ADHEESH SATHAYE

'HIGHER' LEARNING:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COUNTER-NORMATIVE
GURU-ŚIṢYA NARRATIVES
IN THE *UPANIṢADS* AND THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA*

Ever since the time of Śaṅkarācārya, and perhaps long before him, scholars of the *Upaniṣads* have puzzled over the outlandish narratives that are found interspersed in these texts between moments of deep philosophical gravity. Why are these light-hearted, often folkloric stories of *gurus* and *śiṣyas* such as Śvetaketu, Satyakāma, and Raikva embedded within these 'higher' metaphysical treatises? According to Patrick Olivelle, in studying these stories most philologists and text-historian have generally tried "to reconstruct a hypothetical archetype underlying all the versions" [1] of these tales, resulting in an ignorance of the literary value of these narratives, which he proceeds to analyze through a comparative study of one such story, that of 'young' Śvetaketu Āruṇeya. Though he makes a strong argument about the religious basis for why this particular story has diverged into its many Sanskrit versions, we still are left with the same dilemma - why does such an irreverent story, in which a Brāhmaṇ full of foolish pride learns of sacred knowledge from a king, exist at all in the lofty *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*? In order to shed light on this question, it is necessary to examine the pedagogical context of the *guru-śiṣya* relationship within which these stories operate, and in this paper, it is my

---

1. Patrick Olivelle, "Young Śvetaketu: A literary study of an Upaniṣadic story", in JAOS 119 (1999), p.46.

intention to focus precisely on this issue, through a comparative exam-
ination of three narratives: the stories of Satyakāma Jābāla and Raikva
in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, as well as the *Mahābhārata* story of
Ekalavya and Droṇa. By examining the changing motif of the *guru-*
śiṣya relationship within these stories, we will see that through these
counter-normative narratives, both the *Upaniṣads* and the
Mahābhārata are able to legitimize transitions of worldview - in the
Chāndogya, it is a transition from ritualism to esoterism, while in the
Mahābhārata, it is a transition towards *bhakti*.

Before discussing the details of these stories, I would first like to
discuss the concept of a '*guru-śiṣya* relationship' itself. There have
been many extensive studies of ancient Indian education, all of which
point to the *guru-śiṣya paramparā* - that is, the linear transmission of
knowledge from teacher to student - as the primary means of learning
in post-Vedic India. [2] And indeed, as many scholars also have shown,
the features of this system becomes transformed into the devotional,
guru-centered 'cults' that have become a mainstay of modern
Hinduism - Ramakrishna, Sai Baba, even the Bhagwan Shree
Rajneesh - all of these recent guru-figures have based their pedagogi-
cal philosophy on the classical necessity of a spiritual guide to direct
the disciple towards liberation. [3]

In order to appreciate how the *guru-śiṣya* relationship becomes
the dominant feature of ancient Indian education, we need to under-
stand the meaning of the term '*guru*'. In the stories I will discuss
today, the term used for 'teacher' is not actually *guru*, but '*ācārya*'.
Minoru Hara provides an important study of the semantic distinction

---

2. For authoritative treatments of the subject of ancient Indian education, see F.
E. Keay, *Indian Education in Ancient and Medieval Times*, London, 1942; R. K.
Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education: Brahmanical and Buddhist*, London, 1947; S. K.
Das, *The Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, Calcutta, 1930; and A. S.
Altekar, Education in Ancient India, Benares, 1965.

3. For recent illuminating discussions of modern gurus in light of ancient tradi-
tions, see Anthony Storr, *Feet of Clay: Saints, Sinners, and Madmen*, New York,
1996; George Feuerstein, *Holy Madness*, New York, 1991; Ralph M. Steinmann,
Guru-Śiṣya-Sambandha, Stuttgart, 1986; David C. Lane, *The Radhasoami Tradition:*
A Critical History of Guru Successorship, New York and London, 1992; William
Cenkner, *A Tradition of Teachers: Sankara and the Jagadgurus Today*, Delhi, 1983.

