

## BOOSTING FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS

Food safety is a critical pillar of public health, economic stability, and national development. In a country as vast and diverse as India, where millions rely on street vendors, small eateries, and informal food networks, maintaining rigorous food safety standards is not just an administrative responsibility but a moral imperative. Recent concerns about adulteration, contamination, and substandard food practices underscore the urgent need to strengthen the food safety ecosystem across the country.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has made commendable progress in setting up regulatory frameworks and conducting periodic inspections. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, especially at the grassroots level. Many small-scale producers and vendors operate with limited awareness or access to hygiene guidelines, often due to lack of training, infrastructure, or oversight. Bridging this gap is essential to ensure that safe food reaches every household, regardless of socio-economic status.

Public awareness campaigns must be intensified to educate consumers about the importance of food hygiene and the risks associated with consuming unregulated or unhygienic products. Simultaneously, food business operators-big and small-must be encouraged and incentivized to comply with safety norms. The government can consider subsidies for small vendors to upgrade their equipment or implement hygiene measures, thereby making compliance both feasible and beneficial.

Technology can play a transformative role in this effort. Digital platforms can be used to monitor food supply chains, track violations, and provide real-time feedback to enforcement agencies. Mobile apps that allow consumers to report safety concerns or verify food licenses can also increase transparency and accountability.

Another crucial aspect is strengthening inter-agency coordination. Food safety does not exist in isolation-it intersects with agriculture, health, trade, and education. A collaborative approach involving local bodies, health workers, and community leaders can create a more robust and inclusive safety net.

Most importantly, food safety must be embedded into national development strategies. With India aiming to become a \$5 trillion economy and a global food export hub, maintaining high safety standards is not optional-it is a strategic necessity. Unsafe food erodes consumer trust, burdens the healthcare system, and hampers productivity.

Ensuring safe food is a shared responsibility. Policymakers, industry stakeholders, and citizens must come together to elevate food safety from a regulatory checkbox to a collective commitment. Only then can we build a healthier, more resilient, and globally respected food ecosystem.

## Higher Education and Quality concerns-Issues and Challenges

■ PROF K S CHANDRASEKAR



In the last six decades, the number of universities has jumped 23 times, whereas the number of colleges has increased by over 66 times. However, with the population of India expected to grow to over 1.6 billion by 2030, the capacity of the higher education needs to nearly double, to meet the targeted Gross Enrolment Ratio, or GER, of 30% for the higher education segment. This would require an investment of USD 180 billion. If the rate at which the higher education capacity has been developed by the government is any indicator, we will fall short of the target by a very large measure. It is evident that though Arts contributes the maximum in terms of number of students (over 36%), its contribution in terms of market size is less than a percent. Engineering on the other hand has less than 9% of the enrolled students, yet accounts for over 66% of the Higher Education market size.

The responsibility for basic research in medicine and the underlying sciences, so essential to progress in the war against disease, falls primarily upon the medical schools and universities. Strengthen the centres of basic research which are principally the colleges, universities, and research institutes. Thus, universities came to be perceived not only as vehicles for educating the people for carrying out roles in the American economy but also as engines for the nation's growth. Organizations such as the National Science Foundation and the Science Advisory Board were established since the "Science the Endless Frontier" report, for selection and monitoring of research projects to be funded through federal government funds. Later, industry (especially pharmaceuticals and biotechnology corporate) joined the government effort in sponsoring research through funding and joint ventures. Few universities have even set minimum grant amounts that must be obtained by faculty. This results in tough

competition amongst faculty across the nation for these funding.

The private sector accounts for 10% of the total enrolment in post-secondary education in China. Whereas the public-private educational institutions in Shanghai and Beijing enjoy reasonably good reputations, the schools in Shenyang are not doing so well.State Governments are responsible for establishment of State Universities and colleges, and provide plan grants for their development and non-plan grants for their maintenance. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) is created for coordination and cooperation between the Union and the States. The Constitution gives exclusive Legislative Power to Government of India for co-ordination and determination of standards in Institutions of higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions. The higher education sector, owing to its huge potential, holds very promising prospects. With an estimated 178 million people in the age group of 18-23 years, the sector offers one of the most attractive yet highly complex markets for the private/foreign players. This brings us the need for private universities. Understanding the same, the various state governments like Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Punjab etc., have already created provisions in their state legislations to start the private universities.

The private universities as like that of the action of Bangladesh where, the colleges with more than 10 years were promoted to the stature of Universities. These universities enjoyed the same privileges as that of the state universities. In India, similarly most of the colleges (read, Engineering colleges) were allowed to me made into a University through the State Act and those having 30 acres with UGC/AICTE norms adherence were considered and accepted to be a university. What happened later was that all these universities in turn require to have the approval of the UGC, found it difficult to obtain the same due to various reasons which included monosubject, no multi

disciplinarity, family owned universities etc. Some of the universities in Tamilnadu which became deemed universities are now finding it difficult to fulfil the criteria put forth by UGC and are literally going out of the scene.

