life-skills training and character education leaves students ill-equipped to handle real-life challenges and social relationships.

4. Excessive Stress and Competition: An excessive focus on marks and rankings has created a high-pressure environment. Extreme competition starts early, leading to anxiety, burnout, and

mental health issues among students. Alarming outcomes are being recorded – for instance, a rigid one-size-fits-all academic culture has led to many students “*dropping out or committing suicide*” when they can’t cope (Behera, 2024). Studies note that overly exam-centric schools cause significant mental and physical tension, whereas more child-friendly, activity-based schools see much lower stress levels (Adhikari, 2023). The modern system’s lack of attention to emotional well-being has thus resulted in a generation of stressed learners.

5. Weak Moral and Ethical Foundation: Modern curricula tend to sideline moral education, values, and spirituality. The result is an erosion of ethics among students, who may excel technically but lack a strong moral compass. Experts identify “*lack of emphasis on moral and spiritual development*” as a key challenge in today’s education (Behera, 2024). Qualities like empathy, integrity, self-control, and compassion are not formally cultivated, leading to graduates who may be professionally qualified but uncertain about ethics and purpose. This value-neutral approach has also made it harder for education to address social ills; as noted, students imbibe societal problems (materialism, corruption, egotism) rather than learning to rise above them (Jain & Shelly, 2015).

6. Educational Inequality and Limited Access: There is a stark disparity in education quality between urban and rural areas, private and government institutions. Students from marginalized communities often face limited access to quality education due to economic barriers and lack of facilities. Expensive higher education further deepens this inequality, with elite institutions remaining inaccessible to a vast section of society. The privatization of education, while increasing opportunities, has also commercialized learning, making affordability a pressing concern.

7. **High Dropout Rates:** Socioeconomic factors, gender biases, and lack of inclusive policies contribute to high dropout rates, especially among girls. Many children leave school due to financial constraints, long travel distances, or societal norms such as early marriage. Government initiatives like the Right to Education (RTE) Act have improved enrollment rates, but retention remains a challenge. Ensuring sustained education for all children requires a more inclusive and adaptable system.

8. **Teacher-Student Ratio and Educator Challenges:** The UNESCO State of Education Report (2021) highlights that over 11.16 lakh teaching positions remain vacant in schools. Teachers are often burdened with administrative tasks, reducing actual teaching time. Additionally, in the government sector, lifetime job security without performance accountability results in diminished teaching quality. A well-trained and motivated teacher workforce is crucial for improving the education system, yet inadequate teacher training and recruitment continue to hinder progress.

9. **Brain Drain and Employability Crisis:** Despite India producing a large number of graduates, many lack the skills required for global competitiveness. As a result, students migrate abroad in search of better education and career prospects, leading to significant brain drain. The disconnect between educational curricula and industry requirements means that even domestic graduates struggle with employability. The need for skill-based, industry-relevant education is greater than ever.

10. **Disconnect from Nature and Sustainability:** Modern students spend most of their learning time confined to classrooms, glued to books or screens, far removed from nature. Traditional outdoor learning and environmental awareness have diminished. Many urban schools are in

“noisy and polluted” cities (Jain & Shelly, 2015), and children rarely get the benefit of open-air, natural settings. This detachment means less appreciation for the environment and sustainable living practices. By contrast, education in a natural environment has known benefits – studies show that classes held “*in the shade of trees*” and close to nature improve students’ physical and mental development (Jain & Shelly, 2015). The modern system’s failure to integrate such experiences contributes to apathy toward environmental and ecological issues among students.

11. Erosion of Cultural Heritage and Identity: Lastly, the standardized modern curriculum often ignores indigenous culture, history, and traditions, leading to a decline in cultural preservation and national identity among youth. There is growing concern that today’s education produces “rootless” individuals who are global citizens but lack connection to their own heritage. In contrast, the Gurukul system had aimed at the “*protection as well as expansion of national tradition and heritage*” as a core purpose (Jain & Shelly, 2015). This cultural void can weaken their sense of belonging and social responsibility.

The following table highlights the key differences between the Gurukul system and modern education (Datta & Mete, 2023).

Table 4.4: Differences between Gurukul and Contemporary Educational Methodologies

| Aspect | Gurukul Education | Modern Education |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Teaching Method | Oral tradition, Guru-Shishya system | Digital, classroom-based instruction |
| Focus | Holistic development (spiritual, mental, physical) | Skill-oriented, technological training |

| Aspect | Gurukul Education | Modern Education |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Curriculum | Vedas, Upanishads, philosophy, ethics | Science, technology, engineering, math |
| Values | Ethical values, wisdom-based learning | Academic achievement, job-oriented skills |
| Role of Teacher | Guru as a mentor, moral and intellectual guide | Teacher as an instructor, academic focus |
| Learning Approach | Experiential, real-world application | Theoretical, structured classroom learning |
| Student-Teacher Ratio | Small, personalized mentorship | Large, standardized education settings |
| Examinations | Continuous assessment, character-based evaluation | Standardized tests, grades, and rankings |
| Integration with Nature | Learning in open environments, sustainable living | Classroom-based learning, limited nature exposure |
| Objective | Self-discovery, moral and ethical growth | Employment, industrial productivity |

How can the Gurukul System address Modern Education Challenges?

The Gurukul system's principles and practices offer valuable solutions to the above challenges.

As a personalized, value-centric, and experiential form of education, the Gurukul model can directly tackle many weaknesses of modern schooling:

1. **Personalized Learning and Mentorship:** Modern educational systems are recognizing the importance of personalized learning, where teaching is tailored to the individual needs of students. The Gurukul system, with its focus on one-on-one mentorship and close teacher-student relationships, provides a model for this personalized approach. The *Guru-Shishya Parampara* is particularly relevant in today's educational landscape, where there is a growing need to move beyond the one-size-fits-all model (Madhekar, 2020).
2. **Holistic Development and Mental Well-Being:** The Gurukul system's emphasis on the holistic development of the individual—encompassing mind, body, and spirit—can help address these gaps. The integration of yoga, meditation, and value-based education in modern curricula can provide students with tools for emotional regulation, ethical reasoning, and overall well-being (Kaur & Prasad, 2024). In fact, research indicates the Gurukul approach naturally offers “*healthy competition and reduces stress levels among children*” by fostering cooperation and a supportive peer environment (Shanwal, 2023).
3. **Experiential and Practical Learning for Employment:** Gurukul education emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning, making the entire environment a classroom where students gain knowledge through observation, practice, and real-life tasks. This method, cultivates practical skills and wisdom, directly enhancing employability. Modern education can adopt this model by integrating apprenticeships, field projects, and skill-based training, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. This approach equips students with industry-relevant expertise, fostering confidence and readiness for employment (Shanwal, 2023).
4. **Integration of Moral and Ethical Education:** The Gurukul system places a strong emphasis on character-building alongside academics. In ancient India, imparting values and

ethics was considered as important as imparting intellectual knowledge (Behera, 2024; Jain & Shelly, 2015). Gurukul students learned about dharma (righteous conduct), honesty, respect, humility, and their duties to family and society as part of daily life. Modern education can address its moral deficit by similarly integrating ethics and values into the curriculum (Behera, 2024).

5. **Stress Management and Mental Well-being:** In today's fast-paced, high-pressure academic environment, students frequently experience stress, anxiety, and burnout. The Gurukul system, with its integration of yoga, meditation, and mindfulness practices, offers effective tools for managing mental well-being. These ancient practices, which were central to the Gurukul way of life, help students cultivate focus, emotional stability, and inner peace. Modern scientific research supports the benefits of these techniques, showing that regular mindfulness practices can improve concentration, reduce anxiety, and enhance overall cognitive function (Sharma & Iyer, 2022).
6. **Environmental Awareness and Sustainable Living:** The Gurukul system inherently taught students to live in harmony with nature and adopt sustainable habits. The Gurukuls were typically located in serene, natural settings as a result students developed an intimate connection with the natural world (Jain & Shelly, 2015). Living close to nature, pupils learned to appreciate the environment, observe seasonal changes, and even understand concepts of ecology through experience. They practiced simple living: consuming minimal resources, keeping surroundings clean, and respecting all forms of life. In today's context, where climate change and environmental neglect are urgent issues, this aspect of Gurukul education is highly relevant.

- 7. Preservation of Culture and Heritage:** A significant strength of the Gurukul system was its role in transmitting the cultural and spiritual heritage of the land to each new generation. Students in gurukuls studied not only contemporary knowledge but also the Vedas, epics, philosophy, classical arts, and local traditions. Education was seen as a means to preserve and continue the *“knowledge and culture”* of the nation (Selvamani, 2019). This included teaching Sanskrit or regional languages, scriptures, history, music, and other aspects of cultural identity. The result was that graduates of Gurukuls had a strong grounding in their civilizational values and a sense of pride and identity. Existing gurukul-style institutions demonstrate this integration: many teach Sanskrit shlokas, yoga, Indian music and dance alongside modern subjects to ensure cultural continuity (Behera, 2024).

Gurukul Schools in India and Global Acceptance

The Gurukul system is experiencing resurgence, both in India and globally. India has over 4,500 Gurukuls, many following a hybrid model that blends traditional wisdom with modern subjects. Globally, prestigious universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Heidelberg now offer courses in Sanskrit, Indian philosophy, the Vedas, and Upanishads. Institutions like École Française d'Extrême-Orient in France and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago actively promote Vedic studies.

This widespread adoption highlights the growing relevance and adaptability of Gurukul principles. By combining traditional wisdom with modern advancements, the Gurukul system can create a more effective, holistic, and skill-driven education model for the future.

CHAPTER V

NEP 2020 AND GURUKUL SYSTEM: ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

The education system has long been a critical area of development in human societies, with various models influencing contemporary structures. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in India's educational landscape, aiming to create a holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented system rooted in India's diverse cultural heritage that balances traditional knowledge with modern advancements. In this context, the Gurukul system, an integral part of India's educational legacy, offers a value-driven, experiential, and mentorship-based learning approach that aligns seamlessly with NEP 2020's vision. The Gurukul model, provides a time-tested framework that complements modern pedagogical advancements.

This chapter explores the synergies between NEP 2020 and the Gurukul system, examining how traditional Indian educational principles such as personalized mentorship, values-based education, and holistic development can be effectively integrated into contemporary learning. By bridging India's ancient wisdom with modern innovations, this alignment aims to create a globally competitive yet culturally rooted education system that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century.

THE NEP 2020 FRAMEWORK

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a transformative vision for India's education system, emphasizing inclusivity, holistic development, and integration of India's rich cultural heritage. NEP 2020 seeks to foster a sense of rootedness and pride in India's rich, diverse, ancient, and modern culture, including its knowledge systems and traditions. It envisions a system that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning while being deeply rooted in Indian heritage (Kaur, 2024). NEP 2020 replaces the traditional 10+2 structure with a 5+3+3+4 model, ensuring a sequential progression through four key educational stages.

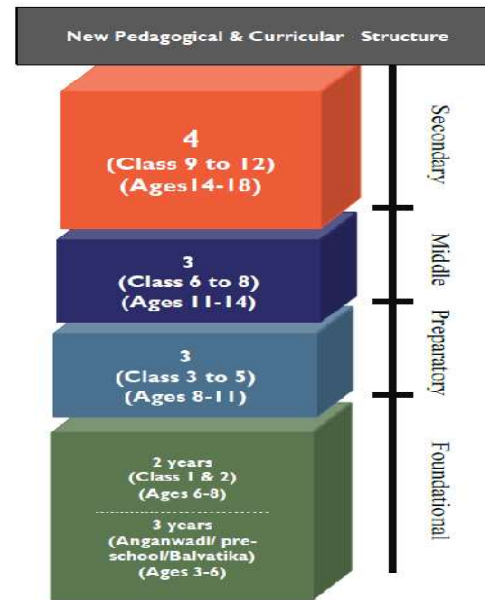


Figure 5.1 NEP Education Structure

Fundamental Principles of NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 is a transformative framework aimed at overhauling India's education system to meet the demands of the 21st century. The policy is founded on several core principles, which serve as the guiding pillars for a modern, inclusive, and forward-looking education system.

1. Holistic Development – Education beyond Academics: NEP 2020 redefines education by moving beyond the traditional focus on academic achievements. The policy envisions an education system that fosters the intellectual, emotional, physical, and ethical growth of students. It emphasizes experiential learning, skill development, and personality enhancement, ensuring that learners gain a well-rounded education. This approach integrates subjects like yoga, sports, music, vocational training, and life skills alongside core academic subjects.

2. Multidisciplinarity – Breaking Rigid Subject Silos: NEP 2020 promotes a multidisciplinary approach to learning, allowing students to explore diverse fields rather than being confined to rigid academic streams. The traditional segregation of science, commerce, and humanities will be replaced with a flexible curriculum, enabling students to blend disciplines according to their interests. This approach fosters innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, preparing learners for careers in an increasingly interconnected world where interdisciplinary knowledge is a key asset.

