

The Guru-shishya Parampara : A Broader View

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In my opinion, the argument begins with the title itself. Indian art-music is certainly the background to the proposed discussion of *guru-shishya parampara*, but the discussion would be less substantial if we were to assume that Indian art-music is the only system which originated, shaped and employed such a parampara. Music-making is a creative endeavour in numerous cultures, and the parampara of Indian art-music may well have close parallels in other music traditions.

Secondly, in view of the nature of the processes involved, *guru-shishya parampara* cannot be assumed to be confined to music alone. In a lighter vein, one might recall that in Shudraka's *Mricchakatika*, one of the most realistic of Sanskrit plays, Sharvilak, a romantically inclined thief, invokes Kartikeya as guru of those keen on quick circulation of wealth! More seriously, even today, all traditional craftsmen speak of a specific deity as well as a guru as their guide. The existence of *guru-shishya parampara* in non-elite categories of performing arts cannot also be ignored. To draw attention to the wider framework of *guru-shishya parampara* would therefore mean moving out of art music, which only constitutes a small part of the total musical reality in India. If this perspective is not adopted, it may be difficult to make sense of the situation obtaining today.

The present discussion is necessitated because the system has undergone modifications—both welcome and not so welcome—in the recent past. *Guru-shishya parampara*, like many other concepts related to music, has become a charged entity—providing a sure sign of its cultural status. At the same time, this super-emotional charge flowing to a concept also indicates that Indians have a complex about it! Such a situation hampers the much-desired free, cool, and periodic reappraisal of a phenomenon. A re-examination of *guru-shishya parampara* is needed because it is in fact a strategy directly concerned with communication of multiple messages, with the disposition of energies of younger minds, and with influencing new (including non-Indian) entrants to Indian cultural citizenship. Today, human minds are poised for a new take-off — mainly due to changing modes of socio-cultural communications affecting societal continuity and collectivity. In these circumstances, it is important to examine *guru-shishya parampara* afresh, as a pervasive, durable, comprehensive, and participation-friendly cultural mode. My effort is in that direction.

Examination of Terminological Clusters — An Investigative Tool

The depth of every cultural phenomenon is indicated by the terminological clusters it gives rise to, and guru-shishya parampara is no exception. Of course, some care is necessary to distinguish between mere words and terms. In brief, words are language-units confined to the language-behaviour of a society while terms are not limited to one field of life; more importantly, they are pointers to definite ideas. Further, terms are of two types : technical and critical. Technical terms usually denote specific components, parts, structural details and the like, while critical terms refer to phases, processes and states which essentially bring to the fore aspects of quality. In durable and living traditions, such as the Indian, terms also provide an axis to a historical perspective. Though we lack dictionaries compiled according to historical principles, an effort to examine terms in the context of musical categories offers clues to language layers and thereby provides valuable insights into the developmental sequences in music. An additional dimension is provided when care is taken to note Sanskrit as well as Prakrit terms. Better minds would certainly be able to do justice to the intricate expressive web woven by Indian languages as a whole and also work on other types of terms. All kinds of terms, taken together, reflect the behavioural map or pattern of a society.

Applying this strategy to explore the guru-shishya parampara, it becomes possible to tabulate the following terms—though somewhat loosely classified :

Sanskrit	Hindi	Marathi	Persian/Arabic/Urdu
1. Guru	guru, ustad	guru	pir, ustad, murshid
2. Shishya	shishya, shagird	shishya	murid
3. Guru-shishya parampara	guru-shishya parampara	guru-shishya parampara	piri-muridi, ustadi-shagirdi rivayat
4. Guru-krama	gurukram		silasila
5. Guru-shishya shikshanpaddhati	guru-shishya shikshanpaddhati	guru-shishya shikshanpadhati	seena-baseena
6. Gurukul	gurukul	gurukul	maktab, madarsa, khanqah
7. Guruseva	guruseva, khidmat	guruseva	khidmat
8. Gurudakshina	gurudakshina, nazar		nazar
9. Deeksha-shiksha-pareeksha	Deeksha-shiksha-pareeksha		Pyala peena
10. Sampradaya	sampradaya, gharana		dastur, rivaj
11. Guruprakar/varga	guruprakar, guruvarg		
12. Shishyaprakar/varga	shishyaprakar/varg		
13. Gurupournima	gurupournima	gurupournima	
14. Chhatra	chhatra		talib, taliba, talib-e-ilm
15. Gurumantra	gurumantra		bakshish
16. Adhyayansthala	adhyayansthala	adhyayansthal	za-e-muta'lla, za-e-amal