RA Mashelkar, in his book Reinventing India draws attention to widely accepted examples of globally recognized universities: Harvard, MIT, Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford, Caltech, and Princeton. He asserts that it is crucial to create "a great intellectual environment". All new universities set up in India require following this process.

1. Absolutely uncompromising pursuit of Excellence both in Teaching and Research
2. Continuous thrust on not only "working" at the frontiers of Research, but "creating" new frontiers; or doing S&T that will "lead" and not "follow".
3. An uncompromising attitude towards selection of both Faculty as well as Students - going for the very best and that too on a globally competitive basis. Rigour to be employed rigorously in the promotion and retention of the most talented and accomplished faculty.
4. Undying commitment to the true institutional autonomy without any political interference whatsoever.
5. Full understanding of the route to "Lakshmi" through "Saraswathi". Not only understanding the wealth creation potential of knowledge, but also creating an "ecosystem" in which this can happen most effectively.

**According to APJ Abdul Kalam, five factors make an institution world class:**

- i) Commitment for achieving excellence in all fields.
- ii) Research and Development in Thrust Area - need for strengthening research capabilities at the universities, particularly at the graduate level education by facilitating innovation to leverage the growing opportunity in developing India as a research hub & sustain global competitiveness.
- iii) Academic and Financial autonomy for emphasis on interdisciplinary.

- iv) Industry-Institute Partnership and
  - v) International Collaboration.
- All these things can ensure that quality institutions come up and continue to impart education. If we look into the growth of Indian students studying overseas, it can be surmised that there is a huge revenue loss to the country.

It can be seen that by allowing private Engineering, Medical and Arts and Science colleges in India, we have opened up a Pandora's Box. Having allowed, it is only natural that they be allowed to grow to the status of a University. As like in Kerala, in order that a college become autonomous, there are stringent conditions. Similarly the private universities need to be given stringent guidelines so that the motto of the operation is to serve the society and not to commercialise education. With the government slowly withdrawing from higher education, it is only apt that either public private partnership or private funding be allowed with riders or the socio economic conditions of each state be considered before venturing into such initiatives. Private universities alone is not a panacea at the moment for the government and hence some of the recommendations like World class universities which is now a non-starter needs to be seriously given momentum along with niche universities which focus on research and development and promote a higher education climate in our country. Private universities once allowed to mushroom, will cause more damage than credit to our country. This is true with the existing engineering education. The current universities need to be given fillip and given direction to ensure that the higher education scenario in our country is in the safe hands.

"Survival of the fittest" is going to be the norm and those who are able to cater to the needs of the students alone will survive. According to Chanakya, "strategic thinking, adaptability, and preparedness for survival" is not only important for individuals but also for institutions.

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## International Day of World's Indigenous People

■ SUNIL VAID

International day of the world's Indigenous people is observed on August 9 each year to raise awareness and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. This event also recognises the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve worlds issues such as environmental protection.

The 2025 theme for the International Day of the worlds indigenous people is "Indigenous peoples & AI: Defending rights, shaping Futures". The theme highlights the due nature of Artificial intelligence for indigenous community, emphasizing. Both the potential benefits and risks associated with the development & implementation. The theme calls for a future where AI supports indigenous communities, rather than marginalizing them and empower them to shape their future.

As per UN Data it is estimated that indigenous people make up less than 5% of the global population, they are responsible for 15% of world's poorest people. The

United Nations passed a resolution on December 23, 1994, to celebrate August 9' as the day of Indigenous people. The day marked the first meeting in 1982 of the UN working group on indigenous population. The UN General Assembly also declared 1995-2004, as the International Decade of Worlds Indigenous people.

The indigenous people are guardians of Mother Earth. We all are part of planet Earth, and it's time we all stand together and be the backbone for the people who are warriors and working to build a better ecosystem. On this day, let's all spread the message of hope, kindness, compassion and provide a space for the native spirit to thrive, prosper and grow. There is a tight knit community of 456 Million Indigenous people living worldwide. They voluntarily live in isolation in the remote forests of Brazil, India, Indonesia, Columbia, Peru, Ecuador etc. They have chosen to detach from the world and live in a forest to protect their culture of being sync with nature. Nature is lifeline of the Indigenous people. Every year, the world Indigenous

day is celebrated on 9th August to raise awareness about the people, culture and their importance of the world. The theme of the Indigenous day in 2024 is "Indigenous Youth" as agents of change for self-determination. It is one of the most important days for the Indigenous people in the world. This day is to promote the rights, traditions and celebrations of the community. The symbol of World Indigenous day 2024 is 2 stars of green leaves facing each other and holding a globe-like planet earth.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous people holds immense significant as it serves to spot light the rich culture diversity, heritage and contributions of Indigenous population globally. The day is necessary since Indigenous people are frequently among the most underprivileged racial and ethnic groupings in society. In India, the term 'Adivasi'/ST is used to encompass a diverse range of ethnic and tribal communities that are regarded as the original inhabitants of the country. These tribal groups make up approximate-

ly 8.6% of India's overall population, which amounts to around 104 million individuals as per 2011 census. Although the most substantial tribal communities are concentrated in Central India, they constitute merely about 10% of the total population in the region. There are, however, many more ethnic groups that would qualify for ST status but which are not officially recognized and consequently, the populations of the scheduled tribes are higher than the official figure. The largest concentrations of indigenous people in India are found in the seven states of North-east India, and so called 'Central Tribal Belt' stretching from Rajasthan to West Bengal. India has several laws and constitutional provisions such as the fifth schedule for Central India and sixth schedule for certain areas of North East, which recognize Indigenous peoples right to land and self governance. The laws aimed at protecting Indigenous people have numerous short comings and their implementation is far from satisfactory. Of all the Indigenous people in India, since 75

groups are identified as particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) by the Govt. of India, effectively on the verge of extinction. The total population of PVTGs as per 2011 census was 1,702, 545 spread across 18 states and Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar.

On 15 November, Prime Minister NarendraModi launched the Rs. 240,000 million Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyeyamala Abhyan (PM-JANMAN) Scheme for the PVTGs of India to provide a number of facilities including housing, drinking water, sanitation, access to education, health nutrition, roads, telecom connectivity and sustainable livelihood opportunities. The 2024 World Indigenous day is an opportunity to learn about tribal communities and stand in solidarity with these native communities globally. Following are some ways to spread awareness and uplift these communities.

1. Educate ourselves: Learn Indigenous cultures through reliable sources such as libraries, educational, social media channels etc.

2. Support Indigenous Businesses: Purchase products from Indigenous -owned enterprises in sectors like food, beauty and jewellery. This will boost their economic welfare.

3. Contribute to Indigenous Organizations: Donate money, time, or skills to Indigenous organizations that help in uplifting the tribal communities by working on ground. Let us use this year's World Indigenous day to foster deeper sensitivity towards preserving endangered native identities, validating overlooked native histories and safe guarding Indigenous rights. Show our gratitude to the Indigenous people respectfully and research their culture and Heritage.

Our compassionate actions today can contribute to building more just and equitable societies. They deserve better life and on this day, we should be grateful for having such communities dedicating their lives to nature. Indigenous people believe that man belongs to World; civilized Man believes that the World belongs to Man - Daniel Quinn.

## Restoring India's Ancient System of Education: A Yoga-Inspired Rebirth of the Gurukulam

■ DR RAKESH VERMA

The Gurukulam system, India's ancient educational model, is experiencing a resurgence, emphasizing wisdom, discipline, and character development alongside nature. This revival focuses on self-realization, humility, and truth, contrasting with modern market-driven education. Through practices like meditation, ethical living, and selfless service, Gurukulams aim to cultivate inner mastery and holistic growth, impacting families and teachers who embrace this transformative approach. India's ancient system of education, the Gurukulam, was never simply about learning. It was about sharing wisdom, imparting discipline, and building human character in balance with nature and the self. In an age when education is all about markets and measures, the gentle resurgence of the Gurukulam model is a compelling counter-trend: not backward, but restorative. In recreating the Gurukulam, we are not doing so out of mere nostalgia. We are awakening a timeless principle that continues to be relevant to this very day. This system of education, conceived by our rishis and formalized in the yogic system by Sage Patanjali, is based on self-realization, humility, and the love of truth. Sage Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras, established the premise for an integral life philosophy wherein the mind (citta) has to be purified and cleansed so that one may attain real knowledge. The second very sutra of his book describes yoga as "yogascittavrtti-nirodhah", the stopping of the fluctuations of the mind. Education in this vision does not mean accumulation of information but developing mental alertness, equanimity, and moral living.

**The Timeless Relevance of Gurukulams**

The Gurukulam system, a cornerstone of ancient Indian education, is making a remarkable comeback in the modern world. This resurgence isn't merely a nostalgic longing for the past but a recognition of the profound wisdom and holistic approach that Gurukulams offer. In an era dominated by market-driven education, where success is often measured by grades and career prospects, the Gurukulam presents a refreshing alternative that emphasizes character development, inner mastery, and a harmonious relationship with nature.

