

National Education Policy-2020 and Ancient Indian Education System: A Case Study on the Students' Homes & Hostels of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Dr. Tejaswini Yakkundimath

Special Officer, Karnataka State Higher Education Council, Bangalore

Abstract

Swami Vivekananda, a visionary saint opined that “The old institution of ‘living with the guru’ and similar systems of imparting education are needed. What we want are western science coupled with Vedanta, brahmacharya as the guidance motto, and shraddha and faith in one’s own self.” In this context India is adapting National Education Policy-2020 which is being guided by the rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought. This policy document clearly states that, the aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self.

Ramakrishna Math and Mission since its inception, along with spiritual and other service activities have taken up many initiatives in imparting quality education based on ancient Indian values and uplifting the society. This study is focused on throwing light on the contributions of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in imparting education based on ancient Indian education system through its Students' Homes & Hostels and also orphanages in India which may considered as Gurukuls of new India. This study is based entirely on secondary data.

Keywords: Gurukul system, National Education Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, Ramakrishna Math and Mission

1.1 Introduction

India has adopted National Education Policy-2020 in July 2020 which is being guided by the rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought. This policy document clearly states that, “The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self”¹. And one of the fundamental principles of this policy is imparting such education which has a rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions.²

Swami Vivekananda, a visionary saint opined that “The old institution of ‘living with the guru’ and similar systems of imparting education are needed. What we want are western science coupled with Vedanta,

¹ https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf page no.3

² https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf page no.6

brahmacharya as the guidance motto, and shraddha and faith in one's own self.”³ Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission which was established by Swami Vivekananda run around 1420 educational institutions as well as non-formal educational centers and coaching centers based on the ideals given by him.

Key Objectives: The key objectives of this study are to throw light on the contributions of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in imparting education based on ancient Indian education system through its Students' Homes & Hostels which can be considered as Gurukuls of new India. It also intends to highlight how these institutions are catering to the principal objectives of National Education Policy-2020.

Data Collection: This study is based entirely on secondary data and it is collected mainly from the website of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. The required data is collected and collected from the annual reports of these organizations and the collected data has been classified, tabulated and analyzed according to the objectives of the study.

Significance of the Study: The education system introduced by the Britishers' based on Macauley's principle has actually damaged India's ancient Gurukul system. Even after independence under various education policies India has retained some of the features of

Macauley's principle. National Education Policy-2020 states that “All curriculum and pedagogy, from the foundational stage onwards, will be redesigned to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, indigenous and traditional ways of learning etc. In order to ensure that education is maximally relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students. Stories, arts, games, sports, examples, problems, etc. will be chosen as much as possible to be rooted in the Indian and local geographic context. Ideas, abstractions, and creativity will indeed best flourish when learning is thus rooted⁴. To impart such kind of education effectively the ancient Gurukul system is very much conducive. Nowadays many residential schools are being established in the country. Hence, in this paper an effort is made to introduce the contributions of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in imparting education in traditional Gurukul system through its Students' Homes & Hostels in new India.

Scope and limitations of the study: Though there are many religious and philanthropic organizations in India are imparting education in ancient Gurukul system, the current study is limited to the contribution of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

1.2 National Education Policy-2020 & Inculcation of Ancient Indian Values in Education System

National Education Policy 2020, the first education policy of the 21st century aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of India. By revising and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, it aims to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education. It is also designed to realize Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030

³ <http://rkmvu.ac.in/overview/our-inspiration/>

⁴ https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf, Page 16

Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. Another key objective of this policy is to build a strong education system by 2040 based upon India’s traditions and value systems which is second to none.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the second president and a great teacher strongly believed that, teacher are the corner stone of the education system. NEP 2020 also mentions that, “The teacher must be at the center of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The new education policy must help re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens”.⁵