between these two terms. An *ācārya*, Hara claims, "is an objective and institutional teacher and the relation between an *ācārya* and a pupil (*antevāsin*) is purely an intellectual one." [4] A *guru*, on the other hand, "is a personal and subjective master, and the relation between *guru* and pupil (*śiṣya*) is a rather emotional one." [5] Furthermore, while an "*ācārya* is a teacher against whom one may have an objection and from whom one may vehemently dissent - to have an objection against one's *guru*, to criticize him, or to dissent from him would be quite impossible for a true pupil." [6] I would also like to employ this important distinction between '*guru*' and '*ācārya*', however, for stylistic reasons, in this paper I will refer to the interactions between teacher and student as the '*guru-śiṣya* relationship,' and the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student as the '*guru-śiṣya paramparā*' despite the fact that in these stories they will generally involve *ācāryas*. On the other hand, as we shall see, in several key instances these *ācāryas* in fact behave like *gurus*.

Let us first consider the story of Satyakāma Jābāla. In nearly every *guru-śiṣya* narrative found in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (henceforth abbreviated as CU), [7] we are presented with a combination of three recurring complications in the *guru-śiṣya* relationship: either the *śiṣya* is non-standard, the *guru* is abnormal, or somehow there is a failure in the normal *paramparā* procedure of learning whereby the student does not learn the essential Upaniṣadic teachings from his duly ordained teacher. In the story of Satyakāma Jābāla, we find the first motif, since it is clear that Satyakāma's birth is at best problematic. In the story itself, Satyakāma asks his mother about his *gotra*, (CU 4.4.1) to which his mother answers, "I used to go around waiting on people a great deal in my youth when I got you, and so I do not know to which *gotra* you belong; but I am named Jabalā and you're named Satyakāma - just tell

---

4. Minoru Hara, "Guru and ācārya", in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honour of Daniel H. H. Ingalls*, ed. By M. Nagatomi et al., Dordrecht, Holland and Boston, 1980, p. 104.

5. M. Hara, 1980, p. 104.

6. M. Hara, 1980, p. 104-105.

7. I have consulted the text of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as presented in Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, New York, 1998.

them 'I'm Satyakāma Jābāla.'" [8] Through this decidedly ambiguous and controversial reply, Satyakāma's eligibility for discipleship under Gautama becomes problematized, even in the most forgiving interpretations of the term '*paricāriṇī*'. Śaṅkarācārya's conservative viewpoint is that the reason Jabalā does not know Satyakāma's *gotra* is that she had no time to ask, since she was busy as a *paricāriṇī* around the house, constantly waiting upon guests; [9] whether or not this be true, it is clear that the power of this narrative relies on the notion that Satyakāma's lineage is problematic - *dharmaśāstras* would be quite hesitant to legitimize the use of a matronymic *gotra* name.

All of the commentators and translators I examined seem to share the belief that the point of this narrative is that Satyakāma's Brāhmaṇ-hood is successfully displayed when he tells his *ācārya* Gautama the truth, and this is in accord with the classificatory nature of the *varṇa* system discussed by Brian Smith's *Classifying the Universe*. According to Smith, the quintessential ancient Indian paradigm of thought is the (tri-partite or quadri-partite) *varṇa* system, with the Brāhmaṇ at its head. Through a sort of throwback to Durkheimian structuralism, he sees this classification system as transferring into all other realms of thought: cosmic, natural, divine, and so forth. Thus the Brāhmaṇ in the *varṇa* system would have equivalencies with other topmost elements of the other congruent classification systems. As he puts it, "the hierarchical position of this class can also be gauged by the fact that the *brāhmaṇ* is also equated with *ṛta*, 'cosmic moral order', and with *satya*, 'truth' or 'reality.'" [10] If we come to understand the *varṇa* system in this manner as sets of categorical equivalencies within the Vedic worldview, we can see how Satyakāma's identifica-tion with the concept of *satya* through Gautama's truth test neatly pro-vides proof of his membership into the category of Brāhmaṇ, since these become equivalent categories in the Vedic *varṇa* system. In this

---

8. Cf. CU 4.4.2: "Na aham etad veda tāta yad gotras tvam asi, bahu aham carantī paricāriṇi yauvane tvām ālabhe. Sā aham etan na veda yad gotras tvam asi. Jabālā tu nāma aham asmi, Satyakāmo nāma tvam asi. Sa Satyakāma eva Jābālo bruvithā iti."

