

Gurus Qualifications

As the main interest in this book is religious development, we shall take up only the highest of *Gurus*, that is those who attend mainly to spiritual welfare. The description of a qualified *Guru* is given in Manu, in Bhagavata Purana, in Tantra works, *Guru Gita*¹⁰³ and *Dasa Bodha*¹⁰⁴ his glories are sung in Jnaneswari. The central fact of *Guruship* is that the *Guru* is approached by an earnest person for achieving highest spiritual welfare. Hence the best *Guru* can only be one who knows what the highest welfare of humanity is, who has himself achieved it and is both able and willing to train and carry others to that state. *Niscreyas* and *Screyas* that is the good, the excellent are the words commonly used to denote the highest achievement in spiritual welfare. The other aim contrasted with it is *Prgyas*. that is the pleasant. The contrast between the two has been brought out from the earliest times for example, in the Kathopanished,

Sreyascha preyescha Manushyam etow

Tou samparikshya vivinakti Dhirah.

Tayoh Screya adadhanasya sadhur bhavati

Hiyate arthat ya vu prayo - vrinite.

This means, Both the excellent and the pleasing confront man. The wise one observes, compares and chooses. It is well with him who chooses the excellent. He who chooses the pleasing loses even pleasure, that is loses his aim. The same is also the choice of Hercules between virtue and pleasure in ancient Greek tradition. Man has, in him, both the brute level based on his animal urges especially Hunger, Sex & Self assertion and the higher or divine level and capacity of raising himself above the brute level. Ordinarily men pursue their lower aims connected with the maintenance of the body and its appurtenances and neglect the hard task of controlling the brute instincts and achieving the

divine nature which alone can carry man to Godhead a realisation of the identity of the *Jiva* or individual soul with the *Paramatma* or Universal soul.

The *Guru* must be from the Vedantic standpoint a realiser of *Atman* that is *Atma Brahma Aikya*, Identity of soul and God and that comes to much the same thing as God-realiser of the *Bhakti marga*. *Vivekachudamani* and other works say that the *Guru* must be in perfect *Atmanishta* or *Brahmanishta*, and the *Bhakti* works like *Srimad Bhagavata* say⁹⁸

Madabhijnam Gurum,

scantam upasita Madatmakam

That is, Krishna says the *sishya* must go to a *Parama Bhagavata* who is thoroughly familiar with, that is steeped in love of a Personal God, who treats God as his own self. *Bhagavata* stresses the effort to reach personal God as the Vedantic works stress the reaching of the Impersonal God or the Absolute. Both are necessarily intertwined¹⁰⁵ for the Personal merges in and emerges from the Impersonal. Both the *Bhagavata* and the *Guru Gita* say that the *Guru* must be a Supreme realiser of the Impersonal Absolute and Personal God. The *Guru Gita*¹⁰⁶ asks how a teacher who himself does not know the Absolute Brahman is to teach it to others and how a stone which itself cannot float across the ocean, can be expected to carry other stones to the other side of the ocean. Instances of ignorant *Gurus* posing as teachers of Brahman are not rare, and persons deficient even in moral qualities posing as teachers of *Daivi bhakti* have played havoc with credulous *sishyas*. Realisation of the Absolute is one of the rarest accomplishments and it is by no means easy for a *sishya* going to a reputed teacher for the purpose of acquiring realisation of the Absolute to see whether that teacher has that realisation. There are no standards or recognised insignia or marks¹⁰⁷ of soul-realisation or God-realisation and several of the external characteristics usually attending *Parama Jnanis* and *Parama Bhagavatas* are easily put on, professed or assumed by others. In this great perplexity, most seekers after *Gurus* have to trust to the repute which the alleged *Parama Jnani* or *Parama Bhagavata* has in society and trust to intuition, *purva vasana*, *rinanubanda* or luck. *Guru Gita* says¹⁰⁸ 'Observe and choose your *Guru*'.

But the chances of observing and testing, which a student has, are hardly sufficient to enable him to arrive at a correct conclusion. Persons who achieve some *siddhis* by *upasana* of petty gods are taken to be perfect *gurus*. Anyhow, the *sadhaka* has to get on, and if he has made a bad choice, he is compelled to retrace his steps and give up a bad choice, and give up a bad or false *Guru* and change for a better one. The Guru Gita warns the sishya's from falling into the clutches of false Gurus

*Jnana Hino Guruhtyajydh Mithyavadi vidambakah*¹⁰⁹.

