

Background

- In Hinduism, education was the means to achieve the four aims of life
 - Dharma (virtue)
 - Artha (wealth)
 - Kama (pleasure)
 - Moksha (liberation)
- It was believed that educated people are twice born, first, physically and second, spiritually
- In Hinduism, Guru is considered the human form of God
- Guru means Teacher and Kulam means residence
- Children used to leave their families and stay at their Guru's house until they completed their education
- The Guru was not paid for educating the children, but they used to help the Guru in his daily rituals and chores and at the end of their education they were expected to give dakshina- special task or favor (example Eklavya)

Life in the Gurukulam

- Gurukulam was away from cities and villages, usually in the forest
- Students lead a simple life of strict discipline
- They had to get up early in the morning, take a bath, finish chores (collecting firewood, sweep the floors etc), recite the scriptures and then go out for bheeksha (beg for food)
- They were not allowed to socialize with women
- They were punished for not obeying the Guru
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- Children learned all year round, but got holidays on religious observances
- They traveled with their Guru when he was invited by local Kings to perform religious rituals
- All learning was oral and by memorization
- Guru named his successor in case of his death or severe illness

Curriculum

- Brahma vidya- knowledge of Brahman
- Shastra vidya- knowledge of weapons and martial arts
- Tantra vidya- knowledge of chakras and energies
- Bhuta vidya- knowledge of spirits
- Alchemy- conversion of base metals to gold
- Jyotish vidya- astrology
- Nakshatra vidya- astronomy
- Pasu vidya- animal breeding
- Politics
- Economics

Advantages of Gurukulam

- Children learned under close supervision of the teacher without distraction
- It was their home away from home
- They got a well rounded education
- There was a sense of camaraderie and belonging
- They had the opportunity to closely observe the Guru and learn from his behavior and conduct

Disadvantages of Gurukulam

- Highly centralized system where authority of the Guru was final
- Parents had no control or say in their kids education
- Everything was taught orally
- Women were not allowed to get educated
- Children from lower castes could not get educated