9. For a discussion on Śaṅkara's views, see S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, Atlantic Highlands, N. J., 1992, p. 407.

10. Brian Smith, *Classifying the Universe*, New York, 1994, p. 30.

fashion, though Satyakāma is an unusual student, without *gotra* or proper pedigree, he is tested and received into tutelage. This tutelage, too, is non-standard; rather than learning directly from his *ācārya*, Satyakāma learns from outside sources - a fire, a bull, a *haṁsa*, and a waterbird. Regardless of how we construe the meaning behind these non-human interlocutors, this is a devastating state of affairs for the *ācārya* - if these are just talking animals, then presumably the secret is out, and the knowledge of *brahman* is available to even the lowliest of waterbirds. If on the other hand, as Śaṅkarācārya would have it, these characters are incarnate deities, then it is even worse, for what good is an *ācārya* if the *śiṣya* is able to supercede him and gain knowledge directly from the gods. Daniel Gold's 1987 study of modern gurus in North India suggests that these gurus, as well as the Vedas and Gods, may be conceived of as 'immanent foci of the divine'; that is, they can be "understood as vital conduits through which the divine reveals itself to men." [11] If we imagine the Upaniṣadic *ācārya* as aspiring to a similar position as an immanent focus, then certainly this story would represent a breach in the normative conduit of esoteric knowledge; in this manner, it becomes clear that the story of Satyakāma may be read as a counter-normative narrative of *guru-śiṣya* conflict, in which a non-standard student of questionable pedigree is able to supercede his *ācārya* and gain knowledge independently.

Let us now turn to another highly intriguing narrative in the *Chāndogya*, the story of Raikva and Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa. While in the Satyakāma tale we find an abnormal student and a normal *ācārya*, here we encounter a different type of inversion, in which the student, Jānaśruti is fairly normal, but the *ācārya* Raikva is quite eccentric. As with Satyakāma, there is a bit of doubt about Jānaśruti's *varṇa* - Raikva repeatedly calls Jānaśruti 'Śūdra', and many scholars, such as S. C. Vasu, have taken this to be evidence of Śūdra kingship and caste mobility in ancient India. [12] While indeed this may have been the case,

---

11. Daniel Gold, *The Lord as Guru: Hindu Saints in North Indian* Tradition, New York, 1987, p. 6.

12. See S. C. Vasu, *Chhandogya Upanisad, with the Commentary of Sri Madhvacharya, called also Anandatirtha*, volume 3 in *The Sacred Books of the Hindus*, New York, 1974 [1910], p. 226. Vasu imagines Janasruti as actually being a Śūdra, for he feels that "in Ancient India, however, there were Sûdras who were

it seems that such a foray into speculative historicization is not neces-
sary here. Even Madhva, who consistently challenges Śaṅkara's nor-
mative interpretations of these Upaniṣadic narratives, especially
regarding *varṇa*, sticks to the conservative interpretation that Raikva
calls Jānaśruti 'Śūdra' as an insult, because he *behaves* like a Śūdra by
coming for instruction with offerings of riches, presumably instead of
the requisite *samidh*. [13] Indeed, this event seems to me to function as a
very interesting parallel with Satyakāma: Satyakāma is accepted as a
Brāhmaṇ because he behaves as one, while Raikva insults Jānaśruti
with the slanderous term Śūdra precisely because in ancient Indian
terms he is behaving as one, and again we see how the Vedic *varṇa*
system of categorical equivalencies remains fully productive in these
Upaniṣadic narratives.

If we accept the idea that Raikva is insulting Jānaśruti, who is
praised rather elegantly at the beginning of this very episode as "a
pious giver, a liberal giver, a preparer of much food...[who] had rest
houses built everywhere with the thought that 'everywhere people will
be eating my food'", [14] then the question arises, why is Raikva cursing
him while *śruti* itself so nicely praises Jānaśruti? How can we recon-
cile this ambivalence? The key to solving this puzzle, I believe, is the
centrality of *food* in this narrative. Jānaśruti is characterized as a
provider of food and nourishment, and so can be seen as a food-dis-
tributor, similar to M. N. Srinivas's concept of 'dominant caste.' [15] But
when he extends his power of food provision to purchasing Raikva's
esoteric teachings through offers of a treasure of cows, a necklace, and
mule-carts, he is rebuked as a Śūdra. Just as the Satyakāma tale estab-
lishes an equivalency between the Brāhmaṇ varṇa and *satya*, here an
equivalency is being established between the Śūdra *varṇa* and food,
again in accordance with the Vedic *varṇa*-based worldview. In speak-

---

kings, and Brâhmanas did not scruple to enter into matrimonial alliances with the
Sûdras; and never hesitated to impart Brahma Vidyâ to them."