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan also emphasized on the need for spiritual education in India. Education in India should aim at fostering spiritual values, faith in God, good manners, honesty and fellow-feeling. This has great relevance for modern times particularly in this age of science and technology.⁶ The vision of National Education Policy 2020 mentions that the curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners; and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment.⁷

1.3 Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission: Brief Information

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission was established by Swami Vivekananda, a chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna on 1st May, 1897. These twin institutions are headquartered in Belur Math, Kolkatta. These spiritual organizations have its 221 branches worldwide. Among them 167 in India, 15 in Bangladesh, 14 in USA, 2 each in Brazil, Canada, Russia and South Africa, and one each in Argentina, Australia, Fiji, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Netherlands, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, UK and Zambia. Further, there are 44 sub-centers (21 within India, 23 outside India) under different centers.⁸

The motto of this non-political, non-sectarian organization is **Atmano Mokshartham Jagad Hitaya Cha**, (“For one’s own salvation and for the welfare of the world”) and it was formulated by Swami Vivekananda. These twin organizations are based on 7 ideals. Among them work is worship, potential divinity of the soul, and harmony of religions are three of the noteworthy ideals on which these two organizations are based. It is this ideal of service to man as service to God that sustains the large number of hospitals, dispensaries, mobile medical units, schools, colleges, rural development centers and many other social service institutions run the twin organizations.⁹

⁵ https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf page 5

⁶ Choudhury, S. (2006). Educational Philosophy of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. p.117

⁷ https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf page 3

⁸ <https://belurmath.org/branch-centres/>

⁹ <https://belurmath.org/about-us/>

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission have received many prestigious national and international awards. To list a few, they were awarded with Bhagwan Mahavir Foundation Award in 1996, Dr. Ambedkar National Award (1996), Dr. Bhawar Singh Porte Tribal Service Award (1997–98), Indian government's prestigious Gandhi Peace Prize in 1998, Shahid Vir Narayan Singh Award (2001), Pt. Ravishankar Shukla Award (2002) and National Communal Harmony Award (2005). The Ramakrishna Mission was selected for an honorary mention of the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Prize for Promotion of Tolerance and Nonviolence 2002. The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Narainpur, Chhattisgarh was jointly selected for the 25th Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration for the year 2009 with musician A.R.Rehaman for their services in promoting and preserving national integration.¹⁰

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission are engaged in various forms of humanitarian and a number of social service activities for more than 125 years. Inspired by the motto of **Atmano Mokshartham Jagad Hitaya Cha** the monks, brahmacharis and other inmates of the organization with the wholehearted support of the devotees the Math and Mission are serving the humanity.

In tackling global challenges philanthropy has to play a greater role and the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also in favor of it. A study by OECD in 2017, which surveyed more than 100 private philanthropic foundations in various countries found that philanthropic activities toward the SDGs focus mainly on general health and education issues (62% of the total), followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing (9%), and government and civil society (8%).¹¹ The same is the case with Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

The details regarding the expenditure made by Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on few selected service activities for the period 2015-16 to 2019-20 is given in Table:1.

Table 1: Expenditure of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on various service activities (amount Rs. In Crores)

Year	Educational Services	Medical Services	Relief Work	Welfare Activities	Service in Tribal and Rural Areas
2015-16	308.03	214.85	36.78	NA	NA
2016-17	339.04	234.83	41.08	24.99	70.26
2017-18	350.29	256.68	NA	NA	73.18
2018-19	387.97	292.27	42.41	NA	74.88
2019-20	428.77	309.8	38.24	29.42	133.5
Total	1814.1	858.75	158.51	54.41	276.94

Source: Annual reports of respective years of Ramakrishna Math and Mission

This table shows that, these organizations have spent the highest amount (**Rs. 1814.1 crores**) of funds for providing educational services.

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramakrishna_Mission

¹¹ OECD (2017). Global private philanthropy for development: Results of the OECD survey as of 19 June 2017. Technical report, OECD.

