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Topic – sages mentioned in mahabharata

INTRODUCTION

Colonel James Todd (British East India Company) said of India “*Where else can we look for sages like those whose systems of philosophy were prototypes to whose works Plato, Thales & Pythagorus were disciples? Where do I find astronomers whose knowledge of planetary systems yet excites wonder in Europe as well as the architects and sculptors whose works claim our admiration, and the musicians who could make the mind oscillate from joy to sorrow, from tears to smile with the change of modes and varied intonation?*”

Indian culture and nationalism have been evolved and fostered over the millenia by India’s ancient rishis, who at the banks of holy rivers of Saptasindhu and Saraswati had composed the Vedic literature – the very foundation of Indian civilization. The term “rishi” or “rsi” originally denoted the composers and singers of Vedic hymns. However, the rishi is also a ‘sage’ to whom the Gods revealed the Vedas (knowledge of the eternal truths about the Creator, His creation and means to preserve it).

The 3 chief classes of Rishi are the Brahmarishi, born of the mind of Brahma, the Devarishi and Rajarishi or kings who became Rishis through their knowledge and austerities, such as Janaka, Ritaparna, etc. The Shrutarishi are authors of shastras as Sushruta. The Kandarishi are of the karmakanda, such as Jaimini. Sapta rishis are two Sanskrit words meaning “seven sages”. Some of the great Rishis (sages) of India are:



Kashyapa

Kashyapa is a revered Vedic sage. He was one of the seven ancient Rishis considered as Saptarishis in *Rigveda*, numerous Sanskrit texts and Indian mythologies. He is the most ancient Rishi listed in the colophon verse in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, and called a self-made scholar in the *Atharvaveda*. He was based in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, and legends attribute the region of Kashmir to be derived from his name. The name Kashmir, states Christopher Snedden, may be a shortened form of "Kashyapa Mir" or the "lake of the sage Kashyapa", or alternatively derived from "Kashyapa Meru" or the sacred mountains of Kashyapa.

Kaśyapa, means "turtle" in Sanskrit.

Kashyapa is one of Saptarishi, the seven famed Rishis considered to be author of many hymns and verses of the *Rigveda* (1500-1200 BCE). He and his family of students are, for example, the author of the second verse of 10.137, and numerous hymns in the eighth and ninth mandala of the *Rigveda*. He is mentioned in verse 2.2.4 of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, along

with Atri, Vashistha, Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadwaja and Gautama. Kashyapa is also mentioned as the earliest Rishi in colophon verse 6.5.3 of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, one of the oldest Upanishadic scriptures.

Kashyapa is mentioned in other Vedas and numerous other Vedic texts. For example, in one of several cosmology-related hymns of Atharvaveda (~1000 BCE), Kashyapa is mentioned in the allegory-filled Book XIX:

Undisturbed am I, undisturbed is my soul,
undisturbed mine eye, undisturbed mine ear,
undisturbed is mine in-breathing, undisturbed mine out-breathing,
undisturbed my diffusive breath, undisturbed the whole of me.

Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning, Desire the primal seed and germ of Spirit,
O Kama dwelling with the lofty Kama, give growth of riches to the sacrificer, (...)
Prolific, thousand eyed, and undecaying, a horse with seven reins Time bears us onward,
Sages inspired with holy knowledge mount him, his chariot wheels are all the worlds of creatures.

Kala [Time] created yonder heaven, and Kala made these realms of earth,
By Kala, stirred to motion, both what is and what shall be, expand, (...)
Kala created living things and first of all Prajapati,
From Kala self-made *Kasyapa*, from Kala Holy Fire was born.

— *Atharvaveda, Book XIX, Hymns L51-53*

His name appears in Patanjali's ancient bhasya on verse 1.2.64 of Pāṇini. His name is very common in the Epic and Purana literature.

