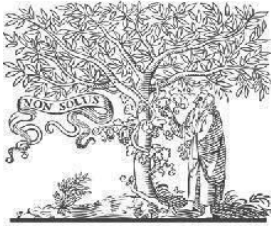


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IJEMR Transactions, online available on 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023. Link

<https://ijiemr.org/downloads.php?vol=Volume-12&issue= Issue 12>

**DOI:10.48047/IJEMR/V12/ ISSUE 12/96**

Title: " A GURUKULAM'S GUIDE TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA"

Volume 12, ISSUE 12, Pages: 720- 724

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## "A GURUKULAM'S GUIDE TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA"

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### ABSTRACT:

The Bhagavad Gita, one of the most revered spiritual texts, has long been a cornerstone of Hindu philosophy and ethical thought. Its teachings, delivered by Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, transcend time, offering guidance on living a life of righteousness, duty, and devotion. This research paper delves into the core teachings of the Bhagavad Gita as interpreted in a traditional Gurukulam setting, highlighting its relevance to modern life. It explores the Gita's concepts of Dharma (duty), Karma (action), Bhakti (devotion), and Jnana (knowledge), and how these principles are imparted in the context of a Gurukulam's holistic education system.

**Keywords:** Bhagavad Gita, Gurukulam, Dharma, Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, Hindu philosophy, spiritual teachings.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Bhagavad Gita, one of the most profound and revered spiritual texts in the world, holds a significant place in Hindu philosophy, providing timeless wisdom that transcends cultures and epochs. Its teachings, encapsulated in the dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, offer a comprehensive guide to life's most fundamental questions about duty, morality, and the nature of existence. The text, part of the larger epic Mahabharata, is unique in that it delivers deep philosophical concepts within the context of a practical and immediate situation—Arjuna's moral and emotional dilemma about engaging in battle against his own kinsmen. The Gita's teachings have been the subject of numerous interpretations, and their universal relevance continues to resonate with people seeking clarity in times of moral and existential crisis.

The traditional Gurukulam system of education, rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, plays a crucial role in preserving and disseminating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. A Gurukulam, or residential school, is not just an institution of learning; it is a spiritual and holistic educational environment where students (known as shishyas) live with their guru, imbibing both practical knowledge and spiritual wisdom. This system emphasizes a well-rounded education that integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual development, with a particular focus on ancient texts like the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. In a Gurukulam setting, the study of the Bhagavad Gita is more than an academic exercise; it is a deeply personal and transformative process that influences every aspect of a student's life.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches essential principles such as Dharma (duty), Karma (action), Bhakti (devotion), and Jnana (knowledge), which are fundamental to leading a balanced and purposeful life. In the Gurukulam system, these teachings are not simply imparted through lectures but are lived and practiced by both the guru and the students. The Gurukulam emphasizes experiential learning, where students apply the philosophical principles of the Gita in their daily lives, from performing their daily chores to understanding their responsibilities towards the community and the cosmos. The text is often studied in the original Sanskrit, encouraging students to not only grasp its meaning but also to connect with the rhythmic and vibrational power of the verses. This practice instills a deeper understanding and reverence for the teachings, as the recitation itself becomes a form of meditation and devotion.

One of the most significant teachings of the Bhagavad Gita that is emphasized in the Gurukulam system is the concept of Dharma. Dharma, in its broadest sense, refers to the ethical and moral laws that govern individual conduct. It is often translated as duty, righteousness, or moral responsibility, but its meaning is far more nuanced and multifaceted. In the context of the Gita, Dharma refers to the unique role and responsibility that each individual must fulfill in their lifetime, according to their nature and position in society. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna that one must perform their Dharma without attachment to the outcomes, focusing instead on the integrity and sincerity of their actions. In a Gurukulam, students are taught to understand and embody their Dharma from an early age, with the understanding that fulfilling one's duty—whether in studies, personal conduct, or service to others—is an essential part of spiritual growth.

Karma, or action, is another pivotal concept in the Bhagavad Gita that is thoroughly explored within the Gurukulam system. The Gita emphasizes the importance of performing one's duties without attachment to the fruits of those actions. This principle of Nishkama Karma (selfless action) teaches that while one must engage in the world and perform their responsibilities, they should do so without selfish motives or desires for personal gain. This teaching is deeply embedded in the ethos of a Gurukulam, where students learn the value of selfless service through activities like cleaning, cooking, and community work. The emphasis is on developing a sense of detachment from the outcomes, focusing instead on the sincerity and purity of the action itself. This practice of Karma Yoga—the path of action—forms a foundation for students, helping them cultivate discipline, humility, and a sense of service, which are essential qualities for spiritual development.

