
Pedagogies of Wisdom: Structural Foundations of the Gurukula System

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Abstract

An ancient Indian residential education system, Gurukula, which is based on Vedic traditions, is a powerful type of pedagogy, in which the emphasis is placed on the holistic development, rather than on rote learning. The system originated circa 1500-500 BCE and organized the learning in the household (ashram) of the guru (shishyas) in which the students (shishyas) lived closely with the guru, as the guru-shishya parampara. This system of relationships promoted immersions in nature where daily activities of seva (service), meditation, yoga, and serious study were combined to develop discipline, ethical virtues, and spiritual understanding. The Gurukula, based philosophically on the notions of dharma, karma, moksha, Atman, and Brahman, did draw a distinction between jnana (theoretical knowledge) and vijnana (experiential wisdom), relying upon the approach of such practices as shravana (listening), manana (reflection), nididhaseana (meditation), satsang (dialogic inquiry), and practical application. Socratic-type conversations in such works as the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita are examples of conversations that helped learners to reach self-realization. The curriculum included Vedas, sciences, arts, ethics and vocational skills and went up through the brahmacharya stage and focused on virtues like ahimsa, satya, tapas. Although the system has faced historical criticism about the caste and gender exclusions, as well as

deteriorated under colonial Western educational systems, the system has undergone contemporary resurgence through the Arya Samaj organizations and constituent models such as Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Its postulates are close to the modern alternative pedagogies (e.g., Montessori, Waldorf) and have useful contributions to consider the modern issues, such as mental health crises and moral emptiness. With inclusivity, technology, and wisdom-based foundations of Gurukula, education can develop to be sustainably and transformatively oriented to foster inner growth in addition to intellectual ability.

Keywords: *Gurukula system, pedagogy of wisdom, guru-shishya parampara, holistic education, Vedic traditions, experiential learning, vijñana, ancient Indian education, modern revival*

Introduction

Gurukula, an Indian system of education that is ancient in origin is named so, because in Sanskrit, guru means teacher or master, and kula means family or household. This is why, Gurukula is literally translated to mean the family of the guru (Das & Fontefrancesco, 2024). This etymology emphasizes its fundamentals: students (shishyas) lived in the home or ashram of their guru, and they were a part of a larger family unit who were interested in studying. The system was founded on Vedic traditions as a residential, immersive kind of education, which combined intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical growth, unlike modern formalised schooling.

One of the major pedagogical differences in the Gurukula setting is the difference between jñana and vijñana. Jñanam normally refers to theoretical or scriptural knowledge—usually intellectual awareness of ideas like the self (Atman) and end reality (Brahman) obtained by means of listening (shravana) and reflection (manana). By contrast, vijñana is experiential realization, practical wisdom or applied insight that goes beyond information in an attempt to capture deeper discrimination and transformative insight (e.g., realization of non-duality or application in life) (Sridhar, 2015). This distinction can be traced at least as far back as Vedic and Upanishadic literature in which education focused not on the fact but on developing inner wisdom with the aim of spiritual liberation (moksha). Vijñana became the ultimate goal of the Gurukula pedagogy and led to the development of the holistic growth that was not based on rote memorization (Saini, 2025).

Traditionally, the Gurukula system emerged in Vedic times (c. 1500-500 BCE), when most of the education was oral and focused on the practice of Vedic knowledge in remote

ashrams (Koul, 2024; Rajguru, 2024). It developed based on classical Indian literature, such as the Upanishads- philosophical dialogues between the guru and the shishyas- and the Dharmaastras (e.g. the Manusmriti), which were collections of ethical and social rules of learning. These scriptures institutionalized the guru-shishya parampara (teacher-disciple tradition), with its focus on discipline, austerity and personalized training. The importance of the system was that it was the main tool of maintaining and transferring the Indian culture, spiritualism and intellectual heritage. Vedic literature, philosophical doctrines, sciences (astronomy, mathematics), arts, ethical values were preserved through gurukula over generations, generating continuity of knowledge even in a changing society (Rajguru, 2024; Das & Fontefrancesco, 2024). The system has helped in the long-term sustainability of the Indian civilization by producing scholars, leaders and spiritually developed persons impacting areas of philosophy to governance (Jayalakshmi & Venkatasubramanian, 2022).

