



Research Paper

# The Significance of Gurukul Education System of Bharat & Its Importance in Indian Knowledge System: A Thematic Analysis.

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**Abstract:**

This study is an original piece of work which is a blend of strong literature review base and a survey on perceptions of Indians towards adapting to an education model proposed for the upcoming decades of innovation and excellence. It is extremely relevant and stands out for its quality as it is associated with the topic of IKS/BKS i.e Indian Knowledge Systems which is an integral part of the NEP2020 Reform in the education industry. It will highly contribute to the noble cause of innovative student development and teaching- learning pedagogy innovations and enhancements. In this study, we are going to emphasize on how the education system in India changed over the years and understand how significant the gurukul system was then in the ancient period as well as how applicable it is today. The lost agendas of the gurukuls in recent education system shall be focused on and the study shall focus on the fusion of the modern education system along with some pillars of gurukul (A model to futuristic approach). The article is a theoretical study which will focus on the thresholds of today's education system compared with the Gurukul system. This study basically focuses on the The history of education generally stated by the European Nations date back to 1600 BC, which was started by the Xia Dynasty. The schools usually educated people for Literature, Rituals and Archery. But if we emphasize on the figures of one of the oldest civilizations, Bhartiya (Indian) Civilizations, which was originally referred to as the Arya Vansh, dated back to even era before 1500BC to 600BC which was centuries before the Xia schools were invented. The Ancient Bharat was amongst the most famous Sub-Continents which invented and introduced Multidisciplinary Studies even before 1500BC. The Universities were names as 'GURUKULS' which educated the people with Astronomy, Political Sciences, Economics, Religion, Yoga and Physical Education. Gurukuls were the place where scholars were developed out of students which enrolled from around the globe who marked their success stories and created history as scientists, economists, teachers and leaders. Bharat has invented and gifted the world with subjects like Ayurveda, the concept of Zero, Economics (Artha Shastra), Astronomy, Plastic Surgery technique, The Number system and many more. In this study, we are going to emphasize on how the education system in India changed over the years and understand how significant the gurukul system was then in the ancient period as well as how applicable it is today. The lost agendas of the gurukuls in recent education system shall be focused on and the study shall focus on the fusion of the modern education system along with some pillars of gurukul. The article is a theoretical study which will focus on the thresholds of today's education system compared with the Gurukul system and what a blend of both could be efficient.

**Key Words:** Education, Vedic education system, Gurukuls, Western education system, Bhartiya Knowledge system, Indian Knowledge System, IKS, BKS.

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## I. Introduction

The word 'Gurukul' is a Sanskrit originated word which literally means 'from the family (kul) of Gurus. The teachers in ancient India were addressed as Gurus. However, 'teacher' can be a word with major limitations to define a wider concept of Gurus. According to the modern definition, Teachers are the one's responsible for the literal or intellectual development of an individual. But the definition of Guru can hardly be composed in a single line. Gurus in ancient Bharat (India) were also known as 'Acharyas'. They had a very vital role in any individual's life. They are not only responsible for the Individual's intellectual or educational development but were also responsible for their behavioral or psychological, ethical, cultural, social and

spiritual development. So in-short, they were considered even more vital than the role of parents as they developed an individual from the fundamental level to the expertise level. Thus, In Bharat, a Guru was been respected and also worshipped as Gods. The individuals were expected to be extremely dutiful and loyal towards their gurus. The concept 'Kula' means the extended Family, origin or roots of the family system in the society. This concept is widely used in Dharmashastra, which also meant a community or clan. So it is also said that, the 'shishyas' (Students) were gifted with the identity of the Guru's Kulas which also accompanied their skillsets, expert areas, knowledge and social prestige.

