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## RELEVANCE OF ANCIENT EDUCATION IN MODERN CLASSROOM: A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS IKS

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### Abstract:

Education has always been a cornerstone of human civilization, shaping societies and fostering intellectual and moral development. Across the world, ancient civilizations established unique systems of learning to promote knowledge and societal progress. In India, the indigenous Gurukul system served as an exemplary model of holistic education, emphasizing not only academic learning but also character building, discipline, and the cultivation of values. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a significant paradigm shift in India's educational landscape by integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into mainstream curricula. This inclusion reflects a growing recognition of the relevance of traditional wisdom in enhancing modern pedagogy and fostering a more contextually grounded education. In the ancient Gurukul system, teachers, revered as Gurus, played a selfless and transformative role in imparting knowledge that encompassed intellectual, theoretical, practical, and moral dimensions. Education extended beyond mere academic learning to include subjects such as philosophy, science, art, and warfare, ensuring the all-round development of the learner.

This paper examines the Gurukul system's principles and practices and explores their adaptation for modern classrooms to create holistic, meaningful, and culturally grounded learning experiences. By bridging ancient wisdom with modern innovation, education can remain both meaningful and future-oriented.

**Keywords:** Ancient Indian Education, Holistic Learning, Value-based Education, Experiential Learning, Indian Knowledge System

## I. INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction: Concept of Ancient Indian Education**

The Ancient Bhartiya (Indian) Education System was highly structured, deeply integrated with the culture and society, and focused on holistic development. It emphasized not only academic knowledge but also moral and spiritual growth. The Indian ancient education system played a multifaceted role in society, serving as a cornerstone of cultural preservation, social cohesion, spiritual enlightenment, ethical governance, economic prosperity, and artistic expression. Its holistic approach to education addressed the diverse needs of individuals and communities, fostering personal growth, societal harmony, and the perpetuation of civilization. The legacy of ancient Indian education continues to resonate in contemporary society, shaping values, aspirations, and ideals that endure across generations. The aim of Education is not only for cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills.

### **Practices of ancient Indian Education System with adaptations in modern classroom**

#### 1. **Guru-Shishya Tradition: Personalized Instruction**

##### ❖ **Gurukula Tradition:**

Education was based on the intimate relationship between teacher (guru) and student (shishya), characterized by mutual respect, trust, and devotion and personalized instruction was given to each student. Knowledge was transmitted orally from teacher to student through direct experience, spiritual guidance, and experiential learning, rather than through formalized curriculum or standardized testing.

##### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation**

In today's classrooms, the essence of this personal connection can be revived through mentorship programs and small group mentoring. By developing personalized learning plans, teachers can cater to the individual needs of students, helping them academically and personally. This one-on-one connection fosters a supportive learning environment, enabling students to reach their full potential. Moreover, individualized attention to each student can significantly improve their relationship with teacher and can result in positive learning outcomes.

#### 2. **Residential Learning**

##### ❖ **Gurukula Tradition:**

Gurukulas were traditional residential schools where students (shishyas) lived with their teacher (guru) in a close-knit community environment. The learners were taught wide range of subjects including philosophy, Vedic scriptures, literature, mathematics, astronomy, and practical skills. The methodology used for content delivery was based on oral instruction, memorization, experiential learning, and practical apprenticeship under the guidance of the guru.

##### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Residential learning in a modern classroom refers to an educational setting where students live and learn outside of their family homes, often within a campus-like environment. This approach emphasizes a structured, immersive learning experience with integrated academic and extracurricular activities, as well as access to modern facilities and resources.

#### 3. **Holistic Development of Learners**

##### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition:**

Education in ancient India was holistic, encompassing not only intellectual learning but also moral, spiritual, and practical dimensions of life. It also aimed to nurturing their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual faculties to achieve personal fulfillment and contribute to society.

#### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

It refers to fostering a student's well-rounded growth, encompassing academic, social, emotional, and physical development. It moves beyond traditional rote learning to engage students in a comprehensive educational experience. This approach emphasizes creating learning environments that support students' cognitive, physical, emotional, and social needs, preparing them for a balanced and successful life.