This chapter explores the structural basis of the Gurukula system and the pedagogies of wisdom. It is argued that the structural pillars of the Gurukula system focus on developing the whole person using immersive and relational pedagogy that builds wisdom (vijñana) over rote learning by developing mind, body and spirit in a guru-centred family. The core themes are: (a) structure, including the ashram environment, relationship between guru and shishya, and curriculum, (b) pedagogy, including experiential learning, dialogue, and development of virtues, and (c) relevance in the present-day world, such as possible modifications to the lessons to suit contemporary education under the conditions of mental health and moral emptiness.

This exploration will be important to the present-day educational reforms. When we live in a time when models are becoming standard and information-driven, returning to Gurukula principles provides not only insights into how to make people ethical, emotionally intelligent, and spiritually conscious but also enables us to understand them in a new way (Koul, 2024). The Gurukula model has the power to inspire more meaningful, sustainable ways of education in the world by balancing ancient wisdom with current requirements, including those reflected in the National Education Policy 2020 in India (with the focus on holistic and value-based learning).

Historical and Philosophical Foundations

The philosophical and historical roots of the Gurukula system are very ancient and related to the traditions of the Vedic and Upanishadic tradition of ancient India, which developed over centuries, becoming a whole educational system, which combined intellectual studies with moral and spiritual development.

A. Origins in Vedic and Upanishadic Traditions

The Gurukula system was first introduced in the Vedic period (c. 1500-500 BCE), where learning was done mostly orally and focused on the imparting of sacred knowledge in isolated environments (Koul, 2024). Probably the earliest allusions in the Vedic literature, especially the Rigveda, are those emphasizing the guru-shishya relationship and the significance of Vedic recitation and ritual knowledge. Rigveda highlights the guru as a teacher who brings knowledge by a combination of direct teaching and teaching by example, which creates the foundation of individualized, home-based education (Altekar, as cited in other historical works; see also Rajguru, 2024).

Another major shift was the Upanishads, philosophical books that were attached to the Vedas, which brought the preoccupation to inner questioning. Of a particular impact is the Taittiriya Upanishad, which outlines the role of the guru in the moral education of the student and the responsibilities of the latter, including the most famous admonition of the student, Acharya devo bhava (treat the teacher as divine). It lists graduation rituals (samavartana) in which the guru gives last-minute teachings on proper living, emphasizing the purpose of education as character development, in addition to knowledge (Mishra, as presented in Vedic educational discussions). New norms of education were further codified by the Manusmriti (a major text of the Dharmashastra), which prescribed stages of life (ashrama), in particular brahmacharya (student phase), and the prerogative of the guru in teaching the Vedic lore, discipline, and professional skills (Koul, 2024).

The shift of the pure oral traditions, where knowledge was memorized and passed word-to-word, to the formalized ashram-based education was one of the milestones. During the early Vedic period, education was informal in a family or tribal context, but during the later Vedic and Upanishadic education, the ashram educational institution became residential.

The guru lived with the students and they had a daily routine of study, service (seva), and austerity, which would guarantee that they absorb knowledge immensely (Rajguru, 2024). This institutionalized order kept Vedic texts alive during oral transmission difficulties and gave rise to a form of communal, experiential pedagogy not to be repeated in subsequent more institutionalized forms.

B. Philosophical Underpinnings

The philosophy of the Gurukula system was based on the major Vedic and Upanishad ideas: Dharma (righteous duty), Karma (action and the results of action) and Moksha (spiritual liberation). Dharma was used to direct moral behaviour and social duties, putting in place a curriculum designed to inculcate such virtues as truthfulness, non-violence, and control. Karma has stressed that actions cause future effects so that students can be mindful in their actions to stay in harmony with the cosmos. The final aim was Moksha which meant freedom of rebirth (samsara) through self-realization (Koul, 2024).