The path of Bhakti, or devotion, is another central theme of the Bhagavad Gita that resonates deeply in the Gurukulam tradition. Lord Krishna's teachings on Bhakti emphasize the importance of surrendering to the Divine with pure love and devotion. In a Gurukulam, devotion is cultivated not only through formal rituals and prayers but also through a spirit of dedication to learning and service. Students are encouraged to see the Divine in all aspects of life, whether it is in the study of scriptures, the relationships with their peers, or in the natural world around them. This holistic approach to Bhakti fosters a deep sense of connection with

the Divine, and students are guided to understand that true devotion is not about external rituals alone but about cultivating an inner attitude of love, humility, and surrender.

## II. THE GURUKULAM SYSTEM: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Gurukulam system is a traditional educational framework rooted in ancient Indian culture, designed to foster holistic development through spiritual, intellectual, and moral education. Here are key aspects of the Gurukulam system:

1. **Residential Learning:** Gurukulams are typically residential institutions where students, known as shishyas, live alongside their guru (teacher). This immersive environment facilitates close mentorship and personalized guidance.
2. **Holistic Education:** The curriculum encompasses a wide range of subjects, including Vedic texts, philosophy, arts, sciences, and practical skills. Education is not limited to academics; it integrates physical, mental, and spiritual training.
3. **Focus on Values:** The Gurukulam system emphasizes moral and ethical values, teaching students the importance of duty (Dharma), selfless action (Karma), devotion (Bhakti), and knowledge (Jnana). These principles are fundamental to character development and responsible citizenship.
4. **Experiential Learning:** Learning is often experiential, involving hands-on activities, rituals, and community service. Students engage in daily chores, which instill discipline, teamwork, and a sense of service.
5. **Guru-Disciple Relationship:** The relationship between the guru and shishya is pivotal. The guru serves not just as a teacher but also as a mentor, guiding students in their personal and spiritual growth.
6. **Spiritual Practices:** Daily rituals, meditation, and prayers are integral parts of the curriculum, fostering a deep connection with spirituality and encouraging self-reflection.
7. **Cultural Preservation:** Gurukulam systems play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge, arts, and cultural practices, ensuring the continuity of heritage.

In the Gurukulam system is a comprehensive educational model that nurtures well-rounded individuals, equipping them with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary for personal fulfillment and societal contribution.

## III. CORE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA IN THE GURUKULAM



The Bhagavad Gita serves as a foundational text in the Gurukulam system, imparting essential spiritual and philosophical teachings that guide students in their personal and academic development. Here are the core teachings emphasized in this traditional setting:

1. **Dharma (Righteous Duty):** The Gita teaches the importance of Dharma, emphasizing that each individual has a unique role and responsibilities based on their nature and position in society. In the Gurukulam, students learn to recognize and fulfill their duties with integrity and commitment, understanding that righteous action is crucial for personal and societal harmony.
2. **Karma (Selfless Action):** The concept of Karma, or action without attachment to results, is central to the Gita's teachings. Gurukulam education encourages students to engage in their duties sincerely, focusing on the process rather than the outcome. This principle helps develop a sense of detachment and cultivates selflessness, teaching students to act for the greater good.
3. **Bhakti (Devotion):** The Gita emphasizes the path of Bhakti, or devotion to the Divine. In the Gurukulam, students participate in daily prayers, rituals, and devotional practices that foster a deep spiritual connection. This teaching encourages them to cultivate love and surrender to God, nurturing humility and compassion.
4. **Jnana (Knowledge):** The pursuit of Jnana, or spiritual knowledge, is vital for self-realization. Gurukulam education focuses on studying the Gita and other scriptures, encouraging critical thinking and reflection. Students are guided to explore profound philosophical concepts, leading to greater self-awareness and understanding of their place in the universe.
5. **Equanimity:** The Gita teaches the importance of maintaining equanimity in the face of success and failure, pleasure and pain. This principle is instilled in students through practical exercises and mindfulness practices, promoting resilience and inner peace.
6. **Yoga (Union):** The Gita describes various paths of Yoga, including Karma Yoga (path of action), Bhakti Yoga (path of devotion), and Jnana Yoga (path of knowledge). In the Gurukulam, students learn to integrate these paths into their lives, achieving a harmonious balance between action, devotion, and knowledge.

By embedding these core teachings into their educational framework, Gurukulam institutions not only impart knowledge but also foster spiritual and ethical development, preparing students for a life of purpose and integrity.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita hold profound significance within the Gurukulam system, guiding students toward holistic development. By emphasizing concepts such as Dharma, Karma, Bhakti, and Jnana, the Gurukulam fosters a learning environment that integrates spiritual, ethical, and intellectual growth. This comprehensive approach not only

prepares individuals to fulfill their responsibilities in society but also nurtures their inner selves, promoting resilience, compassion, and wisdom. As students embody these timeless principles, they emerge as well-rounded individuals equipped to navigate the complexities of life with integrity and purpose, embodying the essence of the Gita's teachings.

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