

ANCIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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Abstract: The **education system** of **ancient** period has unique characteristic and qualities which were not found in the **ancient education system** of any other country in the world. Gurukul (ashram) was a type of school in **ancient India**, residential in nature, with pupils living in proximity to the teacher. A **gurukula** or gurukulam (Sanskrit: गुरुकुल, romanized: **gurukula**) was a type of **education system** in ancient India with shishya ('students' or 'disciples') living near or with the guru, in the same house. In a **gurukula**, the students living together are considered as equals, irrespective of their social standing. It focuses on all round development of a student like science, physical, mental growth. The interaction between student and teachers is more compared to present day system. The respect of student to his/her teacher is more. The class rooms situations will be inside forests, which helps students to keep towards nature, which keeps them healthy and practical sciences were taught. Then, there was no pressure over students, which helps them to concentrate on concepts clearly and no craving for ranks. Vedic literature used to be common in ancient Gurukul System which helps students learn values and ethics. Ancient Gurukul System is much towards practicality rather than theoretical where **students learn things by doing practically** rather than mugging up which happens in present generation schools. **In ancient mode of education, Guru is the centre of education. It is highly impossible to acquire knowledge without Guru.** "గురు బ్రహ్మ, గురు విష్ణు,గురు దేవో మహేశ్వరహ, గురుసాక్షాత్, పరబ్రహ్మ తస్మై శ్రీ గురవే నమః" The guru is the creator, the guru is the preserver, and the guru is the destroyer. The guru is the absolute. I bow before you. The light, wisdom will be kindled by Guru alone. All great saints, Mahatmas have Gurus. But the role of Guru and perspectives of education in Modern are changing a lot leaving adverse effects on learners, individuals, families and to the society by and large. My paper aims at drawing proportional parallels between Ancient and Modern Education line of thinking holding psychological implications, historical significance and Social relevance.

Introduction: The **education system** of **ancient** period has unique characteristic and qualities which were not found in the **ancient education system** of any other country in the world. Gurukul (ashram) was a type of school in **ancient India**, residential in nature, with pupils living in proximity to the teacher. A **gurukula** or gurukulam (Sanskrit: गुरुकुल, romanized: **gurukula**) was a type of **education system** in ancient India with shishya ('students' or 'disciples') living near or with the guru, in the same house. In a **gurukula**, the students living together are considered as equals, irrespective of their social standing. It focuses on all round development of a student like science, physical, mental growth. The interaction between student and teachers is more compared to present day system. The respect of student to his/her teacher is more. The class rooms situations will be inside forests, which helps students to keep towards nature, which keeps them healthy and practical sciences were taught. Then, there was no pressure over students, which helps them to concentrate on concepts clearly and no craving for ranks. Vedic literature used to be common in ancient Gurukul System which helps students learn values and ethics. Ancient Gurukul System is much towards practicality rather than theoretical where **students learn things by doing practically** rather than mugging up which happens in present generation schools. **In ancient mode of education, Guru is the centre of education. It is highly impossible to acquire knowledge without Guru.** "గురు బ్రహ్మ, గురు విష్ణు,గురు దేవో మహేశ్వరహ,

గురుసాక్షాత్, పరబ్రహ్మ తస్మై శ్రీ గురవే నమః" The guru is the creator, the guru is the preserver, and the guru is the destroyer. The guru is the absolute. I bow before you. The light, wisdom will be kindled by Guru alone. All great saints, Mahatmas have Gurus. But the role of Guru and perspectives of education in Modern are changing a lot leaving adverse effects on learners, individuals, families and to the society by and large. My paper aims at drawing proportional parallels between Ancient and Modern Education line of thinking holding psychological implications, historical significance and Social relevance.

What is learning? How learning used to be? How can it be classified? How is one to evaluate one's learning? Upanishads try to answer such questions by motivating the disciple to identify the goal and purpose of his learning, pointed out Dr. Sudha Seshaiyan in a discourse. In one instance, the Guru asks the disciple to list all that he has learnt. The disciple enumerates the different branches of learning that he has mastered. He is proficient in the Vedas, the Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. He is fully knowledgeable with all the facts and figures pertaining to phonetics, ceremonies, grammar, etymology, metre, astronomy, etc. The Guru then asks him if he knows God through all this. He points out that if all this learning has not led him towards God, then it is of no value.