Kashyapa is revered in the Hindu tradition, and numerous legends and texts composed in the medieval era are reverentially attributed to him in various Hindu traditions. Some treatises named after him or attributed to him include:

- *Kashyapa Samhita*, also called *Vridhajivakiya Tantra* or *Jivakiya Tantra*, is a classical reference book on Ayurvedic pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics. It was revised by Vatsya. The treatise is written as a tutorial between the medical sage Kashyapa and his student named Vridhajivaka, and mostly related to caring for babies and diseases of children.
- *Kashyapa Jnanakandah*, or Kashyapa's book of wisdom, is a 9th century text of the Vaishnavism tradition.
- *Kasyapa dharmasutra*, likely an ancient text, but now believed to be lost. The text's existence is inferred from quotes and citations by medieval Indian scholars.
- *Kasyapa sangita*, likely another ancient text, but now believed to be lost. A treatise on music, it is quoted by Shaivism and Advaita scholar Abhinavagupta, wherein he cites sage Kasyapa explanation on *vinnyoga* of each *rasa* and *bhava*. Another Hindu music scholar named Hrdanyangama mentions Kashyapa's contributions to the theory of *alankara* (musical note decorations).
- *Kasyapasilpa*, also called *Amsumad agama*, *Kasyapiya* or *Silpasastra of Kasyapa*, is a Sanskrit treatise on architecture, iconography and the decorative arts, probably completed in the 11th century.

Kashyapa is mentioned in numerous Puranas and Epics. These stories are widely inconsistent, and many are considered allegorical. For example, in the *Ramayana* he was married to eight daughters of mythical Daksha, while in

the *Mahabharata* and *Vishnu Purana* he is described as married to thirteen daughters. Some of the names of the thirteen daughters Kashyapa married in the Hindu text *Vishnu Purana* are different than the list found in *Mahabharata*.^[5] Some texts describe him as son of Marichi and a descendant of the solar dynasty, others as a descendant of Uttamapada who married the Daksha daughters, and yet others relate a Kashyapa as a descendant of *Hiranya Kashyapa*. These texts may correspond to different characters, all named Kashyapa.

The Puranas and the Epics of Indian tradition mention Kashyapa and his genealogy numerous times. These are inconsistent, with allegorical stories exalting him as the father of all gods, men, demons and empirical universe, in some conflated as the tortoise avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu. In the *Vishnu Purana*, Kashyapa marries thirteen daughters of Daksha: Aditi, Diti, Kadru, Danu, Arishta, Surasa, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ira, Vishva and Muni.

Kashyapa, in the *Vishnu Purana* and *Vayu Purana*, is attributed to be the father of the Devas, Asuras Yakhsas dravidas and all living creatures with various daughters of Daksha. He married Aditi, with whom he fathered Surya or alternatively Agni, the Adityas, and in two inconsistent versions Vamana, an *avatar* of Vishnu, is the child of Aditi and Kashyapa. In these fables, Kashyapa is the brother-in-law of Dharma and Adharma, both of whom are also described as married to other daughters of Daksha.



Markandeya

Markandeya (Sanskrit: मर्कण्डेय)(IAST: Mārkaṇḍeya) is an ancient rishi (sage) born in the clan of Bhrigu Rishi. The Markandeya Purana especially, comprises a dialogue between Markandeya and a sage called Jaimini, and a number of chapters in the Bhagavata Purana are dedicated to his conversations and prayers. He is also mentioned in the Mahabharata.

Today, Markandeya Tirtha, where the sage Markandeya wrote the Markandeya Purana is situated on a trekking route to the Yamunotri Shrine in the Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand. One legend relates the story of how Shiva protected Markandeya from the clutches of death, personified as Yama. The great sage Mrikandu rishi and his wife Marudmati worshipped Shiva and sought from him the boon of begetting a son. As a result, he was given the choice of either a righteous son, but with a short life on earth or a child of low intelligence but with a long life. Mrikandu rishi chose the former, and was blessed with Markandeya, an exemplary son, destined to die at the age of 16.

Markandeya grew up to be a great devotee of Shiva and on the day of his destined death he continued his worship of Shiva in his iconic form of Shivalinga. The messengers of Yama, the god of death were unable to take away his life because of his great devotion and continued worship of Shiva. Yama then came in person to take away Markandeya's life, and sprung his noose around the young sage's neck. By accident or fate the noose mistakenly landed around the Shivalinga, and out of it, Shiva emerged in all his fury attacking Yama for his act of aggression. After defeating Yama in battle to the point of *death*, Shiva then revived him, under the condition that the devout youth would live forever. For this act, Shiva was thereafter also known as Kalantaka ("Ender of Death").

This event, it is said, took place on the bank of Markanda river in Kurukshetra district. The ancient Markandeshwar Mahadev Temple was built on the site, which has been re-built as a magnificent and modern temple in the modern times.

As sourced from Sati Purana, a secret portion of Markandeya Purana, Goddess Parvati also gave him a boon to write a text on veera charitra (Brave character) on her, the text is famously known as Durga Saptashati, a valuable portion in Markandeya Purana. The place is known as Yamkeshwar.

In Mahabharata's Markandeya-Samasya Parva in Aranyaka Parva, Markandeya tells Yudhishtira how he lived past the death of the previous world and watched it end through gaining knowledge from Lord Vishnu.



A tale from the Bhagavata Purana states that once sage Markandeya visited Narayana rishi and asked him for a boon. Markandeya prayed to the sage Narayana to show him his illusory power or Maya since sages Nara-Narayana are incarnation of Supreme Lord Narayana. To fulfill his wish, Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of a child floating on a leaf, and declared to the sage that he was Time and Death. Sage Markandeya entered into his mouth and saved himself from the surging water. Inside the boy's stomach Markandeya discovered all the worlds, the seven regions and the seven oceans. The mountains and the kingdoms were all there. So were all living beings. Markandeya did not know what to make of all this. He started to pray to Lord Vishnu. No sooner had he started, than he came out of the boy's mouth. Lord Vishnu now appeared before him and blessed him. The sage spent a thousand years with Lord Vishnu. He composed the Bala Mukundashtakam at this moment.

Vasishtha

Vasishtha (Sanskrit: वसिष्ठ, IAST: *vasiṣṭha*) is a revered Vedic sage in Hinduism. He is one of the Saptarishis (seven great Rishis) of India. Vasishtha is credited as the chief author of Mandala 7 of *Rigveda*. Vasishtha and his family are mentioned in Rigvedic verse 10.167.4, other Rigvedic mandalas and in many Vedic texts. His ideas have been influential and he was called as the first sage of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy by Adi Shankara.

Yoga Vasistha, *Vasishtha Samhita*, as well as some versions of the Agni Purana and Vishnu Purana are attributed to him. He is the subject of many

mythologies, such as him being in possession of the divine cow Kamadhenu and Nandini her child, who could grant anything to their owners. He is famous in Hindu mythologies for his legendary conflicts with sage Vishvamitra.

Vashistha is also spelled as *Vaśiṣṭha* and is Sanskrit for "most excellent, best or richest. According to Monier-Williams, it is sometimes incorrectly spelt as Vashistha or Vashishtha (*vaśiṣṭha*, वशिष्ठ).

In Rigvedic hymn 7.33.9, Vasishtha is described as a scholar who moved across the Indus river to establish his school. He was married to Arundhati, and therefore he was also called *Arundhati Nath*, meaning the husband of Arundhati. Vashistha is believed to have lived on the banks of Ganga in modern-day Uttarakhand. Later, this region is believed in the Indian tradition to be the abode of sage Vyasa along with Pandavas, the five brothers of Mahabharata. He is typically described in ancient and medieval Hindu texts as a sage with long flowing hairs that are neatly tied into a bun that is coiled with a tuft to the right, a beard, a handlebar moustache and a tilak on his forehead.

In Buddhist Pali canonical texts such as *Digha Nikaya*, *Tevijja Sutta* describes a discussion between the Buddha and Vedic scholars of his time. The Buddha names ten rishis, calls them "early sages" and makers of ancient verses that have been collected and chanted in his era, and among those ten rishi is Vasettha (the Pali spelling of Vashistha in Sanskrit).

Vasistha is the author of the seventh book of the *Rigveda*, one of its "family books" and among the oldest layer of hymns in the Vedic scriptures of Hinduism. The hymns composed by Vasistha are dedicated to Agni, Indra and other gods, but according to RN Dandekar, in a book edited by Michael Witzel, these hymns are particularly significant for four Indravarunau hymns. These have an embedded message of transcending "all thoughts of bigotry", suggesting a realistic approach of mutual "coordination and harmony" between two rival religious ideas by abandoning disputed ideas from each and finding the complementary spiritual core in both. These hymns declare two gods, Indra and Varuna, as equally great. In another hymn, particularly the Rigvedic verse 8.83.9, Vashistha teaches that the Vedic gods Indra and Varuna are complementary and equally important because one vanquishes the evil by the defeat of enemies in battles, while other sustains the good during peace through socio-ethical laws. The seventh mandala of the *Rigveda* by Vasistha is a metaphorical treatise. Vasistha reappears as a character in Hindu texts, through its history, that explore conciliation between conflicting or opposing ideologies.

According to Ellison Findly – a professor of Religion, Vasista hymns in the *Rigveda* are among the most intriguing in many ways and influential. Vasistha emphasizes means to be as important as ends during one's life, encouraging truthfulness, devotion, optimism, family life, sharing one's prosperity with other members of society, among other cultural values.

Vashistha is a revered sage in the Hindu traditions, and like other revered sages, numerous treatises composed in ancient and medieval era are reverentially named after him. Some treatises named after him or attributed to him include:

- *Vasistha samhita* is a medieval era Yoga. There is an Agama as well with the same title.
- *Vasistha dharmasutra*, an ancient text, and one of the few Dharma-related treatises which has survived into the modern era. This Dharmasūtra (300–100 BCE) forms an independent text and other parts of the Kalpasūtra, that is Shrauta- and Grihya-sutras are missing. It contains 1,038 sutras.
- *Yoga Vasistha* is a syncretic medieval era text that presents Vedanta and Yoga. It is written in the form of a dialogue between Vashistha and prince Rama of *Ramayana* fame, about the nature of life, human suffering, choices as the nature of life, free will, human creative power and spiritual liberation. Yoga Vasistha teachings are structured as stories and fables, with a philosophical foundation similar to those found in Advaita Vedanta. The text is also notable for its discussion of Yoga. According to Christopher Chapple – a professor of Indic studies specializing in Yoga and Indian religions, the *Yoga Vasistha* philosophy can be summarized as, "Human effort can be used for self-betterment and that there is no such thing as an external fate imposed by the gods".
- *Agni Purana* is attributed to Vashistha.
- *Vishnu Purana* is attributed to Vashistha along with Rishi Pulatsya. He has also contributed to many Vedic hymns and is seen as the arranger of Vedas during Dwapara Yuga.

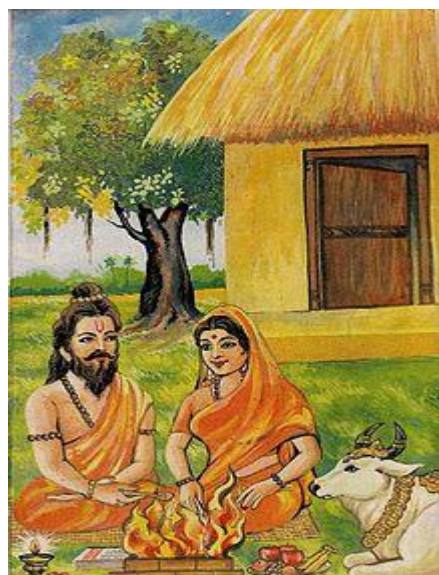
According to Agarwal, one mythical legend states that Vashistha wanted to commit suicide by falling into river Sarasvati. But the river prevented this sacrilege by splitting into hundreds of shallow channels. This story, states Agarwal, may have very ancient roots, where "the early man observed the braiding process of the Satluj" and because such a legend could not have invented without the residents observing an ancient river (in Rajasthan) drying up and its tributaries such as Sutlej reflowing to merge into Indus river.

A copper casting of a human head styled in the manner described for Vashistha was discovered in 1958 in Delhi. This piece has been dated to around 3700 BCE, plus minus 800 years, in three western universities (ETH Zurich, Stanford and UC) using among other methods carbon-14 dating tests, spectrographic analysis, X-ray dispersal analysis and metallography. This piece is called "Vashistha head", because the features, hairstyle, tilak and other features of the casting resembles the description for Vashistha in Hindu texts.

The significance of "Vashistha head" is unclear because it was not found at an archaeological site, but in open Delhi market where it was scheduled to be remelted. Further the head had an inscription of "Narayana" suggesting that the item was produced in a much later millennium. The item, states Edwin Bryant, likely was re-cast and produced from an ancient pre-2800 BCE copper item that left significant traces of matter with the observed C-14 dating.

There is an Ashram dedicated to Vashistha in Guwahati, India. This Ashram is situated close to Assam-Meghalaya border to the south of Guwahati city and is a major tourist attraction of Guwahati. Vashistha Temple is situated in Vashisht village, Himachal Pradesh. Vashistha Cave, a cave on the banks of Ganges River at Shimpur, 18 km from Rishikesh is also locally believed to be his winter abode and houses a Shiva temple, also near by is Arundhati Cave.

Guru Vashistha is also the primary deity at Arattupuzha Temple known as Arattupuzha Sree Dharmasastha in Arattupuzha village in Thrissur district of Kerala. The famous Arattupuzha Pooram is a yearly celebration where Sri Rama comes from the Thriprayar Temple to pay obeisance to his Guru at Arattupuzha temple.



Bharadwaj

Bharadwaj, also spelled Bharadwaaj (Sanskrit: भारद्वाज, Bhāradvāja), was one of the greatest Hindu sages (Maharṣis) descendant of Sage Aṅgirasā, whose accomplishments are detailed in the Purāṇas. He is one of the Saptarṣis (Seven Great Sages) in the present **Manvantara**; with others being **Atri**, Vasiṣṭha, Viswamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni, Kaśyapa.

Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya is the progenitor of the Bhāradvāja family attributed as the composers of Sixth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda. Maṇḍala 6 is known as the Bhāradvāja Family Book as all its 75 hymns are composed by members of this family over several centuries. He is believed to be a contemporary of King Bhārata. Maharṣi Bharadvāja and his descendants were respected and powerful priests-like ṛṣi of several clans/dynasties of the Puru tribe, such as the Bhāratas and the Pañcālas.

Sage Bharadvāja was a sage of the Vedic times. He attained extraordinary scholarship. He had the great power of meditation. His Āśrama still exists at the holy Prayag (Allahabad).

Bharadwaja was also the father of Guru **Drona** and grandfather of Aśvatthāma from the epic Mahābhārata. His grandson **Rishi** Aśvatthāma or otherwise called Drauni, will become one of the Saptarishi in next Manvantara. Bhārdvāja or Bharadwaja is one of the most exalted gotras (family lineages) of the Brahmin caste. Brahmins with Bharadwaja gotra use Bharadwaja as their last name.

Maharṣi Bharadvāja was the son of Devarṣi Bṛhaspati. Devarṣi Bṛhaspati was the son of Maharṣi Aṅgirasa. Angiras was the son of **Brahma** and Brahma came from **Vishnu**. These 3 Ṛṣi are called the Traya Ṛṣi, meaning The Three Ṛṣis of the Bharadvāja Gotra.

Guru Droṇācārya, the royal guru to Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas in the epic Mahābhārata was the son of sage Bharadvāja. He was a master of advanced military arts, including the Devāstras. Among all the seven gotras Bharadvāja is the largest chain. Bharadvāja gotra has more than 1400 branches.

He married Sushila and had a son called Garga.

His son Dronacharya was born as a result of his attraction to an **Apsara** Ghritachi. He trained Drona in use of weapons.

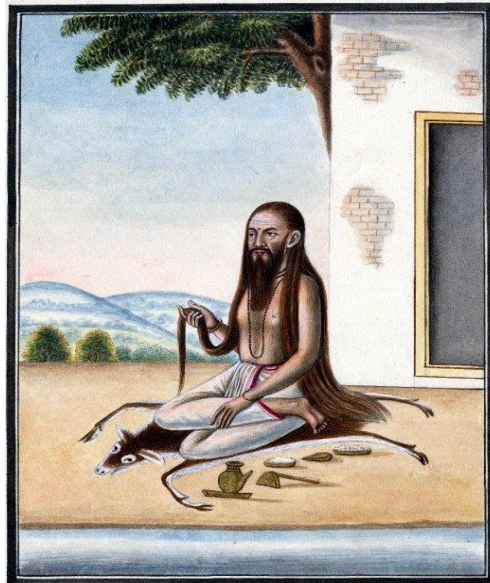
Bharadwaja had a daughter called Devavarnini. Yajnavalkya, the author of the Satapatha **Brahmana** was a descendant of Bharadwaja. The second wife of Yajnavalkya Katyayani, was the daughter of Bharadwaja.

Bharadwaja's Vedic mantras were placed in the sixth Mandala of the Rig Veda by Veda **Vyasa** Dharmasutra and Srautasutra were written by Bharadwaja. The manuscript of the latter was in **Pandu** script and is available with the Vishvavidyalaya of Mumbai. He was a master of the scriptures and **Vedas**. He was a renowned Sanskrit grammarian. As per the Rktantra, pratisakhya of the samaveda, Brahma taught grammar to Brhaspati who in turn taught it to Bharadwaja. Panini, Rkpratisakhya and Taittiriya have quoted and discussed Bharadwaja on grammar.

Kautilya (Chanakya) has quoted Bharadwaja on politics in his treatise Kautilya Arthashastra. Dhvanta Pramapaka Yantra : Spectrometer of Bharadwaja Maharshi. Chanakya quotes Bharadwaja in the Kautilya Arthashastra

He had an unquenchable thirst for the knowledge of the Vedas and in addition to his studies, meditated on **Indra** for long life for more knowledge. He also meditated upon Siva and Parvathi for more Vedic knowledge. He was a first hand witness to the incident of the Krauncha birds, where Valmiki uttered his first sloka. He was egoless. He spent a major part of his life spreading Vedic knowledge as per a command of Indra's.

In Rāmāyaṇa, Śrī Rāma along with Sita and Lakṣmaṇa went on exile on own for the maintaining the dharma/words of his father. Rama along with them went through many forest regions starting from crossing Ganga river with help of Guha, head clansman and a friend of Rama's father Daśaratha. As he traveled he visited many Rishi's Ashrams and met many rishis and sages including **Agastya**, Gautama and Bharadvāja. Śrī Rāma and others rested in Bharadvāja's āśrama when they were crossing Prayag and accepted his offerings as great sages knew that Śrī Rāma is incarnation of Mahā Viṣṇu, Sitā Devī is goddess Lakṣmī and Lakṣmaṇa is none other than Śeṣa Nāga.



Learning outcome

By this project I came to know that the importance of the Mahabharata and came to know about many sages in Mahabharata. Working for this project was very exciting and felt very happy after getting some knowledge about Mahabharata.

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