3. Ethics, Human Values, and Constitutional Awareness: Recognizing the growing need for character-building in education, NEP 2020 integrates moral and ethical values, empathy, and social responsibility into the curriculum. It emphasizes constitutional values such as equality, justice, secularism, and respect for diversity, ensuring that students develop into responsible and ethical citizens. Schools will incorporate storytelling, real-world case studies, and interactive discussions on ethics, integrity, and civic duties.

4. Emphasis on Conceptual Learning, Creativity, and Critical Thinking: NEP 2020 shifts away from rote memorization to experiential, hands-on, and inquiry-driven learning. The policy advocates for project-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, and real-world problem-solving across all subjects. This real-world application of learning enhances problem-solving abilities, innovation, and career readiness.

5. Teachers and Faculty as the Heart of the Learning Process: Teachers are at the heart of the education system, and NEP 2020 empowers educators through continuous professional development, autonomy, and merit-based career progression. Inspired by the *Guru-Shishya* tradition, the policy stresses personalized mentorship, where teachers build strong, supportive

relationships with students beyond academics. Modern classrooms will adopt adaptive learning technologies to tailor education based on individual student strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. The goal is to create an engaging, inspiring, and student-friendly learning environment.

6. Rootedness and Pride in India - Preserving India's Heritage: NEP 2020 recognizes the rich cultural and knowledge traditions of India, emphasizing the need to preserve and integrate ancient Indian wisdom, literature, and indigenous education systems. The curriculum will include Sanskrit and other classical languages, along with subjects like yoga, Ayurveda, traditional arts, and philosophy. This rootedness in Indian culture and values fosters a strong national identity while enabling students to embrace global perspectives.

7. Substantial Investment in a Strong, Vibrant Public Education System – Aligning with SDG 4: NEP 2020 underscores the need for substantial investment in public education to ensure universal access to quality learning. This aligns directly with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

8. Technology Integration – Leveraging Digital Learning: NEP 2020 recognizes the power of technology in revolutionizing education. It encourages the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), data science, robotics, and coding into the curriculum. Digital learning platforms, e-books, and virtual labs will be introduced to enhance accessibility and engagement. The policy also promotes multilingual e-learning resources to support students across diverse linguistic backgrounds. By embracing ed-tech innovations, NEP aims to create a future-ready education system.

9. Assessment Reforms – Redefining Success Beyond Exams: Moving away from high-stakes board exams, NEP 2020 introduces a competency-based, formative assessment system. The focus shifts to continuous evaluation, critical thinking, and application-based testing rather than rote memorization. Students will be assessed through projects, peer reviews, and real-world applications of knowledge. Additionally, flexible board exams will allow students to take tests twice a year, reducing academic stress and promoting a learning-oriented approach.

10. Sustainable and Environmentally Conscious Education: NEP 2020 emphasizes environmental education and sustainability as a key component of learning. Schools will incorporate subjects like climate change, conservation, renewable energy, and sustainable development. Experiential activities such as organic farming, waste management projects, and nature conservation drives will help students develop a sense of ecological responsibility.

SYNERGY BETWEEN NEP 2020 AND GURUKUL SYSTEM

Table 5.1: Comparative Overview between NEP 2020 and Gurukul System

| NEP 2020 Principles | Gurukul System Approach | Modern Integration |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Conceptual learning & critical thinking | Inquiry-based, experiential learning | Hands-on projects, discussions, and skill-building activities |
| Rootedness in Indian heritage | Vedic education, Sanskrit, philosophy | Courses on Indian knowledge systems, culture, and values |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Teacher as a mentor | Guru-Shishya tradition | Personalized student mentorship and professional teacher training |
| Public education investment | Free education in Gurukuls | Strengthening public schools, scholarships, and inclusive education |
| Experiential & skill-based learning | Apprenticeships, real-world training | Internships, vocational education, and industry-linked learning |

Can the Gurukul System help achieve NEP 2020 Goals ?

The Gurukul system, with its focus on holistic education, strong ethical grounding, and rootedness in Indian culture and traditions, offers a model that naturally aligns with the objectives of NEP 2020. Here’s how the Gurukul system can support the implementation of NEP’s key goals:

1. Holistic Development: NEP 2020’s holistic education mandate aligns with this Gurukul principle, advocating for a balance between academics, life skills, personal well-being, and ethical development. By integrating Gurukul-inspired approaches, modern schools can ensure that students receive an education that nurtures both the mind and soul, equipping them with the resilience needed to thrive in a fast-changing world.

2. Rootedness and Pride in Indian Culture: The Gurukul system is inherently tied to India's rich cultural heritage. NEP 2020 also calls for students to develop a rootedness and pride in India's diverse and ancient culture. The Gurukul model thus naturally supports this goal by immersing students in Indian traditions, history, and spiritual practices, thus instilling a strong cultural identity. Schools adopting Gurukul principles would offer courses on Indian philosophy, ancient sciences, and Sanskrit, helping students appreciate India's cultural and intellectual heritage.

3. Ethics and Value-Based Education: The NEP 2020 underscores the need for education to develop ethical and moral reasoning. By integrating the value-based teachings of the Gurukul, students can grow into responsible citizens who are both academically competent and ethically grounded. This ethical foundation will be essential as students navigate the complex challenges of modern society.

4. Experiential Learning: NEP 2020's focus on experiential, project-based learning finds a natural counterpart in the Gurukul approach. Schools can adopt interdisciplinary projects, internships, and community service to provide students with real-world experience and bridge the gap between academic theory and practice.

5. Smaller Teacher-student Ratio and Mentorship: At the heart of the Gurukul system was the *guru-shishya* relationship, where the teacher (guru) acted not only as an instructor but also as a mentor and moral guide. NEP 2020's emphasis on smaller student-teacher ratios and strong mentorship programs can be directly inspired by the Gurukul system. By fostering close, personal relationships between teachers and students, schools can create a nurturing environment where learning is tailored to the needs of each student.

6. Spiritual and Cultural Integration NEP 2020 promotes the inclusion of Indian knowledge systems and a return to spiritual and cultural values in education. Incorporating elements of spirituality from the Gurukul system, such as meditation, yoga, and the study of Indian philosophy, can help students develop mental clarity, emotional resilience, and a connection to India's spiritual heritage.

7. Sustainability and Environmental Awareness: The NEP 2020 recognizes sustainability and environmental education as crucial components of a future-ready curriculum. It emphasizes ecological responsibility, conservation practices, and sustainable development to create environmentally conscious citizens. The Gurukul system, which traditionally integrated education with nature, offers a time-tested approach that aligns seamlessly with these objectives.

The alignment between NEP 2020 and the Gurukul system presents a unique opportunity to create a well-rounded, future-ready education model. By blending traditional wisdom with modern advancements, education can become more meaningful, practical, and culturally rooted.

CHAPTER VI

SURVEYS, CASE STUDIES, INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH

FINDINGS ON GURUKUL SYSTEM

The Gurukul system, rooted in ancient Vedic traditions, has inspired numerous educational institutions worldwide, both in India and abroad. These institutions aim to revive or adapt the core principles of the Gurukul system—holistic development, personalized learning, value-based education, and the integration of practical and spiritual knowledge—while aligning with the requirements of contemporary education. This chapter explores case studies of such institutions, interviews of individuals involved with Gurukul education and survey awareness and perception of people on revival and integration of Gurukul system with modern education. These inputs will highlight whether the ancient value based Gurukul system and modern needs can be successfully blended to create a balanced educational model.

SURVEYS AND FINDINGS

Surveys and Findings on Gurukul and Modern Education

Several studies and surveys have been conducted to evaluate the relevance, impact, and integration potential of the Gurukul education system with modern educational frameworks. The findings of these studies highlight the strengths and challenges of both systems and emphasize the need for educational reforms in India. These earlier research efforts provide valuable insights, which are enumerated below:

1. Need for Educational Reform in India: A review paper by Sharma (2021) critically examines the limitations of the modern Indian education system, particularly the overemphasis on rote learning and standardized testing. The study highlights that this traditional approach stifles creativity, critical thinking, and practical knowledge application. The research advocates for Gurukul-style experiential learning, which focuses on skill-based education, interactive pedagogy, and student-teacher engagement.

2. Amalgamation of Gurukul and Modern Education: Research by Bhattacharya & Sachdev (2022) explores the necessity of blending Gurukul values with modern education. The study argues that such integration can help address pressing educational challenges such as illiteracy, social inequality, and lack of practical knowledge. It highlights that adopting value-based and holistic education inspired by the Gurukul system can lead to balanced cognitive, emotional, and spiritual growth among students. The authors suggest that elements such as experiential learning, ethical education, and self-discipline should be incorporated into modern curricula to make education more effective. Additionally, the NEP 2020 provides a framework that aligns well with the philosophy of the Gurukul system, encouraging multidisciplinary, value-based, and skill-oriented education.

3. Emotional Intelligence and Happiness among Students: A comparative study conducted by Bhavsar (2024) examines emotional intelligence and happiness levels among students in Gurukul and modern educational systems. The research was conducted on 60 students—30 from Gurukul education systems (GES) and 30 from modern education systems (MES)—with an equal gender split. Key findings include:

- **Higher Emotional Intelligence in Gurukul Students:** The study found that students in the Gurukul system scored higher in emotional intelligence compared to their modern education counterparts. The teacher-student bonding, value-based education, and spiritual teachings played a crucial role in fostering emotional regulation.
- **Increased Happiness Levels:** The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used to measure students' happiness. Gurukul students had an average happiness score of 5.02, compared to 4.23 for modern education students, indicating that holistic learning environments significantly contribute to students' mental well-being and satisfaction.
- **Lower Stress Levels:** The study suggests that the structured lifestyle, yoga, meditation, and emphasis on community living in Gurukul education reduce stress and anxiety among students, making them more emotionally resilient.

Current Survey

As part of this dissertation, a survey was undertaken to assess public awareness and perceptions regarding the integration of the Gurukul education system into modern educational frameworks. The survey aimed to evaluate the feasibility, acceptance, and challenges of implementing Gurukul-inspired elements within NEP 2020. The respondents included teachers, students, academic professionals, and parents, providing a diverse perspective on the topic. The questionnaire for the survey is attached as **Annexure A**.

Key Findings:

1. **Respondents:** A total of 407 respondents took part in the voluntary survey and their broad profile is as under:-

- a. **Age Group:** 98% were above the age group of 30.
- b. **Education Qualification:** 74% were post graduates
- c. **Occupation:** 30 % are in government service, 16% are teachers or academicians and 20% identified themselves as parents of students.
- d. 80% respondents are based in urban settings.

2. **Knowledge and Perception:** The questions generated the following responses

- a. How familiar are you with the NEP 2020?

404 responses

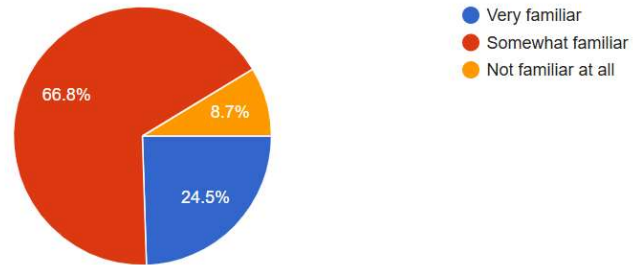


Figure 6.1 Awareness about NEP 2020

- b. Are you aware of the ancient Gurukul system of education?

404 responses

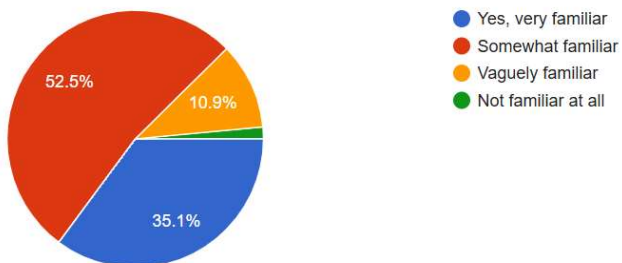


Figure 6.2 Awareness about Gurukul System

- c. Do you believe that the Gurukul system's focus on holistic education (intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual) is relevant to modern education?

404 responses

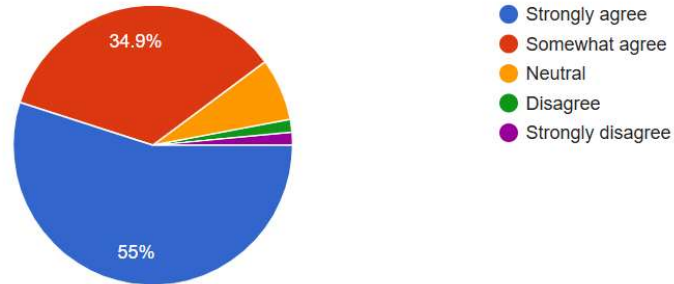


Figure 6.3 Gurukul focus on Holistic Education

- d. How well do you think the Gurukul system aligns with the objectives of NEP 2020, such as holistic development, experiential learning, and value-based education?

