

Return of Holistic Learning System – Ancient Indian Gurukul Style

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ABSTRACT

Quality of education is at the heart of National Education Policy -20 (NEP-20). This paper draws a parallel between objectives and guidelines of NEP-20 and ancient Indian gurukul type of learning system. There is a lot common in both systems. Development in technology and computing technique has now made it more convenient to implement good of both systems in words and spirit. Curriculum has to be made very dynamic with an effective feedback mechanism and continuous upgrading system with all the stake holder i.e. teacher, learner, industry, technology and society an integral of the system. The paper brings out various aspects which will help in effective change over.

Keywords: - Gurukul System, NEP-20, Multidisciplinary approach, experiential learning, critical thinking, Lifelong learning

I ANCIENT INDIAN LEARNING SYSTEM

Till the eleventh century, glory of ancient Indian learning system was at the peak, when universities like Nalanda, Taxshila and Vikramshila etc. used to attract scholars from all over the world. The entire education system those days was based on Gurukul system- a residential teaching-learning place where the learning system was student centric and holistic in nature. Four components of learning made the system holistic. These four components related to the mind, body, heart and soul of the learner. It was believed that learning is holistic only when all the four components get adequate education in right proportion.

- (a) **Mind** - On the delivery side the curriculum was so designed that concept and theory of the subject taught, ignited and exercised the mind of the learner in order to make him/her understand and retain the knowledge. Critical thinking was integral part of the system.
- (b) **Body** - The skill development, practical's and project work were part of the curriculum which implied application of theory and experimenting with the theoretical knowledge gained. It encouraged certain amount of research orientation also.
- (c) **Heart** - Learning is incomplete unless there is food for the heart. For this, system ensured that curriculum had adequate amount of social connect, learning of value system, arts and culture which developed values and concern for humanity in the heart of the learner.
- (d) **Soul** - It is said that character building is most essential part of any education. The curriculum those days ensured adequate amount of spiritual learning which directly affected the soul of the learner.

Continues learning, monitoring, evaluation and counselling for all the four components of learning was integral part of the system. Unfortunately, this beautiful system of learning was destroyed by various invaders successively for over eight centuries when they demolished our world class universities. Slowly holistic learning was replaced by rote learning which primarily

exercised only one component i.e. mind and promoted only remembering and not critically thinking and analyzing. The skill development, social connect, values and character building took back seat in the new western kind of learning system.

II THE NEW NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020 (NEP-20)

The new education policy which emphasizes on holistic education could be a game changer and could bring back the glory of ancient Indian learning system. It focuses on bringing idea of India, Indian languages and Indian system of learning back into the curriculum. This policy makes learning more effective and efficient by totally restructuring the system and redesigning the curriculum. Some essential ingredients promoted in the new policy to make learning effective and meaningful are noteworthy.

- (a) **Medium of Learning-** NEP-20 encourage learning in mother tongue which is one of the key point, as undoubtedly man thinks best in his own language. With development of technology now getting the resources in own language in not a big issue.
- (b) **Critical Thinking & Experiential Learning-** Rote learning and cramming is to be replaced by critical thinking and rational in learning. Experiential learning is important aspect where learning is to be extended to real life experience in terms of applying the knowledge in to practice.
- (c) **Skill Development-** The most important aspect in learning is developing skill to apply the knowledge gained. It should be not only in the core field of learning but also in other fields of interest including the area which are close to learner's heart. In skill, body heart and soul in unison produce best result.
- (d) **N is equal to one-** The best learning system is where in a group of learners one should be able to feel as if the curriculum has been designed keeping only his needs and ability in the mind. Outcome based learning, continuous assessment and monitoring are parts of this kind of learning environment.

- (e) **Multi-Disciplinary Perspective-** NEP-20 makes it mandatory for all HEIs to be of multi-disciplinary in nature. So professional institutions will also have departments like department of arts, science, humanities and languages. This will not only help bring development in all disciplines but provide better resources for holistic learning.
- (f) **Research Environment-** Academics and research are two faces of the same coin called effective learning. Learning becomes effective when research is integral part of education. NEP-20 encourages HEIs to build research environment and make research part of all forms of teaching learning system.
- (g) **Character Building & Values-** Ultimately the essence of learning is in building character and developing value system in a learner, in addition to going knowledge and skill in core area of education. This was possible in ancient Indian education system with dedicated and experienced teachers and a dynamic curriculum and continuous monitoring and assessment system.

III LEARNING SYSTEM POST NEP-20

NEP-20 provides excellent platform and right direction for developing an effective learning system. It has all the ingredients of time tested learning system of ancient gurukul times.

- (a) **The Curriculum-** The curriculum has to be developed in such a way that it provides adequate learning in all four components i.e. Mind, Body, Heart and Soul of the learner core knowledge & concept building relating primarily to mind, practical's, skill development and Physical education for body, social connect and connect with the cultural roots for the heart and character building and value system development for soul. For this curriculum has to be dynamic and continuously growing after reviews by a competent Board of Studies. It should give equal weightage to all four components in the syllabus and assessment.
- (b) **Delivery System-** The medium of learning is best in mother tongue. There will be need to develop learning material in regional languages. With unprecedented growth of AI and computing technology, it is possible to provide online resources and facility to enhance the power of learning. Adequate use of technology, virtual platforms and computing and simulation techniques need to be exploited.
- (c) **Critical Thinking & Experiential Learning-** Learning becomes effective if it answers basically three questions- What, Why and How. What relates to observational part and provides ground for inquisitiveness and critical thinking. Why operational part and system is should provide adequate ground for learner to learn the concepts and reason out. How

the analytical is part and should provide ground for experiential learning and research motivation. Learning system should encourage learners to get satisfying answers to all the three questions. Spoon feeding and stereotype readymade answer should be avoided.

- (d) **Collaboration and Multidisciplinary learning-** Collaborative learning and going to other discipline to form a cohesive group for learning makes not only learning effective and interesting but provides great exposure to learner. Role of industries, foreign universities and corporates is quite important this new vision.
- (e) **Happiness Index-** Learning becomes most effective when learner is happy and feels deep satisfaction by what he/she is learning. Learner should have option to take some electives to develop knowledge and skill in subject of his/her choice. This will improve performance in all other core subjects. An effective feedback system may help developing an effective system.
- (f) **Assignment and Project based Learning-** Learning becomes effective if there are assignments and projects related to subjects being taught on a regular basis. Research becomes integrated part of such learning system.
- (g) **Life Long Learning-** The curriculum should encourage both the teacher and the learner to continuously upgrade their knowledge and keep themselves abreast with development in the field. It should encourage them to go beyond the curriculum.
- (h) **Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities & Value Addition-** Such activities provide exposure to the learner and build their confidence level. It develops spirit –de-corpus and develop leadership qualities.

IV CONCLUSION

The learning system becomes effective if all the ingredients discussed above are taken care in developing a curriculum. It becomes the responsibility of not only the teacher but also of the learner to make the teaching-learning system dynamic and futuristic by continuously contributing in updating and changing the system. Autonomy provided to institutions by NEP-20 and has redefined the role of regulatory bodies in making it convenient to implement new learning system effectively.

Following aspect need to be looked in to seriously to bring about the desired change

- (a) An effective Board of Studies to continuously develop curriculum with the help of experts in industries corporate and social domain to include all ingredients of holistic learning.
- (b) A continuous monitoring and assessment system on N = 1 philosophy with right system of counseling.