

Qualifications of Sishyas

This subject like that of the previous Chapter is exhaustively dealt with in the works mentioned therein including,

Dasa Bodha, a great authority not only in Maharashtra but elsewhere. The *Guru Gita*¹¹⁷, under disqualifications of *sishyas* say that a *Papakarmarata*, that is, one indulging in evil and sins and abuses is loose in his morals and who keeps company with the wicked, should not be given the position of a *sishya*. Other words like *Kulamavatantra* state that *Upadesa* should not be given to,

Arthalubdha, Piscuna, asthira

Bhakti sraddha vihina, Susrusha vimukha

that is, Instruction should not be imparted to the covetous, the miserly, the fickle minded, one lacking *Saburi*, the person without devotion or faith, and lastly to one who does not care to render service to the *Guru*. While on this subject we may take apt illustrations of the above from popular stories as well as from Baba's biography. As for covetousness, it is very well known that a covetous person would ever be thinking of money and the importance of getting it and keeping it, in every matter. The *Niti sloka* says, *Artha Aturanam, Na Guruh Na bandhuh*. That is, Those who are always hankering after wealth, will have no regard' for *Guru* or Kinsmen. A good description of an *Arthalubdha* is in *Srimad Bhagavata*¹¹⁸. An incident commonly narrated by *Bhagavatars* is as follows:

In a certain community, the caste *Guru* used to tour about and when he visited any place, the local adherents of the *Guru* would each have to pay ten *panams* Rs. 1-4-0. One such *guru* wanting to visit a village, where there was only one *sishya*, had a very unfortunate experience. The *sishya* though very well off, was an *Arthalubdha*, an inveterate miser. So he wanted to evade the hereditary *Guru's* claim for ten *panams*. When he learnt of the time at which the *Guru* would arrive, he went up to the *Tahsildar*, a friend of his, and prayed to be put in stocks and kept there till the time that would be communicated later on. The *Tahsildar*

obliged him and put him in stocks. The *Guru* came and learnt that the only *sishta* he had was in stocks and so went away. Learning of the *Guru's* departure, the *sishta* wanted to be freed from the stocks, but at that time the *Tahsildar* was not in office but had gone home. When he asked the peon guarding him to report to the *Tahsildar*, the latter declined, and said that he would not go to the *Tahsildar's* house. So, this covetous *sishta* had to pay Rs.5 to the peon in order to make him go to the *Tahsildar* and get the order for his release. The man anxious to cheat his hereditary *Guru's* claim for Rs. 1-4-0 had to pay four times that amount to a peon besides having the experience of being in the stocks for some time. Amongst Baba's own followers, these are some incidents to be found in Baba's Charters and Sayings, and one or two of them will suffice here. Baba who read the hearts of every one approaching him, dealt with such visitors appropriately. Once a very rich man, having over Rs.250 in his pocket, had heard that Baba was a *Brahma Jnani* and could impart *Brahma Jnana* to anybody that he chose and would not ask for payment for the *upadesa*. Having a sort of momentary desire to acquire *Brahma Jnana* at the hands of Baba without payment, he straightway engaged a *tonga* at the Kopergaon railway station for a visit to Shirdi and back, fixing up a single fare for both journeys and stipulating that he would return in a few hours. He went up and told Baba that he had come for *Brahma Jnana* which Baba was so capable of imparting and wanted it immediately, evidently treating it as a parcel to be handed across the counter in a shop. Baba fell into the humour of the man and told him that his demand for *Brahma Jnana* was grand, for so many people came to him for other objects and none, for *Brahma Jnana*. Then turning to a boy, he told him to go and get for him a handloan of Rs.5 from a *marwadi*. The boy came and reported that the *marwadi* was absent. Next Baba went on similarly sending word to absent *marwadis* and thus nearly half an hour was spent. The rich visitor was getting impatient thinking that the *tongawallah* would raise his demand. He noted that Baba only wanted a loan of Rs.5, and he could easily give it. But he was oppressed with the fear that a loan advanced to Sai Baba might not be recoverable, and so he would not advance the money. The risk of lending Rs.5 was too great in his estimation for

obtaining *Brahma Jnana*. Finally finding that Baba was still not answering his question, he asked Baba, why he delayed giving him *Brahma Jnana*. Baba's answer was, 'Have you understood nothing. I have been all the while trying to impress you with *Brahma Jnana* even as you are. You see I want five things, surrendered to me, that is, *Manas, buddhi, ahamkar, chitta*. Unless a man thoroughly surrenders himself, and is free from the love of money and love of worldly things, he cannot attain *Brahma Jnana*. When the dawn comes, there will be light, and not earlier. The man then discovered that Baba read his heart thoroughly and that he was too avaricious ever to get *Brahma Jnana*.