Sanskrit	Hindi	Marathi	Persian/Arabic/Urdu
17. Abhyas/sadhana	abhyas/sadhana		riaz, riat
18. Vidya	vidya	vidya	ilm
19. Ashirvada	ashirvad	ashirvad	dua, navazish
20. Gurupatni/stree/ bhagini/bandhu	gurupatni/stri/ bhagini/bandhu	Gurubhagini/ bandhu	
21. Guruninda/apaman	guruninda/apaman	guruminda/apaman	
22. Gurutalpaga			
23. Gurusmanman/ smaran/pranam	gurusmanman/smaran/ pranam		izzat, yad, bandgi
24. Gurupratik/chinha	guruprateek/chinha	guruprateek/chinha	
25. Gurusakshatkar	gurusakshatkar	gurusakshatkar	
26. Gurubhakti	gurubhakti	gurubhakti	aquidat
27. Guruhatya	guruhatya	guruhatya	
28. Gurvagya	gurvagya	gurvagya	hukm, ijazat
29. Gurupad/gadi/peeth	gurupad/gadi/peeth	gurupad/gadi/peeth	gaddi
30. Gurudharma/kartavya	gurudharma	gurudharma	farz
31. Gurupadesh	gurupadesh	gurupadesh	vasihat
32. Vidyarthi	vidyarthi	vidyarthi	
33. Sadguru	sadguru		

Some Terms

Guru, as a socio-cultural institution, has a long history. Some of the older features of 'guru-hood' were quite contemporary! For example, in the *tantra* tradition, women could become gurus and receive worship from disciples, even though Kalhana, in his *Rajatarangini*, refers to the practice satirically. *Gurukula* is a word which is noticeably in vogue from the period of the Vedic *sutra-granthas*. The *gurukula* system was established in this period. The guru concept does not seem to have developed during the Mantra period, which preceded the Sutra period. The *mantras* were composed on inspiration or in imitation thereof. No special class or profession had evolved to teach them systematically. When the *mantras* were systematized into *samhitas*, the need arose for a class of people devoted to the task of learning, teaching, transmitting and preserving the *mantras*. The sacrifice-based religion (*yagya-pradhan dharma*) was becoming increasingly complex and that too underscored the need for a class of experts specializing in various sacrificial religious practices (e.g., *hota*, *adhvaryu*, *samagayan*). It is thus from the *Samhita* period that we have the names of *acharyas* such as Angiras, Garga, Atri, Brihaspati and Vashishtha.

It is instructive to note that there were also people who did not believe in the ritualistic religion, and *aranyakas* emerged to concentrate on *adhyatmya-vidya* with importance accorded to analysis of fundamental questions about reality, nature of god, contemplation,

etc. Even these thought-systems needed to be taught, learnt, transmitted and preserved, and the *guru-shishya* tradition worked towards it. Janak and Yagyavalkya are the well-known archaryas mentioned in this respect. Eighty-two such traditions have been listed prior to the Buddha period! Inevitably there would be numerous approaches if fundamental issues were raised and hence each *darshana*, i.e., philosophic school, had its own *guru-shishya* tradition. Gurus became necessary and inevitable.

During the medieval period and after the advent of Islam, there was a marked proliferation of esoteric religious cults, including the tantras. Most of these being for the initiated few (therefore described as *guhyadarshanas*), the institution of guru attained its highest prestige and importance such as the Nirguna-sampradaya in orders such as the Nirguna-sampradaya, Nath-sampradaya, and the Bouddha-siddhas. In the Nath-cult, it is the *guru-vamsha* and not *pitru-vamsha* with which one is identified. (In the *Brahmandapurana* it is stated : "Guru is Shiva even though without three eyes, Vishnu, even if without four hands, and Bramha despite the fact that he does not have four mouths or heads.") It is instructive to note that the famous *shloka* '*Gururbrama gururvishnu*' is from *Devi Bhagavat*. This *upapurana*, in praise of goddess Durga, seeks to establish the supremacy of Devi and *devitvatva* over all other gods.

Guru appears to be the dominant partner in the relationship under discussion. It is the guru who teaches *vedanta-shastra*. The treatise *Agamasara* explains the three syllables in the word *guru* :

गकारः सिद्धिदः प्रोक्तो रेफः पापस्य हारकः । उकारो विष्णुव्यक्तस्त्रितयात्मा गुरुः परः ।

(The 'ga' helps in accomplishing tasks undertaken, the 'ra' eliminates sins, 'u' is the unmanifest Vishnu. Guru includes all the three [qualities] and is therefore great.)

Panini refers to four kinds of gurus: *acharya*, *pravakta*, *shrotriya*, and *adhyapak*. The *acharya* was the one who taught the Vedas to disciples who had had their sacred-thread ceremony. The *pravakta* taught the Brahmanas, the Shrauta-sutras, and the Vedangas. The *shrotriya* gave the *santha* of the Vedas. The *adhyapak* taught secular and scientific literature.