This means, a hypocrite who really is without God realisation and who pretends to have such realisation should be abandoned. Verse 200 of Guru Gita says that these are

Darsanat bhranti karakah

that is, by external appearance, they mislead people into the belief that they are true realisers. Verse 201 of Guru Gita says that the following are false *Gurus*.

Pashandi, that is, those who reject the *Vedas*.

Paparatah, that is persons revelling in sin.

Nasthikah, Atheists or agnostics.

Bheda buddhayah, Those who are under the tendency to oppose one God to another, to distinguish *Guru* from God, and stress differences instead of stressing the unity of existence.

Stree lampatah, Those who are under the influence of lust.

Duracharah, that is the sinful or wicked.

Kritaghnah, that is the ungrateful.

Bakavrutayah, that is, those who like the crane put on the appearance of *Dhyana samadhi* or wisdom or realisation, professing to concentrate on *Brahman*, all the while concentrating on worldly aims and objects. The crane while waiting on the bank to catch fish wears a solemn look, as though it cared for nothing.

Karma bhrashtah, that is, those who have fallen from their duties.

Kshama nashtah, that is, those who are without patience or forgiveness.

Nindyatarka vadinah, that is, those proceeding on fallacious modes of reasoning.

Kaminah, that is, men subject to strong desires for women.

Krodinah, that is, men with ungovernable temper.

Himsah that is, murderous men.

Chandah, that is, cruel men.

Scathah, that is, rogues

Jnana luptah, that is, men without realisation or wisdom.

Mahapapah, that is, highly sinful men.

These have to be avoided. The reason for avoiding such is patent. *Sadhakas* do not always succeed in avoiding them. One Kavle Patel who was a subordinate of *Mamlatdar* B.V. Dev of Thana had such a *guru*, who told him he, Patel, should install a brand new image of the Goddess of Vani in the place of the old image of Vani that he had in his family temple, evidently with the hope of making a great profit out of the new installation, that is *Pratishtha* and *Kumbhaabhisheka* ceremonies. The Patel had some doubts and so approached Sai Baba through B.V. Dev and next through Shyama to get his decision in the matter¹¹⁰. Baba, a *Samartha Paramaguru* without any desire for gain, definitely stated that the new image should not be brought and only the old should be installed. When asked about the harm of introducing the new, Baba mentioned that by contravention of a similar advice given by him about the purchase and introduction of a cow, an epidemic was the terrible consequence. The Patel who still believed in his own *Guru*, brushed aside Baba's advice, and brought in the image. And Lo! an epidemic came into the village, and the Patel's wife was one of the first to be attacked. When the Patel appealed to his *Guru* for aid, the latter demanded a gift deed by the Patel of half of his landed property. The Patel then woke up and discovered that his *Guru* was an avaricious *lobhi*, an ignorant man, and a crane like hypocrite and gave up his *Guru* and followed Baba's advice of reinstalling the old image. Where the *Guru*, however, is not a person who is sinful or wicked, Baba was conservative and directed people not to shatter their loyalties. His advice was that people should stick to their own *gurus* however little

their merit might be, and not change over to another *guru* who may have more merit¹¹¹. The *Guru Sishya* relation is more personal than the marital.

The process of the *Brahma Nishta Guru* that is, one with Supreme Realisation of *Atman* enabling a proper *sishtya* to get the realisation is compared in the *Guru Gita* to getting another's lamp kindled in the flame of one's lamp. It is the same heat and light which proceed from one to the other, and thus there is continuity in the *Guru Parampara*. The final result also is said to be light within light.

The realisation of *Atma Nishta* or *Brahma Nishta* is very well set out in *Vivekachudamani* and other works, and the requisites therefore are *Viveka*, *Vairagya*, *Scamadi shatka*, and *Mumukshutva*¹¹². *Vairagya* or detachment is the state when attachment to worldly things disappears. Love of God and love of *Guru* are based on the decreased pull on the heart from wife, child and wealth, So the *sadhaka* has to march on to strengthen his *vairagya* and *viveka* based thereon, in his *Jnana Marga* and strengthen his love of the *Guru* also. These, *Viveka Vairagya* and Love of *Guru* form a virtuous circle so to speak, mutually assisting each other. The development of *scamadhi shatka*, *scama*, *dama*, *titiksha*, *uparati*, *shraddha*, and *samadhana* also fall into the same course. In the *Bhakti marga* also, the increased love of god helps one to overcome the attraction of sense objects and that in turn strengthens one's *Bhakti* or *Prema* to God and *Guru*. The best antidote to worldliness or sense attraction is declared in the *Hamsa Gita*¹¹³ to be worship of God with *Bhakti*, *Bhakti* gradually grows in power and intensity and finally leads to a merger. In *Bhagawad Gita*, Lord Krishna says,

Bhaktya maam abhijanati
Yavan yatcha asmi tatvatah
Tato maam tatwato jnatva
Viscate tad anantaram

which means, A person contacts me and recognises Me by his Devotion, a dynamic process, and learns more and more what sort of personality and what

I am in reality. Thereafter by proceeding higher and higher on to the highest reality he fully realises Me and then merges in Me.