In Baba's summary *Nishta* and *Saburi* are the qualifications and their absence the disqualifications in a *sishtya*. But it is better to go into the full list given of such disqualifications after saying a word as to the importance of that subject. *Rudra Jamala* says

Vicharya yatnat vidhivat Schishya sangraham acharet

Anyatha Scishyadoshena Narakastho Bhavet Guruh.

This means, The *Guru* should examine and test the *sishtya* as ordained by the *Sastras*. Else the *Guru* will go to hell by the *sishtya's* taints. Such taints may arise in two ways. First the natural contagion of evil qualities especially in a powerfully evil *sishtya* may corrupt the *Guru*. Secondly, even apart from that, the *Niti sloka* says,

Sishtya papam Gurum Vrajat

that means, The pupil's sins fall on the head of the *Guru* the *Guru* being responsible for the good and evil done by the *sishtya* who has surrendered to him. The phrase *Vidhivat* in the above verse refers to the rule and practice of a pupil going and serving the *Guru* at his place for 12 years after which probation, instruction would be imparted.

Samachara Tantra gives a long list of 27 disqualifications, which are specially mentioned. The first eleven are mentioned in *Rudra Jamala*. They are,

Kamukha, lustful, this being the greatest danger in youth.

Kutula, crooked.

Loka Nindita, notoriously bad.

Satya Varjita, given to lying

Avinita, stiff-necked.

Asamartha, too weak in nature.

Praja hina, issueless.

Ripu priya, a man dear to enemies, as a weak minded and weak bodied person is apt to be.

Sada papa kriya yukta, given to vice and sin.

Vidya scunya, unlettered.

Jadatmaka, dullard.

Then come the sixteen disqualifications of Samachara Tantra.

Body with *doshas-defects*.

Without *Vedakriya*, that is, not having been given the regular *samskaras* prescribed in the *Vedas*.

Without *Ashrama Achara* failing to perform the duties of his *Ashrama* or stage of life. Impure in heart. Lacking in faith.

Mean.

Passionate temper.

Bhrama confused.

Asat charitra, given to bad ways.

Without good qualities.

Adulterous, lecherous.

Deformed.

Samuhaugra, that is, anti-social. Without *bhakti* or devotion to God or *Guru*.

Dvaita cheta, ever doubting and tending in opposite ways.

Ninda Fond of scandal and blame.

Now let us turn to the qualifications of *sishyas* and begin with Baba's summary. Baba stated that his own *Guru* asked him for a *dakshina* of 2 pice and that he gave them to him, who was thereby satisfied. He added in explanation that the two pice demanded by the *Guru* who had no attachment to coins, or earthly objects were *Nishta* and *Saburi*. Baba wanted two things to be given to him. About the impatient Mrs. Khaparde, who was staying with her husband, who was

impatient of the prolonged stay at Shirdi that entailed loss of business and income Baba told Kaka Dixit to give her Rs.200, meaning only *Nishta* and *Saburi*¹¹⁹. Taking up *Nishta* first, one can see that no progress at all will be made by any *sishya*, who has no faith either in the particular *Guru* or in *sastras*, *Vedas* or *Mantras*, Atheists, scoffers, flippant persons, women hunters, combative persons, passionate natures, hypocrites, cruel hearted and wicked people in general, or those revelling in sin, are, as a rule incapable of pure and strong faith and so are unfit either to be *Gurus* or *sishyas*. And in the *sishya*, pride and stiff neckedness, *Susrusha Vimukha* lack of reverence, *Bhakti Sraddha Hina* will be fatal to all progress. No *Guru* in the first place would care to accept a *sishya* who lacks in the proper attitude and spirit and the above defects betray lack of faith, *Nishta*. In the *Guru Gita*¹²⁰, the warning is given that no instruction or *upadesha* should be given to one lacking in faith, for,

Naranaamcha phalapraprou Bhaktir evahi Karanam.

That is, To make the teaching effective, the *sishyas* faith in the *Guru* is a *Sine qua non*. Unless a man has the necessary humility, he cannot approach a *Guru*. *Gurus* have to test a newcomer to make sure that he has or will soon have sufficient humility and receptivity. If one has not sufficient faith in his *Guru*, he will not accept what the *Guru* says in the first place. Taking the case of *mantropadesa*, it may be pointed out that *mantras* do not bear fruit unless the *Japa karta* has faith in the *mantra*. The *Niti sloka* says.

Mantre Tirthe, dwije deve daivajne,

Beshaje gurow yadrisi Bhavana

yasya siddhir bhavati Tadrasi

which means, In *mantras*, *Tirthas* holy places, Brahmins or priests, gods, in astrologers and in the *guru* and medicine one achieves only to the extent of one's faith, which stresses the above point. Faith in God and *Guru* are equally stressed in this verse. See also *Vivekachudamani* stressing need of *Bhakti* faith and devotion for *Moksha*.