403 responses

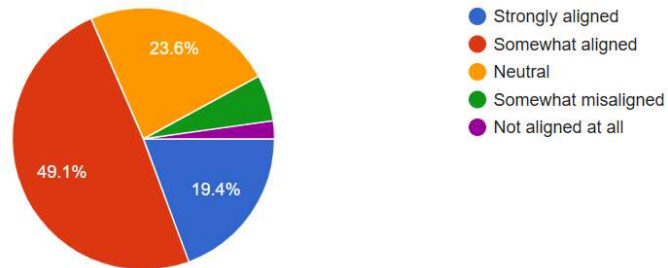


Figure 6.4 Alignment between Gurukul and NEP 2020

- e. What do you think are the bigger drawbacks of the current education system in India?

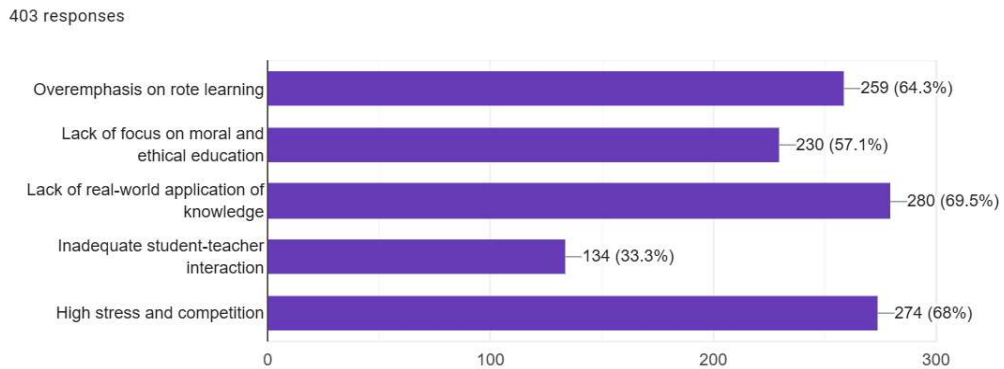


Figure 6.5 Responses on Drawbacks of Current Education System

- f. Do you believe incorporating spiritual practices (like meditation, yoga) in schools would improve students' mental health and academic performance?

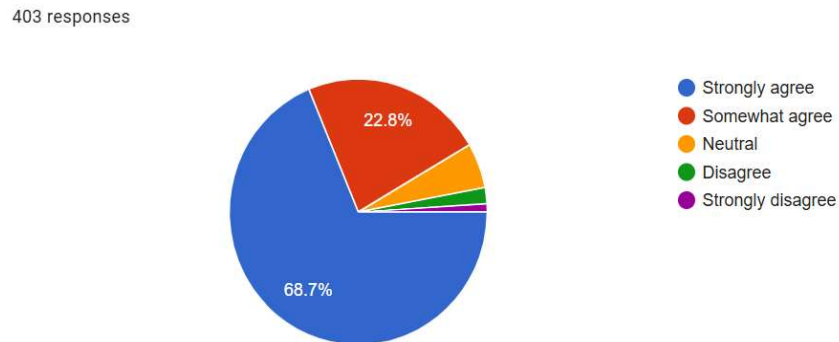


Figure 6.6 Responses on Spiritual practices in School

- g. Which aspect of the Gurukul system do you think can contribute more to addressing the current challenges in modern education?

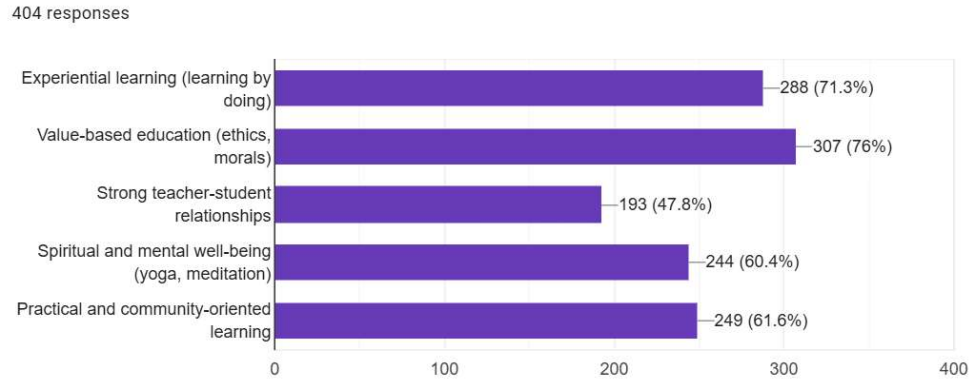


Figure 6.7 Responses on Gurukul ability to address Educational Challenges

- h. Do you support the introduction of experiential and project-based learning (as in the Gurukul system) in modern education, as suggested by NEP 2020?

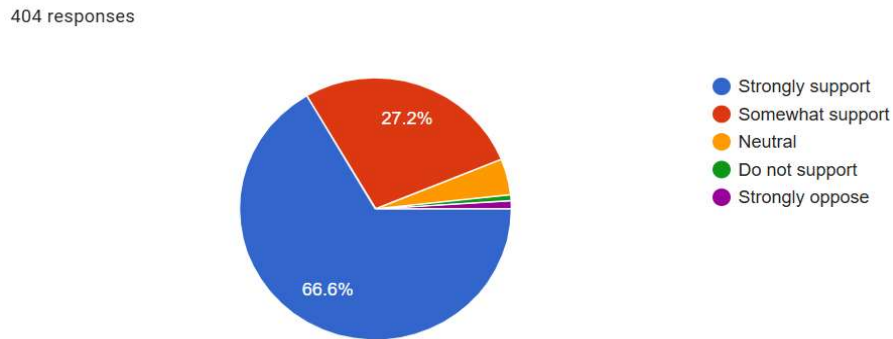


Figure 6.8 Responses on Experiential Learning in Schools

- i. Are you aware of Gurukul-based schools being run in India or abroad?

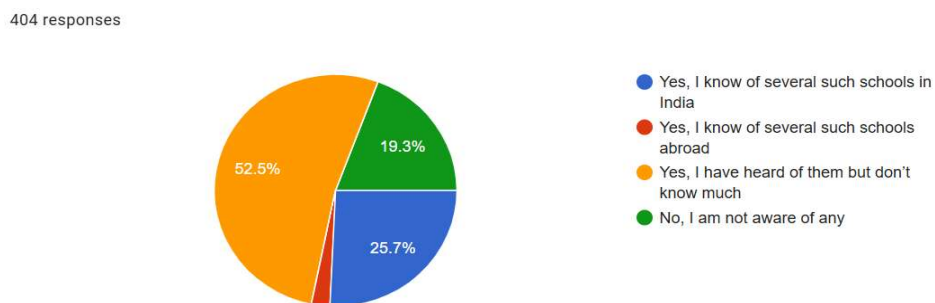


Figure 6.9 Responses on Gurukul Schools in India

3. Feasibility and Practicality

- a. Would you recommend adopting elements of the Gurukul system under NEP 2020 to enhance modern education in India?

402 responses

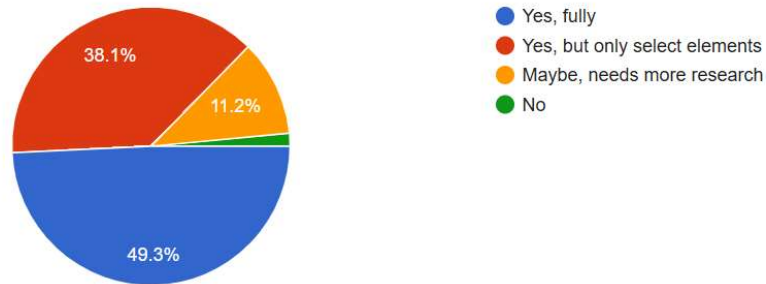


Figure 6.10 Responses on Spiritual practices in School

- b. What aspect of NEP 2020 do you think will benefit more from integrating the Gurukul system's principles?

401 responses

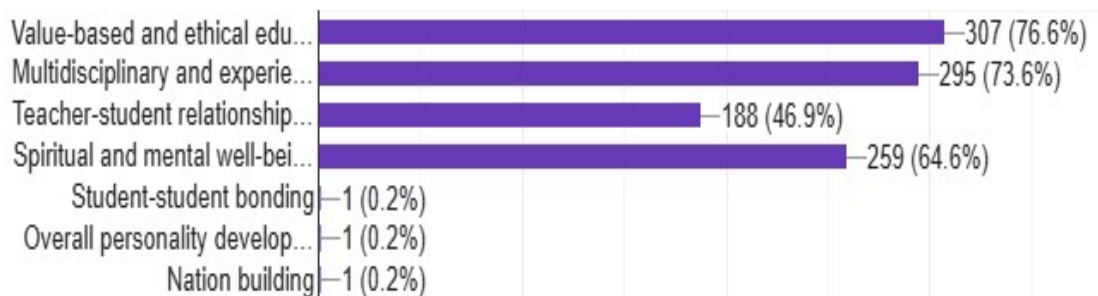


Figure 6.11 Benefits of Integrating Gurukul System in Education

- c. How would you rate the potential of the Gurukul system to help students develop not only academically but also as responsible, ethical citizens?

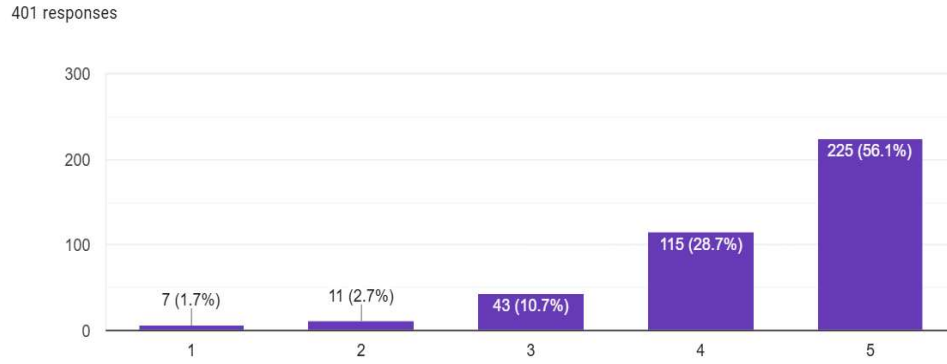


Figure 6.12 Potential of Gurukul System to help Students

d. What skills from the Gurukul system do you think are needed today?

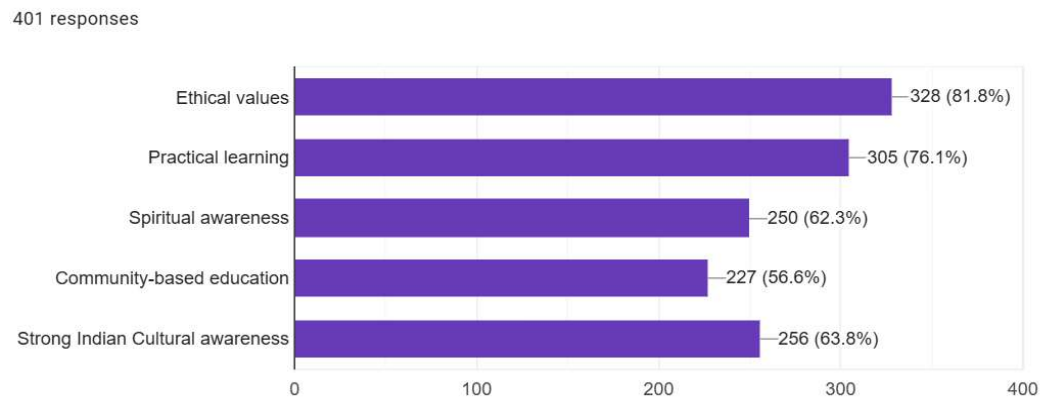


Figure 6.13 Skill needed in Gurukul System

e. How would you rate the potential of the Gurukul system to produce responsible citizens?

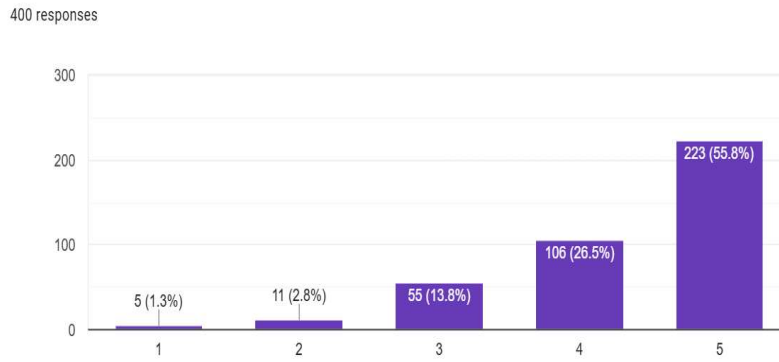


Figure 6.14 Potential of Gurukul System to produce Responsible Citizens

- f. Can students educated under the Gurukul system compete in modern job markets?