1.4 Educational Service Activities of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

According to Swami Vivekananda “Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man”. He envisioned of an education system through which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one’s own feet. In other words, he wanted to start various educational institutions to teach the so-called secular subjects like modern sciences, technology, vocational-oriented sciences, arts, English, etc. on the one hand, and the so-called spiritual subjects like the ancient Upanishads, Sanskrit, Vedic literature, etc. on the other, was to create a complete human being, all-round and fully developed in the three ‘h’s — heart, head, and hand.¹² Swami Vivekananda’s scheme of education was mingling between science and religion (Vedanta), material prosperity and spiritual attainment, mother-tongue and other language, book-learning and experience and practical education. Accordingly, Ramakrishna Math and the Mission have established a number of educational institutions to impart education by adhering to the noble visions of Swami Vivekananda. The details regarding the educational institutions run by them are listed in Table: 2.

Table 2: Details of Educational Institutions run by Ramakrishna Math and the Mission

Institutions	No. of Units	No. of Students			
		Boys	Girls	Total	Socially Backward
Deemed-to-be-University	1	1,853	540	2,393	1,333
Colleges (Arts, Sc. & Commerce)	6	8,678	44	8,722	4,526
Sanskrit Colleges	1	29	35	64	24
Teachers’ Training Institutes	4	573	2	575	329
Colleges of Physical Education	1	153	–	153	153
Junior Basic Training Institutes	5	183	199	382	201
Higher Secondary Schools	38	28,849	12,722	41,571	26,754
Secondary Schools	45	14,421	9,225	23,646	9,071
Sanskrit Schools	1	30	–	30	–
Jr. High / Middle Schools (VI-VIII)	22	4,878	3,016	7,894	3,955
Jr. Basic / U.P./ L.P. Schools (I-V)	75	9,933	4,984	14,917	7,755
Pre-Basic / K.G./ Nursery Schools / Crèches	270	6,407	5,957	12,364	5,022
Hostels / Students’ Homes	113	21,471	3,116	24,587	10,856
Orphanages	5	774	54	828	796
Polytechnics	4	2,479	–	2,479	1,161
Jr. Technical & Industrial Schools	7	1,544	–	1,544	552

¹² <https://belurmath.org/education-services/>

Schools of Languages	3	27,926	16,459	44,385	4,519
Computer Training Centres	14	7,188	6,171	13,359	6,355
Blind Boys' Academies	1	206	–	206	206
Vocational Training Centres	134	25,037	20,104	45,141	28,023
Institutes of Agriculture	3	4,969	1,648	6,617	1,818
Rural Dev. Training Institutes	3	1,163	3,003	4,166	3,282
Non-formal Education Centres	138	4,630	3,837	8,467	2,672
Night Schools / Adult Education Centres	2	31	25	56	81
National Institute of Open Schooling centres	5	322	355	677	218
Coaching Centres	275	9,147	8,879	18,026	10,636
Others	244	18,305	11,068	29,373	3,976
Total	1,420	2,01,179	1,11,443	3,12,622	1,34,274

Source: Annual reports on education services of Ramakrishna Math and Mission of respective years

As on 2019-20 these organizations are running 1,420 educational institutions from Nursery Schools to Deemed-to-be-University. They are catering to 1, 34,274 students belonging to Socially Backward classes, 1, 11,443 female students and 2, 01,179 male students.

As Swami Vivekananda was of the opinion that it would be better if the people get a little technical education, so that they might find work and earn their bread, instead of dawdling about and crying for service. Hence, these organizations are running 07 junior technical & industrial schools imparting technical and vocational education & training at the secondary/higher secondary level and 04 Polytechnics imparting technical education in various branches of engineering at the diploma level.