The *Devalsmriti* lists eleven types of gurus :

आचार्यस्य पिता ज्येष्ठो भ्राता चैव महीपतिः । मातुलः श्वशुरस्त्राता माताप्रपितामहौ । वर्णज्येष्ठः पितृव्यश्च पुंस्येते गुरवो मतः ।

The *Namchintamani* lists twelve types of guru and the nomenclature is colourful or ecological as one may choose to describe it :

- (i) The Dhatuvadi-guru, who makes the disciple undertake pilgrimage and follow other procedures before giving the final *upadesha*;
- (ii) the Chandan-guru, who helps by just being nearby, just as sandalwood spreads fragrance even among ordinary people;

- (iii) the Vichar-guru, who teaches the disciple to think and attain realization by *pipeelika marga*;
- (iv) the Anugraha-guru, who imparts knowledge to the disciple by *anugraha*, i.e., *grace*.
- (v) the Paris-guru, who gives divine knowledge to the disciple by mere touch, like the philosopher's stone;
- (vi) the Kacchap-guru, who imparts knowledge as the tortoise-mother nurtures her offspring—by merely looking at them;
- (vii) the Chandra-guru, who helps by the stream of compassion in his heart for the disciple, like the stone which oozes when moonlight falls on it;
- (viii) the Darpan-guru, who shows you your real self, like a mirror;
- (ix) the Chayanidhi-guru, a guru whose shadow makes the disciple king of his own self, or of a kingdom of inner joy — named after the bird whose shadow makes one a king;
- (x) the Nadanidhi-guru, who turns a person into a self-realized soul the moment he prays for it, named after the bead which turns any metal into gold;
- (xi) the Krauncha-guru, who takes his disciples to the blessed state merely by remembering them, like the *krauncha* bird which only thinks of her offsprings while gathering food for their nurture;
- (xii) the Suryakant-guru, who lights up disciples into the blessed state, like the Suryakant bead which lights up on being touched by sunlight.

The tantra texts also provide some interesting typologies. For example, the *Piscila tantra* mentions a Deeksha-guru and a Shiksha-guru with obvious functions associated with them.

Another tantra text, the *Kulagama*, refers to six types of gurus :

- (i) Preraka, one who creates an initiative about initiation in the disciple's mind;
- (ii) Suchaka, one who describes both initiation and practice;
- (iii) Vachaka, one who describes various devices to attain the goal;
- (iv) Darshaka, one who explains how to discriminate between proper and improper *sadhana* and *deeksha*;
- (v) Bodhaka, who explains philosophical differences between *sadhana* and *deeksha*;
- (vi) Shikshaka, who initiates and teaches *sadhana*.

Sant Ramdas, with his usual thoroughness, lists seventeen types of gurus !

The guru was regarded as the metaphysical father of a disciple and ranked higher than the biological parents. Even Bouddha monks were recommended to stay with the guru for ten years. (However, the Buddha had no guru for himself !) Some have opined that the scarcity of writing material and skill, together with the preponderance of the oral tradition, probably contributed to the guru's growing importance. It is to be noted that most of the gurus were *grihasthas*, very few were in *vanaprastha*, and fewer still were *sanyasins*. It appears that institutions making monthly payment to gurus did not come into existence till

about the eighth or ninth century. From the eleventh century onwards, we have records to show that a guru teaching grammar, *mimamsa*, etc., was paid a fixed quantity of rice per year and that one teaching *vedanta* got more rice than him. The *kulkarni*, a village administrative officer, received less than gurus. There were cases when gurus entered into a prior contract with disciples for imparting training on a pre-determined *gurudhakshina*. Such gurus were not regarded highly, and were aptly described as *bhritakadhyapaka* (servant gurus).

Kalidasa succinctly expresses the consensus in this matter when he says in *Malavikagnimitra* :

यस्यागमः केवलजीविकार्थं तं ज्ञानपण्यं वणिजं वदन्ति ।

(One who sells his learning for earning his livelihood is called a trader who sells his knowledge.)

The general feeling was that a guru should teach a poor but deserving student free and the student should try to pay back the *guru-rina* by offering *gurudakshina*.

Gurus were expected to teach everything they knew to the disciple and hold back nothing from fear of being outclassed by the student. As the aphorism puts it, one should wish for defeat from one's disciple (शिष्यात् इच्छेत् पराजयम्). If a *shishya* died while doing chores for the guru, the latter had to undergo severe *prayashchitta*. Opinions differ on the propriety of a guru resorting to corporal punishment on the disciple.

Gurukula literally means a guru's dynasty or family. However, the term actually came to mean an institution of learning. A student would be admitted to it after the sacred-thread ceremony. The student would stay with the guru for a period of twelve years to learn the Vedas. He would be permitted to enter *grihasthashrama* on completing training. The institution was accessible only to the three upper castes. (Ekalavya, a *nishad*, and Karna, a charioteer's son, were denied the benefits of gurukula.) However, there was apparently no discrimination between the poor and the rich. Similar to the gurukulas, there were also the *vidyashramas* of various sages. The gurukulas were well supported by kings who considered it their duty to make gurukulas financially viable. Many kings established *agraharas* to ensure continued financial support to the gurukulas. The gurus and shishyas lived together in the *agraharas*. I must state in anticipation that the gurukula was the direct precedent of the *gharana* in Hindustani music—with of course the religious foundation removed for scholastic, performing, as well as cultural reasons.

Gurudakshina is understood to be an offering made by the disciple to the guru after completing training—this being nearly the final act before entering *grihasthashrama*. It is to be noted that gurus who head various religious cults also receive *gurudakshina* on various occasions including birth, initiation, marriage, or death in the family of followers. It appears that the guru could ask for anything he desired as *gurudakshina* and the shishya was expected to achieve the feat! (Koutsa was to give fourteen crore gold coins to his guru Varatantu, and Uttanka was asked to procure the queen's (king Poshya's wife's) earrings

for the *gurupatni*, and Sandipani asked Krishna to bring back Sandipani's son—who was drowned in the sea!)

Gurupournima is celebrated on the full-moon night of the month of Ashadh and sage Vyasa is worshipped. It is believed that Shankaracharya was a reincarnation of Vyasa, hence the monk-community also worships Shankaracharya. All disciples worship their gurus, i.e., those who have initiated them, as also their parents, on this day. In the overall tradition of gurus, Vyasa is regarded supreme and is venerated as the source of all knowledge. (See the famous shloka '*Vyasochchishtam*', etc.)

Guru-mantra is originally the mantra associated with Brihaspati. It is to be properly used if it is to fulfill wishes (*ishtasiddhi*). By analogy, the term refers to any effective advice given by an elder or teacher to a disciple.

The shishya, the guru's partner in the educational adventure, was of two types. The shishya who paid fees to the guru was known as *acharya-bhaga*, and the shishya who compensated by doing domestic chores in the guru's house was described as *dharma-shishya*.

Manu records instructions on how a disciple should behave in the guru's presence, as also in the latter's house. For example, he mentions that a disciple should eat and clothe himself in a manner inferior to his guru. He should go to bed after the guru has done so, and should wake up earlier than the guru. He should be obedient and should not seat himself at a level higher than the guru. He should not imitate the guru's walk or talk. He should not listen to calumny of his guru. If it falls on his ears, he should shut his ears and go away from the guru's detractors.

Interestingly, Boudhayan also lays down that in case the disciple notices incorrect behaviour on the guru's part, the former should conscientiously talk to the guru—though in solitude (प्रमादानाचार्यस्य बुद्धिपूर्वकं वा नियमातिक्रमं रहसि बोधयेत्). There are some who advocate flat denial to obey wrongful commands by the guru.

Post-training contacts with the guru were encouraged and sometimes the disciple married the guru's daughter—even though the custom had obvious incestuous overtones.

A *chhatra* is generally understood to be one who lives with the guru, under his 'umbrella', i.e., protection, and this is not far off the mark. However, a traditional definition throws up a surprise as it says : छत्रं गुरो दोषाणामावरणं तत् शीलम् अस्य इति ('A *chhatra* is one who covers/conceals the defects of a guru.)

Chhatras have of course been classified. One category is the *dand manav*. According to Patanjali, this is a student whose training in the Vedas has not yet commenced. According to the *Tatvabodhini*, he is one whose sacred-thread ceremony has not yet taken place. *Matanga-jatak* has an interesting variation to offer : the term refers to those children who play in the *ashram* with a stick, treating it as a horse ! Obviously they are very young. The *sabrahmachari* is a student who stays with his guru. *Antevasi* is one who devotes himself to the guru with mind, deed and speech after the sacred-thread ceremony. *Piturantevasi* is a student learning from his father.

Chhatras were often identified on other basics such as *kaksha* (grade), *grantha* (the studied texts), *vedakrama* (mode of studying the Vedas) and *ritu* (season in which he attends). For example, according to *grantha* : *agnishtomik*, *vajapeyik*; *ritu* : *varshik* (i.e., the rainy season), *sharadik*, *haimantik*, *masik*, *samvatsarik*, and *ardhamasik*; *vedakrama* : *pathak*, *kramak*.

Acharya is defined variously : मन्त्रव्याख्याकृत् आचार्यः, one who explains mantras; यस्मात् धर्मान् अचिनोति स आचार्यः, from whom the shishya learns the dharma; आचार्यः कस्मात् आचारं गृह्णाति अचिनोति अर्थात् अचिनोति बुद्धिम् इति वा, one who teaches behaviour, collects *shulka-dhana*, or enriches the intellect of the shishyas. According to the *Manusmriti* : उपनीय तु यः शिष्यं वेदम् अध्यापयेत् द्विजः/सकल्पं सरहस्यं च तमाचार्यं प्रचक्षते, one who performs the sacred-thread ceremony of a Brahmin shishya and teaches him Veda and Upanishad is known as acharya.

Sometimes authors of *vyakarana*, *kalpasutra*, *smriti*, *purana*, *darshana*, *bhashya*, etc., were also loosely called *acharya*.

Antecedents, Precedents, Parallels and Alternatives

Examination of the terminological cluster makes it abundantly clear that guru-shishya parampara has antecedents, precedents, parallels as well as alternatives. Antecedents are prior tendencies, responses, etc., which may or may not be directly linked to the phenomenon discussed. Precedents are instances of previous happenings of the phenomenon under discussion (government agencies are generally known to find precedents extremely soul-satisfying!). Parallels point to continuities of the phenomenon under consideration but, at the same time, they project inherent differences. Finally, alternatives constitute a criticism of the prevailing state and, at the same time, creation of new angles, ideas, thought-structures, etc.

In the context of guru-shishya parampara, I suggest that one of the major antecedents was the long process of differentiation between *vidya*, *karu*, *shilpa*, and *kala*. Ashrama, as a concept and related agency, exemplified its precedent. Gurukula and ancient vidyapeeths functioned as its parallels, while modern universities and similar other institutional efforts are steps towards the creation of alternatives.

Vidya, Karu, Shilpa, Kala

How does one refer to music? Is it a *vidya*, *karu*, *shilpa* or *kala*? The question and the suggested differentiation are important. They determine the mode in which music is passed on. Generally, guru-shishya parampara is held up as a model of the process of passing on, transmission, or handing over, and hence the matter is significant.

Interestingly, through centuries, the number of accepted vidyas increased, and, more importantly, the concept became more and more secular and accommodating.

Some of the listings are :

1. आन्वीक्षिकी त्रयी वार्ता दण्डनीतिश्च शाश्वती । (कामन्दकीनीतिसार)

2. त्रैविद्येभ्यस्त्रयो विद्यां दण्डनीतिश्च शाश्वती । आन्वीक्षिकीं चात्मविद्यां वार्तारम्भांश्च लोकतः ॥ (मनुस्मृति)
3. षडङ्गमिश्रिता वेदा धर्मशास्त्रं पुराणकम् । मीमांसा तर्कमपि चेता विद्याचतुर्दश ॥

To the fourteen were added medicine, military art, music and polity. Music—i.e., dance, instrumental music, and singing—was collectively included as *devajanavidya* from ancient times and its identification as a less religion-based expression came later. With the march of time the term *vidya* was widely understood as specialized knowledge of any subject. Consequently, it became necessary to define the other three concepts more precisely.

An early differentiation was between *vidya* and *kala*. A rather intriguing distinction is offered in *Shukranitisara* :

यद् यस्यद् वाचिकं सम्यक् कर्म विद्याभिसंज्ञितम् । शक्तो मूकोऽप्यित्कर्तुं कलासंज्ञतम् ॥

‘A task which can be undertaken only through speech is *vidya* and that which can be undertaken even by a dumb person is *kala*’. The same source adds a twist to the interpretation while identifying two features of *kala* :

आदानमाशुकारित्वं प्रतिदानं विरक्रिया । कलासु द्वौ गुणौ द्वे कले परिकीर्तिते ॥

‘Speed in taking, but delay in giving—these are the two features of all arts’. The statement does not seem complimentary to gurus! With a little help from the *Naradiya Shiksha* and also with a charitable inclination, it may however be possible to interpret the statement as a recommendation of a teaching technique. The *Shiksha* says: For self-study employ repetition in fast (i.e., *dрут*) tempo (*laya*), for performance (*prayog*) *madhyalaya*, and for teaching disciples (*shikshanamupadeshartham*), *vilambit*.

Experts have noted that, in spite of some loose application, the listing of sixty-four (the number being somewhat stabilized) arts, and identification of music as an art, was established from the times of the *Arthashastra*. During the same period, the semantic fields of *karu* and *shilpa* on the one hand, and *shilpa* and *kala* on the other, were also remapped. The term *karu* was confined to tasks dependent on efficient use of manual labour, the term *shilpa* was used with reference to skilled work. As time passed, *shilpa* came to be reserved for sculpture. The action-content of these four antecedents of *sangeeta* was directed through agencies of *ashrama*, *gurukula* and *vidyapeetha*. The choice of agency depended on the type of music transmitted. Of course, the agency-formats were not mutually exclusive, and yet there were perceptible differences—a prominent feature being the diminution of religious content, while simultaneously efforts were made to legitimize the secular by investing it with the aura of the sacred.

Ashramas

Gurus, in various periods, chose to operate from their own residences. Students came and often stayed with them to complete training in the chosen field.

The ashramas were scattered in the country and usually located away from the hub of urban life. Sometimes disciples subsisted on alms collected from surrounding areas, and sometimes gurus took complete responsibility for the disciples' material well-being.

The University Model

It is obvious that a multiplicity of teaching-learning processes existed in India because of its size and diversity and the durability of its cultural traditions. Even though there would be considerable commingling of influences and overlapping of methods, it could be said that the *vidapeetha*, i.e., university, set up a model at variance with guru-shishya parampara.

Between about 800 B.C. to A.D. 1300, experts have singled out nineteen vidyapeeths for their distinctive contributions to education in India. They are :

1. Takshashila (800 B.C.-A.D. 400)
2. Nalanda Vihar (A.D. 400-1200)
3. Vikramshila Vihar (A.D. 800-1200)
4. Udantapuri Mahavihar (A.D. 700-1200)
5. Jagaddal Mahavihar (A.D. 1100-1200)
6. Kashi (A.D. 1000 to date)
7. Ayodhya (600 B.C. ?)
8. Gunasheela Vidyapeetha (600 B.C.)
9. Kundinpur (600 B.C.)
10. Mithila (A.D. 1100-1500)
11. Navadweep/Nadiya (A.D. 1450-1800)
12. Vallabhi (A.D. 450-775)
13. Kanchi (200 B.C.-A.D. 1300)
14. Madura (500 B.C.)
15. Salotgi Mandir (A.D. 1000-1100)
16. Tirumukkudal Mandir (A.D. 1100)
17. Malakapuram (A.D. 1100-1300)
18. Tiruvoriyur Mandir (A.D. 1300)

In the West, the word university came into vogue after the thirteenth century. This word replaced the earlier *studium generale*. In India the current term *vidapeetha* was preceded by *ashrama*, *parishad*, *vihar*, *math*, *mandir*, and *ghatika*. All the terms, it should be noted, have religious connotations, though in varying degrees.

What features distinguish a university as a teaching-learning institution? Adding a few more to the features enlisted by Dr Radhakumud Mukherjee to describe the famous Nalanda vidyapeetha, we may note the following chief characteristics of the ancient Indian university. :

1. There was a notable variety of subjects taught.

2. Subjects were optional; choice was given to the taught.
3. The method was not entirely Indian — as many teachers were from other lands and they followed their own approaches.
4. Debating was regarded as extremely important.
5. The training offered was fairly advanced.
6. The students admitted were from different areas and cultures.
7. Often examinations were held in public.
8. Degrees were awarded to successful students.
9. Educational methods were formed and reformed to respond to changing needs.
10. There was a purposeful bringing together of many academic luminaries.
11. There were efforts to include new subjects, disciplines, etc., in the curriculum.

From various accounts, some more details about these vidyapeethas can be obtained, and the educational system that emerges impresses one as a well-developed model to cater to a number of cultural needs :

1. In Takshashila, rich students enrolling took poor students along and paid their fees. Poor students were offered freeships and were also paid for their travel after completing their courses.
2. Learned female tutors were not rare in Takshashila.
3. In addition to Vedic studies, Takshashila offered courses in eighteen different subjects including *narashamsi* and *gatha*, which are known as ancient non-elite musical genres. Students could opt for subjects they liked and hence Brahmins could study magic, military science or archery. However, the vidyapeetha was famous for its teaching of medicine, archery, engineering and architecture.
4. Nalanda, celebrated through the perceptive writings of the Chinese travellers Fa Hien, Huen Tsang, and I Tsing, had academicians of high rank acting as *dwarapandit* to examine those seeking admission to the vidyapeetha. It had above 10,000 students on its rolls and 1,510 teachers. Students were usually admitted when they were about sixteen years of age and they were normally required to study for twelve years in the chosen branch of learning. The Gupta kings, the chief patrons of Nalanda, were followers of the Vedic religion. However, Buddhist studies were generously supported by them in Nalanda. Acharyas from Nalanda were in great demand at other places. Shantarakshit and Kamalasheel were, for example, specially invited to Tibet to systematize Buddhist religious studies. Students were required to copy manuscripts, and many languages were taught. Nalanda boasted of a large library called Dharmaganj. I Tsing, in his stay of ten years, copied and translated 400 Sanskrit works into Chinese.
5. Vikramshila, a vidyapeetha set up as a rival to Nalanda, was solely devoted to Buddhist studies. It had 108 acharyas looking after six viharas. Students were trained

individually and also attended lectures common to all. Nalanda also used to schedule a hundred lectures a day in various disciplines. In fact, this seems to be the accepted format. It has been recorded that a special envoy from Tibet came to Vikramshila vidyapeetha to persuade Ateesha, one of the acharyas, to visit and stay in Tibet to organize Buddhist studies there. Convocation ceremonies in Vikramshila were impressive. The degree awarded was Pandit.

6. Kashi is known for its long-standing tradition of religious and philosophical studies. Bernier, during the seventeenth century, mentions that numerous acharyas were scattered in the city with ten to twelve students attached to each. It must be added that individuals functioning as universities is a recurring feature in Indian cultural studies.
7. Ayodhya, seat of a Jaina-supported vidyapeetha, was distinguished by its co-educational approach. The co-educational Gunasheela vidyapeetha had sixty-four subjects in its curriculum for women, including *geeta*, *vadya*, *nritya*, *natya* and *udak-vadyam*.
8. Kundinpur specialized in imparting training in wrestling. Vallabhi had the distinction of holding a convention in A.D. 454 to finalize a list of eight-four texts as the core texts of Jainism. The earlier Jaina tradition depended on unwritten 'texts' and was therefore known as *nirgranthi*. The Vallabhi convention was intended to put an end to confusion about the true nature of Jainism. The curriculum for male students in Vallabi offered seventy-two subjects including *geetam*, *vadyam*, *nrityam* and *pathitam*. (This separate mention of *pathitam* as a mode of music-making should remind us of Valmiki's detailed exposition of the *pathya* mode of making music.) It has been generally noted that vidyapeethas devoted to Vedic studies, unlike those devoted to Buddhist and Jaina studies, concentrated on fewer subjects and catered to a smaller number of students.

Essentials of the Guru-Shishya Parampara Training Method

This is the background against which guru-shishya parampara in music crystallized as a method. Obviously it took on various characteristics from other agencies in various degrees. In addition, it also worked within the parameters of a larger oral tradition functioning in India.

The teaching model perfected and used with notable assurance in the guru-shishya parampara appears to have the following essential features :

1. It relied heavily on using *upama* (simile) and *rupaka* (metaphor) for exposition of subjects.
2. Narration and quotation of anecdotes was ranked high as an educational device to explain issues. Anecdotes were deliberately kept in circulation—with conscious or unconscious modifications. Their capacity to generate impact cannot be ignored even

today.

3. There was an unmistakable emphasis on establishing similarities between two or more procedures/approaches/processes to explain minutiae, as also to lay down outlines of recommended action.
4. *Samvad*—dialogue—was considered essential for successfully establishing a 'one to one' relationship between the teacher and the taught. In this way, the teaching-learning process was spared the fate of becoming a series of dry, impersonal and mechanical acts executed to transmit information. The aim was to ensure the effectiveness of teaching-learning acts as interpersonal exchanges. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in Nalanda, teaching-learning in all disciplines including *ayurveda*, proceeded through self-study, teaching, and *tad-vidya-sambhasha* or *sandhya-sambhasha*—a mode which may perhaps correspond to the symposium.
5. *Samanvaya* was a well-honed intellectual strategy for arriving at conclusions and preparing action-plans intended to meet demands and views which were often divergent. The basic decision was *not* to rule out any idea in its entirety and to try for a synthesis of established and new positions.
6. While seeking a solution to a particular problem, or searching for an answer to a specific question, the effort was to keep antecedents in view. Nothing was treated as completely new, or sudden. The approach was described as *pratigamik*.
7. Guru-shishya parampara freely borrowed from the other formats mentioned earlier. However, the main thrust was to dissociate itself from the overwhelming religiosity which had enveloped the earlier modes.

Some Deductions

1. At this point of time, it is necessary to differentiate between modern and contemporary, as historians aptly do. A time-span of about seventy years, i.e., within the living memory of three generations, is identified as contemporary. The modern period in India is closely associated with the advent of British rule, the new educational system, and the rise of the (new) middle class, the printing press, etc.
2. Guru-shishya parampara needs to be examined as a model developed to transmit across generations material which is basically intangible. Broadly speaking, the channel or mode is utilized to pass on information, skills, knowledge and insights. Depending on the strength of relationship, one or all four are passed on.
3. Guru and shishya are mutual correlates in a complex process of interchange of influences. As such, the two agencies are defined chiefly in terms of one another.
4. Like many other socio-cultural institutions in India, guru-shishya parampara has its roots in the religio-sacred vision governing many areas of life. Gurus are venerated and their roles are customarily idealized because of the generic connections.
5. As a consequence of overpowering religious associations, the guru-shishya

parampara has been inevitably subjected to numerous socio-cultural pressures seeking to replace a religio-sacred orientation with a secular-sacred orientation. The retention of the sacred component appears to be warranted by the ephemeral, significant, and obviously intangible value-loaded experience of music. At the same time, a diminished role of the religious component enables musicians to enjoy the freedom to be normal human beings! With the diminution of the religious component, or its intensity, they are able to participate in mundane activities. The long journey from the ashrama phase, through gurukula, to the gharana, and further on to a more mobile guru-shishya parampara is a story of progressive attempts at striking a balance between the religious-sacred on the one hand and secular-mundane on the other (despite the fact that numerous romantic and idealistic accounts are given, and occupational mythologies are lovingly created and nurtured!).

