

# CHILDHOOD DAYS AT GURUKULA



In the last class, the Ramayana story was told till the birth of Rama and his three brothers, Bharata, Laxmana and Shatrughna. King Dasharatha was blessed with four handsome sons after successfully finishing the “Putrakameshti” yagna. The people of Ayodhya were very happy and celebrations were held throughout the Kosala Kingdom.



In due course, the princes grew into young boys. All the princes had deep care for each other. However, Laxmana was very close to Rama, and Rama was also close to Laxmana. Similarly, Bharata and Satrughna were very close to one another and practically always together.

Their father, the King Dasharatha requested the royal priest, Sage Vasistha to perform the princes’ thread

ceremony. After that, their formal education started. In those days each king had to educate his princes in all aspects (spiritually and mentally) and had to train them in warfare too. First of all, they were imparted training in shooting arrows. They became expert archers.

As the princes grew up further, all the four young princes were sent to Vasishtha Maharishi’s gurukula for schooling. Vasishtha Maharishi was the Kulaguru (family teacher) of Raghava Dynasty.

A guru is one who is regarded as having great knowledge, and wisdom, and who uses it to lead others (teacher). Gurukula means the place of the teacher. Literally, guru means teacher, and kula means family. So gurukula means the place where the student comes to be a part of the family of the guru for some time - and learn the culture of the Indian Vedic Sciences, as well as true knowledge.

Sage Vasishtha was created by Lord Brahma, the creator. He was a man of peace. He had conquered desire and anger. He was married Arundhati. Sage Vasishtha had his gurukula on the banks of the river Saraswati. He had with him thousand of disciples and taught them the Vedas. Arundhati who is the Gurumatha manage the gurukula and treated all the students as her children.

The gurukula was a very peaceful place. The plants and trees were full of flowers and fruits. Different kinds of birds

sang and flew about in the gurukula. There was regular performance of several holy sacrifices (yagna) for the good of the world. Several hundreds of visitors used to come to the gurukula to meet Sage Vasishtha.

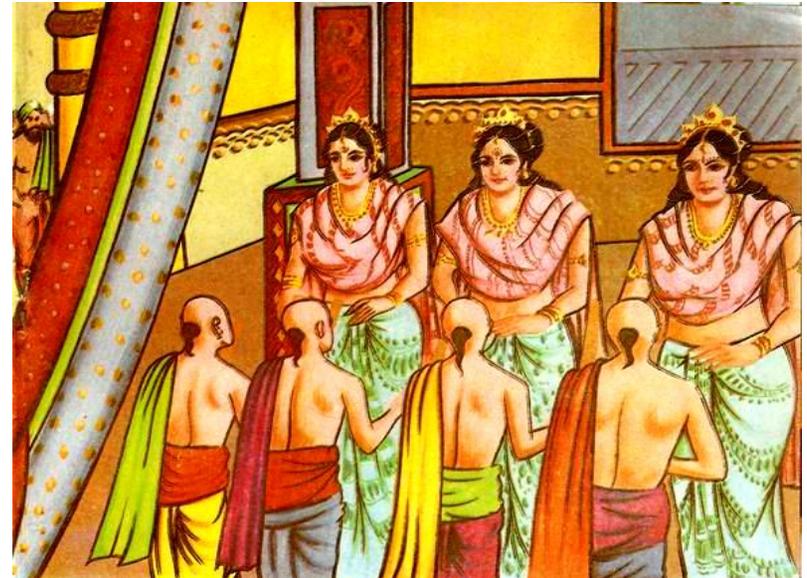


The gurukula needed great quantities of milk, curds and ghee for the feeding of thousands of disciples, guests and performance of sacrifices regularly. Deva Indra had gifted to Sage Vasishtha a divine cow, having admired his generosity and performance of sacrifices. The cow was called Nandini. Since it was a divine cow it had extra ordinary powers. The gurukula got plenty of milk and ghee from this cow.

Everyone in and around the gurukula felt that they were living under the care of their own parents and this was

made possible by the power of Sage Vasishtha's tapas, Arundhati's love and Nandhini's bounty.

The princes were soon told that they were going to the gurukula. They dress themselves in simple clothing and shaved their hair before they left.



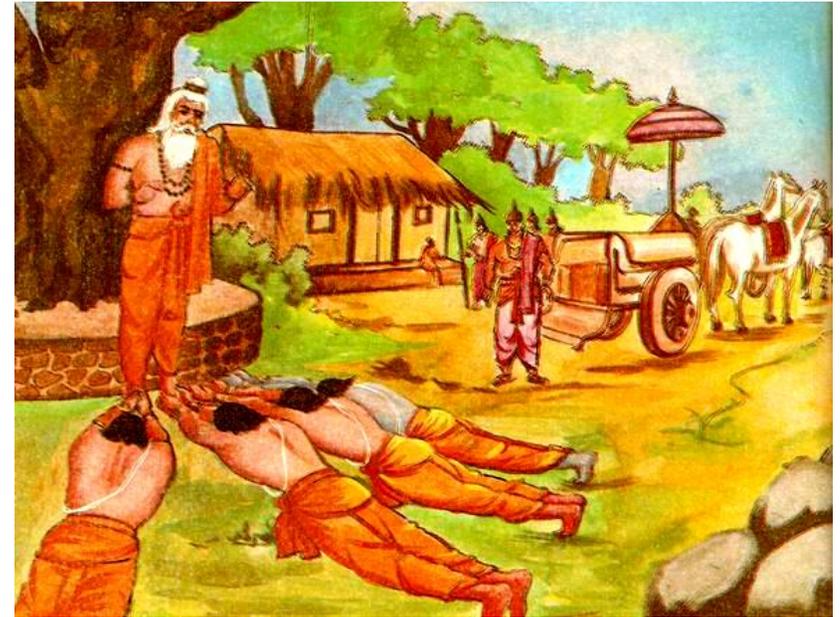
Under Vasishtha's able leadership, all four became masters of the Vedas, horse riding, chariot driving, hunting, and the use of weapons. They had also have been instilled with all good qualities. The skills acquired by the four princes were not used to hurt others, but to guard the world. They always strived to give all beings peace and happiness.

The education of the princes having been complete, Sage Vasishtha sent message to king Dashratha.

“I have taught you all I could. You must transform all my teachings into your day-to-day life. You shall be able to prove yourself to be good men. You will be successful leaders also,” he said to Rama, Bharata, Laxmana and Shatrughna.



The princes lay straight at their teacher’s feet to pay their respects to him and then they stood up and said with folded hands, “We the sons of King Dashratha shall never forget your teachings. We beg you to bless us. We have learnt wisdom from you that nobody else could have given us.”



Sage Vasishtha was indeed very pleased to hear what the princes had said. He remarked, “My sons! Go back to Ayodhya and serve your parents as best as you can to earn their blessings. My good wishes shall always be with you.”