

GURU-SHISHYA PARAMPARA AS A FOUNDATION FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION: LORD RAMA'S LEARNING UNDER GURU VASISHTHA

NIKITA KARMA¹

Department of Physics, PMCoE, Shri Krishnaji Rao Pawar College Dewas, M.P., India

ABSTRACT

The Vedas, Hindu philosophy's fundamental books, describe the Guru-Shishya parampara, which developed in ancient India (c. 1500–500 BCE). This educational system shaped India's intellectual, spiritual, and cultural traditions. Ashramas and gurukulas taught students directly from their gurus. It was passed down orally in the Shruti tradition, meaning "that which is heard," to ensure accuracy through memorization and recitation. Gurukulas taught Vedic knowledge and ethical principles including discipline, humility, self-control, and social responsibility. Epic books like the Mahabharata and Ramayana portray the guru as a moral and spiritual adviser, emphasizing this tradition. The Guru-Shishya tradition adapted to philosophical and cultural developments to remain relevant in India. An important intellectual representation of this tradition is the Yoga Vasishtha, a conversation between Sri Rama and Sage Vashishta. An emphasis on self-inquiry, experiential knowledge, and wisdom (jnana) as the way to liberation highlights the Guru-Shishya parampara's lasting effect on Indian philosophical and educational thought.

KEYWORDS: Guru-Shishya Parampara; Gurukulas; Ramayana; Indian Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

The Guru-Shishya parampara is an ancient Indian tradition that dates back to the Vedic era and involves the guru imparting knowledge to the shishya. A guru and his shishya have a relationship similar to that of a mother and her unborn child, according to the Rig Veda, which describes the guru as the "source and inspirer of the knowledge of the self, the building blocks of personal development." "One who dispels the darkness of ignorance" is the genuine definition of a guru. "Gu" represents the darkness of ignorance, and "ru" denotes the person who drives it out. The following is a simplified version of the term "Guru-Shishya Parampara": "Parampara" means tradition, "Shishya" means learner, and "Guru" means instructor. Additionally, ethics is the study of moral concepts that help people differentiate between right and wrong, behavior and make decisions that are consistent with their values. Learning is the process of gaining information, abilities, attitudes, or competences by instruction, study, or experience. Understanding and putting ethical ideas to use in a variety of situations, including social challenges, professional behavior, and personal decision-making, is known as ethical learning. It promotes empathy for others, critical thinking about moral quandaries, and consideration of the effects of one's actions.

The Guru-Shishya parampara originated in ancient India during the Vedic period (1500–500 BCE), when it was first recorded in the Vedas, the oldest and most respected texts in Hinduism. Ancient Indian society's intellectual, spiritual, and cultural advancement was greatly influenced by the Vedas. At this time, learning took place in Ashramas and Gurukulas under the close supervision of a Guru, and information was mostly

passed down orally. In these Gurukulas, shishyas lived with their guru and learned the Vedic scriptures as well as useful life lessons like self-control, discipline, humility, and community duty. This teaching approach is called Shruti, which translates to "that which is heard." The repetitive recital of hymns, mantras, and verses, as well as listening to their guru, was how the disciples learned. Despite the lack of a written script, this oral tradition made sure that information was preserved and passed down through the generations.

Numerous instances of the Guru-Shishya tradition can be found in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, underscoring its importance in the moral and spiritual fabric of society. The custom changed over time in response to philosophical advancements and cultural shifts, taking on new forms and continuing to have a significant impact on Indian education and culture.

The Hindu guru: a manual for achieving spiritual enlightenment and conserving cultural traditions. In Hinduism's cultural legacy, the traditional idea of the guru occupies a special place. A guru helps people on their spiritual path to moksha by dispelling ignorance. In the past, gurus were people who became spiritually enlightened and felt a strong obligation to guide others. In their early roles, gurus imparted knowledge verbally while teaching the fundamentals of the Vedas, including grammar and etymology. Since association and imitation were highly valued in the learning process in ancient India, pupils preferred to reside in the Gurukula, the guru's extended family. A guru is someone who benefits and enhances the spiritual lives of seekers, according to the Yajur Veda. During the Bhakti school era, when followers realized that God and guru are one and the same, the Guru-Shishya relationship underwent

¹Corresponding author

considerable historical growth. The guru's function in modern society goes beyond only serving as a spiritual mentor to his shishyas; it also includes a wider impact on many facets of life.

AN OUTLINE OF VASISHTHA YOGA

One of the most significant texts in classical India is the *Yoga Vasishtha*. The *Maha Ramayana*, *Arsha Ramayana*, and *Vasishtha Ramayana* are some other names for it. *Yoga Vasishtha* skillfully combines self-reflective writings, dialogue, and narratives with poetical phrases. The work is organized as a conversation between Sri Rama, the disciple, and Sage Vashishta. Vasishtha emphasizes experiential knowledge over academic understanding in his teachings on the nature of reality, the mind, and the self. As the seeker, Sri Rama poses important queries regarding the nature of existence, freedom, suffering, and the cosmos. In response, Vasishtha uses parables, fables, and analogies to clarify profound philosophical principles in the form of a question-and-answer session. Sri Rama receives the knowledge of *Nirguna Brahman* from Vasishtha. This text is special because it emphasizes intellectual inquiry and the methods of self-examination, meditation, and the essence of reality rather than ceremony or dogma. Sri Rama traveled extensively around the country when he was fifteen years old in order to gain firsthand knowledge of the daily routines of the populace as well as the overall administrative framework and procedures. After touring all the sacred sites, he went back to Ayodhya. During his travels, Sri Rama encountered the world's seeming reality, which left him completely disillusioned. Prince Rama was a totally different person when he returned to Ayodhya. Then, utilizing a number of amazing tales as a conduit, Vasishtha led Sri Rama through the process of enlightenment. The attainment of emancipation (*moksha*) through introspection and wisdom (*jnana*) is the central teaching of the *Yoga Vasishtha*.