In Gurukuls, the shishyas (students) were expected to stay at the Guru's residence along with the Guru's family members. Not only to pursue education and observe discipline but also serve the family of gurus in their day to day chores was expected from the shishyas. This taught them the sense of responsibility and duties towards their families and gave them the sense of politeness, 'to do something in return of something'. Gurukuls were treated as 'Mandirs' or temples and were given the same level of importance as it was considered as the purest place on the planet. This importance was derived from the prime objective and outcomes of the Gurukuls which was, to develop an Individual on the 360 degree, which also resulted in the holistic development of the Bhartiya Society. Many subjects were introduced by these Gurukuls to the world and Bharat is considered as the inventor of the subjects like economics (Artha Shastra) and Mathematics. Bharat gifted the world with concepts like square root, Zero, Hindu Number system, sign Convention etc. Not only in Mathematics but it is considered that Rishi Sushrut was the father and inventor of Plastic Surgery, Rishi Bodhayana was the inventor of Pythagoras theorem, Philosophy and Logic were the on of the flagship works in Bharat along with metrology, many gems and commodities, Ayurveda and Yoga which the whole globe is fond of. All the skills, invention and studies were invented and introduced in Bharat (India) which later spread its roots all around the world. Gurukuls are considered to be the pride of Bharat, as all these skill sets were taught and developed in the gurukuls at a very young age to the students, which, made them multiskilled and all-rounders. The majority number of students used to develop as scholars, experts and many of them were specially trained and developed for becoming kings and monarchs of a whole empire.

## **II. Methodology:**

The research article is totally a qualitative base study which shall include the analysis of multiple readings and also some personal interviews of scholars. A survey including random sampling to analyze the perceptions of Bhartiya Citizens with reference to the gurukul system of educations, its benefits, its decline, its significance, its re-evolution in India etc shall be conducted.

### **Problem Statement:**

The education system of 21<sup>st</sup> century is more catering to the hard skills, technical knowledge and Intelligence quotient of individuals and is lacking in the holistic development from the ethical, moral and mindfulness point of view which was ensured along with a range of subjects in the Gurukul System of education.

### **Objectives of Research:**

Some of the major objectives of this study include:

- The understanding of significance and role of Gurukuls in building a concrete base of modern education system of Bharat.
- To study the factors or contributors of education system of ancient Bharat in detail and their outcomes during that era.
- A comparative analysis of the current education system and Gurukul system of Bharat. To Suggest a hybrid model of current education system and Gurukul system in Bharat.

## **III. Review of Literature:**

### **Stages of Life: Human Life in Ancient Bharat:**

Before jumping on directly on the structure, system and decline of gurukuls, let us understand the basic human life of Bhartiya people during the era. It was much different from what we live these days or even what the other civilizations lived in the era of 1500 century BC. Human Life was divided into 4 significant stages which, had its own importance, roles and functions. These stages were referred to as 'Aashrams'. These Ashrams also included rituals to be followed at that particular Age/ Stage of life.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Stage: Bramhacharyashram:**

This was the very first and fundamental stage of a human's life which used to be considered between the age of 4 to 5 years till the age of 25 years. Many a times, depending on the pace of learning of the Shishya (Student), This stage used to end before the age of 25 as well. The Gurukuls had a significant role in this stage

of life as, the students were sent to the place of Gurus (teachers) which acted like small schools during that time. These schools were called as Ashrams. However, these ashrams were much different than a contemporary or modern school where students only attend for hours and go back home. In Bramhacharyashram, Students used to stay away from parents, stay with their guru and his family and serve the duty of a disciple. They used to abide by each and every instruction of the guru and observe severe disciplined life which was bound to healthy, cultural habits and a strict day schedule. Along with learning subjects, the students learned music, household chores, meditation, warfare techniques which is also called as 'Yudh kala' and 'Shashtra Vidya' (weapons). The position and importance of a Guru was equal or even more than that of the parents and even the Gurus used to treat all their disciples and their own Kids. The children of all variances may him be rich/ poor, a child of King or ordinary person, used to stay and study together in the same Ashram, under one roof. This created a sense of equality and unity between the disciples. Thus, Bramhacharyashram was the most important Phase of a human's life as this whole duration was spent in the Gurukuls for the holistic development of the student. Even an average Kid having average IQ, was developed as a brilliant and all-rounder. The development of not only their Intelligent Quotient but also the Emotional and Spiritual Quotient was focused. Spiritual Quotient which the world is today fond of as something innovative, and research is being highly done, was already a part of every student's lifestyle in Gurukuls and a matter of excellence. This was considered as the Bachelor Stage of life. In today's world, our education system already has hostel/ inhouse accommodation so that the students can focus more on holistic learning. Instead of rectors and attendants, if these can be replaced by Domestic Gurus, they can focus on security of students as well as holistic learning like discipline, grooming, soft skills which are taught in colleges for lesser credit subjects (and hardly give outcomes on large scale).

