

## The Concept of *Guruvāda* in Indian Tradition: A Study on Medieval Odisha

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The present paper attempts to highlight the relevance and importance of *guru* tradition in India. Since the *Vedic* period, the cult of *guru* worship is continuing and is being practised by the people. The word *guru* is comprised of two syllables, i.e. *gu* (shadow, or darkness) and *ru* (he who disperses darkness). Due to the power to disperse darkness, the *guru* is thus named.<sup>1</sup> In addition, other meanings of *guru* are also described; i.e. "impartor of knowledge", "heavy with knowledge"<sup>2</sup>, "a spiritual master, one who is heavy with knowledge of Absolute and who removes nescience with the light of Divine", "heavy with spiritual wisdom"<sup>3</sup>, "heavy with the good qualities of scriptures and realization"<sup>4</sup>, and "heavy with a wealth of knowledge"<sup>5</sup>, etc. In Indian faith and belief<sup>6</sup>, the *guru* is considered as a Supreme Divine Power who awakens mankind from the state of ignorance and darkness, by illuminating knowledge and wisdom to distinguish between right and wrong. Manusmriti describe a *guru* as a second parent who conceives the disciple in his wisdom like womb and impregnates him with profound knowledge and wisdom and then delivers him with illuminated vision and broadness of mind<sup>7</sup>. So the initiated disciple is called as *dviija* (twice born). It is explained in the form of dialogue between Lord Śiva and mother Pārvaī in *Guru Gītā*<sup>8</sup>;

*"Gurur Brahmā gurur Viṣṇur gururdevo Maheśvarah,*

*Guruh sāk'āt ParaA Brahma tasmai Śrī Gurave namah".*

(*Guru* is Brahmā, *Guru* is Viṣṇu, and *Guru* is Maheśvara. *Guru* alone is verily the Supreme Brhma. Therefore, sublime prostration to Him-the *Guru*.)

The *guru* is the embodiment of the Supreme Divine. In Indian tradition, the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara symbolize creation, preservation, and destruction. Following the age old tradition, even in present Odisha, a child's learning commences on an auspicious day by drawing three circles either on the slate, or on the ground by a piece of chalk. It is initiated by one of the senior members of the family, or by a Brahmin priest and this occasion is called as *Vidyārambha*. While drawing the first circle, the child is instructed to utter the name of Brahmā and then to bow down his head to touch the ground in honour of the respective god. This process is followed while drawing two other circles in honour of Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. In analysing the concept behind the tradition, it may be interpreted that the child is expected to grow with blessings of the three Supreme Divine Powers inheriting all potential energies ingrained in them; i.e., the child must bear creative energy like Brahmā 'to innovate new ideas' for the progress of the society; the blessings of Viṣṇu must energise him for protecting, preserving and administering the newly created innovative ideas, existing moral, ethical and social values, if that would not contradict the interest of mankind; he must possess the power of Maheśvara to destroy all restraints and obstacles coming in the path of moral, material and spiritual progress of the society.

*Guru* is further described in the *Guru Gītā*:

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