



PRABODHINI GURUKULA : IMPARTING ANCIENT INDIAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has been organising thousands of social service activities throughout the country through several of its sister organisations. With its objective of changing the lives of many tribal children, orphans and other underprivileged children, it has been running centres for education, housing and culture. It is running many 'Gurukulas' (Traditional Indian schools) with the aim of reviving the traditional Vedic education system and promoting the Hindu tradition, with an aim to save education, medicine, healthcare and food from becoming mere commodities. The people inspired by the Sangh, have started Maithreyi Gurukulas and Prabodhini Gurukulas in the State where in education and culture are being imparted in order to create awareness about the values of ancient Indian system of education. The Prabodhini Gurukula that started in 1994 in Hariharapura of Chikkamagaluru district has grown into a great institution.

KEYWORDS : Prabodhini Gurukula , social service activities , ancient Indian traditional education.

INTRODUCTION

The excellence of traditional Indian education system :

Although India has a history of thousands of years, She has preserved her excellence in various fields through the test of time. We can clearly see that this has been possible only because of the traditional education system of India. It is necessary to mention in this context, the role of ancient Universities of Nalanda , Takshashila, Vikramashila, Vallabhi, Pushpagiri, Odantapuri, Somapura and many other education centres. These centres of learning and education system in general was nourished by the kingdoms like Maurya, Gupta, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, Kadamba, Vijayanagara, Chola etc. As products of this, scholars like Chanakya, Bhaskaracharya, Madhavacharya, Shri Adi Shankara, Acharya Ramanuja, Acharya Madhva, Vidyananya and many others emerged. Indians were proficient in various subjects throughout the spectrum of knowledge – metallurgy, architecture, astronomy, astrology, spirituality, mathematics, medicine and many more. For all these fields, the ancient Indian system of education, with its grand universities and numerous Gurukulas, provided a stable foundation and a fertile ground for progress. Contrasting that glory with the sorry state of affairs of Indian education system, we can clearly recognise the serious deterioration of standards. We see that today, the universities are merely, centres to get a graduate degree from rather than centres of learning from where great personalities emerge. Throughout history, India was an exporter of knowledge, but it is probably the first time that after we got independence, India has remained an importer of knowledge. Today, among the top 200 universities around the world, not a single Indian university can be found. These are the serious reasons why many individuals and institutions inspired by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have taken up the effort to revive and revitalise the traditional system of education that once thrived in India. These efforts are guided by the vision of Bharat in the position of 'Vishwaguru'. One of the prominent institutions striving in this direction is the Prabodhini Gurukula.

PrabodhiniGurukula is situated on the bank of the River Tunga, in Hariharapura ofShringeri of Chikkamagalur District, Karnataka. This Gurukula was born as a unique experiment in the field of education. To generate a human resource capable of finding solutions for the modern challenges, based on the ancient Indian knowledge and techniques, is the Gurukula's purpose. The Gurukula is strongly committed to the ideal that knowledge is not something that can be sold. Education here, is not confined to just the four walls and everyone has the exposure to the outside environment to learn from the nature. In this beautiful environment of the Western Ghats, students are provided with free education, accommodation and food. Here, the students don't have the burden of carrying the books. Every year, only 15 to 20 students of 9 to 10 years of age, are admitted to the school. The six year programme is classified as the six characters or Gunas – Shraddha, Medha, Prajna (awareness), Pratibha (talent), Dhriti and Dhih. A complete agenda has been set for this 6 year programme. Along with this, what is called Panchamukha('five-faced') education is emphasised – Veda, Science, Yoga, agriculture and art are the five faces of this system. Along with the subjects that are usually taught, children are guided about the dignity of labour. Various subjects like cleaning cooking, making toys from clay, organic farming, preparation of Ayurvedic medicines are also taught. The art of leading a community life with cooperation is taught vey well. No wonder such activities will produce the most eligible and self-motivated citizens. The youth who are educated in this way will not even find it difficult to get employed. They can easily start their own business. The greatest lesson the students learn from this system of education is dignity of labour.

Activities of the Gurukula :

In this Gurukula, activities run from 5 in the morning to 9:30 in the night. There will be prayer , Yogasana, cleaning the premises of the Gurukula, worship, self-study and classes in the morning and games and working in the farm in the evening and singing devotional songs and recital of Bhagavad Geeta at night. After meditation, again, there will be study. From the beginning, mother tongue – Kannada and Sanskrit. Hindi is taught in the final two years. The talented children from here conduct 'Balagokula' in the primary and secondary schools of Hariharapura. They teach the students in villages the selected stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata, the biographies of the great personalities and the important events from Indian history.

Village stay :

The students of the final year and the pre-final year visit the selected villages from Chikmagalur district during October/November and stay there for ten days. By staying there, they can get a close view of the villagers and understand the rural life and its problems and opportunities. Thus, they will get a chance to understand the lifestyle of the rural society.

Laboratory and Library :

The Gurukula imparts systematic, modern and scientifically equipped education that is necessary for the 21st century. The library has a collection of the best books on various subjects. The grammar books of Kannada, Sanskrit and English, encyclopaedias, biographies of great personalities, novels, collections of poetry, textbooks from different states and also the books that explain various subjects relate to the competitive world are available in the library.

Organic farming :

Organic farming is followed in the Gurukula. The students have developed a beautiful flower garden. They grow vegetables in an area covering 4-5 acres. Cow urine and cow dung are used as fertilizers. Medicine made from Neem leaves is used as insecticide. Chemical fertilizers and insecticides are never used.

Fine Arts :

Bharatanatya, Yakshagana. Classical music and drawing and painting are taught here. Instrumental music that includes keyboard, Mrudanga, flute, harmonium, Tabla, Veena etc. are also taught here. Importantly, the study of these fine arts, awakens and enhances the creativity of the students.

Self-Help Groups (SHG's) :

NABARD has recognised the Prabodhini Trust as a nongovernment organisation (NGO). It has been guiding many self help groups (SHG's) in Chikkamagalurdistrict. Training programmes for the members of SHG's are conducted every month. So far, 104 SHG's are promoted by this Trust. With the aid from the Government, the Prabodhini Trust is conducting home-tuitions to differently abled children. Presently, 24 such students are being taught.

'The organic farming village' ('Savayava Grama') :

The State Government emphasises organic farming through this programme. The State Government has assigned the responsibility of the implementation of this programme to the Prabodhini Trust, covering an area of a hundred hectares of cultivable land in each Taluk/city. The infrastructure needed and educational programme are also provided to the trust. As a result, the Central Government has distributed the organic fertilizer plants to the farmers free of cost. The Prabodhini Trust is organising many such experiments.

CONCLUSION :

There are numerous educational institutions now in India. There are many parents amongst us with the ability to spend crores of rupees for the children's education, but the contemporary education may give least results in favour of the society. From the Vedic times itself, our ancestors believed that education, food and health should not be mere marketable commodities, but it is annoying to note that they are becoming just that. However, even amidst such a situation, this institution is involved in imparting the Gurukula system of education in accordance with the ancient tradition – It makes it praiseworthy. The RashtriyaSwayamsevakSangh is marching ahead in the creation of people with the tendency and capacity to work on these lines.

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