The qualifications of true *Gurus* may be partly inferred from the above statement of who the false *Gurus* are. But the positive marks of a true Guru are set out in various words like the Upanishads, Manu, Guru Gita, Bhagavata Purana, We will take the Guru Gita¹¹⁴ first. He must be a

Tatvanishta Adhyatma jnani
Viveki, Sadhu, Nirmalamanas
Scuchi, Kamakrodha Jit Indriya Jit,
Scanta and Mita bhashana

From these qualifications, namely *Tatvanishta*, which comes along with *Adhyatma jnani* and *Viveki* it is patent that the *Guru* must have perfect *nishta*, that is, must have steady and continuous realisation of *Brahma Atma Aikyam*, which is the real significance of the *Mahavakyas*. Unless a man has reached that realisation, he will not enable the *sishtya* who approaches him to reach it. Mere bookish understanding would only lead to doubts of various sorts as the matter is extremely subtle. As the *Guru* has to impart *jnana* or enable the *sishtya* to realise it, it is not sufficient that the *Guru* should have got into the supreme state of *Brahma Nishta*. He must also understand the theoretical basis which is found in the *Mahavakyas* and in the Upanishads for the same. He must have *viveka*, that is, be able to distinguish between the real or the Brahman and the phenomenal or unreal Universe. There are persons who know a fact or realise a state and yet do not and cannot impart it to others. The omission or inability to impart may be due in part to unpreparedness and in part to incapacity. It is not all who can express what they feel.

The Guru Gita draws a distinction between two sets of *Parama Gurus*, the *Mouni* and the *Vagmi*. The former *Mouni* enjoys the bliss of perfection but does not impart it to help others to get it. But the *Vagmi* expresses his thoughts and realisation as far as possible, and uses language and other means to enable the *sishtya* to acquire that realisation. So the *Vagmi* is the one primarily to be preferred by the *sishtya* at the initial stage, though finally often a *mouni* may suit

his purpose. *Brahma Nishta* is not a mere question of intellect or working up the mind and other phases or facets of the self. It is a unique experience and it comes from the grace of the *Guru*, God, and can come only in that way.

Gurum vinana jananti Mudhas tat paramaam padam.

Mere prayer to Siva and Vishnu will not suffice for knowing God. To know God even a Personal God properly the *Guru* must help the *sisya*¹¹⁵. Namdev's case is the best illustration of this truth. That is why prominent mention in the list of qualifications is made of these, *Tatvanishta* and *Adhyatma jnani*. This will suffice for the present, and later references amplifying the subject may be found in other portions of this book. The fourth qualification, *Sadhu* is a very wide term. But as it is fairly understood, it need not be discussed. *Nirmalamanas* refers to the purity of the heart of the *Guru*. *Scuchi* also denotes much the same thing, for in addition to external purity, internal purity also is implied by the term *scuchi*. *Kamakrodhajit* and *Indriyajit* qualifications are also practically involved in *Nirmalamanas* and *Scuchi*. Unless a person has conquered his lust and other appetites and his temper, he can never be a proper *Guru*. Any *sisya* who approaches him is apt to absorb his lack of control. Those who have not conquered their senses, *indriyas*, their lust, their anger, are generally given to sins and vices, and, therefore, will not only lose mental peace but would also be doing much harm to the very name of Religion and ruining their *sisyas* and others approaching them. The Upanishads and also the *Guru Gita* point out the necessity for a person to avoid *Gurus* who are tainted with these faults.

Navirato duscharitat Naasanto

Na asamahitah Naascanta manaso vapi.

Prajnaneniva enam apnuyat¹¹⁶.

This means, a person who has not given up bad and evil courses, the man who has not reached calmness and quiet, and who has not gained peace of mind can never realise Brahman that is get *Brahma Nishta*. Amongst the disqualifications mentioned lack of these has been noticed. The last two, *Santi* and *Mitabhashana*, peace, paucity of speech in a *Guru* are patent external marks

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of the calm, peace, and quiet that reign in his heart. The Guru Gita points out that at the very sight of a *Parama Guru*, one's heart is filled with *Santi*.