    13. S. Radhakrishnan, 1992, p. 403.

    14. S. Radhakrishnan, 1992, p. 401. This is CU 4.1.1: "Jānaśrutir ha śrad-
dhādeyor bahudāyī bahupākya āsa."

    15. See for example M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*,
Bombay 1962, or M. N. Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and Other
Essays*, Delhi, 1989.

ing of social hierarchy, Brian Smith remarks, "This rather basic and literal description of the world endlessly divided into food and eaters of food was also applied in a seemingly more figurative way to the interrelations between the classes in the social world: the higher orders 'live on' the lower." [16] Thus "society's classes, like nature's, are divided into eaters and food, and supposedly immutable hierarchical distinctions are drawn between *varṇas* on this basis." [17] In other words, Smith correlates the *varṇa* hierarchy to a food chain of eaters and eaten - the higher 'live on' the lower, and so the Brāhmaṇ feeds on everyone while the Śūdra provides sustinence for everyone. Thus it seems evident that by insulting Jānaśruti as Śūdra, in a sense Raikva makes an inversion of Jānaśruti's beneficence - indeed as the narrative asserts, like a Śūdra the rest of society really *does* feed off of Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa. Apart from the insulting effect of this situational irony, the power of Raikva's insult is increased by the Dumontian polluting effect, in *dharmaśāstraic* terms, of the *varṇa* itself. Simply put, 'Śūdra' is not a term that would sit well with a beneficent king.

Through this, we can see that Raikva's insult is particularly powerful in the ways in which he manipulates *varṇa* ideology as well as food symbolism. But there is lingering doubt as to why Raikva insults him in the first place. Clearly Raikva is not above a little bit of bribery, since in the end he does accept Jānaśruti's lovely daughter in marriage, his own kingdom, plus all of the previously offered wealth as payment for services rendered. Perhaps, as Śaṅkara and Madhva suggest, he is insulted at the price, or maybe at the lack of *samidh* - even the *asura* Virocana, in another intriguing *Chāndogya* narrative, has the decency to bring some sticks of fuel when approaching Prajāpati. No, the most direct answer seems to be in the personality of Raikva himself. Raikva's own caste status is never quite made explicit. It is clear from the text that he is not to be found in places where Brāhmaṇs meditate, and is finally found by Jānaśruti's messenger underneath a cart, a highly polluting place to sit even now in Indian culture. Compounded with this pollution is the fact that he is

---

16. Brian Smith, 1994, p. 46.
17. Brian Smith, 1994, p. 46.

described as picking at his scabs, not exactly the purest of bodily activities. [18] If we consider these eccentric traits in conjunction with his insulting behavior towards Jānaśruti the king, he seems to resemble more and more the saintly *gurus* (in Minoru Hara's sense of the word) of medieval and modern *bhakti* sects, who use their counter-normative behavior to demonstrate their devotional or spiritual power. In this case, of course, Raikva's power lies in his esoteric knowledge of the *saṃvarga vidyā*, which is what Jānaśruti is really after. So in this scene, in contrast to the tale of Satyakāma, we have in the personage of Raikva a highly abnormal and eccentric *ācārya*, who in contrast to the orthodox figure of Gautama, appears as a freelance, independent ascetic.