Sanskrit school and college are imparting knowledge of the Sanskrit language and literature and Vedic school is imparting Vedic education at the secondary/higher secondary level. Agricultural schools/institutes are imparting education/training in agriculture and horticulture at the diploma level and Rural Development/Social Workers' Training Institutes are imparting education for rural development work. The Social Welfare & Integrated Rural Development Institutes are engaged in conducting research and evaluation studies, and integrated rural development projects, apart from giving training courses. The Blind Boys' Academy & Centre for the Visually Handicapped is offering general education as well as training in music, agriculture, and several other crafts to the blind and visually handicapped boys. Teachers' Training Colleges/Institutes are training the future teachers. Non-formal Education Centers are imparting literacy and adult education.

Thus, through these 1420 educational institutions of various types Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission every year training the mind, heart and souls of lakhs of students as per their needs and interests.

1.5 Students’ Homes & Hostels of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission: The Gurukuls of New India

A *gurukula* is a type of education system whose origin dates back to around 5000 BC in the Indian subcontinents. Under this system shishya ('students' or 'disciples') lived with the guru, in the same house. Swami Vivekananda had high regards towards this system. He once said “My idea of education is Gurugriha-vasa (stay at Guru’s house). Without the personal life of the teacher, there would be on education. In our country, the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation. The charge of imparting knowledge should again fall upon the shoulders of Tyaagis.” To realize his idea of education, the Ramakrishna Mission is running 113 Students’ Homes & Hostels which are attached to residential schools/colleges/institutes. They have attempted to be modeled on the guru-griha-vāsa system.

Most of these Students’ Homes & Hostels are striving hard to actualize Swamiji’s vision of guru-griha-vasa and his educational concepts. The monastic wardens /teachers/wardens of these, Students’ Homes & Hostels constantly involve in the overall development of the students and they also exert an unconscious influence on the students residing with them. The residential students are taught meditation, chanting of Vedic and other hymns, bhajans, yogasana, pranayama etc. They are also being introduced to Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, teachings of Divine trios and other great personalities. They need to attend morning and evening prayer sessions. The students are also being trained to do household activities, management of the stores and libraries, maintenance of the gardens, electrical installations, computers and water pumps etc. Students are also made to participate in the Mission’s social service activities.

Table 3: The details regarding Hostels / Students’ Homes run by Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
No of units	108	111	110	118	113
Boys	18,664	19878	19,974	21,849	21,471
Girls	6,451	7056	7,668	7,904	3,116
Total	25,115	26,934	27,642	29,753	24,587
Socially Backward	9,524	10,120	10,420	10,103	10,856

Source: Annual reports on education services of Ramakrishna Math and Mission of respective years

Along with Students’ Homes & Hostels, 05 orphanages housing destitute children and grown-up students are attempted to be modeled on the guru-griha-vāsa system.

Table 4: The details regarding Orphanages run by Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
No of Units	6	3	3	4	5
Boys	1292	711	703	743	774

Girls	9	7	6	4	54
Total	1301	718	709	747	828
Socially Backward	1218	658	643	642	796

Source: Annual reports on education services of Ramakrishna Math and Mission of respective years

From Table 3 & 4 we come to know that Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission are contributing to keep ancient Gurukula system of education alive in New India and also to develop young generation with good character and zeal to excel in different walks of life.

1.6 Conclusion:

Swami Satyapriyananda, of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur has rightly said, “As very few embark on the stage of recluse and renouncer, the main concern for our patriotic minds is to introduce a healthy scheme of education during the student stage which stands him or her in good stead during the householder stage. This is where the combination of National Education Policy-2020 and Gurukula system of education gets the relevance. The intention is good and noble, but the implementation is difficult if it were possible at all.¹³ Thus as Indian educational institutions which are actively involved in the implementation of National Education Policy-2020 must try to combine the framework and ideals of ancient Gurukula system to build India which can lead the entire world by restoring its role as Viswa Guru. In this process the contribution of organizations like Ramakrishna Math and Mission is commendable. The hostels run by various Government departments, educational institutions across the country may also consider the principles of Students’ Homes & Hostels of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and such other organizations to fulfill the aspirations of National Education Policy-2020.

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