The main one was the quest of wisdom on Atman (self-individual) and Brahman (universal reality). The teachings of Upanishads assumed that the real education results in the recognition of the oneness of Atman and Brahman and goes beyond intellectual gain to the experiential one (vijñana). Education was therefore directed at the overall development of oneself: the cleansing of the mind, sensual regulation, and the harmonisation of the inner being (Sridhar, 2015). The guru did this by dialogue and example, and saw no knowledge as information but rather liberation. The philosophy made Gurukula unlike the rote-based systems, as it based its emphasis on character building and spiritual understanding rather than material acquisition.

C. Evolution Through Ages

The system of Gurukula changed with time. It shaped and existed alongside monastic institutions during the Buddhist and the Jain periods (c. 6th century BCE onward). Buddhist viharas and Jain mathas had guru-shishya features but did not prioritize theistic morality, logic, or ahimsa, and increased accessibility to a broad spectrum of learners and contributing to areas such as mathematics and philosophy (Koul, 2024). Regional kingdoms continued to

adapt during medieval times and gurukulas continued with the rise of the temple-based and royal patronage systems which were challenged by invasions (Srinivasan & Aithal, 2026).

This system started to deteriorate during the colonial period (18th-20th centuries), when the British policies (such as the Minute by Macaulay (1835)) encouraged Western education, undermining the significance of the indigenous knowledge and causing the process of marginalizing gurukala (Koul, 2024). Conservative ashrams were forced through financial calamities and cultural oppression.

Reformers brought up revival efforts in the contemporary India. Swami Vivekananda recommended a combination of Gurukula values with scientific training to instil national character and spiritual power, and was a founder of such schools as the Ramakrishna Mission schools. Rabindranath Tagore founded the Visva-Bharat at Santiniketan to combine ashram principles with natural environment education to foster comprehensive growth and cultural recovery (different sources on contemporary forms; see Koul, 2024). These, along with the needs of the age, united ancient wisdom and contemporary needs, and affected the emphases of the National Education Policy of India on value-based learning.

Thus, the origins of the Gurukula were based on Vedic oral tradition, which developed to become philosophically deep with emphasis on dharma, karma, moksha, Atman, and Brahman, which was resilient and adapted to the colonial deterioration and modern re-emergence.

Structural Elements of the Gurukula System

Gurukula system did this by its structural aspects playing the fundamental role in the ancient Indian education producing an all-inclusive, residential system that emphasised the holistic aspect more than the academic one. The combination of these elements, the ashram atmosphere, the guru-shishya parampara, and the integrated curriculum, combined to develop wisdom (vijnana), character and practical skills.

A. The Ashram Environment

Gurukula was usually located in remote, natural locations (forests, riverbanks, or countryside) to avoid urban temptation, to encourage simplicity, discipline, and a profound

unity with nature (Koul, 2024; Rajguru, 2024). This physical arrangement helped students to co-exist with the environment and be mindful and not attached to the material excesses. Ashrams were simple, and usually made of bare huts or areas under trees, and focused on austerity (tapas) and self-reliance.

Routine was rigidly ordered to combine physical work (seva), meditation and study, to develop character and equal personality. Students got up early in the morning to pray, and then they practiced yoga, pranayama, and body exercises in order to develop physical fitness and mental clarity. Seva entailed physical activities of finding water, gardening, washing, cooking and serving the guru and the community which taught humility, responsibility and the importance of selfless service (Karma yoga). Grounded learning was based on spiritual awareness via meditation, mantra chanting and contemplation with the intellectual study being based on oral recitation and discussion. This unification made education experiential, which encouraged emotional strength, moral behaviour, and internal discipline as opposed to independent intellectual endeavours (Rajguru, 2024).

B. Guru-Shishya Parampara (the Teacher-Disciple Tradition)

The guru-shishya parampara was at the core of the Gurukula: close, submissive but hierarchical, the guru was the mentor, parent and spiritual guide to the shishya (Wikipedia, 2025). The guru became the living wisdom and demonstrated to the shishya ethical conduct, spiritual wisdom and practical wisdom to follow.

Students were selected and initiated based on Upanayana ceremony, the religious ceremony of passage, which was usually carried out between the ages of 8 and 12 (when an eligible boy was ready to do it), and it signalled the start of formal education and the phase of brahmacharya. In the Upanayana, the disciple was given the sacred thread (yajnopavita) and mantra, which is a sign of spiritual reborn and devotion to celibacy, study, and service. The guru took the shishya as the part of the home, and the guru took the responsibility of the comprehensive development of the shishya (Koul, 2024).