What emerges from these two stories is the account of a situation of pedagogical crisis in ancient India where the standard, traditional form of education based in solid Vedic and Brāhmaṇic foundations, seems to be failing or losing its power - though students are able to gain a knowledge of the mundane sacrifice through their orthodox *ācāryas*, there is a *failure* in the system in the sense that something is still lacking in the learning process; like Śvetaketu, students are coming home without the true knowledge of *brahman*. Precisely by their counter-normative nature, these Upaniṣadic *guru-śiṣya* narratives serve to problematize the existing liturgical system of the *Brāhmaṇas*, in favor of the more esoteric and introspective aspects of Upaniṣadic *brahmavidyā*. As Hara claims, "in Brāhmāṇical texts the *ācārya* functions as a teacher especially of Vedic knowledge and in the *Upaniṣads* as a teacher especially of philosophical and metaphysical knowledge." [19] It is indeed 'higher education': in many ways, these stories function as narratives pointing to such a transition of *worldview* from the sacrificial and liturgical *Brāhmaṇas* into the more introspective and mystical teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, and they are able to accomplish this through a rethinking of what it means to be a *śiṣya*, what it means to be a *guru*, and what it means to have a '*guru-śiṣya sambandha*'.

In order to better understand the significance of this rethinking

---

18. Cf. CU 4.1.8: "adhastāt śakaṭasya pāmānam kaṣamāṇam."
19. M. Hara, 1994, p. 94.

process that is apparent in these Upaniṣadic stories, it is fruitful to compare them with a rather different conceptualization of the *guru-śiṣya* relationship in the *upākhyāna* of Droṇa and Ekalavya, from the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 1.7.123). [20] We have now seen how Upaniṣadic *guru-śiṣya* narratives are structured in a way that allows for a transition of worldview with regard to what is considered to be authoritative knowledge. In the Ekalavya story, we can see a similar structural motif of transition, though this time rather than towards esoteric *brahmavidyā*, it is towards the more exoteric *bhakti*. As in the Upaniṣadic narratives, we again find an abnormal student and an unusual *ācārya*, as well as a failure in the normal process of the *paramparā* process of knowledge transmission. Like Raikva, Droṇācārya is not your average teacher; conceived in a *droṇa* from the seed of the Ṛṣi Bharadvāja, he is born a Brāhmaṇ, but acquires Kṣatrīya knowledge and *astras* from the equally counter-normative figure of Paraśurāma Jāmadagnya, and becomes a teacher not of *brahmavidyā*, but rather of *kṣatrīya dharma*. Furthermore, as he explains to Bhīṣma, Droṇācārya's entire reason for coming to Hastināpura to teach the Pāṇḍavas is to exact revenge on his estranged Kṣatrīya friend Drupada, who had earlier slighted him for being a penniless Brāhmaṇ, saying: "A poor man is no friend for the wealthy, a fool is no friend to the wise; cowards are not friends to the brave, of what use is an old friend?" [21] He accepts the assignment as the Pāṇḍavas' teacher on the condition that they help him avenge this insult - as he says to them, "There is a certain deed I desire to be done, buried in my heart; when you have learnt weaponry you must grant this to me, give me your word, O blameless ones!" [22] Like Raikva, Droṇācārya is a non-standard, fiery personality, and again it is this personality that not only testifies to his counter-normativity but also his martial and spiritual power as well as the authority of the knowledge he possesses.

---

20. For passages from the *Mahābhārata*, I have consulted *The Mahābhārata: Text as Constituted in its Critical Edition*, Volume 1, Poona, 1971.

21. Cf. MBh 1.122.7: "na daridro vasumato, na avidvān viduṣaḥ sakhā / śūrasya na sakhā klībaḥ, sakhipūrvam kim iṣyate."

22. Cf. MBh. 1.122.42: "kāryam me kāṅkṣitam kiñ cid, hṛdi samparivartate / kṛtāstrais tat pradeyam me, tad ṛtam vadatānaghāḥ."

Ekalavya's counter-normativity as a student is a bit more straight-forward. A Niṣāda prince, Ekalavya comes to Droṇācārya for martial instruction upon hearing of his remarkable teaching abilities, but the *dharmajña* Droṇācārya does not accept him, on account of his social standing. However, the determined Ekalavya constructs a clay image of Droṇācārya and learns vicariously through the power of his own faith, his *śraddhā*, so much so that he is able to eclipse and embarrass the Kṣatrīya Arjuna. Again, like Satyakāma, we find an unusual student of questionable birth, but one who is earnest and possesses the characteristics necessary to independently acquire knowledge without the direct assistance of a proper teacher. Here, rather than bulls or waterbirds, it is Ekalavya's extraordinary *śraddhā* that enables him to learn archery on his own. But in contrast to Satyakāma, Ekalavya's abilities and adherence to *satya* does not ultimately do him any good - his knowledge is not deemed as authoritative, he is unable to transcend the boundaries of caste, and he must pay a heavy price. Though perhaps his success in learning *dhanur-vidyā* is *implicitly* acknowledged by Droṇācārya's *guru-dakṣiṇā*, there is nonetheless a failure in the learning process, since there is no continuation of the *guru-śiṣya paramparā* - unlike Satyakāma, Ekalavya is never initiated by his teacher as a legitimate student, is never acknowledged as learned, and never himself becomes a legitimate teacher.

