

A Case Study of Gurukul Indraprastha: The Traditional Education System in the Present Era

Dr. Nithya Prem. S.R., Shalini

Department of Education, Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200564>

Received: 10 February 2026; Accepted: 16 February 2026; Published: 20 March 2026

ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the cognitive and moral behavior, as well as the philosophical underpinnings and teacher-student relationships within the Gurukul education system. The aim is to understand the factors that contribute to the growth and development of students in Gurukuls, and to analyze the subsequent impact on their values following enrollment in this traditional education framework. Historically, students received education by residing with their Acharya (teacher), who observed their behavior and facilitated positive changes. While Gurukuls served as the primary centers of learning in ancient times, the modern educational landscape is characterized by numerous formal institutions. Today's education systems tend to prioritize examination outcomes and standardized measures, contrasting with the Gurukul model, which emphasizes value-based education while adapting to contemporary educational requirements. The Gurukul education system, rooted in culture and values, remains distinct from modern approaches that often overlook these elements. Essential features of the Gurukul system foster an environment where students can engage deeply with their studies and their surroundings. The guru-disciple relationship, built on trust and respect, allows for personalized attention and individualized learning experiences, catering to each student's unique strengths and challenges. Moreover, Gurukuls prioritize moral and ethical education as intrinsic components of both the curriculum and daily activities. This system emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, compassion, and respect for others. Additional elements like yoga, cultural activities, and physical exercises are integrated into daily schedules, ensuring that education extends beyond mere textbooks. This holistic approach aims to cultivate well-rounded individuals who make positive contributions to society. Gurukuls are currently struggling to survive. In this situation, the government should take concrete steps to significantly contribute to preserving Vedic education, culture, and the revered values of Gurukuls. This exploration aims to enrich the existing literature on traditional education, offering invaluable insights for policymakers and educational planners, and encouraging a deeper reflection on the significance of such practices in contemporary educational discourse.

Keywords: Case study, Gurukul education system, Philosophical foundation, Student-teacher relationship, Moral qualities and values.

INTRODUCTION

The Gurukul system of education occupies a prominent and revered position within the extensive landscape of Indian educational traditions. Rooted in the ancient and sacred guru-disciple relationship, this approach emphasizes a holistic development model that intricately weaves together intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social growth (Sharma, 2017; Verma, 2018). In the traditional Gurukul setting, education transcends the mere acquisition of knowledge; it is inherently life-oriented and value-based, designed to nurture the character and virtues of students.

Students live in close quarters with their gurus, typically in natural surroundings conducive to learning, where the rhythm of daily life promotes a sense of discipline and simplicity. The daily schedule often includes rigorous routines of study, meditation, physical activities, and communal responsibilities, fostering a spirit of self-reliance

and collaboration among peers. Core values such as truth, humility, and respect permeate every facet of the curriculum, ensuring that character building is as integral to education as intellectual achievement.

This ancient and esteemed educational system continues to thrive in the modern-day Gurukuls, which may incorporate contemporary subjects while still adhering to traditional principles. The current study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Gurukul experience, detailing not only the daily life schedules and pedagogical philosophies but also the profound impact on student development.

Objectives of the Study

Given the focus of this study on the development of students and the philosophy underpinning Gurukul institutions, the research has been organized with clearly articulated objectives to systematically direct the investigation.

1. To examine the philosophical foundations of the Gurukuls.
2. To evaluate the daily routines and activities that contribute to students' development within the Gurukuls.
3. To explore the moral and ethical values cultivated in the students of the Gurukuls.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Gurukul system of education, deeply rooted in ancient Indian traditions, has long been recognized for its emphasis on holistic learning, moral values, and close teacher–student relationships. Kumar (2025) explains that the Gurukul system historically fostered not only intellectual knowledge but also moral discipline, cultural values, and life skills through a personalized and experiential approach to education, which contrasts with the formal structure of modern schooling

In their study, Ramchandra Kiledar and S. Patil (2020) explore the psychological dimensions of education within the ancient Indian Gurukul system. They describe this system as a residential education model where the guru and disciple lived in close proximity, fostering positive expectations for one another.

Aithal and Mishra (2023) explored the significance and implications of holistic and sustainable learning outcomes derived from Gurukuls within the context of modern education. They contended that while Gurukul education emphasizes character development, spiritual orientation, and practical life skills, the contemporary system tends to prioritize exam performance and employability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The selection of an appropriate research methodology is essential for capturing the intricacies of real-life institutional phenomena, especially when the emphasis is on in-depth understanding rather than mere measurement.

- This research is predominantly qualitative in nature and adopts an interpretivist paradigm.
- The case study method has been purposively chosen to conduct a detailed examination of Gurukul Indraprastha.
- To enhance the comprehensiveness of the study, both primary and secondary data have been incorporated.
- The methods of data collection include observation, interviews, and document analysis through direct observation and an interview schedule.

- Gurukul's head and principal were the interviewers.