The process of imparting knowledge was multidimensional, and included dialogue (samvada) as the form of philosophical investigation, as well as observation of the everyday life of the guru, and the practices imitation. It was a tradition of oral tradition where shishyas

would listen (shravana), reflect (manana) and meditate (nididhyasana) on doctrines. This intimate, experiential treatment was able to express subtle things, and form lifetime connections of respect, devotion, and obedience (EIILM Kolkata, 2024).

C. Curriculum and Knowledge Domains

The Gurukula curriculum was an all-round curriculum that incorporated both sacred and secular realms to equip students in every part of life. Philosophical depth in core studies included Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda) and related texts such as Upanishads, and arts (music, dance), sciences (mathematics, astronomy, medicine), ethics (dharma, ahimsa), and vocational skills, such as archery (in the case of Kshatriyas).

The next stage of learning was the brahmacharya stage where emphasis was made on self-control (brahmacharya vow of celibacy), enquiry and disciplined living. Students were subjected to rigorous schedules in order to acquire concentration, moral uprightness and intellectual discipline.

Historical critiques were shaped by access to education which was determined by varna (social class) and gender norms. Historically, Brahmins specialised in the work of priests and scholars, Kshatriyas in the state administration and war, Vaishyas in trade and Shudras in service-based skills and education was usually structured to meet societal responsibilities. Although there was a certain inclusiveness in the early Vedic times (e.g. Gargi and Maitreyi were women who discussed philosophy), there was subsequent limitation to access in women and the lower varna, and many were not offered a formal study of the Vedas. Such exceptions have been criticized as supporting social hierarchies, even though the system was based on merit and guru judgment permitting exceptions (Koul, 2024).

Altogether, these curricular features formed a radically new system of education when people lived, learned, and developed spiritually in an inseparable unity, which resulted in all-embracing people responsive to dharma and self-realization.

Pedagogies of Wisdom in Practice

The Gurukula system of pedagogies of wisdom was beyond memorization, and placed more emphasis on transformational processes that developed experiential wisdom (vijnana) and

self-realization. Education was to focus on complete integration of knowledge, character and spiritual development through immersion, relational process.

A. Experiential and Dialogic Learning

The core of Gurukula pedagogy was based on the Vedic and Upanishadic practices: satsang (meeting in order to inquire with each other), shravana (attentive listening to the teachings of the guru), manana (serious thinking and reflection about what was heard), and nididhyasana (long-term meditation and absorption that results in experience) (Koul, 2024; Rajguru, 2024). These levels were a successive staircase: shravana was the absorption of the scriptural knowledge through the senses, manana was the intellectual analysis and questioning to get rid of all doubts, and nididhyasana was the internalization until the truth turned into the lived experience (Sridhar, 2015). This progression was a reflection of intellectual knowledge to a deeper wisdom commonly referred to as a correspondence with higher-order learning activities.

Satsang added to these by creating a community of dialogue, in which the students held the collective reflection, debating, and reinforcing each other with ideas, which encouraged communal wisdom (Gupta & Maurya, 2026).

Classical literature offers graphic examples of dialogic inquiry that is similar to Socratic approaches. The dialogue that Krishna and Arjuna have in the Bhagavad Gita is a good example of guru-shishya dialogue: when Arjuna is unsure of his own responsibilities, Krishna advises him on the systematic path of karma yoga, bhakti, and jnana, until Arjuna achieves the level of experiential clarity (Koul, 2024). The Upanishads are filled with examples of the use of questioning to reveal misconceptions and lead to self-realization through dialogues between teachers and pupils (examples include Chandogya Upanishad, 3.4.1) or questions between the teacher and the student (examples include Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2.4.2). These exchanges placed a strong focus on inquiry, contemplation, and immediate intuition rather than dogmatic delivery, and the practices of dialogic approaches developed critical thinking and spiritual enlightenment (Rajguru, 2024).