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage: Grihastha Ashram:

This Stage was the second and Post Gurukul Stage of a human's life where a human was considered as an educated, literate and holistically developed being who had gained all the knowledge of How to live his life in a perfect manner. According to the western human cycle this stage was like the Honeymooner stage of life. In this stage, the disciple returned back to his home and started living with his parents, overtook all their responsibilities and relieved them from the life of efforts. His responsibility was to get married, and serve his parents wishes. To utilize the knowledge that he had gained from Gurukul, Grihasthashram was the best time during 25 to 50 years of age. To be respectable, sober and presentable in a society, earn and invest, provide for the Family, Society and Nation was the main responsibility during this stage. Here, in today's world if we see, learning has to be individual based but can be supervised/ surveillance/ given trainings by experts so as to how to orient a family environment, how to emphasize on corporate citizenship, create and maintain healthy relationships with ethical grounds through seminars, ted talks, social media gatherings etc, so that the societal issues like women and child security, domestic violence, domestic harassment etc can be addressed. This should be the individual communities responsibility to ensure their followers attend it, and implement it.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage: Vanaprashthan:

In Bharatiya ideology, a human is to leave his home again after between the age of 50 to 60. This was considered as the Post Parental Stage of Life where you are done with all your responsibilities towards your family, friends, society and the nation and now you must leave for 'Vana' means forest to spend the rest of your life. Why forest? To Meditate, to Observe 'sanyas' meaning renunciation from life and pleasures. To gain god/ death by knowledge peace, it was considered necessary to leave all pleasures of life and to not hold on to emotions, feelings and leave everything behind. Gift away all you have earned to your children and allow them to commence with their Grihasthashram.

Here, in Today's world, we can get amazing volunteers, trainers and social workers who would serve the noble cause of becoming domestic Gurus for the educational Institutions of Infants.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Stage: Sannyas:

This was the last stage of life where you are supposed to be meditating, remembering god and only god before you die. To forget about your worries, wants and dedicate totally to God.

Thus, If we observe the Gurukul and where, what, how the human learned his ethics of life was much more important. As the very first and important stage of life, Gurukul was what taught the human How to live, for what to live, how much to live and what to do with your life. An ideal, perfectionist and fulfilled way of life. Individuals in today's world can focus on legitimate and environment friendly spiritual development centers which cater to the problems of the society like donations, seva (worship) towards society for humanity and wellbeing, spreading knowledge and counselling the needy.

#### **Role of Gurukuls in the Human's Life:**

A conceptual framework would be efficient enough to explain the role and functions of Gurukuls in Human's Life. This shall give a brief idea about why we need a model which can contribute to the main cause of

NEP 2020 reform. This model suggested to academicians can state a roadmap as to how the future of education in Bharat can be a blend of the Gurukul system as well as the contemporary choice based education system of India. To develop this model, we first need to understand the conceptual framework that gives us an idea of the pillars of the Gurukul system:

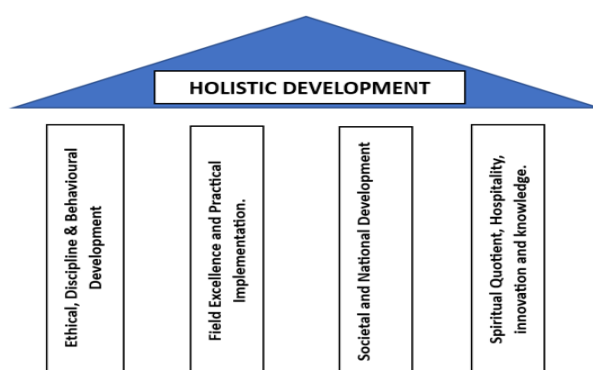


Fig. 1.1 Pillars of the Gurukul System

### **The Fall of Gurukul System & The Rise of Modern Education in Bharat:**

As we studied the Gurukul System existed long back even before 1500 to 600 BCE, knowledge sharing and knowledge updating has been an inseparable part of the of the Bhartiya Knowledge System. It was a golden age of education where education was considered sacred, valuable and the main root of human life (Singh, 2022). There are beliefs and considerations that the Gurukul education System drastically was ruined due to wars, Islamic Colonialism and the British Colonialism on Bharat. It begun around the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and the ruin kept on declining over centuries. Bharat (India), has been known as the Mother of Democracy and thus, the over accommodative, friendly and secular nature of the country has lead to extreme invasions of the country. These Invaders when approached Bharat were shocked by the incredible financial, literature, and knowledge or skill based wealth, not only looted the Nation Financially in millions and millions of rupees and tons and tons of gold (Tharoor, 2023) but also destroyed all the traces and channels of rejuvenation and recreation. One of the which was, knowledge, literature and Gurukuls. Thousands of genocides happened during this era and many of them were the pandits (Gurus) of the Gurukuls. The ‘Granthas’ and Books written by the scholars were also destroyed. According to the study conducted by some research scholars in April 2022, there were more than 4500 Gurukuls in existence in Bharat, some of which named Takshashila Gurukul, Nalanda Gurukul furnished by Gupta Dynasty, Sharada Peeth of scholar students like Adi Shankaracharya, Mithila Gurukul from the time of Raja Janak, Telhara Gurukul, Vallabhi Gurukul built by Maitrika Dynasty, Pushpagiri Gurukul in Kalinga established by Emperor Ashoka, Odantapuri Gurukul, Sompura Gurukul and Vikramshila Gurukul established by Pala Dynasty, and many other were the most famous and populated gurukuls of all (Sinha M, 2020). All these Gurukuls didn’t decline on their own but are proven to be destroyed by the Islamic invasions around 13 century BC. The burning down of Gurukuls, Genocides of millions of students and gurus, Burning down of thousands of Granthas, created a huge impact and terror in the minds of Bharatiy Citizens and they eventually lost their link with Gurukul system of education. For years and years, people were only striving hard to atleast survive in these invasions, and its said when life is at cost, all other things become secondary.

### **Women Scholars during Gurukul System:**

Women in Ancient Bharat were also well literate, well educated and some were scholars too. There were two types of women scholars namely Bramhavadinis who never married for the sake of culturing vedas in their lives and the lives of others and other were the Sadyodvahas who studied Vedas and literature till they got married. There are mentioned of all the Vedic female scholars in Panini as well. Gargi, Maitreyi, Sanghomitra, Kousambi Princess: Jayanti, etc are some of the examples of popular scholars of ancient Bharat (Rout, 2016). However, during Islamic Invasions, there are many stories where women were harassed and physically assaulted, slaved and sold in the Arabian Markets. This lead to the terror of stopping young girls, women to move out for education and thus, women were detached from the system of Gurukul and Education and here, begun the Purdah System for women (Adityagupta, 2020). Later during 1840, the British Invasion, under the leadership of Lord Macaulay, Introduced the ‘School’ system in India, which is considered as one of the major contributors to the fall of gurukuls too (Mishra, 2023).

## **Comparative Thematic Analysis Between Ancient Gurukul System and Modern Education System in India**

While the Gurukul system emphasized spiritual and holistic development within a personalized setting, the modern education system focuses on academic rigor, specialization, and preparing students for a competitive world. Both systems reflect the needs and values of their respective times and have contributed uniquely to the educational landscape of India.

### ▪ Structure and Setting:

The ancient Gurukul system was characterized by its informal and residential nature, situated in natural surroundings such as forests (Chakrabarti, 2013). Students lived in close proximity to their guru, fostering a community-based learning environment (Sen, 2016).

In contrast, modern education in India is formalized, with schools typically located in urban or semi-urban areas, organized into classrooms and grade levels (Government of India, 2017).

### ▪ Curriculum and Subjects

The curriculum in Gurukuls predominantly revolved around the Vedas, scriptures, philosophy, and practical skills like agriculture and warfare (Chakrabarti, 2013). The emphasis was on holistic education, combining spiritual and practical knowledge.

Modern education, on the other hand, encompasses a broader spectrum of subjects including sciences, mathematics, languages, social sciences, and vocational courses (Government of India, 2017). Specialization begins early, catering to diverse career pathways.

### ▪ Teaching Methodology

Gurukuls relied on oral transmission and experiential learning, where knowledge was imparted through discussions and practical demonstrations (Sen, 2016). The guru provided personalized attention, focusing on character building alongside academic learning.

In contrast, modern education employs structured teaching methods such as lectures, textbooks, and standardized assessments to achieve learning outcomes (Government of India, 2017). Classroom-based learning is predominant, aiming for uniformity in education delivery.

### ▪ Social and Cultural Context

Socially, Gurukuls promoted communal living and ethical values, deeply rooted in Indian traditions (Chakrabarti, 2013). They served as centres of cultural preservation and spiritual growth.

Modern schools reflect societal diversity and norms, fostering interaction among students from various backgrounds (Government of India, 2017). They aim to blend traditional values with global perspectives to prepare students for a multicultural world.

### ▪ Outcomes and Objectives

The objective of Gurukuls was primarily spiritual and moral development, producing scholars and leaders enriched with cultural heritage (Sen, 2016). They aimed to prepare individuals for a practical life intertwined with ethical principles.

In contrast, modern education in India focuses on academic excellence, critical thinking, and skill development (Government of India, 2017). The outcome is a workforce equipped for professional careers across diverse sectors, contributing to national development.

The ancient Gurukul system and the modern education system in India both have significantly influenced the country's educational framework, each reflecting the societal values and needs of its time. While Gurukuls emphasized spiritual growth and personalized education, modern schools prioritize academic rigor and career-oriented skills. Integrating the strengths of both systems could potentially enhance the educational experience for students in contemporary India.

## **Blending of the Ancient Gurukul Systems with the Modern Education Tools:**

Establishing a blend of the ancient Gurukul system and the modern education system in India involves integrating the strengths of both approaches to enrich the educational experience. Blending elements of the Gurukul system with modern educational practices, India can foster a more inclusive and culturally rich learning environment. This approach not only preserves traditional knowledge but also prepares students for the complexities of the modern world.

## **Strategies to Execute the blend of Ancient Gurukul System with Modern Education:**

### Curriculum Integration:

Integrate aspects of the Gurukul curriculum, which included spiritual teachings and practical skills, with the modern curriculum framework. This can enhance holistic development and cultural understanding among students (Chakrabarti, 2013). For example, incorporating Indian Knowledge System/ BKS, meditation or yoga sessions into daily routines can promote mental well-being and stress management among students, aligning with ancient practices (Sen, 2016).

#### Teaching Pedagogy:

Adopt a blended approach to teaching that includes traditional methods like discussions and experiential learning alongside modern pedagogical techniques such as digital learning tools and project-based learning (Government of India, 2017). Encouraging teachers to personalize learning experiences, similar to the guru-shishya tradition in Gurukuls, to cater to individual learning styles and foster total mentorship (Sen, 2016).

#### A Home Away from Home:

Instead of Hostels, The Guru-Dhaam system can be re-introduced where full time dedicated rectors, dhaamcoordinators, mentors etc can stay with the students 24/7 and look after their holistic development. These rectors/ coordinators should be well trained for Bharatiya Knowledge Systems, Well Educated and Passionate to inculcate BKS (Bharatiya Knowledge System) in the upcoming generations.

#### Community and Environment:

Create learning environments that reflect the communal and natural settings of Gurukuls. This could involve organizing outdoor learning activities, community service projects, and promoting a sense of responsibility towards the environment (Chakrabarti, 2013).

#### Values and Ethics:

Emphasize ethical values and character building through curriculum content and extracurricular activities. Integrating moral education programs can instill values of respect, empathy, and integrity, aligning with the principles taught in Gurukuls (Sen, 2016).

#### Faculty Development & Administration:

**Teacher Training:** Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to learn about the Gurukul system and how to integrate its principles into modern classrooms (Government of India, 2017). **Policy Support:** Advocate for educational policies that support a balanced approach to education, acknowledging the cultural and historical significance of both Gurukul and modern education systems (Government of India, 2017).

#### **Most Significant Role of Bharatiya Knowledge System:**

The Bharatiya knowledge system offers a rich tapestry of wisdom and practices that can enrich modern education, promote sustainable development, and enhance India's cultural heritage on a global stage. By integrating these elements into educational frameworks and public policies, India can leverage its traditional knowledge to address contemporary challenges and foster holistic development.

#### Preservation and Revival of Traditional Knowledge:

The Bharatiya knowledge system emphasizes the preservation and revival of ancient Indian knowledge in various fields such as yoga, Ayurveda, astronomy, and philosophy (Srinivas, 2018). These disciplines are integral to understanding India's cultural heritage and holistic approaches to health and well-being.

#### Integration with Modern Education:

Integrating elements of the Bharatiya knowledge system into modern education can enhance curriculum diversity and promote interdisciplinary learning. For example, incorporating teachings from ancient Indian texts like the Vedas and Upanishads can broaden students' perspectives on ethics, spirituality, and societal values (Kapoor, 2017).