Case Profile of Gurukul

Gurukul Indraprastha was founded on December 24, 1916, by Swami Shradhanand Ji, a distinguished disciple of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati Ji, in the Faridabad district of Haryana. The institution has received official recognition from the Board of School Education Haryana, Bhiwani. Gurukul Indraprastha is dedicated exclusively to the education of boys, offering classes from the 5th to the 12th grade, as well as a Shastri (B.A) degree program affiliated with Maharishi Dayanand University in Rohtak.

Vision and Mission of the Gurukul

To educate scholars committed to safeguarding the nation, religion, and culture, and to promote and uphold the teachings of Maharishi Dayanand Ji.

To address societal issues such as caste and communal inequality, as well as combat drug abuse, while fostering a heightened awareness of human rights among students.

Philosophical Foundation of the Gurukul

Gurukul Indraprastha, a renowned educational institution, was founded in 1916 by the esteemed Swami Shradhanand Ji, a devoted disciple of the influential social reformer Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati. Gurukul Indraprastha is firmly rooted in the enduring principles laid out by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, maintaining a steadfast commitment to the tenets of Arya Samaj. The curriculum is meticulously designed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the Vedas—an ancient body of knowledge that forms the foundation of Hindu philosophy and spirituality. Students engage in the sacred rituals of Havan and Agnihotra, which not only promote spiritual well-being but also emphasize environmental harmony and purity. Additionally, the teachings found in the Satyarth Prakash, a pivotal text authored by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, as well as the profound insights of the Upanishads, are integrated into the learning experience. These texts inspire critical thinking and moral development, equipping students with a holistic understanding of life and its purpose. This commitment to the philosophy of Arya Samaj, articulated by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, is not only grounded in logical reasoning but is also supported by scientific principles, fostering a rigorous and comprehensive educational environment that aims to develop informed and conscientious individuals.

Holistic development of the students of Gurukul

Gurukul Indraprastha adheres to the principle of "early to bed, early to rise," operating under a meticulously structured daily schedule that begins promptly at 4:00 AM. This early start fosters a tranquil and disciplined environment that supports the holistic development of students. After completing their tasks for the day, students retire to bed at 9:15 PM. This disciplined routine at Gurukul Indraprastha is thoughtfully designed to promote not only academic excellence but also spiritual growth, physical fitness, and personal development.

Physical & Mental development

At Gurukul Indraprastha, students embrace a satvik (pure vegetarian) lifestyle that promotes health and spiritual well-being. The institution features a dedicated cowshed providing fresh, nutrient-rich cow's milk, and meals are carefully prepared with these ingredients, fostering a connection with nature. Nestled away from urban noise and pollution, the serene environment enhances focus and mental clarity, supporting academic and personal growth. Daily practices include morning and evening havan rituals, purifying the space and instilling discipline. Students also recite the Vedas and mantras, with a strong emphasis on the Gayatri Mantra for mental and physical development.

Intellectual growth of the students

Gurukul Indraprastha represents a significant piece of historical heritage, drawing students and visitors from across the globe who seek to immerse themselves in its rich history. The curriculum incorporates the study of Satyarth Prakash by Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, along with a variety of other literary and Vedic texts. This diverse academic exposure stimulates curiosity and encourages numerous inquiries, which teachers are well-equipped to address. Furthermore, Gurukul Indraprastha has instituted a mandatory study of the book Ashtadhyayi, a foundational grammar text consisting of 4,000 sutras authored by Maharishi Panini. Mastery of this work is crucial for understanding the Vedas and Vedangas, establishing it as a cornerstone of Sanskrit grammar. As students engage with the book Ashtadhyayi and commit its sutras to memory, they naturally experience an enhancement of their intellectual abilities. Consequently, this comprehensive approach to education leads to improved reasoning and critical thinking skills among students.

Creativity Development

In Gurukul, students balance personal studies with community tasks, fostering creativity through hands-on experiences. In the Bhojanalay (kitchen), they learn food preparation, while agricultural activities teach soil preparation, watering, and harvesting. In the cowshed, students gain skills in animal care, including feeding and milking. They also enhance creativity through competitions and cultural activities, exploring shlokas and composing hymns. This environment encourages a mutual learning experience between the Guru and students, enriching their creative outputs.

Relationship between teacher-students & among the students

Gurukul is a vital aspect of society, bringing together students from various states to live, learn, and engage in shared activities. In this collaborative environment, they work together and closely observe their Gurus as they impart lessons. Teachers and students reside together in Gurukuls, fostering a strong relationship where the teacher becomes a guiding figure, understanding the students deeply—often even better than their families do. The atmosphere in Gurukul cultivates a familial bond among the students and teachers, enabling them to approach their responsibilities with a profound sense of understanding. As students come from diverse regions, they share cultural experiences that enrich each other's social and cultural perspectives. In the Gurukul, students participate in various ceremonies and attend cultural programs beyond their institution. Additionally, students from different Gurukuls visit one another, enhancing the sense of community among them. The emphasis on values and culture in Gurukul instills principles that students carry into the wider world. Whether they become yoga teachers, religious preachers, scholars, military personnel, or educators, they uphold the values learned at Gurukul. Through their endeavors, they promote cultural rituals and contribute to building a more vibrant and cohesive society.