B. Cultivation of Inner Qualities

Gurukula education was aimed at the cultivation of inner virtues needed to make a person wise and ethically right such as ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness) and tapas (austerity or disciplined effort). Ahimsa encouraged kindness and non-violence in thoughts, speech, and behaviour; satya stressed on honesty and sincerity, tapas was exercise of self-control by means of austerity in order to melt down the impurities and develop strength (Rajguru, 2024). These yamas (restrictions) of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali were applied into everyday life, which formed the morality (Roy & Roy, 2025).

The mind, the body and the spirit were integrated through practices such as yoga (poses to physically exercise oneself), pranayama (control of breathing to be mentally clear) and moral education. Yoga and pranayama helped me relax, concentrate better and develop emotional intelligence by balancing the prana (life force) and developing equanimity. Ethical education helped in strengthening virtues through seva (service) and observing the behaviour of the guru which encouraged the individual to be self-conscious and empathetic. Such a whole person approach nurtured not only the mind but also emotional maturity and spiritual sensitivity and equipped students with balanced living (Koul, 2024; Sridhar, 2015).

C. Assessment and Progression

This is used to compare the progress of these learners with their counterparts. Gurukula assessment was not formal and continuous and was used to develop character, through practical use and internalization of teachings as opposed to written tests as in modern exam-based systems. The guru measured the progress by observing daily behaviour, moral observance, mastery of the skills (e.g. performance of rituals or use in the workplace) and depth of knowledge revealed both in a conversation or practice session. Focus was placed on change: did knowledge change into righteousness of deed and soul (Rajguru, 2024; Koul, 2024).

A sequence of events led to samavartana (graduation or convocation), the final act of brahmacharya and preparation of grihastha (householder) existence. It was a ritual bath (snana) which signified purification, the last teachings of the guru on dharma and social responsibility, guru dakshina (giving of gratitude), and the leave-taking permission. It meant

the comprehensive preparedness not only of academic but also of moral and spiritual maturity to serve the society (Koul, 2024).

These pedagogies transformed Gurukula education into a deep instrument of wisdom in which education was not to be separated in any way and in which knowledge took the form of embodiment.

Logical and Scientific Foundations for Contemporary Application

Contemporary education systems worldwide grapple with a mental health crisis, student disengagement, and ethical fragmentation amid high-stakes testing and digital overload. Globally, one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 experiences a mental health condition, accounting for a significant share of the disease burden in this age group (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025). The Gurukula system’s structural foundations—ashram environments, guru-shishya parampara, experiential-dialogic pedagogies, virtue cultivation, and integrated curricula—provide a logically coherent framework for a pedagogy of wisdom (*vijnana*) that moves beyond rote *jnana* toward holistic transformation. When inclusively adapted, these elements align with evidence from educational psychology and emerging Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) integration under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (NCFSE 2023).

The ashram-inspired environment, combining nature immersion, disciplined routines, *seva* (selfless service), yoga, and pranayama, logically cultivates self-regulation, emotional equanimity, and mind-body-spirit integration essential for resilience. Systematic reviews of randomized controlled trials confirm that school-based yoga interventions significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms while enhancing emotion regulation, executive function, and school engagement (Khunti et al., 2023). One yoga-based social-emotional program demonstrated meaningful reductions in unexcused absences and detentions alongside increased engagement (Frank et al., 2016). In contemporary settings, schools can implement short daily “wisdom modules” (10–20 minutes of yoga-pranayama plus reflective *nididhyasana* or community *seva* projects) as low-cost, scalable hybrids that complement existing timetables and support NEP 2020’s emphasis on well-being and multidisciplinary learning (NEP 2020).

The guru-shishya parampara offers a relational model of personalized mentorship and ethical modeling that counters the impersonality of mass education. Large-scale cross-national evidence from 25 countries involving over 33,000 early adolescents shows that stronger teacher-student connections are robustly associated with higher prevalence of flourishing, even after controlling for family connection (Whitaker et al., 2023). Practical adaptations include structured mentor groups, dialogic *satsang*-style inquiry circles, and teacher professional development focused on facilitation and virtue modeling (*ahimsa, satya, tapas*). These approaches scale relational depth while preserving cultural resonance.

Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya stands as a compelling institutional case study. As a deemed university that synthesizes Vedic ethos with modern disciplines (engineering, management, sciences), it has achieved NAAC accreditation, produced thousands of research publications with substantial citations, and maintained competitive placement outcomes, demonstrating that Gurukula principles can thrive alongside contemporary academic and professional demands.

Emerging NEP 2020 IKS initiatives—including over 1,500 faculty trained and 32 dedicated research centers—report early gains in critical thinking, creativity, and cultural pride among students (Shanwal, 2025). By combining these structures with inclusive, technology-supported designs (e.g., virtual *satsang* platforms or portfolio-based assessment of behavioral growth), educators can foster *vijnana*: transformative wisdom that nurtures ethical, resilient, and self-aware individuals. Rigorous pilot evaluations of such hybrid models will further establish their significance for scalable, sustainable educational reform aligned with both ancient wisdom and modern evidence.

Challenges, Critiques, and Modern Adaptations

Although acclaimed to be holistic and wisdom based, the Gurukula system has received strong criticism throughout history and has suffered massive erosion at the hands of external influences. The relevance of religion in the present time is renewed by revival movements and comparative studies, and its further application in modern education may be integrated with consideration.

A. Historical Critiques

One of the biggest criticisms against the traditional Gurukula model is the problems of caste and gender exclusion. Access was frequently limited according to varna (social class), and Brahmin students were given preferential treatment in order to pursue higher levels of Vedic education, and the lower castes (especially Shudras) were excluded or received vocational training based on their roles in society (Encyclopedia.pub, n.d.; Koul, 2024). This hierarchical system reproduced social disparities and reinforced caste-based boundaries and restricted greater movement throughout society. Gender marginalization was also quite strong: although uncommon women such as Gargi and Maitreyi attended philosophical discussions in the early Vedic era, in later periods women were mostly confined to domesticity, and the formal education in Gurukulas was not offered to them (Rajguru, 2024). The critics claim that such exclusions were a reflection and perpetuation of patriarchal and casteist values that favoured the elite groups and discriminated against broad strata of society (Kumari & Niyogi, 2025).

Erosion of the system got worse during the colonial era especially with the policies of the British that uprooted the native education. The Minute on Indian Education (1835) by Thomas Babington Macaulay was also a proponent of replacing traditional systems with English-medium instruction that would produce a class: Indian in blood and colour, yet English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (Koul, 2024). This downward filtration method gave precedence to clerical education as the vehicle to serve the needs of colonial administration, and marginalized Gurukulas and pathshalas and redirected funds out of the vernacular and traditional education. The disturbances of the economy, a loss of patronage to the temples and rulers, and the introduction of Western courses resulted in the mass degradation of their cultures and alienation of Indians to their culture, with negative effects on educational opportunities in the long term (Rajguru, 2024).

B. Contemporary Relevance

There have been revival campaigns to revert Gurukula ideals in the contemporary settings. Swami Dayananda Saraswati established the Arya Samaj in the 19th century that advocated Vedic education based on Gurukula-type establishments (e.g., Gurukul Kangri

Vishwavidyalaya) with a focus on Vedic studies, discipline and the development of character, adjusting itself to modern subjects (Koul, 2024). Equally, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother inspired integral models of education such as those at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Pondicherry) combine spiritual growth, holistic development, and a pedagogy of free progress in ashram-based schools (a number of sources on the educational vision of Sri Aurobindo).

The parallels and complementarities can be seen by the comparison of alternative pedagogies in the world. Similar to Montessori, Gurukula places a focus on child-centred and experiential learning and autonomy, but Montessori lays more emphasis on prepared environments and practical life skills with less spiritual focus (comparative analyses). Waldorf education has a similar holistic approach as Gurukula: it cultivates head, heart and hands with the help of imagination, arts, and rhythm, but puts more emphasis on creativity and delayed academics, similar to the way Gurukula incorporates the mind-body-spirit (Koul, 2024; alternative education comparisons). It is these systems that identify experiential and value-based education as remedies to mainstream rote and standardized approaches, indicating that Gurukula immediate relational and immersive aspects can be used to meet international demands of meaningful education (Singh & Kaushal, 2026).