Moksha Sadhana Samagrat, Bhakti reva gariasi

that is, *Bhakti* is highly important among the elements that make for salvation. Unless a man has faith, he will not take the proper steps and preserve in following the *mantra japa* or the advice given. All sorts of persons came to Baba. For instance, one Valambi Station Master, who had no faith in Baba and fancied that Baba was unnecessarily honoured, was taken by Das Ganu Maharaj to see Baba at Shirdi. Baba was then washing pots and placing them on the ground mouth downwards. When asked why he did so, Baba explained his symbolical action. He said, Persons who come here are like this. That is, Just as a vessel with mouth turned down cannot receive anything, some persons come to Baba in an unreceptive mood. That was exactly the case with the Valambi Master, and the All Knowing Baba knew it. Persons with poor or no faith would easily give up their *guru* or his advice if any persons talked anything adverse to the *Guru*. When Dr. Mulky was trying for the first time to go and see Baba at Shirdi as advised by his sister, he came up to Kopergaon station. There, the railway personnel vilified Baba and described him as an immoral and dangerous character. Dr. Mulky at once turned back and went away to his own place without seeing Baba. Persons with wavering faith have first to develop stronger faith before they could get any benefit from Baba and Baba graciously helped such people in a number of cases. The above mentioned Mulky was persuaded by his sister again to go to Shirdi, and on that occasion, Baba revealed his All Knowing nature and narrated the above incident and thus helped Dr Mulky to get strong and unshakeable faith in Baba. The *Prarthana Samaj* is against paying any respect or worship to saints and *sadhus*. One of that *Samaj* got a little faith in Baba, but suddenly, he was asked by a disbeliever in Baba, if Baba had the qualification of a *Gunatita* mentioned in the Bhagavata Gita. When with faith thus reduced he came to Baba, Baba asked Shyama to tell him something. Shyama then told him facts to revive his faith. Tampering with faith also is part of Baba's *Lila*. He then understood just as Vittal or God might appear as an idol breaker. Similar help Baba rendered to S.B. Nachne, who also was greatly dampened in his *bhakti* to Baba by the Manmad railway station personnel and their vilification. When he approached Baba, the latter revealed his wonderful knowledge and love for

sishyas by asking without any one's revealing the facts to him 'Why have you come without your *Mamlatdar's* permission? Do not do so again' and thus strengthened Nachne's faith. Baba's testing of faith is in strict accordance with the *sastras* as stated above, and sometimes the test is very severe. Shri M.B. Rege a double graduate had the great advantage of seeing Baba and Mahavishnu in a vision in his own place and Mahavishnu's direction to him that he should make Baba his *Guru*. He also had another vision of his visit to Shirdi, bowing to Baba, who embraced him and accepted him as his *sishya*. When he actually visited Shirdi and prostrated before Baba, Baba tested his faith and humility by saying, Why do you bow to a man?. Usually English educated people will not prostrate to a *Guru*. Shri Rege was stunned and stayed at a distance for some hours, being determined to keep on to Baba, as he had shed his pride of caste and title and learnt that treating a *guru* as a man is fatal to all progress. He waited quietly and was then accepted by Baba with a fond embrace.

Gurow manushyata buddhih

Schishyaya yadi Jayate

Nahi tasya bhavet Siddhih

Kalpa koti scatair apt

That means, that if you treat a *Guru* as a mere man, your *sadhana* will be a failure perpetually. Faith in the *Guru* is specially needed for God-realisation. The *Guru* who has himself realised his soul as identical with *Para Brahman* a truth expressed by *Mainm Allah Hum* of Baba works at the soul of his disciple and after seeing that it is duly prepared, and at the right moment, utters a word or uses a gesture or makes other effort, and the effect is instantaneous. The *sishya* is drawn into the same state of *Satchidananda* resulting from the experience of *Jiva Brahma Aikya*. This is done in one minute or half a minute, as The *Guru Gita* says,

Nimishena Nimishardhena.