The Upanishads refer to two kinds of knowledge, the lower *Apara Vidya* and the higher *Para Vidya*, which is hailed as the only worthwhile knowledge. The lower knowledge is of the intellect and the senses and comprises all empirical and objective knowledge. It is, therefore, limited to the finite world. Empirical knowledge presupposes a knower, the thing known and the act of knowing. But knowledge of the Atma, of Brahman is the higher knowledge and is known as *Para Vidya*. It is not the knowledge of the external world. It is also not the subjective experience of concepts and emotions. The main purpose of man is to attain this *Para Vidya* and it is held that if one does not strive to achieve this, he has wasted his life time. *Para Vidya* cuts the bonds of ignorance and leads to realisation of God. It frees one from the cycle of birth. The Upanishads reiterate that "the Self is not known through the study of scriptures, nor through subtlety of intellect nor through much learning. The Self is revealed to one who longs to know the "Self." These are also known as *Mukti Vidya* and *Bhukthi Vidya*. In *Mukti Vidya* Guru is chief. In *Bhukthi Vidya* Guru is helpful to Sadhana.

Modern education is fully dominated by one of the social medias Internet (Auntherjalam) where Guru is not so important. It helps us in learning things quickly without values. The relation between Guru and disciple is deep and their relation is everlasting. They are inseparable in the learning process. But through Internet sources, Guru plays no role at all. In ancient times, disciples used to see the Guru in Ashram. Guru is the most adored person after the parents. They become bright and insignificant only when they maintain healthy relationships between each other. The following sloka tells:

శాంతో దాంతః కులీనశ్చ వినీతః శుద్ధవేషవాన్

శుద్ధాచార స్సుప్రతిష్ఠః శుచిర్గక్షః సుబుద్ధిమాన్

ఆధ్యాత్మ జ్ఞాననిష్ఠశ్చ మంత్రతంత్ర విశారదః

Further, the importance to Guru is enormous and inevitable as we see in the following sloka"

“ॐ सह नाववतु ।

सह नौ भुनक्तु ।

सह वीर्यं करवावहे ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहे ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥“

It means: Om, Together may we two Move (in our Studies, the Teacher and the Student), Together may we two Relish (our Studies, the Teacher and the Student), Together may we perform (our Studies) with Vigour (with deep Concentration), May what has been Studied by us be filled with the Brilliance (of

Understanding, leading to Knowledge); May it Not give rise to Hostility (due to lack of Understanding), Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

The disciple acquires several things from a Guru like self-control, the quality of serenity, controlling over all five senses, obedience, a good sense of dressing, following well established traditions, customs, obtaining reputation, cleanliness, ability, maturity, having maturity over mantras, exercising wisdom, having wisdom in metaphysical knowledge and all are the personality traits of a Guru. Similarly the rudiments of a disciple or students are well defined in the Ancient education system. The well established Nature poets like William Wordsworth, John Keats and others, every creature in the object teaches something useful to the humanity. Similarly, the ancient type of education underlines the fact that one can learn life-techniques from every creation irrespective of small or big. For instance, the famous expressions like 'kakulashetalu', 'kongadhyanam', 'kukkanidra', 'mithaharam', masinadhustulu' etc leaves an indelible impression in the process of ancient education where a student can enrich himself in the process of acquiring knowledge and like skills. The wide use of expression 'kakulacheshthalu', stands for a kind of 'relieve' and 'aiming at goal'. 'Konga' (crane) pretends to be in the deep meditation but its actual intention is to secure its bread for the day. In this process, it exhibits utmost concentration and unyielding attention. It teaches a student to inculcate the habit paying attention to the work that he or she does. 'Mitabhajanam' means limit in what we take is very good for easy health that keeps people away from corporate hospitals and serious diseases. Having a dress sense also plays a vital role in the process of ancient education system. All these plays a role of a Guru.

In fact, a disciple learns only a quarter part of education from teacher, the remaining part from his own use of cognitive skills developed through the 'sadana' and also from remaining students as well with his age old maturity. Teachings of Guru, interest of a student, cooperation of his fellow student, sense of sensibility to society creates overall impact on education. Otherwise, missing of any one these ingredients keeps the education process incomplete and meaningless. In 'Bhagavatham', Avaddhutha asks one on how he enquired enormous knowledge. Then he replies, that he has several Gurus in this world as mentioned earlier. Therefore, the driving point here is that there are several groups in different forms to guide us, teach us and control us.

సన్ని మే గురవః రాజన్ బహవః బుద్ధ్యా ఉపాశ్రితాః |

యతః బుద్ధిమ్ ఉపాదాయ ముక్తః అటామి ఇహ తాన్ శ్రుణు || ౩౨ ||

పృథివీ వాయుః ఆకాశమ్ ఆపః అగ్నిః చంద్రమా రవిః |

కవోతః అజగరః సిన్ధుః పతంజః మధుకృద్ గజః || ౩౩ ||

మధుహా హరిణః మీనః పిఙ్గాలా కురరః అర్భకః |

కుమారీ శరకృత్ సర్పః ఊర్ణనాభిః సుపేశకృత్ || ౩౪ ||

Thus he refers to the king several examples mentioning that the 'earth', 'Air', 'Sky', 'Water', 'Fire', 'Moon', 'Sanke', 'Dove', 'Sea', 'Bird', 'Butterfly', 'Elephant', 'Deer', 'Fish' etc are all his great Gurus. It shows the integral part played by all creatures a role of a Guru. A student can learn a lot from these inspirations once he or she decides and wishes to learn.

In modern education system, the source of Internet is playing a vital role; yet it cannot replace the role of Guru. It is just a quick source of information where a student can get primary, secondary and critical data. By this, we can say **internet** is neither a **boon** nor a **bane** as it has helpful aspects as well as bad effects. Today a child knows about **Internet**. ... With **Internet** it is easy to collect data, store data, share data. **Internet** gave a new life to human beings as they are addicted to **Internet**. A student can collect knowledge but not wisdom. A learning process through Internet makes the people sedentary and he can't extend his imaginative horizons. He is like a lonely person among millions of people.

The **ancient education** system in India focused much more on values rather than rote learning whereas the **modern education** system focuses much on rote learning and various disciplines of **education**. In ancient times, the total education was concentrated on the establishment of the existence of God, heaven and hell. If justice is followed, God rewards you with heaven and if injustice is done, God punishes you in the hell. If you say that God exists, people may not believe and may commit sins by which the balance of the society gets disturbed. The existence of God is to be proved through very deep logical analysis and discussions. All the seminars and conferences in ancient India ran on single subject, which is about the existence and nature of God. Today, people think that the ancient scholars in India wasted lot of time on this useless subject. The ancient education system is composed of several schools like logic (Tarka), grammar (Vyakaranam), analysis of sacred scriptures (Mimamsa), etc. and all the schools aimed at the subject of God (philosophy) only. The student, after realizing the existence of God with the help of all the schools of education (Shaastras), comes out as a citizen fearing for crime and corruption. Therefore, the existence of God is primary basis and the control of corruption and crime is the secondary consequence. Hence, it is wrong, as some people say, that the concept of God by itself is not true, but, should be respected and maintained for the sake of control of crime and corruption. In such a way, the crime and corruption can never be controlled because one knows that the basic concept is only created story for control in crime and corruption.

Today, scholars spend lot of time on seminars and debates dealing with developments of new materials, machines and applications of energy. In fact, the ancient scholars were highly wise and the modern scholars are highly imprudent. The results of the present research in Science are leading to the improvement of several amenities of the humanity. But, these amenities are now realized to be the ways of destruction of the environment leading to global calamity in a very short period of time. Our ancient scholars did not encourage such research in science since the advanced knowledge of energy and materials will lead to the destruction of humanity. Moreover, they concentrated on the logical understanding of the existence of God so that the resulting balanced society without corruption and chaos will give immense happiness to the life of the humanity. We now realize that the ancient materials and technologies were far better for health and environmental balance of the world. Added to this happiness, a strong fear for God and hell were well established in the mind of every human being.

Little knowledge of materials and technologies was sufficient for the happiness of humanity and to maintain the ecological balance. This aspect is at the external physical level. Regarding the internal intellectual level, intensified realization resulted in every human being regarding the existence of God. After a long period of learning, the human being came out of the ancient university with thorough realization of the existence of God, hell and heaven so that in the practical life, the human being perfectly followed the justice rejecting the injustice at any cost. People did not know even the word 'corruption' because everybody was afraid of God and hell. Today, after a long period of learning, the person coming out of the modern university is not at all in touch with the subject of God. Moreover, the person is well versed in the technologies of energy and materials and is dedicating the total life for increasing amenities, which ultimately lead to environmental pollution and global destruction. The present human being is well versed in the concepts of profit and loss and is a master of business administration. Everybody wants to improve the personal amenities even through corruption. Corruption has become a spontaneous global phenomenon.

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