6. It is not surprising that against the background of the continued dialectic between the religio-sacred and the secular-sacred, two dominant theological traditions—namely Indian-Hindu and Indian-Muslim—carried out a constant struggle to make the unavoidable transition from the acharya-chhatra, peer-murshid and gurukula prototypes. The resulting institutions are identified as guru-shishya parampara, ustad-shagird, and gharana respectively during the modern period.
7. As has been argued by many experts, the consolidation of Islam during the medieval period compellingly brought forth a bipolarity in religious affiliations in India. Hence music was (also) forced to take sides or effect a synthesis. Music, due to performing and socio-cultural reasons, expectably chose the latter alternative. The resulting guru-shishya parampara therefore resounds with echoes of the two main religious continuities mentioned earlier.
8. It is also possible to detect one more inherent dialectic in the parampara. From the functions related to it, providing information and imparting skills have fairly tangible goals. However, the other two functions, namely, passing on of knowledge and of insights, are patently non-quantifiable, intangible and subtle. I submit that it is in the nature of the sacred component to facilitate operations linked with knowledge and insight. In contrast, the secular proves conducive to passing on of information and skills. To picture music and musicians as solely concerned with one or the other of the two pairs is to attempt building images with no basis in reality.
9. It is necessary to remember that the guru-shishya parampara has so far operated mainly in the context of a pervasive Indian oral tradition. As I have argued elsewhere, this tradition has its own unique features and it cannot be confused with the oral traditions of pre-literate societies. Briefly, the chief features of the Indian oral tradition are : (i) prestige of the 'word'; (ii) emphasis on the oral as well as the aural; (iii) coexistence with the written; (iv) guru; (v) the sutra way; (vi) memory and the oral tradition; (vii) ritualism; (viii) prestige of sound as a principle; (ix) multiplicity of communicators.

These features are directly reflected in processes of teaching, practice, performance, propagation, and preservation of Hindustani music. For example, the importance of word of mouth has relegated music notation to a secondary place. Appreciation of musical behaviour, as an essentially oral-aural phenomenon, has resulted in evolution of techniques of 'listening' as opposed to 'hearing'. Coexistence with writing and the written word has culminated in the practice of maintaining skeletal, though carefully prepared, records of musical material. The guru and his supremacy have become legendary and his presence is felt in everything related to music, though the consequences are sometimes appropriately questioned! The sutra way has dominated musicians' communication in almost every music-related activity. The high ranking accorded to memory has helped in developing a music-related mnemotechny of considerable complexity. Ritualism has found a place as a major strategy employed to ensure coordination of the psycho-physiological energies of musicians. The prestige accorded to the *nada* principle has influenced song-texts as well as many areas of theoretical thinking and formulation of practice-procedures. And finally, at least till the recent past, the multiplicity of music-communicators was a force that shaped areas of specialization in music.

The nature of performance as a phenomenon is to be kept in view while discussing guru-shishya parampara. One may also raise the question : is there anything specifically Asian about this educational model?

From Here . . .

The conceptual-cultural ground covered so far would take us to more technical, structural, and methodological details vis-à-vis Hindustani art-music. From here one could move on to some questions such as these:

1. How does guru-shishya parampara approach the problem of musical ability of the student and the teacher? Is there any scope for including aptitude-testing and other modern methods to avoid wastage of human efforts?
2. Is guru-shishya parampara able to accommodate prodigies of potentially high achievement?
3. Has guru-shishya parampara geared itself up to meet the demands of more inquiring minds from India and abroad? Or is it seeking shelter under a crumbling cover of self-indulgent mystification?
4. To what extent has guru-shishya parampara understood and accepted the diminishing importance of vocal music compared to instrumental music?
5. Has the parampara systematic answers to every aspect of music-making? For example, have its scholastic and performing traditions paid attention to voice-culture (and not voice-production), instrument-making, changing acoustic environments, etc.?

6. To what extent has the parampara recognized the new equations between culture studies and music studies? A related question would be : can guru-shishya parampara encourage, enable, and enrich non-performing music-related disciplines such as music therapy, or is it to continue as a mode of performance-teaching alone? Further, social conditions in education today display a remarkable degree of horizontal and vertical inter-class mobility. Can guru-shishya parampara fulfill the new demands?
7. Is guru-shishya parampara plagued by a regressive attitude in regard to emerging technologies and techniques of communication?
8. From the structural components generally identified as raga, tala, and shabda, has the guru-shishya parampara failed to achieve a new integration required by a new awareness of audiences as receivers?

Perhaps *this* octave-experience is the appropriate point to take and give a breather—to all who have suffered with me through these pages!