#### 4. **Dialogues and Debates**

##### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition:**

Students in gurukulas were encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussions with their guru to clarify doubts and explore concepts. Formal debates among students or between students and teachers, fostering logical reasoning and articulation of ideas.

##### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

In the modern classroom, dialogues and debates serve as powerful tools for enhancing critical thinking, fostering collaboration, and developing communication skills. They provide opportunities for students to explore diverse perspectives, construct arguments, and engage in meaningful discourse, ultimately promoting deeper learning and understanding.

#### 5. **Diversity in Curriculum (Multidimensional Learning)**

##### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition:**

The curriculum was diverse and comprehensive, encompassing a wide range of subjects such as Vedic scriptures, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, ethics. Education emphasized the practical application of knowledge, preparing students for real-world challenges and equipping them with skills relevant to their personal, professional, and social roles.

##### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

In present day classroom, curriculum diversity focuses on incorporating various perspectives, experiences, and values to create an inclusive and enriching learning environment. This includes acknowledging and addressing differences in race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, and other social identities. By embracing diversity, educators can foster a more equitable and empowering learning experience for all students.

#### 6. **Cultural Preservation**

##### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition**

Education played a pivotal role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage, including language, literature, rituals, music, dance, architecture, and artistic expressions. It also maintains Cultural Continuity through dissemination of cultural traditions, education further ensured the continuity of civilization, fostering a sense of identity, belonging, and pride among successive generations.

##### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Cultural preservation in the modern classroom involves integrating cultural heritage into the curriculum, fostering a diverse learning environment, and leveraging technology to enhance traditional practices. This can be achieved by incorporating traditional values, arts, and languages into lessons, encouraging extracurricular activities, and promoting a sense of belonging and community among students.

## 7. Oral Tradition

### ❖ Gurukul Tradition:

Memorization, recitation and chanting was central to the education system, especially for the Vedas and other scriptures. Students memorized large volumes of texts verbatim. Regular recitation of texts, often in groups, to ensure correct pronunciation and rhythm, crucial for Vedic hymns and mantras.

### ❖ Modern Classroom Adaptation:

The practice of transmitting culture and knowledge through spoken word, can be effectively integrated into modern classrooms by incorporating storytelling, oral history, and other forms of spoken expression, educators can enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and cultural understanding. Students are encouraged to actively listen and analyze information presented through oral narratives, fostering critical thinking skills. Oral traditions can provide opportunities for students to develop their language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and fluency.

## 8. Practical Application Hands-On Training

### ❖ Gurukul Tradition

Practical training in various disciplines such as medicine (Ayurveda), arts, and crafts. Students learned by doing, under the guidance of their guru or skilled artisans. Students engaged in fieldwork to gain practical experience in subjects like agriculture and astronomy.

### ❖ Modern Classroom Adaptation:

Experiential learning, such as project-based activities, internships, and community service, can play a similar role in contemporary education. Schools can incorporate hands-on learning opportunities where students apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios. This approach ensures that learning is not only academic but also deeply relevant to life outside the classroom.

## 9. Storytelling and Epics

### ❖ Gurukul Tradition

During this period of time Narrative Teaching was much in practice. Use of stories from epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana to impart moral lessons, cultural values, and complex philosophical ideas. Also teaching through parables and fables to illustrate ethical principles and lessons of life was a regular feature

### ❖ Modern Classroom Adaptation:

Storytelling and the study of epics can be powerful tools in the modern classroom, making learning more engaging and memorable. By incorporating stories, teachers can introduce new topics, build connections with students, and help them understand complex concepts through relatable narratives. Epics, with their rich characters, plots, and themes, can also be used to explore history, culture, and human values.

## 10. Collaborative Learning –Peer Learning

### ❖ Gurukul Tradition:

Collaborative learning through group recitations, discussions, and joint projects. Senior students often helped teach and mentor junior students, reinforcing their own knowledge and aiding the learning process.

### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Interactive learning through group discussions, peer teaching, and collaborative projects can be introduced to encourage student engagement. Such methods create opportunities for deeper understanding through peer interaction, while also cultivating teamwork and communication skills, which are essential in today's world.

## 11. Rituals and Ceremonies

### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition**

Learning through participation in rituals and ceremonies, which reinforced the teachings and provided practical experience. Educational opportunities during festivals, integrating cultural heritage with academic learning and with daily life.

### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Rituals and ceremonies can enhance the learning experience in modern classrooms by fostering a sense of community, promoting focus, and marking significant transitions. They can be as simple as a daily "Quote of the Day" or a more elaborate tradition like a graduation ceremony. Rituals and ceremonies help students understand the importance of what they are learning and connect with their peers and teachers in a meaningful way.

## 12. Yoga and Meditation

### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition**

As a regular practice, yoga and meditation was incorporated to develop physical health, mental clarity, and spiritual awareness among learners. They also practice breathing exercises (pranayama) and postures (asanas) as part of the daily routine. Techniques like yoga and meditation are integral to IKS, supporting cognitive development and emotional well-being.

### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Yoga and meditation can be effectively integrated into a modern classroom to enhance student well-being, improve focus, and promote emotional regulation. Start with short, engaging sessions, incorporating poses like Standing Pose and Mountain Pose, and then gradually introduce more challenging poses. Use guided meditations and breathing exercises to help students manage stress and build concentration. Consider incorporating yoga into curriculum activities, like reading time, and focus on developing a sense of mindfulness and self-awareness.

## 13. Ethical and Moral Education

### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition:**

In the Gurukul system, Gurus served as moral role models, teaching virtues like **truthfulness (satya)**, **righteousness (dharma)**, **self-discipline (tapas)**, and **compassion (daya)**. Learning focused on character building along with academic and practical knowledge.

### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Modern education can adopt these values through **value-based learning**, including **meditation**, **mindfulness**, and **ethics lessons**. Encouraging students to set goals, self-monitor progress, and practice self-discipline fosters independence and empathy—skills vital for success in today's world.

## 14. Role of Women

### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition**

Although higher education was more accessible to men, women from learned families also received education in scriptures, arts, and practical skills. This shows that concept of inclusive education was

practiced in gurukulas. As a result of which notable women scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi participated in intellectual discourses and debates.

#### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Modern education is more inclusive and technologically advanced, where women have access to a wide range of subjects. From pioneering educators to innovative researchers, women have played a pivotal role in revolutionizing the way we learn and grow. Their unwavering dedication, resilience, and passion have not only broken barriers but have also paved the way for a more inclusive and diverse educational experience for all. Women scholars have made diverse impacts on various fields, including education reform, curriculum development, and the promotion of inclusive and equitable learning environments.

### 15. Cultural Integration

#### ❖ **Gurukul Tradition**

Education in the fine arts, including music, dance, and visual arts, was integrated into the curriculum, reflecting the holistic approach to learning. Through participation in cultural festivals and rituals provided experiential learning and reinforced social and cultural values.

#### ❖ **Modern Classroom Adaptation:**

Cultural integration in the modern classroom involves recognizing and valuing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students, creating an inclusive environment where all feel respected and valued. This means actively incorporating diverse perspectives, cultures, and languages into the curriculum and teaching practices. Incorporate diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives into lesson plans. This can include literature, music, art, and other subjects.

### Conclusion

The ancient Bhartiya education system, epitomized by the Gurukul tradition, exemplified a holistic and integrative approach to learning that encompassed intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical dimensions. It emphasized personalized mentorship, experiential learning, and the cultivation of virtues, thereby fostering well-rounded individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society. The enduring relevance of these principles is evident in their potential to enhance contemporary pedagogy, particularly through value-based education, holistic development, and culturally responsive practices. By thoughtfully integrating the timeless wisdom of the Gurukul system with modern educational innovations, contemporary classrooms can cultivate learners who are not only cognitively competent but also ethically grounded, socially responsible, and capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st century. This synthesis of ancient insight and modern practice offers a compelling framework for creating an education system that is both meaningful and transformative.

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