

Quadrant II – Notes

Programme: Bachelor of Arts

Subject: History

Paper Code: HSG 102

Paper Title: Indian Culture and Heritage

Module Name: Gurukul System

Name of the Presenter: Ms. Arusa Bhandare

Notes :

It was a residential schooling system whose origin dates back to around 5000 BC in the Indian subcontinent. It was more prevalent during the Vedic age where students were taught various subjects and about how to live a cultured and disciplined life.

Gurukul was actually the home of teacher or Acharya and was the centre of learning where pupils resided till their education got complete. All were considered equal at the Gurukul and *guru* (teacher) as well as *shisya* (student) resided in the same house or lived near to each other.

The term is derived from Guru meaning teacher and Kula meaning clan or family. The students were admitted to the Gurukul at a specific stage depending on the caste they belonged to.

The Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishya students were admitted to the Gurukul at the age of 6, 8 and 11 respectively. It was called Yajnopavita, Upanayana or Upavita then and sacrificial rituals were performed before the students were allowed in. They sat near their Guru and studied as Brahmachari.

Source of learning:-

The ancient system of education was the education of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and Dharmasutras.

The writings of Aryabhata, Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali and the medical treatises of Charaka and Sushruta were also some of the sources of learning.

- The students in the Gurukul had to follow a very strict routine. They had to be up by 5 in the morning and perform Gangasnan along with Suryanandanam at the sunrise.
- Then began the chanting of the "Gayatri Mantra" followed by Surya Namaskar and Yoga Asanas.
- This was followed by text studying or class until pre-noon or by 11:20 as per the modern clock.
- Once the recitation was over the students followed to perform Madhukari or begging for alms.
- After the students returned they were given an hour of rest followed by classes till dusk or sunset.

- This was followed by Sayam Sandhya where hymns were sung and students were provided with snacks. They were given dinner and were asked to sleep later.

Physical education too was an important curricular area and pupils participated in krida (games, recreational activities), vyayamaprakara (exercises), dhanurvedya (archery) for acquiring martial skills, and yogasadhana (training the mind and body) among others. In order to assess pupils' learning, shastrartha (learned debates) were organized.

Teacher (Guru) enjoyed a predominant place not only in his Gurukul but also in the entire society. He was regarded as a great guide for all. The pupils were free to discuss points with the Guru. Students had to beg alms for the support of the Guru and himself. This tradition was carried out by all, be he poor or rich. This would beget in the students the virtue of humility and thereby he learnt the concrete lesson of charitable good done to him by the society and in return his sense of obligation to it.

Along with the external duties study was the main duty of the pupil. The study of Vedas would initiate their education. At the completion of their educational period, the teachers would deliver convocational address to the students, which sought to remind them of the duties in practical life they stood at the threshold of. This was the Samavartana ceremony. This relationship between guru and shishya was so sacred that no fee was taken from the students. However, the student had to offer a *gurudakshina* which was a token of respect paid to the teacher. It was mainly in the form of money or a special task that the student had to perform for the teacher.

By the colonial era, the *gurukula* system was on a steep decline in India. Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj and Swami Shraddhanand, were the pioneers of the modern *gurukula* system, who in 1886 founded now-widespread Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Public Schools and Universities. In 1948, Shastriji Maharaj Shree Dharamjivan das Swami initiated first Swaminarayan *gurukula* in Rajkot in Gujarat state of India. Recently, several *gurukulam* have opened up in India as well as overseas with a desire to uphold tradition.