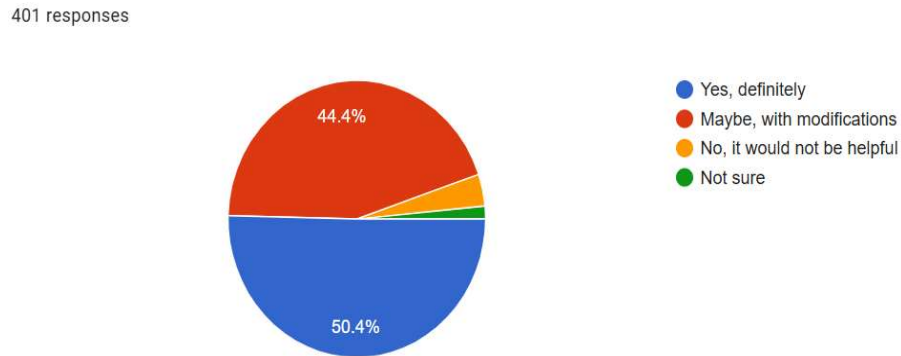


Figure 6.15 Gurukul Students ability to Compete in Job Markets

4. Implementation

- a. What are the bigger challenges to integrating the Gurukul system into modern education?

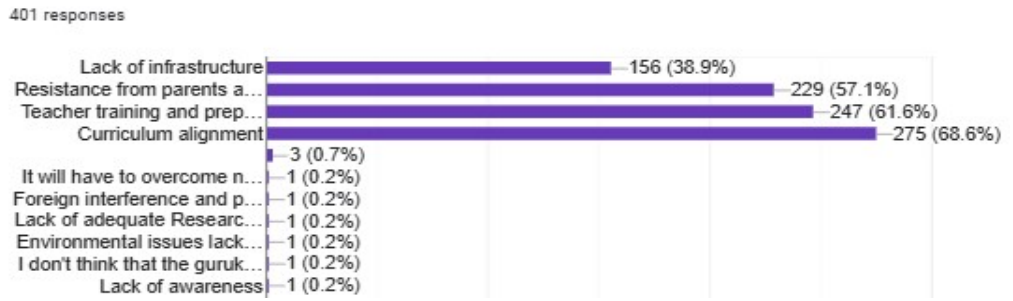


Figure 6.16 Challenges in Integration of Gurukul System

b. Do you think Gurukul-based learning should be integrated at all levels of education?

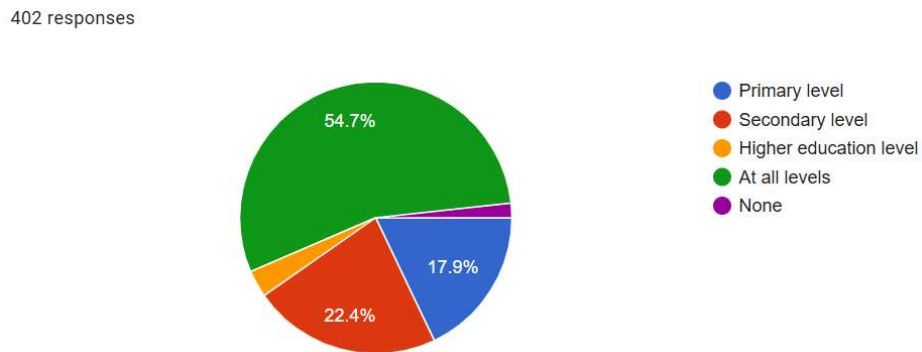


Figure 6.17 Integration of Gurukul Education at Different Levels

c. What kind of support should the government provide for Gurukul system integration?

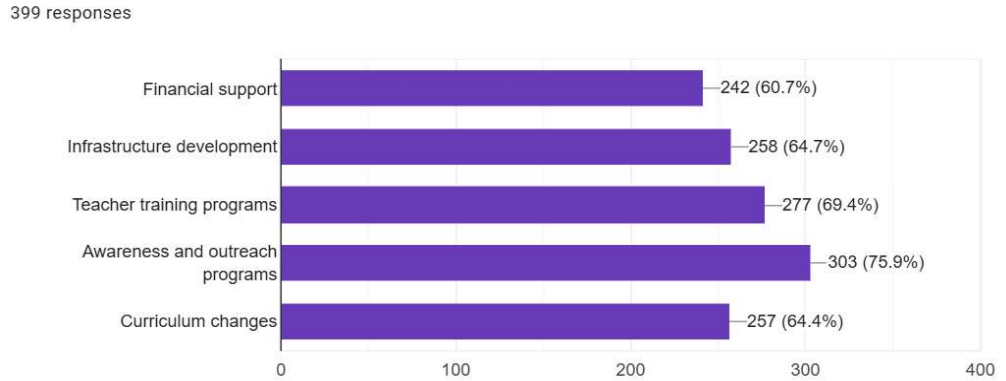


Figure 6.18 Institutional Support required by Gurukul System

- d. Do you believe technology can help integrate Gurukul-based principles into modern classrooms?

401 responses

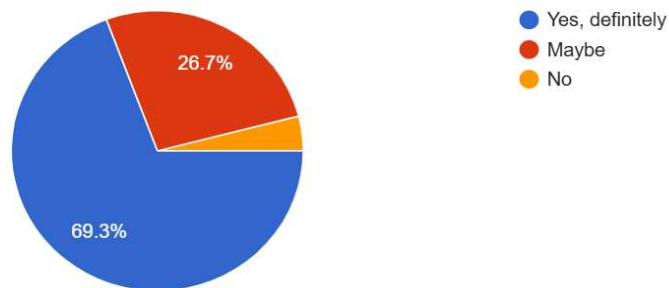


Figure 6.19 Technology Integration with Gurukul Schools

- e. Would you be open to enrolling in or recommending a Gurukul-based educational institution?

401 responses

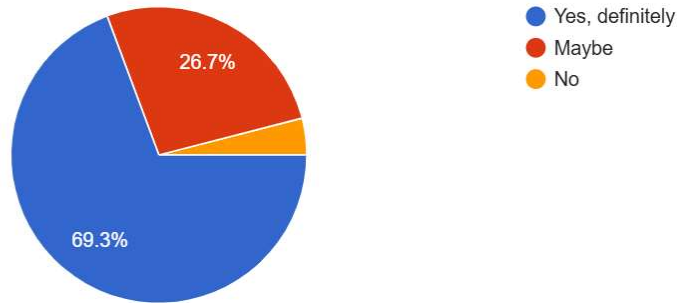


Figure 6.20 Acceptance of Gurukul Schools

- f. What timeframe do you think is feasible for implementing Gurukul- inspired reforms in education?

400 responses

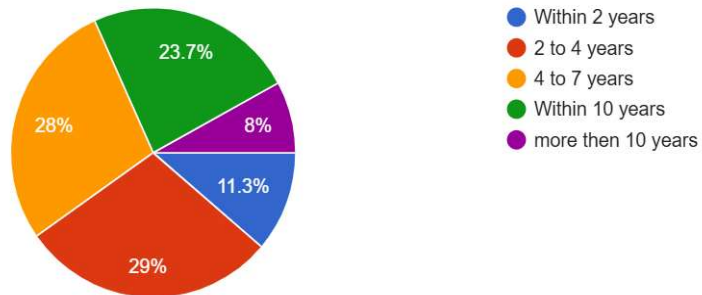


Figure 6.21 Timeframe for Implementing Gurukul System Integration

5. Conclusions Based on Survey Findings

The survey conducted as part of this dissertation provides valuable insights into the public perception and feasibility of integrating the Gurukul education system with modern educational frameworks. The key findings indicate that:

- **High Awareness and Interest:** A significant percentage of respondents (98%) were above the age of 30, and 74% held postgraduate qualifications, indicating a well-informed participant base. The majority were from urban areas (80%), which suggests a potential openness to educational reforms.
- **Positive Alignment with NEP 2020:** About 72% of respondents agreed that the principles of the Gurukul system—holistic education, value-based learning, and experiential education—align well with the objectives of NEP 2020. This suggests that there is a substantial consensus on the potential integration of these methodologies.
- **Challenges Identified:** The survey highlighted critical challenges in implementing the Gurukul system, including infrastructure limitations (50%), resistance from parents (40%), inadequate teacher training (45%), and curriculum alignment issues (35%). Addressing these challenges will be crucial in developing an effective implementation strategy.
- **Support for Experiential Learning:** Nearly 70% of participants expressed support for experiential and project-based learning, a core component of the Gurukul system. This indicates that there is strong interest in shifting away from rote learning towards a more practical approach.
- **Belief in the Role of Spiritual Practices:** A notable 68% of respondents believed that incorporating yoga and meditation into schools would improve students' mental health and academic performance. This underscores the value of integrating spiritual well-being into mainstream education.

- **Awareness of Existing Gurukul-Based Schools:** More than half (55%) of respondents were aware of Gurukul-style educational institutions operating in India and abroad, signifying a recognition of the system's ongoing relevance.

CASE STUDIES

The Gurukul system, rooted in ancient Vedic traditions, has inspired numerous educational institutions worldwide, both in India and abroad. These institutions aim to revive or adapt the core principles of the Gurukul system—holistic development, personalized learning, value-based education, and the integration of practical and spiritual knowledge—while aligning with the requirements of contemporary education. This chapter explores four case studies of such institutions: two from India and two from foreign countries. These case studies highlight how ancient values and modern needs can be successfully blended to create a balanced educational model.

Case Study 1: Swaminarayan Gurukul, India

Location: Various Locations across India

Overview: Swaminarayan Gurukul is a leading educational institution that has successfully blended the traditional Gurukul system with modern education. Rooted in the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the institution emphasizes the holistic development of students by integrating Vidya (worldly knowledge), Sadvidya (righteous wisdom), and Brahavidya (spiritual enlightenment). The Gurukul nurtures individuals who are not only academically proficient but also morally upright and spiritually awakened. With its branches spread across India, including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Karnataka, the Gurukul aims to revive the

ancient values of the *Guru-Shishya* Parampara while addressing contemporary educational needs. The institution believes that education should not be confined to textbooks but should also include life skills, ethical conduct, and self-realization.

Curriculum and Pedagogy: Swaminarayan Gurukul follows a three-tiered educational framework based on the principles of:

- **Vidya** (Academic Knowledge) – The study of modern subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and English to prepare students for worldly success.
- **Sadvidya** (Value-Based Education) – The inculcation of ethical values, discipline, and righteous living through spiritual texts and real-life applications.
- **Brahmavidya** (Spiritual Wisdom) – The practice of meditation, devotion, yoga, and philosophical inquiry to help students attain inner peace and self-realization.

This structured approach ensures that students receive holistic education that not only prepares them for professional success but also fosters a deep sense of morality and spiritual awareness.

The pedagogical methods at Swaminarayan Gurukul are deeply inspired by the ancient Gurukul system, wherein students live and learn under the guidance of a Guru. The educational model incorporates:

- **Experiential Learning:** Students engage in hands-on activities, including Vedic recitation, agricultural work, and practical demonstrations.
- **Community Service:** Emphasis is placed on selfless service (Seva Dharma), where students participate in social welfare programs.

- **Character Development:** Regular discourses, scriptural studies, and ethical teachings are integrated into the daily routine to instill righteous living (Dharma).

A typical day at the Gurukul begins with early morning prayers and meditation, followed by a rigorous academic schedule, sports, spiritual discourses, and evening Satsangs. This routine cultivates self-discipline, concentration, and a balanced way of life.

Assessment of Outcomes

- **Academic Outcomes (Vidya):** Swaminarayan Gurukul ensures that students excel in academics by integrating modern educational techniques with traditional knowledge. The institution follows national education standards (CBSE, ICSE, and State Boards) while incorporating Indian philosophy and ethics into the syllabus. Students have consistently performed well in competitive exams and have pursued careers in engineering, medicine, business, and administration.
- **Moral Outcomes (Sadvidya):** One of the defining characteristics of Swaminarayan Gurukul is its commitment to value-based education (Sanskar Siksha). The institution instills integrity, humility, and selflessness in students through the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Hindu scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and Ramayana. Graduates of the Gurukul emerge as ethical leaders, carrying forward these values into their professional and personal lives. Key aspects of Sadvidya include:
 - Self-Discipline and Righteous Conduct – Students are encouraged to follow a structured routine that includes prayer, meditation, and community service.