C. Potential for Integration

The Gurukula principles are hopeful to respond to the contemporary educational needs in terms of the integrated applications. Emotional intelligence, ethical basis, and mental well-being can be developed with the inclusion of guru-shisha mentorship, seva (service), and cultivating virtues (e.g., ahimsa, satya) in the modern high-stress settings (Koul, 2024). Fusion with technology: The application of digital means to individual learning, virtual experience of ashram practices, or online satsang is an extension to more people, and technology should work with people rather than overtake them (Rajguru, 2024).

Reform inclusivity is necessary: the modern adjustments focus on universal access, gender equality, and caste-neutral admission, which is consistent with such policies as the National Education Policy 2020 in India, which advocates holistic and value-based education. Hybrid models might integrate the experiential knowledge of Gurukula with

STEM, global education, and fairness in achieving sustainable development education of inner transformation and practical skills.

Simply put, the historical criticism points to the necessity of the reform, but the fundamental principles of the Gurukula system are relevant to the improvement of modern education (Shabaraya & Aithal, n.d.).

Conclusion

Its structural basis in the ancient Indian wisdom, the Gurukula system can be a blueprint of timeless education focusing on the development of *vijnana* (experience of wisdom) instead of *jnana* (theoretical knowledge). We have discovered throughout the chapter how the ashram setting encouraged simplicity, discipline and unity with nature; how the guru-shishya parampara offered a relational mentorship; and how the vedantic curriculum brought together sacred texts, sciences, arts, morals and professional training in the brahmacharya phase of self-restraint and inquiry. The pedagogical techniques that encouraged experiential learning and inner realization included *shravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*, *satsang*, and dialogic inquiry, as demonstrated in the Upanishadic dialogues and the Bhagavad Gita. The development of such virtues as *ahimsa*, *satya* and *tapas*, *yoga*, *pranayama*, and *seva*, which combined mind, body and spirit, resulted in emotional and ethical maturity. Non-formal assessment centred on personality and practice, and the ultimate rite of passage was *samavartana*, which was a rite of passage to life (Shabaraya & Aithal, n.d.).

The essence of the Gurukula is very relevant despite the denial of caste and gender in historical criticism and their erosion through the colonial imposition of Western ideals. The contemporary resurgences, such as the Arya Samaj-inspired ones and the integration-based educative practice of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, illustrate the features of the adaptations, which focus on the holistic development, but at the same time, consider inclusivity (Koul, 2024; Rajguru, 2024). Similar tendencies with Montessori, Waldorf and experiential pedagogies point to shared values of child-centred, imaginative and value-driven learning.

The consequences to the future education are pressing and radical. The crises of the present day, which are an increase in mental health issues among students due to academic pressure, competition, and digital overload; moral problems in a highly materialistic and

polarized world; and the feeling of pointlessness in the face of information overload all require more than skills training. These principles of gurukula have solutions: mentorship models to develop emotional resilience and empathy; combined practices such as meditation, yoga, and seva to improve the mental state and stress management; and virtue-based education to develop ethical background and moral courage (Koul, 2024; multiple studies of holistic revival). The National Education Policy 2020 of India reiterates them in its promotion of holistic and value-based, multidisciplinary learning based on the Indian knowledge systems, and this policy gives framework through which they can be integrated (NEP alignments in contemporary analyses).

To adapt these ancient pedagogies, it is necessary to reform them intentionally, including by making them accessible and everywhere, combining guru-guided personalization with technology to reach many people (e.g. virtual satsang or AI-assisted reflection tools), and encompass mindfulness and ethical inquiry in curricula. It is through such integration that one can bring about self-aware compassionate individuals who are in a position to solve the global issues such as sustainability and social harmony.

Finally, the vision that is inspired by the Gurukula is a vision in which education is not about gathering information but it is primarily about being changed. It is an envisioning of learning spaces that bring the entire being to life, not merely the production of competent professionals, but wise, ethical, and spiritually sensitive human beings who are in balance with self, society, and nature. In reclaiming and reimagining these structural foundations we can proceed to an education which is indeed in a position to liberate and uplift humanity.

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