**A Holistic Approach to Education**

Unlike conventional schools that primarily focus on academic knowledge, Gurukulams adopt a holistic approach to education, nurturing the mind, body, and spirit. The core principles of a Gurukulam revolve around:

- **Wisdom and Knowledge:** Gurukulams impart not just information but also wisdom, encouraging students to think critically, question assumptions, and seek deeper understanding.
- **Discipline and Self-Control:** Students learn self-discipline and self-control through a structured daily routine, ethical guidelines, and practices like meditation and yoga.
- **Character Development:** Gurukulams prioritize character development, instilling values like honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect for all beings.

► **Nature and Environment:** Living in close proximity to nature, students develop a deep appreciation for the environment and learn sustainable living practices.

► **Self-Realization:** Gurukulams encourage students to explore their inner selves, understand their purpose in life, and strive for self-realization.

**The Role of the Guru**

At the heart of the Gurukulam system is the Guru, a teacher and mentor who plays a pivotal role in shaping the lives of their students. The Guru is not just a dispenser of knowledge but a guide who inspires, motivates, and supports students on their journey of self-discovery. The relationship between the Guru and the student is based on mutual respect, trust, and devotion.

**Modern Gurukulams: A Blend of Tradition and Innovation**

Modern Gurukulams are not exact replicas of their ancient counterparts. They have adapted to the changing needs of the modern world, incorporating contemporary subjects and technologies while retaining the core principles of the Gurukulam system. These modern Gurukulams offer a unique blend of tradition and innovation, providing students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in all aspects of life.

**The Benefits of a Gurukulam Education**

A Gurukulam education offers a multitude of benefits that extend far beyond academic achievements:

- **Holistic Development:** Gurukulams nurture the mind, body, and spirit, promoting holistic development and well-being.
- **Strong Character:** Students develop strong character traits like honesty, integrity, compassion, and self-discipline.
- **Inner Mastery:** Gurukulams help students develop inner mastery, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence.
- **Connection with Nature:** Living in harmony with nature, students develop a deep appreciation for the environment and sustainable living practices.
- **Purposeful Living:** Gurukulams encourage students to explore their purpose in life and live with intention and meaning.

**The Transformative Impact**

The revival of the Gurukulam system is not just about education; it's about transforming individuals, families, and communities. By embracing the timeless principles of wisdom, discipline, and character development, Gurukulams are creating a positive impact on society and paving the way for a more harmonious and sustainable future.

**Addressing the Challenges of Modern Education**

The modern education system, while providing access to knowledge and skills, often falls short in addressing the deeper needs of students. The relentless focus on academic performance and career prospects can lead to stress, anxiety, and a lack of purpose. The Gurukulam system offers a compelling alternative by:

- **Reducing Stress and Anxiety:** The emphasis on holistic development and inner mastery helps students manage stress and anxi-

ety, promoting mental well-being.

► **Cultivating a Sense of Purpose:** Gurukulams encourage students to explore their values, passions, and purpose in life, giving them a sense of direction and meaning.

► **Promoting Ethical Living:** The focus on character development and ethical guidelines instills values like honesty, integrity, and compassion, creating responsible and ethical citizens.

► **Fostering Community:** Gurukulams create a strong sense of community, where students support and learn from each other, fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

**The Role of Families and Teachers**

The success of the Gurukulam system depends not only on the Gurus and the students but also on the active involvement of families and teachers. Families who embrace the values and principles of the Gurukulam create a supportive home environment that reinforces the lessons learned in the Gurukulam. Teachers who are passionate about holistic education and committed to the well-being of their students can inspire and motivate them to reach their full potential.

**The Future of Gurukulams**

The revival of the Gurukulam system is gaining momentum, with more and more people recognizing the value of holistic education and character development. As modern Gurukulams continue to adapt and innovate, they are poised to play a significant role in shaping the future of education. By embracing the wisdom of the past and combining it with the best of the present, Gurukulams can empower individuals to live meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling lives.

**The Core Principles in Detail**

To further illustrate the profound impact of the Gurukulam system, let's delve deeper into each of its core principles:

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge:** In a Gurukulam, education transcends the mere accumulation of facts and figures. It emphasizes the pursuit of wisdom, which involves critical thinking, questioning assumptions, and seeking deeper understanding. Students are encouraged to explore various disciplines, from philosophy and literature to science and mathematics, and to connect these subjects to their own lives and experiences. The goal is to develop well-rounded individuals who can think for themselves and make informed decisions.
2. **Discipline and Self-Control:** Discipline is an integral part of the Gurukulam system, fostering self-control and responsible behavior. Students adhere to a structured daily routine that includes meditation, yoga, study, and selfless service. They learn to manage their time effectively, prioritize tasks, and overcome distractions. Ethical guidelines are also emphasized, teaching students to conduct themselves with honesty, integrity, and respect for others. Through these practices, students develop self-discipline, which is essential for achieving success in all aspects of life.
3. **Character Development:** Character development is at the