Here are various ways that Sri Rama became enlightened by the philosopher Vasishtha and became Maryada Purushottama.

Enlightenment Through Guidance (Sage Vasishtha and Sri Rama's transforming relationship)

Since a disciple cannot become a disciple without a Guru, and a Guru cannot exist without a disciple, the relationship between a disciple and a Guru is fundamental. Sri Rama receives spiritual guidance from Sage Vasishtha, who also assists him in overcoming obstacles on his journey to enlightenment. Vasishtha's teachings, which emphasize responsibility, morality, and inner fortitude, help Sri Rama overcome his challenges. Sri Rama became one of the most respected personalities

after receiving such profound knowledge from Sage Vasishtha.

The Essence of the Guru (The Route to Enlightenment, Faith, and Knowledge)

A guru was a spiritual mentor who embodied knowledge and enlightenment in addition to being a teacher. Faith was a condition of consciousness rather than the outcome of outward observances; instead, it developed from a persistent inner awareness, not from the senses or mental turmoil. The guru-student relationship was based on faith, which was an inner conviction and the most important characteristic of a disciple. This idea was best illustrated by Sri Rama's trust in his guru. Sri Rama received the moral and ethical foundation required for his future as a leader and a living example of dharma through Vasishtha's wisdom and guidance.

Guided by Wisdom (Sri Rama's Spiritual Journey with Sage Vasishtha)

Sri Rama's guru, Sage Vasishtha, had a significant impact on his path to self-realization. He gave Sri Rama priceless wisdom that helped him realize his true nature and purpose, and he urged him to see beyond the material world and recognize the transience of existence. Vasishtha assisted Sri Rama in exploring fundamental ideas such as dharma and righteousness.

Down-to-Earth Wisdom (Sage Vasishtha's Teachings on Life and Non-Dual Awareness)

Sage Vasishtha used parables and stories to highlight important truths, making his lessons understandable to everyone. These stories offered practical guidance for dealing with life's challenges while maintaining a foundation of non-dual awareness. The *Yoga Vasishtha* taught that one could live a fulfilling life by embracing compassion, cultivating awareness, and understanding the nature of reality. These practical teachings enable people to face life's challenges with grace and wisdom, ultimately leading them to greater self-awareness and inner peace.

Ethical and Moral Education (The Road to Better Human Characteristics)

The development of values that enable people to cultivate higher human qualities such as honesty, fairness, fraternity, love, compassion, loyalty, and friendliness lies at the heart of moral and ethical education. It is essential for creating a morally upright and harmonious society. *Yoga Vasishtha* provides a framework for moral education that inspires individuals to cultivate ethical values, fostering personal growth and contributing to a more peaceful society.

The Journey to Oneness (Rama's Awakening Through the Wisdom of Sage Vasishtha)

Sage Vasishtha taught Sri Rama the fundamentals of yoga and imparted knowledge of non-attachment, self-reflection, and various forms of meditation. Through diligent practice, Sri Rama attained enlightenment and a state of unity with the Supreme Consciousness. He gained a profound understanding of the meaning and mystery of life, the responsibilities associated with different roles, and the dynamics of reward and punishment in this world through these teachings. He also understood the interrelationship between past, present, and future incarnations, as well as the ways in which one's deeds (karma) influence both the individual and the larger cosmic cycle.

CONCLUSION

For anyone who wants to comprehend the essence of life and the way to freedom, the Yoga Vasishtha is an invaluable resource. This ancient literature, which comes before the Ramayana in chronological order, contains epic stories similar to those found in the Puranas. It helps people reach Moksha and answers the many questions that come up in the human mind. The main goal of Sage Vasishtha is to assist people in distinguishing between reality and Maya (illusion). A greater understanding of oneself can result in enduring calm and genuine satisfaction if one reads this material diligently and puts its lessons into practice. In the age-old tradition known as the Guru-Shishya parampara, a guru helps followers acquire a strong moral compass that is necessary for navigating the difficulties of life by teaching them ethics and values in addition to knowledge. Even while the old Guru-Shishya Parampara may not be

as prevalent in current society, its principles can still be applied in contemporary settings. We can address today's moral dilemmas and build a more responsible, caring society by proactively working to restore mentoring and emphasize ethical frameworks. Academic accomplishment is the main focus of the contemporary educational system, which is also largely career-oriented and strongly reliant on digital tools, technology, and structured testing. However, holistic growth can be promoted by combining these systems with conventional ideals.

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