Through this dynamic of an unusual student and teacher, the *Mahābhārata* is able to create a unique, counter-normative situation in which a new type of doctrine is asserted. Though on the surface, Droṇācārya is teaching his students *dhanur-vidyā*, through this episode it becomes clear that what is actually being emphasized is not the bow but the 'bow'. That is, the sentiment of the story revolves around Ekalavya's tragic devotion, of his self-sacrificial '*guru-bhakti*' towards Droṇācārya. As the *Mahābhārata* does in so many places, this *upākhyāna* frames this action within the standard ethical dilemma of the Kali yuga, in which everything goes hopelessly wrong, and a dharmic clean-up job is necessary to fix it. In this case, Droṇācārya is not able to keep his word, since he had earlier promised Arjuna that no other pupil would ever surpass him. Not only is this promise jeapodized, Arjuna is upstaged not by another Kṣatrīya, but a Niṣāda. Ekalavya's unusual abilities create a dharmic crisis, but Droṇācārya is

able to find an acceptable solution by exacting a heavy payment (*vetanā*) from Ekalavya, who, fully devoted to *satya*, obliges and cuts off his right thumb, and thus Droṇācārya's words are proved true. Indeed, it is his *guru-bhakti* that becomes the notable lesson of the story, not his suffering at the hands of a vengeful Droṇācārya, which is not insinuated by the text itself, and in fact the issue of tragedy or injustice is not even addressed by commentators. Since, in this way, the emphasis is on the idea of devotion, then it appears that Droṇa functions more like a <u>*guru*</u> than an <u>*ācārya*</u> in Minoru Hara's terms, demanding the strict obedience and devotion of his pseudo-*śiṣya* Ekalavya, who has no choice but to follow his guru's instructions. By unhesitatingly cutting off his thumb, it is Ekalavya's adherence to *śāstraic* etiquette that inspires our sentiment, not the cruelty of Droṇa's demands. Instead, this narrative stresses the new doctrine of *bhakti*, specifically *guru-bhakti*, as authoritative learning - a proper student would aspire to be as devoted to his guru as Ekalavya. So through an inversion of the normative *guru-śiṣya* relationship, this *Mahābhārata* episode is in effect narrating another shift in worldview, this time concerning the problems of *dharma, varṇa*, and the growing dominance of the ideal of *bhakti*.

In these stories, we have seen how counter-normative *guru-śiṣya* narratives create an intellectual space within the *Upaniṣads* and the *Mahābhārata* in which the new doctrines of *brahmavidyā* and *bhakti* are given legitimacy through the testimonials of these prodigious *śiṣyas* and eccentric gurus. Through such a literary consideration of the underlying fabric of worldview in which these types of Epic and Upaniṣadic stories are woven, we are able to gain important insights into the way in which counter-normative stories function within religious texts. In a sense, these stories are powerful precisely because they go against the norm; they create situations in which there is a failure in the traditional *paramparā* system of transmission, and thereby are able to incorporate new ideas into the sealed environment of valid knowledge. As many scholars have noted, the notion of tradition in ancient India revolves around the concepts of *paramparā* and *sampradāya* - and so examining the processes of scholarly lineage and transmission of knowledge is essential for understanding the concept of traditional authority. A concept can become traditional only if it can

somehow enter the *sampradāya*, that is, if it can penetrate this unbroken chain of transmission between guru and *śiṣya*, and in these stories, we find exactly such a process of traditionalization at work - innovative ideas such as *brahmavidyā* and *bhakti* are being introduced into the Epics and *śruti* as authoritative knowledge through these exemplary narratives.