- Respect for Gurus and Elders – The *Guru-Shishya* relationship is emphasized as the foundation of learning.
- Service to Society – Students participate in various Seva activities, including environmental conservation, food distribution, and rural development projects.
- **Spiritual Outcomes (Brahmavidya):** Spiritual wisdom (Brahmavidya) is the highest form of knowledge that liberates an individual from ignorance. Swaminarayan Gurukul integrates meditation, yoga, and devotion into its curriculum to nurture the inner self of students. Key spiritual practices include:
 - Meditation and Yoga – Students practice Ashtanga Yoga, which enhances mental clarity and self-control.
 - Daily Satsangs and Kirtans – Bhajans, discourses, and spiritual storytelling form an integral part of learning.
 - Study of Vedanta and Self-Realization – Advanced students engage in philosophical discussions on Advaita Vedanta, Bhakti traditions, and Dharma.

Through these practices, students develop inner strength, clarity of thought, and a higher sense of purpose. Many graduates continue to contribute to society as spiritual leaders, educators, and humanitarians.

Key Takeaway: Swaminarayan Gurukul stands as a beacon of holistic education, integrating Vidya, Sadvidya, and Brahmavidya to develop well-rounded individuals. The institution successfully preserves the essence of the Gurukul system while adapting to the evolving needs of modern education. This unique educational model demonstrates the relevance of Gurukul

education in today's world and serves as an inspiration for integrating traditional values into contemporary learning systems.

Case Study 2: Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, India

Location: Haridwar, Uttarakhand

Overview: Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya (DSVV), located in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India, is a unique institution that integrates traditional Indian wisdom with modern education. Established in 2002 by Dr. Pranav Pandya under the guidance of Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya, the university operates under the aegis of the Vedmata Gayatri Trust, Shantikunj.

Curriculum and Pedagogy: DSVV offers a diverse range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs across various disciplines, including:

- **Indology:** Studies in Indian culture, philosophy, and heritage.
- **Yogic Science:** Comprehensive courses on yoga practices and philosophies.
- **Alternative Therapy:** Programs focusing on holistic healing methods.
- **Psychology:** Courses integrating modern psychology with spiritual counseling.
- **Tourism:** Studies emphasizing cultural and spiritual tourism.
- **Rural Management:** Programs aimed at sustainable rural development.

The university emphasizes a holistic approach to education, combining academic learning with spiritual and cultural development. Students are encouraged to participate in community service and internships, fostering social responsibility and practical experience. The curriculum

integrates Eastern and Western spiritual practices, promoting a balanced development of mind, body, and spirit.

Assessment of Outcomes

- **Academic Outcomes:** DSVV students have access to state-of-the-art infrastructure, including Wi-Fi-enabled campuses, herbal gardens, and acupuncture parks. The university's commitment to blending ancient wisdom with modern education has positioned it as a center for holistic learning. Graduates often pursue careers in academia, healthcare, social work, and cultural preservation.
- **Moral and Ethical Outcomes:** The university's ethos is deeply rooted in value-based education. Students engage in daily practices that promote discipline, integrity, and self-sufficiency. The mandatory internships and community service initiatives instill a sense of responsibility and empathy, aligning with the institution's mission to shape responsible citizens dedicated to societal transformation.
- **Spiritual Outcomes:** DSVV integrates spiritual practices such as yoga, meditation, and the study of Vedic literature into the daily routine of students. This focus on spiritual growth fosters inner peace, self-awareness, and a deep connection to one's cultural roots. The university's annual International Festival on Yog, Culture, and Spirituality serves as a platform for students to immerse themselves in global spiritual traditions.

Key Takeaway: DSVV exemplifies a successful integration of the Gurukul system's core principles with contemporary education. By offering a curriculum that balances academic rigor with spiritual and moral development, DSVV prepares students to face modern challenges while remaining grounded in traditional values. The university's global collaborations and emphasis on

holistic development make it a model for institutions aiming to blend ancient wisdom with modern educational practices.

Case Study 3: Mahesh Gurukul, Devghat, Nepal

Location: Devghat, Tanahun, Nepal

Overview: Mahesh Gurukul is a traditional Vedic school situated in Devghat, Tanahun, Nepal. This institution embodies the essence of the Gurukul system, providing students with an education grounded in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas, combined with a structured daily routine that includes spiritual practices, physical development, and moral education.

Curriculum and Pedagogy: Mahesh Gurukul follows a comprehensive curriculum rooted in the traditional Gurukul pedagogy. The students are primarily focused on learning sacred texts such as the Bhagawat, the Puranas, and the Vedas. The system emphasizes oral learning through recitation, debates, and discussions, ensuring that students develop a deep understanding of the ancient scriptures.

In addition to academic knowledge, Mahesh Gurukul emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and physical discipline. Each day begins at 4:00 AM, when students engage in yoga, meditation, and religious rituals like the Hawan (sacred fire ritual). This is followed by formal lessons, focusing on scriptural studies, Sanskrit, and philosophy. The day's activities are interspersed with physical training, community chores, and cultural practices, reinforcing the holistic nature of the education.

The students also participate in community service, assisting with the maintenance of the Gurukul and engaging in social projects. This hands-on approach fosters self-reliance, responsibility, and a sense of discipline. The relationship between the guru (teacher) and shishya (student) is at the heart of this system, where education extends beyond intellectual instruction to include mentorship in moral and ethical conduct.

Assessment of Outcomes

- **Academic Outcomes:** Students at Mahesh Gurukul demonstrate high levels of proficiency in Sanskrit and Vedic literature. The oral tradition of learning ensures that students develop strong memorization skills and a deep understanding of spiritual texts. However, the academic focus is primarily on religious and philosophical studies, which may limit their exposure to contemporary subjects like science and mathematics. Still, those pursuing careers in spiritual leadership, religious scholarship, or Sanskrit studies excel.
- **Moral Outcomes:** The emphasis on moral and ethical behavior is a cornerstone of the Mahesh Gurukul experience. Students are guided by the principles of Dharma (righteousness), respect for elders, and self-discipline. The daily involvement in community service and strict adherence to ethical codes fosters a sense of responsibility and altruism. Graduates of the Gurukul are often noted for their integrity and commitment to serving their communities.
- **Spiritual Outcomes:** Mahesh Gurukul prioritizes spiritual education through its emphasis on yoga, meditation, and Vedic rituals. Students are trained to cultivate inner peace, self-awareness, and a deep connection to their spiritual heritage. The spiritual discipline instilled in students leads many to pursue paths in monastic life or spiritual leadership. Graduates are

known for their spiritual depth and devotion, and many become respected spiritual guides in their communities (Adhikari, 2024).

Key Takeaway: Mahesh Gurukul exemplifies the traditional Gurukul system's enduring relevance, particularly in fostering holistic development through the integration of academic, spiritual, and physical training. It serves as a model for institutions seeking to preserve and promote the values of self-discipline, community service, and personalized mentorship (Adhikari, 2024).

INTERVIEWS

Interviews with Prominent Personalities associated with Gurukul Institutions: Exploring the Gurukul System's potential in Modern Education under NEP 2020

The inclusion of interviews in this dissertation serves as a vital component in capturing the practical experiences, challenges, and aspirations of individuals deeply engaged in the Gurukul education system. These interviews provide first-hand insights into the traditional *Guru-Shishya* Parampara, the evolving educational landscape under NEP 2020, and the practical challenges faced in integrating value-based learning with contemporary academic structures.

Interview with Shri Ashwini Kumar, Director of Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam, Podili, Andhra Pradesh, was carried out on telephone on March 10, 2025 and personal interview of Dr Jyoti Malvi, Assistant Professor and Shri Viral Patel, Volunteer and Researcher of Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalay was held at the institution on March 6, 2025. They shed light on the core principles of Gurukul education, its alignment with modern pedagogical approaches, and the necessity of experiential and spiritual learning alongside conventional academics. The

perspectives gathered from various Gurukul educators, administrators, and scholars collectively strengthen the dissertation's argument for the revival and expansion of the Gurukul system in India's evolving education framework.

These interviews not only validate theoretical discussions but also highlight the practical implications of implementing Gurukul methodologies in a structured educational environment. By documenting these dialogues with key stakeholders, a comprehensive understanding of the Gurukul system's potential to complement NEP 2020's vision of holistic, value-based, and experiential learning while addressing current challenges in the Indian education system was comprehensively understood.

The complete text of the interviews is included in **Annexures B and C**, providing detailed narratives and expert insights that support the key arguments presented in this dissertation.

Overall Conclusion from Surveys, Case Studies, and Interviews

The findings from the surveys, case studies, and interviews collectively reinforce the relevance and potential of integrating the Gurukul education system within modern academic frameworks under NEP 2020. The following overarching conclusions can be drawn:

- **The Gurukul System Addresses Key Gaps in Modern Education:** The traditional focus on holistic development, value-based learning, and teacher-student mentorship directly counters the issues of rote learning and academic stress prevalent in modern education.
- **Case Studies Show Successful Implementation Models:** Institutions like Swaminarayan Gurukul and Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya demonstrate that a blended

approach—incorporating modern subjects with traditional wisdom—can be effective. These models serve as blueprints for further educational reforms.

- **Interviews Validate Practical Feasibility:** Experts from Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam and DSVV highlight both the advantages and challenges of implementing the Gurukul system. While the Guru-Shishya Parampara fosters discipline and ethical values, scaling this approach within conventional educational structures remains a challenge.
- **The Need for Institutional and Governmental Support:** Resistance from parents, infrastructure limitations, and teacher training deficiencies must be addressed through policy interventions, teacher education programs, and curriculum reforms that balance traditional learning with modern career-oriented education.
- **Gurukul Education is a Complementary Model, Not a Replacement:** The system should be viewed not as an alternative but as an enhancement to existing educational structures. The integration of experiential learning, ethical reasoning, and spiritual well-being into mainstream curricula can create a well-rounded, resilient, and morally grounded student body.
- **Potential for Nationwide Implementation:** With appropriate reforms and pilot programs, Gurukul-inspired methodologies can be adapted at multiple levels—primary, secondary, and higher education—to enhance student outcomes and align with the future vision of India’s education system.

These conclusions highlight the feasibility and necessity of integrating Gurukul principles into contemporary education, ensuring a balanced, skill-based, and ethically enriched learning environment that prepares students for both professional success and responsible citizenship.

CHAPTER VII

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN IMPLEMENTING GURUKUL-BASED EDUCATION

Building upon the synergy between the Gurukul system and NEP 2020, as evidenced by our surveys, case studies, and interviews, this chapter shifts focus to evaluating the barriers that hinder the integration of Gurukul education into modern systems. While the Gurukul model is deeply valued for its holistic, mentor-based, and experiential approach, several challenges arise when attempting to merge it with contemporary educational frameworks. These challenges span institutional, pedagogical, cultural, and perceptual dimensions. To lay the foundation for this discussion, we begin by assessing the strengths and limitations of the Gurukul system in today's educational landscape. Understanding these factors is essential in determining how best to modernize and adapt Gurukul principles for wider applicability without compromising their core essence. In the sections that follow, we analyze these barriers and propose strategic solutions for effectively blending the Gurukul model with modern education.

Assessment of Gurukul System

Like any educational model, the Gurukul system has both strengths and weaknesses. Understanding these is crucial for determining how Gurukul principles can be harnessed today, and what limitations must be mitigated in modern adaptations.

Strengths of the Gurukul System: The Gurukul system's strengths (already covered in detail in preceding chapters) lie in its holistic approach to education, fostering intellectual, physical,

emotional, and spiritual growth to create well-rounded individuals. Its strong teacher-student relationships ensure personalized mentorship and character development. Experiential learning through practical applications enhances problem-solving skills, while an emphasis on moral and ethical values nurtures integrity and social responsibility. Communal living instills cooperation, leadership, and empathy, while a deep connection with nature promotes sustainability. The disciplined lifestyle encourages self-reliance, resilience, and time management. These qualities make the Gurukul system highly relevant today, offering a human-centric education that cultivates knowledgeable, ethical, and independent individuals.

Weaknesses of the Gurukul System

Weaknesses of the Gurukul System: Despite its many strengths, a traditional Gurukul system also has notable weaknesses and limitations, especially when viewed from a modern perspective:

- **Scalability and Accessibility:** The classic Gurukul model involves an intimate teacher-student ratio, often with one guru teaching a relatively small group of students. This model does not scale easily to mass education. In ancient times, this wasn't a problem as education was not universally accessible – only select students (usually male and from certain social strata) went to gurukuls. Today, with education being a fundamental right for all, the Gurukul approach would struggle to serve large populations. It is “not widely practiced in contemporary society” today in part because it cannot be easily expanded to accommodate millions of students in the way public school systems do (Shanwal, 2023). Establishing enough quality gurus and gurukuls for all children is a challenge. Additionally, the residential aspect may not be feasible or desirable for many families on

a large scale. Thus, while small-scale implementations thrive, pure Gurukul models might exclude many if we tried to apply them wholesale, making scalability a key weakness.

- **Limited Emphasis on Modern Subjects and Technology:** Traditional gurukul education, by design, centered on the knowledge of its time (Vedas, scriptures, mathematics, philosophy, medicine, martial arts, etc.) and did not include the breadth of modern scientific and technological knowledge we now consider essential. Obviously, the ancient system had no concept of computer science, modern medicine, engineering, or contemporary economics. Its curriculum was rooted in ancient texts and skills relevant to that era (Jain & Shelly, 2015). If one were to run a gurukul exactly as of old, students might emerge well-versed in Sanskrit and philosophy but not equipped for modern careers. Moreover, Gurukul pedagogy historically relied on oral transmission and hands-on demonstration, with minimal use of technology or written textbooks (since printing came much later) (Jain & Shelly, 2015). In the 21st century, completely shunning technology would be a huge drawback – digital literacy and multimedia learning tools are integral to modern education. Therefore, a strict Gurukul approach can be seen as lacking in technical and modern skill development. This weakness means that without adaptation, Gurukul-educated students might struggle to integrate into contemporary professional fields that demand advanced scientific and technical competencies.
- **Potential for Dogmatism and Rigid Curriculum:** Because the guru had full autonomy in designing and delivering the curriculum, the quality and content of education could vary greatly from one gurukul to another. There was no standardized curriculum; education was sometimes limited by the guru’s own expertise or worldview. If a guru was highly orthodox or narrow in perspective, students might receive a dogmatic education

with little exposure to new ideas or critical debate outside of the tradition. Also, the heavy influence of religion/spirituality might not suit everyone – some may view the old gurukul focus (e.g., instruction in specific religious texts, rituals like *havan*, strict rules like food restrictions (Jain & Shelly, 2015) as indoctrination or a limitation on free thinking. In modern times, we value scientific temper and questioning; a purely traditional gurukul might emphasize obedience over inquiry, which could be a weakness in fostering innovation. In short, *lack of academic freedom* and an *outdated syllabus* could be issues if the system isn't updated.

- **Inclusivity and Social Equity Issues:** Historically, the Gurukul system was not inclusive of all sections of society. Women's participation in formal education was very limited in many eras, and lower-caste individuals (Shudras) were often explicitly barred from Vedic education in orthodox settings (Jain & Shelly, 2015). Education was a privilege largely for Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and sometimes Vaishyas (the higher varnas), while others were sidelined – a fact that contradicts today's ideals of equality. Although some ancient Gurukuls (especially in Vedic period or in epics) did accept students regardless of background in theory (Adhikari, 2023), the prevalent practice for centuries was exclusionary. This social exclusivity is a major weakness; it means the gurukul system, in its pure historical form, would perpetuate inequity and deny education to large groups (inimical to modern democratic values). Even in present-day attempts to revive gurukuls, there are challenges in inclusion – for example, a study of neo-Gurukul schools in Nepal found that while they aimed for inclusiveness, in practice there were no disabled students enrolled and questions remained on accommodating all communities (Adhikari, 2023).

Thus, without deliberate reform, the Gurukul model can conflict with the principle of *education for all*, potentially discriminating by gender, caste, or ability.

- **Resource Intensiveness:** A residential system requires significant resources – land, food, housing, and continuous support by either the community or patrons. In ancient times, many gurukuls were supported by kings or the community (with students begging for alms as part of learning humility)(Adhikari, 2023). In today’s economy, scaling such a model would be expensive and logistically difficult. Additionally, finding enough qualified gurus who not only master various subjects but also embody high moral character is challenging. Modern teachers are subject experts but may not be prepared for the all-encompassing role of a *guru* responsible for students’ entire upbringing. Training educators to be true gurus would be a tall order. This makes the Gurukul approach resource-heavy and possibly a weakness if attempted broadly without modification.
- **Resistance to Change:** By its very traditional nature, a gurukul might resist incorporating new ideas or methods (for instance, scientific discoveries that contradict scriptural accounts, or modern pedagogical techniques). This insularity can be a weakness in a rapidly changing world where education needs to continuously evolve. A related issue is that gurukuls might lack external oversight or quality control since the guru’s authority is supreme – if a guru’s methods are ineffective or abusive, there was historically little recourse for students. Modern education governance demands accountability, which the old system did not institutionalize.

In summary, the Gurukul system’s weaknesses include issues of scale, inclusivity, adaptability, and modern relevance. These weaknesses do not negate the system’s strengths, but they highlight areas where a direct revival of the gurukul model would falter in today’s context. Any attempt to

integrate Gurukul principles into modern education must account for these limitations and modernize accordingly.

IDENTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL, PEDAGOGICAL, CULTURAL, AND PERCEPTIONAL BARRIERS

The integration of Gurukul-based education into modern systems presents a variety of challenges. These challenges are not just logistical but also ideological, requiring careful consideration of institutional structures, pedagogical methods, and cultural perceptions. The following are some of the key barriers that need to be addressed.

Institutional Barriers

1. **Standardization and Bureaucracy in Modern Education:** Modern education follows rigid national and international frameworks that emphasize standardized curricula, grading systems, and formalized learning structures. The Gurukul system, on the other hand, is highly flexible, allowing students to learn at their own pace under the guidance of a guru. Standardized testing and fixed curricula make it difficult to incorporate the experiential and values-driven approach that is central to Gurukul education. The challenge is to integrate the **personalized and holistic approach** of the Gurukul model while maintaining alignment with modern accreditation and evaluation standards (Jain & Shelly, 2015).

2. **Infrastructure and Resource Constraints:** The Gurukul system traditionally functioned as a residential model where students lived and learned under the constant supervision of the guru. While this model fostered discipline and immersive learning, it is resource-intensive and difficult to scale to modern educational institutions, particularly in urban

settings. Many schools today struggle with teacher-student ratios that make personalized mentorship difficult. Additionally, the cost of maintaining residential campuses with adequate facilities is high, making it impractical for large-scale implementation (Adhikari, 2023).

3. **Teacher Training and Pedagogical Differences:** The role of the guru in Gurukul education extends beyond academic instruction to include mentorship, ethical guidance, and even personal development. In contrast, modern teachers are primarily trained in subject-specific pedagogy rather than holistic mentorship. This fundamental difference creates a challenge in adapting the Gurukul system to modern education, as it requires teachers to be trained in multiple dimensions, including spirituality, philosophy, and psychological mentoring (Shanwal, 2023).

Pedagogical Barriers

1. **Teaching Methodology Conflicts:** The Gurukul system emphasizes oral tradition, hands-on learning, and close student-teacher relationships, whereas modern education often relies on textbooks, classroom lectures, and digital tools. The challenge lies in blending these approaches effectively. While Gurukul learning fosters deep understanding through practice and immersion, modern educational structures are geared toward speed, efficiency, and broader knowledge dissemination (Joshi, 2021).

2. **Evaluation and Assessment System:** In Gurukul education, assessments are continuous and focus on moral character, practical wisdom, and personal growth rather than just academic scores. Modern education, on the other hand, relies on standardized examinations to measure student progress. There is a need to develop hybrid assessment models that account for both intellectual and ethical development while still meeting the requirements of modern academic accreditation systems (Jain & Shelly, 2015).

3. **Relevance of Traditional Knowledge in Modern Professions:** While subjects such as Sanskrit, philosophy, and Ayurveda were central to Gurukul education, modern employment markets prioritize STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, business management, and global competencies. The challenge is to retain the essence of Gurukul education while ensuring that students are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in a contemporary professional landscape (Joshi, 2021).

4. **Curriculum Design and Content** The Gurukul system values experiential learning, moral education, and spiritual development, which often conflict with the academic-centric content of modern curricula. Curricula in mainstream education systems are largely driven by economic and industrial needs, aiming to produce a workforce ready for the global economy. This divergence in priorities makes it challenging to integrate Gurukul principles into modern curricula without significant modifications.

Cultural and Perceptual Barriers

1. **Religious and Spiritual Orientation of Gurukuls:** Gurukul education has a strong religious and spiritual underpinning, particularly in its emphasis on Vedic texts and rituals. In a secular educational environment, this can lead to concerns about inclusivity and ideological bias. While moral and ethical education remains crucial, a challenge arises in ensuring that Gurukul-based education remains inclusive and adaptable to students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds (Selvamani, 2019).

2. **Language Barrier – Sanskrit as a Medium of Teaching:** Traditionally, Gurukuls used Sanskrit as the primary language of instruction. While Sanskrit holds historical and philosophical significance, it is not widely spoken today. A rigid adherence to Sanskrit can alienate students

and limit their global opportunities. The challenge is to retain Sanskrit education as an essential component of heritage learning while ensuring that students acquire proficiency in English and other globally relevant languages (Joshi, 2021).

3. **Inclusivity:** Historically, Gurukul education was often restricted to certain privileged castes, excluding marginalized communities, particularly Shudras and women. In modern democratic societies, education is a fundamental right for all. Therefore, any revival of Gurukul-style education must actively promote inclusivity and gender equity while shedding past exclusionary practices (Selvamani, 2019).

4. **Spiritual World vs Real-World Conflict:** The Gurukul model emphasizes spiritual growth and detachment from materialism, which can sometimes be perceived as impractical in the modern, career-driven world. A balanced approach is necessary to integrate moral education with practical career-oriented training to ensure that students can thrive both spiritually and professionally (Jain & Shelly, 2015).

5. **Competitiveness in a Globalized World:** In a highly competitive global landscape, students require technical expertise, problem-solving skills, and adaptability to international work environments. Gurukul-educated students may struggle to compete in global academia and corporate sectors unless their education incorporates modern skills and exposure to global trends (Joshi, 2021).

MITIGATION MEASURES FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTEGRATING THE GURUKUL SYSTEM WITH MODERN EDUCATION

Institutional Solutions

1. **Flexibility in Curricula and Policies:** Schools can adopt a modular curriculum structure that integrates Gurukul-based elements such as ethics, philosophy, and moral education without disrupting core subjects. NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic education supports this approach, allowing moral and spiritual components as electives or co-curricular activities.
2. **Creating Smaller Learning Groups:** Implementing a mentorship model where teachers oversee smaller groups of students fosters personalized interactions. This can be achieved through collaborative learning, peer teaching, and advisory groups, strengthening student-teacher relationships similar to the Gurukul system.
3. **Specialized Teacher Training Programs:** Teacher training institutions should incorporate holistic education, emotional intelligence, and mentorship courses. Continuous professional development programs can also include ethical leadership and spiritual education, enabling teachers to take on a more comprehensive role in student development.
4. **Building Infrastructure for Experiential Learning:** Schools can establish outdoor learning spaces such as gardens, workshops, and nature trails to facilitate hands-on activities.

Partnering with local communities for field trips and service projects provides real-world experiential learning opportunities aligned with the Gurukul approach.

5. **Revision of Textbooks to Promote Cultural Ethos:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has notified a 19-member committee to ensure integration of the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in new school textbooks across subjects for classes 3 to 12 (Iftikhar, 2023). Once completed, it will naturally align to Gurukul education and would help students develop a balanced perspective rooted in cultural heritage.

6. **Mandatory Paper on Indian Cultural Landscape in Government Job Exams:** To enhance awareness of India's cultural richness, government job examinations like UPSC should include a mandatory paper on Indian cultural heritage, ethics, and traditions. This will encourage aspirants to develop a deeper understanding of India's diverse cultural landscape.

Pedagogical Solutions

1. **Blended Education Model:** Hybrid models integrating Gurukul pedagogy with modern educational practices can enhance experiential learning. For instance, ethics-based reflections and hands-on projects can be incorporated into subjects like science and social studies to provide holistic learning experiences.

2. **Reforming Assessment Methods:** Schools can adopt alternative assessment strategies such as portfolios, peer reviews, and reflective essays to capture students' holistic growth. Periodic self-assessments can further encourage students to reflect on their ethical and emotional development alongside academic progress.

3. **Incorporating Digital Tools in Gurukul-Based Education:** Technology can enhance personalized learning and experiential education through digital mentorship platforms, virtual classrooms, and interactive learning environments. These tools provide opportunities for experiential learning, such as virtual field trips and collaborative projects.

Community and Cultural Integration

1. **Engaging Local Communities:** Schools can establish community outreach programs where students engage with local traditions, crafts, and environmental projects. This fosters a sense of responsibility and cultural pride while enriching the learning experience with diverse perspectives.

2. **Promoting Cultural Relevance:** Collaborating with local historians, philosophers, and cultural practitioners can help develop curricula rooted in regional traditions and values. This ensures that Gurukul-based education remains relevant and resonates with students' cultural backgrounds.

3. **Strong Policy Framework for Promoting a Common Cultural Identity:** A robust policy framework should be established to ensure that Gurukul-based education fosters a shared cultural identity rather than being viewed through a religious lens. This policy should mandate the integration of universal moral values, ethical leadership, and Indian philosophical traditions into educational curricula without aligning with any particular religious doctrine.