Cultural & Value-based Education

Gurukul Indraprastha greatly contributes to the preservation of social, cultural, and moral values. Periodically, revered speakers grace the Gurukul with their presence, delivering sermons that impart vital moral values and inspire engaging discussions. The Gurukul boasts a Martyr Museum, a poignant homage intertwined with the history of India's independence. This museum holds special meaning as it was once a refuge for the legendary Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, where crucial meetings took place among revolutionary leaders. This sacred space serves to deepen the students' sense of patriotism and national pride. In addition to its rich cultural offerings, Gurukul Indraprastha features a dedicated cowshed and a well-stocked library. Students actively participate in organizing havan yajya ceremonies, further promoting a connection with ancient traditions. Through all these endeavors, Gurukul Indraprastha not only stands as a beacon of education but also plays an instrumental role in preserving and promoting India's cultural, social, and moral values.

Key Findings

- The study clearly demonstrates that Gurukul Indraprastha has adopted the teachings of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati and operates in accordance with the principles established by the Arya Samaj. The

findings highlight that Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati's educational philosophy significantly contributes to the eradication of social evils, the promotion of rational and scientific thinking, and the fortification of moral and ethical values among students.

- In the Gurukul, students receive an education focused on holistic development and discipline. The Gurukul emphasizes physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, and social growth, providing nutritious meals and promoting self-reliance while avoiding materialism. This environment boosts self-confidence and enhances logical reasoning skills, preparing students to face life's challenges with resilience.
- The findings of this study conclude that Gurukul Indraprastha has played a vital role in preserving and sustaining moral and cultural values across generations. In contrast to modern educational institutions that primarily emphasize academic and vocational outcomes, Gurukul focuses on the transmission of cultural heritage, ethical conduct, and socially responsible behavior through daily practices, rituals, discipline, and value-based education.

DISCUSSION

Gurukul Indraprastha was established approximately 110 years before India gained independence, with the objective of promoting Vedic education and the spirit of Swadeshi. At that time, the Gurukul received recognition from Gurukul Mahavidyalaya Jhajjar. Currently, the Haryana Government has initiated a program to grant recognition to Gurukuls from the Board of School Education, Haryana, aligning with the National Education Policy (NEP) 20-20 to integrate the Indian knowledge tradition into the mainstream of modern education.

Gurukul Indraprastha has begun to adopt technological advancements, though this process is still in its early stages. For successful implementation, the government needs to conduct training programs in Gurukuls, which will enable them to effectively coordinate with modern technology. While Gurukul Indraprastha imparts education grounded in human values and sanskar, modern education often struggles to instill such values, emotions, and self-confidence in students. In today's context, Gurukuls stand as crucial bastions of traditional education.

However, it is concerning that there is a general lack of awareness about Gurukuls in society. They are continually striving to preserve their existence, often facing the misconception that only those who study in Gurukuls become Pandits. Additionally, Gurukuls offer entirely free education and rely on donations, which has become a significant challenge due to limited financial resources. To protect and sustain the traditional knowledge system, it is imperative to support Gurukuls in the contemporary landscape.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Gurukul Indraprastha offers a blended education that exemplifies a holistic approach, deeply rooted in the teachings of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati. By prioritizing moral and ethical values alongside academic learning, it nurtures the development of well-rounded individuals capable of navigating life's challenges. The Gurukul's dedication to preserving cultural heritage and promoting responsible citizenship sets it apart from contemporary educational institutions, establishing it as a vital pillar in sustaining societal values for future generations. There is a pressing need to integrate the values and traditions of Gurukuls into modern education. The government should take concrete steps to enhance public perception of Gurukuls and raise awareness about their significance.

The government initiatives related to education policy indicate a noteworthy inclusion of traditional knowledge and educational frameworks. However, to effectively implement these provisions, it is essential to develop specialized policies and initiatives that support Gurukuls. These institutions play a pivotal role in preserving India's rich knowledge tradition and the foundational principles of Vedic education.

REFERENCES

1. Verma, R. (2018). Value-based education in traditional Indian schools. Delhi: Academic Sharma, P. (2017). Holistic education in Gurukuls: A philosophical perspective. Introduction 16 Jaipur: Vedic Publications.Press.
2. Kumar, R. (2025). A Study on the Influence of the Ancient Indian Gurukul System on Modern Education. RESEARCH HUB International Multidisciplinary Research Journal.
3. Kiledar, R., & Patil, S. C. (2020). Education psychology in the ancient Indian Gurukula system. International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH), 4(8), 45–53. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijmh.L1098.0841220>
4. Mishra, N., & Aithal, P. S. (2023). Ancient Indian education: Its relevance and importance in the modern education system. ResearchGate.
5. Government of India, Ministry of Education. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Government of India. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf