

Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University)  
Post Graduate Diploma (Theology) Programme 2016-17



Synopsis  
Exploring the relevance of Guru Shishya Parampara  
teaching tradition in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century  
learning and education  
(In partial fulfilment of requirements for PGDT)

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## **Introduction**

The Guru Shishya Parampara (GSP) or Master Disciple Relationship is a common element among all the major religious traditions of the world. As the scale of the education system increased, and it became increasingly egalitarian, with not just the elite getting educated, teaching became more transactional and it became less possible to achieve the one-on-one interaction that GSP provided. Other aspects of the tradition, such as

- long period of sustained interaction and in depth study,
- an expectation of commitment,
- peer-to-peer learning and,
- the setting of high standards

have also been lost steadily and there is a general lament about the state of the rote learning based, uninspiring teaching found in the education systems of today. As information and communication technology is penetrating our classrooms, we look back at the GSP and ascertain if there are any elements of the tradition that can be revived and enhanced via new technology methods.

Synopsis  
Exploring the Guru Shishya Parampara  
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This paper explores the history of the GSP as defined by the various religious traditions of the world viz. Indian Religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism etc.), Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and the Chinese Religious Traditions.

It consolidates the similarities and differences between the approaches taken by each religion, arriving at a broad understanding of the salient points of the GSP pedagogy.

It then explores areas of study in which GSP is still widely followed, be it a continuation of the traditional forms of study or a modern application of the method.

Finally, we arrive at a checklist for determining whether a particular learning environment could incorporate elements of the GSP into it and derive benefit.

**Guru Shishya Parampara as described in World Religious Traditions**

The Guru Shishya Parampara (GSP) or Master-Disciple Relationship has been explored in almost all the religious traditions of the world.

In Indian religious traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, GSP was the accepted way in which knowledge was imparted. At the age of about 8 years, the child would undergo an initiation ceremony called the Upanayana ( Pravarajya in Buddhism) to be formally accepted by the Guru into their Gurukul or Paathshaala or Monastery. These would be located far from densely populated area, in the midst of nature, where the focus would be on the complete physical, mental and spiritual development of the student.

Similarly, the traditions of Christian seminaries and Islamic Maktubs and Madrasas will be described. Additional light will be shed on Jewish and Chinese traditions of GSP. We will also explore the tradition as followed by the Greek and Roman civilisation.

**Common Traits of GSP Pedagogy - Similarities and differences between the various teaching traditions**

By reviewing the GSP traditions of the various world religions, we would be in a position to do a comparative study of their similarities and differences and find the salient features of the use of such a teaching method.

Some of the points that will become evident may include:

- long period of sustained interaction and in depth study
- an expectation of commitment
- peer-to-peer learning
- the setting of high standards
- one-on-one relationship between the student and teacher

**Examples of GSP in the modern world**

This section will shed more light on modern examples of this teaching tradition, focusing on the areas of performing arts (music and dance), martial arts, professional sports and business. We would look at the continuous and uninterrupted GSP tradition in Hindustani and Carnatic Classical Music and Dance as well as modern manifestations of this pedagogy based on the common traits that we have determined.

**Framework to evaluate the efficacy of GSP in a given learning environment**

In the fourth section, we will formulate a checklist of criteria which, when fulfilled, can point to the use of GSP as a teaching pedagogy. We hope to provide a framework which can be used to apply this method and show how GSP is still a relevant and effective mode of teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can see that in this day and age, with the increasing use of technology to broaden the horizons of the classroom, the role of the teacher or Guru becomes paramount. This paper hopes to shed light on the ancient system of GSP and its continued relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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