4. **Promoting Community Service (Shram Dan):** Encouraging students to participate in Shram Dan (voluntary community service) instills values of selfless contribution and responsibility.

Schools can integrate community-driven initiatives such as cleaning drives, rural outreach programs, and environmental conservation projects into their curriculum.

Additional Mitigation Measures

1. **Bilingual Instruction:** While Sanskrit remains integral to cultural studies, English and Hindi should serve as primary mediums of instruction to enhance accessibility and relevance.
2. **Inclusivity Measures:** Implementing policies to ensure equal access to Gurukul education for students of all castes, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds.
3. **Flexible Curriculum with Experiential Learning:** Developing interdisciplinary curricula that incorporate moral education, philosophy, yoga, and practical ethics alongside science, mathematics, and technology.
4. **Hybrid Assessment System:** Combining traditional character-based evaluations with modern academic grading to create a holistic assessment system.
5. **Teacher Training Reforms:** Establishing specialized teacher training programs that equip educators with mentorship and ethical guidance skills essential for a Gurukul-style education.
6. **Global Exposure and Collaboration:** Creating pathways for Gurukul-trained students to participate in international academic programs, research initiatives, and technological advancements.

INTEGRATING THE GURUKUL SYSTEM INTO MODERN EDUCATION: A BALANCED APPROACH

While the Gurukul system is not a panacea for all educational challenges, its merits—such as holistic education, strong mentor-student relationships, and values-based learning—offer substantial benefits. However, modern education necessitates scientific, technological, and global competencies that a purely traditional Gurukul system does not fully provide. A blended approach, incorporating the best aspects of both systems, can create a transformative education model that meets contemporary needs while preserving India’s rich educational heritage(Jain & Shelly, 2015). This shift towards a more balanced education system, in line with the goals of NEP 2020, can contribute significantly to the development of well-rounded individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the modern world.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

Having evaluated all aspects of the Gurukul system, the NEP 2020 framework, their synergies, the various barriers, and lessons from existing Gurukul schools, the major findings are as follows:

1. The Gurukul system promotes holistic learning, personalized mentorship, and values-based education, aligning well with NEP 2020's goals while ensuring rootedness in India's rich educational traditions.
2. NEP 2020 encourages experiential learning, vocational education, and character-building, which can be enhanced by Gurukul methodologies.
3. Gurukul institutions emphasize self-sustaining education models, integrating apprenticeship-based training, which supports employment generation.
4. The Gurukul model provides quality education at a low cost, making it accessible to the masses, especially in rural and economically weaker sections. Consequently, it can greatly mitigate the illiteracy challenges in the country.
5. Existing Gurukul schools offer successful case studies, but large-scale implementation requires a structured hybrid approach.
6. The philosophy of Gurukul aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting environmental sustainability, ethical education, and holistic well-being.

7. With its focus on emotional and spiritual intelligence, the Gurukul system can help address issues like student suicides, mental health crises, and lack of resilience in the youth.
8. The model can reduce the dominance of English in education by utilizing teachers from rural areas proficient in Hindi, Sanskrit, and regional languages, ensuring wider access to knowledge.
9. A collateral benefit of the Gurukul model is the preservation of India's cultural strengths, ensuring traditional knowledge systems and value-based education remain integral to national identity.

STRONG CASE FOR ADOPTION

A strong case exists for integrating Gurukul elements into modern education under NEP 2020 due to:

- **Value-Based Education:** Gurukul teachings focus on ethics, discipline, and sustainability, strengthening moral foundations.
- **Experiential and Practical Learning:** Aligns with NEP 2020's emphasis on real-world skills, project-based learning, and skill development.
- **Cost-Effectiveness and Accessibility:** Gurukul education is self-sustaining, requiring minimal infrastructure while providing affordable, high-quality education to marginalized communities. It also aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education for All.
- **Employment-Oriented Learning:** Apprenticeship-based training ensures students gain hands-on vocational skills, helping tackle unemployment challenges.

- **Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The Gurukul model fosters sustainability, social equity, and holistic well-being, contributing to global educational objectives.
- **Addressing Emotional and Mental Well-being:** By integrating yoga, meditation, and moral teachings, the system helps in stress management, suicide prevention, and emotional resilience building.
- **Blended Learning Potential:** Gurukul models can be modernized using digital tools, ensuring their relevance in today's education system while maintaining their personalized mentorship approach.

RECOMMENDED HYBRID MODEL

To effectively integrate the Gurukul system within NEP 2020, a Hybrid Gurukul-Modern Education Model is proposed. This model retains the core strengths of traditional Gurukul education while incorporating modern pedagogical advancements.

Structure of the Hybrid Model

The model comprises the following key elements:

1. Policy Framework

- **Accreditation and Recognition:** Provide official status to Gurukul-inspired educational institutions under NEP 2020.
- **Research on Curriculum:** Establish a balanced mix of traditional and modern subjects (STEM), ensuring relevance and adaptability.

- **Revision of Textbooks and Examination System:** Updating textbooks is crucial to blending Indian cultural ethos, Gurukul learning methodologies, and modern scientific temperament. Additionally, introducing a mandatory paper on the Indian Cultural Landscape in government job exams will provide formal recognition and promote deeper understanding.

2. Institutional Adaptation

- **Gurukul-Modern Integration Schools (GMIS):** Establish pilot institutions blending both systems.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Leverage funding and expertise from government bodies, private institutions, and NGOs.
- **Decentralized Learning Hubs:** Establish small-scale, self-sufficient learning centers modeled after traditional Gurukul setups.

3. Pedagogical Framework

- **Experiential Learning:** Incorporate hands-on projects, real-world problem-solving, and skill-based activities.
- **Value-Based Curriculum:** Integrate yoga, meditation, ethical education, and sustainability initiatives.
- **Flexible Learning Paths:** Adopt a modular system that allows students to choose Gurukul-based electives alongside traditional subjects.

4. Teacher Training and Capacity Building

- Develop specialized training programs for educators in both modern and Gurukul methodologies.
- Certification programs to qualify teachers in Gurukul-style mentorship and holistic education.
- Cross-training initiatives to enable modern educators to learn from existing Gurukul institutions.

5. Technology and Digital Integration

- **Blended Learning Models:** Use AI-driven platforms and adaptive learning systems for personalized instruction.
- **Virtual Gurukul Platforms:** Implement online mentorship programs that extend the Guru-Shishya tradition beyond physical boundaries.
- **Digital Resource Hubs:** Develop open-access platforms for Vedic literature, holistic education, and cultural studies.

6. Financial Incentives

- **Government Grants and Subsidies:** Provide financial support for institutions adopting Gurukul methodologies.
- **Allocation of Land and Resources:** Ensure dedicated land allocation for Gurukul-based educational setups.
- **Tax Benefits and CSR Funding:** Encourage corporate and philanthropic contributions to sustain the Gurukul model.

- **Subsidies for Infrastructure Development:** Support schools in setting up Gurukul-inspired campuses.

7. Grades of Gurukul Institutions

- **Category 1:** Contemporary Subjects Focus – Integrating Gurukul pedagogy with modern STEM and humanities education.
- **Category 2:** Apprenticeship-Based Learning – Specialized in vocational training, traditional crafts, and entrepreneurship.
- **Category 3:** Vedic Studies – Focus on Sanskrit, scriptures, spiritual education, and ethical philosophy.

8. Timelines and Implementation Strategy

- **Phase 1 (Year 1-2):** Pilot projects in select schools to test the hybrid integration.
- **Phase 2 (Year 3-5):** Scale-up of Gurukul-based curriculum to regional and state-level institutions.
- **Phase 3 (Year 6-10):** Full nationwide implementation, with policy incorporation in NEP 2030 revisions.

Overcoming Challenges

While the Hybrid Model offers a practical roadmap, key challenges must be addressed:

- **Infrastructure and Funding:** Encourage PPP models, crowdfunding, and low-cost tech interventions to develop Gurukul-modern hybrid schools.

- **Teacher Readiness:** Implement nationwide training programs to equip teachers with blended pedagogy skills.
- **Institutional Resistance:** Conduct mass awareness campaigns, stakeholder consultations, and small-scale pilots to demonstrate the effectiveness of the model.
- **Regulatory and Policy Barriers:** Advocate for NEP-compliant frameworks that allow seamless integration of Gurukul methodologies.
- **Community Awareness and Involvement:** Engage local communities, parents, and stakeholders to create a grassroots movement supporting Gurukul integration.
- **Promoting a Common Cultural Identity:** Address concerns related to the religious and spiritual orientation of Gurukuls by positioning them as inclusive institutions fostering national unity and cultural preservation.

THE WAY FORWARD

The integration of the Gurukul system within NEP 2020 represents an opportunity to create an education system that is holistic, values-driven, and future-ready. By adopting a structured Hybrid Model, India can preserve its rich educational heritage while ensuring students are equipped with modern skills, global competencies, and emotional resilience. Strategic policy interventions, technological integration, and structured implementation will be essential for timely execution and long-term sustainability of this model.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A

Survey: Integrating the Gurukul System into Modern Education Under NEP 2020

Disclaimer:

The information collected in this survey will be used solely for academic research purposes to explore the integration of the Gurukul system into modern education under the NEP 2020 framework. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to any third parties. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to skip any question you are not comfortable answering. Your input will help inform potential educational reforms.

Section 1: Personal Information

1. What is your age group?

- 15-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31-50 years
- 51+ years

2. What is your highest educational qualification?

- High School
- Graduate
- Postgraduate
- Doctorate
- Other (Please specify) [Text Box]

3. What is your current occupation/status?

- Teacher
- Student
- Parent of a Student
- Academic Professional (Professor, Researcher, Policy Maker)
- Other (Please specify) [Text Box]

4. **Which type of educational institution are you associated with?**
- Government School/College (as a student or employee)
 - Private School/College (as a student or employee)
 - Non-profit Educational Institution (as a student or employee)
 - Home-schooling (as a student or parent)
 - Other (Please specify) [Text Box]
5. **What is your current location?**
- Urban
 - Semi-Urban
 - Rural
-

Section 2: Knowledge and Perception

6. **How familiar are you with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020?**
- Very familiar
 - Somewhat familiar
 - Not familiar at all
7. **Are you aware of the ancient Gurukul system of education?**
- Yes, very familiar
 - Somewhat familiar
 - Vaguely familiar
 - Not familiar at all
8. **Do you believe the Gurukul system's focus on holistic education is relevant to modern education?**
- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
9. **How well does the Gurukul system align with NEP 2020's objectives?**
- Strongly aligned
 - Somewhat aligned
 - Neutral

- Somewhat misaligned
- Not aligned at all

10. What do you consider the biggest drawback of the current education system?

- Overemphasis on rote learning
 - Lack of focus on moral and ethical education
 - Lack of real-world application of knowledge
 - Inadequate student-teacher interaction
 - High stress and competition
-

Section 3: Feasibility and Practicality

11. Can students educated under the Gurukul system compete in modern job markets?

- Yes, definitely
- Maybe, with modifications
- No, it would not be helpful
- Not sure

12. Which area of NEP 2020 would benefit the most from Gurukul integration?

- Value-based and ethical education
- Multidisciplinary and experiential learning
- Teacher-student relationships and mentoring
- Spiritual and mental well-being of students

13. What is the biggest challenge in integrating the Gurukul system?

- Lack of infrastructure
- Resistance from parents and students
- Teacher training and preparedness
- Curriculum alignment

14. How would you rate the potential of the Gurukul system to produce responsible citizens?

- Very high potential
- Moderate potential
- Low potential
- No potential

15. Do you think Gurukul-based learning should be integrated at all levels of education?

- Primary level
 - Secondary level
 - Higher education level
 - None
-

Section 4: Implementation

16. Would you recommend adopting elements of the Gurukul system under NEP 2020?

- Yes, fully
- Yes, but only select elements
- Maybe, needs more research
- No

17. What skills from the Gurukul system do you think are most needed today?

- Ethical values
- Practical learning
- Spiritual awareness
- Community-based education

18. What kind of support should the government provide for Gurukul system integration?

- Financial support
- Infrastructure development
- Teacher training programs

- Awareness and outreach programs

19. How do you perceive the role of parents in supporting Gurukul-based learning?

- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Neutral
- Not supportive

20. Would you be open to enrolling in or recommending a Gurukul-based educational institution?

- Yes, definitely
- Maybe
- No

21. What teaching methodologies from the Gurukul system should be prioritized in modern education?

- Experiential learning (learning by doing)
- Value-based education (ethics, morals)
- Strong teacher-student relationships
- Spiritual and mental well-being (yoga, meditation)

22. Do you believe technology can help integrate Gurukul-based principles into modern classrooms?

- Yes, extensively
- To some extent
- Not sure
- No

23. What role should private institutions play in adopting Gurukul-style education?

- Major role
- Moderate role
- Minor role

- No role

24. What timeframe do you think is feasible for implementing Gurukul-inspired reforms in education?

- Within 1-3 years
- Within 5 years
- Within 10 years
- More than 10 years

25. What additional suggestions do you have for integrating the Gurukul system into modern education?

- [Text Box]
-

ANNEXURE B

INTERVIEWS : EXPLORING THE GURUKUL SYSTEM'S POTENTIAL IN MODERN EDUCATION UNDER NEP 2020

Interview with Shri Ashwini Kumar, Director, Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam, Podili, Andhra Pradesh

Held on telephone, New Delhi – March 10, 2025

Interviewer: Vishal Chauhan

Vishal Chauhan: Namaste Shri Ashwini Kumar Ji, thank you for joining me for this interview on the Gurukul system and its relevance in modern Indian education, particularly under the framework of NEP 2020. To start, could you share your journey and role at Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Namaste. Thank you for having me. I serve as the Director of Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam, where our focus is to revive and integrate the ancient Gurukul education system with contemporary learning needs.