#### Promotion of Sustainability and Environmental Ethics:

The Bharatiya knowledge system advocates for sustainable living practices and environmental ethics, which are increasingly relevant in the context of global climate change and resource conservation (Sethi, 2020). Traditional Indian practices such as organic farming and water conservation techniques can inform contemporary environmental policies and practices.

#### Cultural Identity and Global Engagement:

Studying the Bharatiya knowledge system fosters a deeper appreciation of India's cultural identity and contributes to global dialogue on diverse knowledge systems (Srinivas, 2018). It encourages cross-cultural exchanges and promotes India as a hub of traditional wisdom and modern innovation.

#### Strategies to boost Bharatiya Knowledge System:

- **Curriculum Development:** Introduce modules or courses that incorporate teachings from the Bharatiya knowledge system into formal education systems at various levels (Kapoor, 2017).
- **Research and Documentation:** Support research initiatives to document and disseminate knowledge from ancient Indian texts and practices, ensuring their accessibility and relevance in contemporary contexts (Sethi, 2020).

- Public Awareness and Advocacy: Raise public awareness about the value of Bharatiya knowledge systems through seminars, workshops, and public outreach programs (Srinivas, 2018).

### Perceptions of Indian Towards Blending Modern Education Tools with Ancient Gurukul Systems

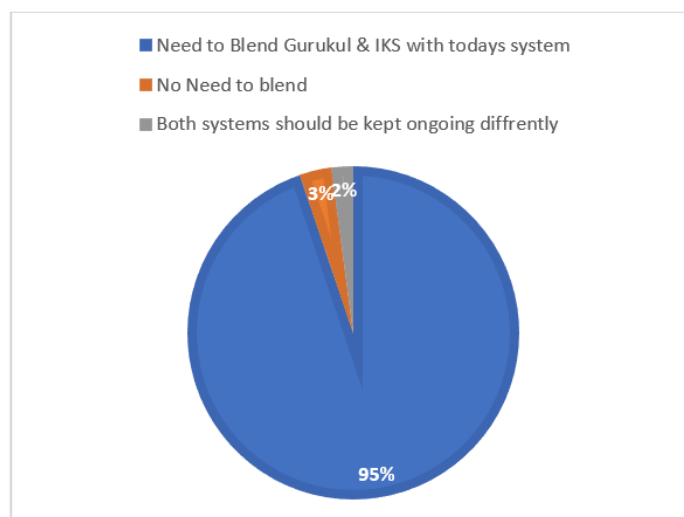


Fig.1.2: Opinion Poll for blending Gurukul & IKS with Modern Education System.

Interpretation: While a random sampling survey was taken on a National Level with Online mode of implementation, a general perception of samples was observed and interpreted. When given an opinion poll between three options, almost 95% of respondents opinionated that Gurukul System is absolutely essential and important for the National as well as Indian Development and thus, shall form the base along with a blend of Modern Tools like ICT and AI. While 3% respondents polled for there is no need to blend both the modern and Gurukul education systems. There also evolved a strata of respondents who chose to opine that both the systems should be continued simultaneously. It can be concluded that majority of the samples have an opinion that a blended education system with Gurukul System and Modern tools shall be beneficial.

### General Discussions:

It is first of all a pleasure to acknowledge all the respondents who participated in the survey, 'Perceptions towards the re-evolution of Gurukul System with a blend of Modern Education tools' which has been extremely essential and significant for the course of primary data collection. It also gave a huge scope to interpret the perception and demands of the society towards a new education system: Bharatiya Knowledge System which should be implemented on a large scale all over Indian to rejuvenate and maintain the cultural, heritage and environmental development leading to the betterment of Emotional Intelligence, IQ, Spiritual Quotient for holistic development of the Nation through Generation. There are many aspect in the Macaulay's education system which are directly, indirectly responsible for the lack and gaps developed in the current talent of India and thus, there is a significant need to inculcate the Indian Knowledge System to enhance and fill the knowledge, personality, traits and skill gaps in the upcoming generation. To encourage innovation keeping the social, moral and traditional values in mind will lead to a generation with wisdom as their strength along with technical and competitive skills. The dream of Bharat being a 'VishwaGuru' which it already used to be in the past shall again be succeeded.

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