My journey into education has been shaped by over two decades of corporate experience across the US, Europe, India, and Africa, working in companies such as McKinsey & Co, Conns Inc, MPOWER Financing, and TCS. My expertise spans Corporate Strategy, Finance, Risk Management, Analytics, and Technology, and I have served on the board of several startups. More recently, I have had the privilege of serving **HH Sri Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswati Ji, the Shankaracharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham**, and learning the models of Vedic education under his guidance. This experience has led me to work on integrating modern education with Vedic education at **Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Sankar Vidyalaya of Sanatana Dharma Seva Gramam**, where I contribute as a **volunteer-Director**. I also serve on the advisory board of **Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Academy of Civil Services**, furthering my efforts to bridge traditional wisdom with contemporary career pathways.

Vishal Chauhan: What are the fundamental principles of the Gurukul system that you incorporate into your curriculum?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Our curriculum is deeply rooted in value-based education, discipline, integrity, and self-sufficiency. We emphasize Sanskrit learning, traditional wisdom, and

experiential education. Students engage in self-discipline activities such as maintaining hygiene, daily prayers, chores, and self-reliant practices like washing their own clothes and utensils.

Vishal Chauhan: How do you balance traditional teachings with modern subjects like science and technology?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: While we strongly uphold traditional teachings, we recognize the importance of modern subjects. We encourage scientific temper by drawing connections between traditional knowledge and contemporary sciences. For instance, the theory of evolution finds parallels in the Dashavatar concept. Students are never discouraged from asking questions, and if we don't have an answer, we explore and research further.

Vishal Chauhan: Could you describe a typical day in your Gurukul?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Our day begins with early morning prayers, exercise, and a Vedic class. After breakfast, students attend CBSE school for around seven hours. Post-school, they engage in evening prayers, play, self-study, and an early dinner. This structured routine helps in maintaining discipline and mental clarity.

Vishal Chauhan: How do you maintain the essence of the Guru-Shishya Parampara in today's context?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: The first step is hiring the right Gurus who live by example. We also incorporate stories from our scriptures to highlight the significance of this tradition. The relationship is built on mutual respect, discipline, and mentorship.

Vishal Chauhan: Do students engage in self-sustained activities like farming or community service? How does this impact them?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Yes, students participate in activities such as maintaining a goshala and gardening. These activities ground them and develop essential life skills. Initially, they might lose interest, but over time, they realize its benefits, similar to a "bathtub curve" effect—enthusiasm wanes initially but grows as they understand the long-term value.

Vishal Chauhan: How does personalized mentorship benefit students?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Personalized mentorship ensures that each student gets individual attention, allowing their strengths and weaknesses to be addressed holistically. This approach fosters confidence, clarity, and strong moral foundations.

Vishal Chauhan: What are the biggest challenges in implementing Gurukul-based education today?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: One of the biggest challenges is the disconnect between parents' expectations and the Gurukul model. Many parents want their children to learn discipline and

values but are not ready to adapt their lifestyles accordingly. They want the benefits without putting in the effort, which creates a dichotomy in the child's external environment.

Vishal Chauhan: How do parents perceive the Gurukul model compared to modern schooling?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: There is a general admiration for the model, but most are hesitant to enroll their children. They fear it may not provide mainstream career opportunities. The perception is improving gradually, but it is still not widely acceptable.

Vishal Chauhan: Have you faced resistance from authorities in integrating Gurukul methodologies into mainstream education?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Yes, largely due to a lack of clear implementation methodologies. There needs to be more structured discussions to align Gurukul principles with national education policies effectively.

Vishal Chauhan: How does the Gurukul system align with NEP 2020's vision for holistic education?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: NEP 2020 emphasizes value-based learning, experiential education, and personalized mentorship—all core aspects of the Gurukul system. The shift from rote learning to critical thinking aligns with our approach. However, more work is needed in integrating traditional sciences and ethics into mainstream education.

Vishal Chauhan: What support is needed to make Gurukul education a viable mainstream model?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: There is a need for structured policy support and collaboration with Vedic institutions. Authorities should consult experts from traditional mathas (spiritual institutions) to frame a roadmap for effective integration.

Vishal Chauhan: What are the common misconceptions about Gurukul education?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Some believe Gurukul education doesn't offer career opportunities, which is not true. Many of our students are preparing for competitive exams like UPSC and have succeeded in business ventures. The misconception that it lacks scientific and modern relevance also needs to be addressed.

Vishal Chauhan: How do Gurukul-educated students perform compared to those in conventional schools?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Gurukul students tend to excel in leadership, social responsibility, and critical thinking. While there isn't enough large-scale data yet, we observe a high percentage of strong performers. Their memory skills, ethical grounding, and adaptability are superior.

Vishal Chauhan: What assessment methods do you use?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: We use oral recitation, written exams, project-based learning, practical demonstrations, and observational assessments. Internships and experiential learning play a crucial role in our evaluation system.

Vishal Chauhan: Have Gurukul graduates succeeded in mainstream professions?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Absolutely. Many have entered business and are preparing for exams like UPSC. However, we need more structured career pathways to ensure broader acceptance.

Vishal Chauhan: How does the Gurukul system shape students' moral and ethical values?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Students are less exposed to negative influences and have a strong grounding in adhyatmik (spiritual) values. They develop a deep understanding of ethics, integrity, and social responsibility, which modern education often lacks.

Vishal Chauhan: Are Gurukul students more disciplined and socially responsible than their peers in conventional schools?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Yes. Their discipline is evident in their lifestyle, daily practices, and interpersonal interactions. They are also more socially responsible and empathetic due to their training in community engagement and sustainability practices.

Vishal Chauhan: Finally, what message would you like to convey to policymakers and educators about the Gurukul system's future in India?

Shri Ashwini Kumar: The Gurukul system has immense potential to address the gaps in modern education by fostering holistic development. Policymakers must engage with traditional educational institutions to design an effective integration strategy under NEP 2020. Society must also shift its mindset to embrace value-based education alongside career aspirations.

Vishal Chauhan: Thank you for your insights, Shri Ashwini Kumar Ji. Your thoughts provide a valuable perspective on how the Gurukul system can contribute to India's evolving education landscape.

Shri Ashwini Kumar: Thank you. It was my pleasure to share these insights. Namaste.

ANNEXURE C

Interview with Dr. Jyoti Malvi, Shri Viral Patel, and Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma on the Gurukul Education System

Held at Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar – March 6, 2025

Interviewer: Vishal Chauhan

Vishal Chauhan: Thank you for giving me a detailed tour of Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya and agreeing to this interview. As stated earlier, this interview is for academic purposes only, as part of my research on integrating the Gurukul system into modern education under the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

To begin, could you all introduce yourselves and share your role in the Gurukul education system?

Dr. Jyoti Malvi:

Thank you, Vishal. I am an Assistant Professor at Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, where I teach and research traditional Gurukul methodologies and their relevance in contemporary education. My focus is on integrating value-based learning with modern pedagogical approaches to create a holistic education model.

Shri Viral Patel:

Namaste, Vishal. I am also a Professor at Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, where I specialize in experiential learning, Vedic education, and community-based teaching methodologies. My work emphasizes the practical application of Gurukul principles in today's education system, ensuring that students receive both academic knowledge and life skills rooted in ethical and spiritual values.

Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma:

Namaste, Vishal. I have been a teacher and warden at Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya for the past 19 years. My role involves not only academic instruction but also guiding students in their daily lives to ensure their holistic development. My focus is on instilling discipline, self-reliance, and a strong ethical foundation in students.

Vishal Chauhan: The Gurukul system has a deep-rooted history in Indian education. **What are the core principles that you integrate into your curriculum here at Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya?**

Dr. Jyoti Malvi:

The Gurukul education model is based on holistic learning, which integrates spiritual wisdom, ethical values, and practical life skills with academic knowledge. We emphasize:

- Personalized mentorship (Guru-Shishya Parampara)
- Value-based education
- Experiential learning through hands-on activities
- Integration of modern subjects like science and technology with ancient wisdom

We believe education is not just about acquiring degrees but about developing character, wisdom, and self-discipline.

Shri Viral Patel:

Yes, and an important part of our curriculum is ensuring that students actively engage in learning through experience. Unlike conventional education, which is often theoretical, our students participate in:

- Self-sustaining activities like organic farming
- Community service
- Yoga and meditation for mental and emotional well-being
- Project-based learning focused on real-world problem-solving

This approach ensures that students develop practical skills and self-reliance along with academic excellence.

Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma:

In addition to these principles, we emphasize life management skills and character development through structured routines. Students practice **early rising, Satvik bhojan (pure diet), mantra chanting, meditation, and yoga**, which contribute to their mental and physical well-being. **Discipline and self-development** are at the heart of Gurukul education, ensuring that students grow into responsible individuals who can lead by example.

Vishal Chauhan: **How do you strike a balance between traditional teachings and modern subjects like science and technology?**

Dr. Jyoti Malvi:

The Gurukul system and modern education are not opposing forces; rather, they complement each other. We integrate:

- **Vedic sciences, Ayurveda, and ancient Indian mathematics** into STEM subjects
- **Environmental sustainability and ethical technology use** into digital education
- **Storytelling, Sanskrit shlokas, and philosophy** into language and literature studies

For instance, when we teach physics, we explore its applications in **Vedic architecture and metallurgy**. Similarly, Ayurveda-based biological sciences enhance students' understanding of health and medicine.

Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma:

One of the most effective ways we balance tradition with modern subjects is through a "**Word to World Approach**," where we apply theoretical knowledge in real-life settings. Students engage in **Seva (selfless service), social internships, and sustainability projects** to ensure they develop both intellectual knowledge and a sense of social responsibility.

Vishal Chauhan: Could you describe a typical day in your Gurukul?

Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma:

A typical day follows a structured routine designed for holistic growth:

- **4:30 AM** - Waking up and preparing for the day
- **5:00 AM** - Yoga, meditation, and mantra chanting
- **6:30 AM** - Morning prayers and introspection
- **7:00 AM** - Academic classes (integrating both modern and traditional subjects)
- **12:30 PM** - Lunch (Satvik Bhojan)
- **2:00 PM** - Practical learning, community service, and project work
- **4:00 PM** - Skill-based training and vocational learning
- **6:30 PM** - Dinner (Satvik Bhojan)
- **8:00 PM** - Reflection, prayer, and early bedtime

By following this disciplined lifestyle, students develop self-reliance, emotional resilience, and a sense of purpose.

Vishal Chauhan: How do Gurukul students perform academically compared to those in conventional schools?

Dr. Jyoti Malvi:

It depends on the criteria used for evaluation. Academically, they perform well, but in terms of **life skills, discipline, and moral development, they excel significantly beyond conventional students.**

Vishal Chauhan: Do Gurukul students show stronger critical thinking skills than modern school students?

Shri Viral Patel:

Yes, because their learning is rooted in **experiential education, problem-solving, and real-world applications**. They are trained to analyze situations holistically and make informed, ethical decisions.

Vishal Chauhan: Are Gurukul students more disciplined and socially responsible compared to conventional students?

Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma:

Absolutely. **Discipline is a core principle of the Gurukul system**, embedded in daily routines and ethical teachings. Additionally, community service and seva activities make them more socially responsible, instilling in them a strong sense of **duty, humility, and leadership**.

Vishal Chauhan: Have Gurukul graduates succeeded in mainstream professions like medicine, engineering, and business?

Dr. Jyoti Malvi:

Yes, many Gurukul graduates have excelled in various fields, including **medicine, engineering, business, and public administration**. The strong foundation in ethics, discipline, and problem-solving that they receive in Gurukul education makes them stand out in their respective careers.

Vishal Chauhan: Before we wrap up, what message would you like to share with educators and parents?

Shri Gopal Krishna Sharma:

The Gurukul system provides students with **holistic education, discipline, and moral values** that are often missing in conventional schooling. If integrated correctly, it can create a **strong foundation for life-long success**.

Vishal Chauhan: Thank you all for your valuable insights! This has been a truly enlightening discussion.