That is, In a moment, or half a moment the *Guru* and his disciple are in that realised state as a result of the *Guru's* action and the disciple's faith. This involves no doubt a previous preparation under the *Guru's* care of the *sishya's*

soul for a very long time. But the final effect takes no time. It is instantaneous. As dramatically put, in the story of *Janaka* and *Ashtavakra*, the change may be suddenly and marvellously effected. The story goes that King Janaka asked the sage *Ashtavakra* whether it was true that the *Guru* could make the *sishta* have the realisation within the short space of time that exists between a man's putting his one foot on the first stirrup and the second foot on the second stirrup. *Ashtavakra* answered in the affirmative and was prepared to prove it. That *Rishi* spent some time with Janaka in preliminary preparation and then said, 'Bring a horse saddled up'. Then he asked Janaka to put his first foot on one stirrup and to put his second, foot on the other stirrup. Within that time the magic had worked. King Janaka had full realisation of himself as Brahman and went away riding, caring for nothing in the world. Similar instances of the magic effects of faith are found in Tukaram's,

Apana sarika karitat tatkal

Kalavela lagat Nahi tayachi.

As for the obverse, many have experience of the effects of lack of faith even in temporal matters. If a man takes a medicine without any faith, he will often fail to have any effect from that medicine. *Mantre, Beshaje Gurow*, quoted above is absolutely correct, in the experience of all. Persons with strong faith pronouncing certain syllables for curing cobra bite, scorpion sting, etcetra succeed in curing these ailments. If so much faith is needed, and useful in such trivial cases, how much more would be needed when the effort is for the soul to realise its highest goal of *Brahmanhood*! The only technique by which the *Guru* prepares the disciple and the actual means by which the grand denouement is effected are extremely subtle and peculiar to each saint. In Baba's case, these are highly concealed, and yet have been partly revealed. Some attempt will be made to disclose these and other interesting facts about his *Guruship* later on. Let us proceed to consider the authorities on other qualifications of the *sishta*. *Srimad Bhagavata*¹¹⁵ gives a list of them in these words,

Amani, amatsaro, daksho, nirmamo, drudhasou hridah,

Asatvaro arthajijnasuh anasuyuh amoghavak,

Jaya apatya griha kshetra svajana dravina dishu,

Udasinah samam pascyan sarveshu artham iva atmanah.

this means, The *sishya* must be not conceited, not jealous, tactful, devoid of the sense of possession, that is, ready and willing and eager to sacrifice everything and own nothing, that is endowed with perfect *Nishta* possessed of patience *Saburi* very firm and intense in his love to the *Guru* , not hasty, earnest in his desire to understand and reach the goal of life, free from envy, reticent-avoiding gossip and idle chat and free from attachment to wife, child, home, lands, kinsmen, and wealth, thinking and feeling that every object will serve his purpose. This is a fairly exhaustive list, but the essence of it consists in two items. The first and foremost is freedom from worldly attachment and the second is intense love to the *Guru*. One who has these will naturally be free from envy, jealousy, hastiness, self conceit, and unrestrained speech, and will not be too much attached to wife, children, kinsmen, or wealth. The attractions of the world reduce or even nullify one's disposition and power to love the *Guru* with one's heart and soul. If one loves God, he does not love Mammon, and if one loves Mammon, he does not love God. You cannot love both God and Mammon. In order to develop this unworldly love or to test the presence of these qualifications, *Gurus* not infrequently employ devices when a person first approaches them for becoming a *sishya*. Partly with this view Baba from 1908 established a threshold of *dakshina* for those approaching him to cross. It was a good test from several stand-points, testing reverence to Baba, freedom from narrow ideas and too much attachment to "mine". A man too much attached to wealth is frightened at the demand for *dakshina* and does not approach Baba. A trifler with too much of self conceit like Londa will not pay it. A person who is ready to pay *dakshina* shows his readiness to part with worldly things and may also be ready to part with his worldly avocations and attachments and thus be prepared for intense love towards and surrender to the *Guru*. The love of the *Guru* is the one thing needed, for *Guru* is the sole *sadhana* The key to the readiness to part with money and get indifferent to relatives in earnestness, and that in turn is based upon faith. If one fully believes the *Guru Gita dicta*¹²² that the

Guru is an absolutely essential prerequisite for one's attaining Bliss or wisdom and to make sure that at death there will be no faltering or pain and that a *Guru* would ensure success and happiness in life and a happy death with his help as *Sathee Akaraka*¹²³ then one would be ready to sacrifice everything in order to secure such a *Guru*, and he would also be free from the vices of envy, jealousy, conceit, hastiness, and neglect of the *Guru* for the sake of relatives. Such a person would be anxious to approach the *Guru* and do service to him. He would not be a *Susrusha vimukha*, that is, he will not be disinclined to serve or service-shunning. Even when a *Guru* is not highly esteemed or has defects, the fullest respect due to a *Guru* must be shown by the *sisnya* who should not become *Susrusha Vimukha*. Baba set a good example in his dealings with, the *Guru* Javar Ali who was not morally his superior though he was very well equipped and learned in Koran and Shariat and who forced Baba to be his *sisnya* taking advantage of his principle of Non-resistance to Evil. Baba whom numbers of people served as worshippers served him by carrying faggots, lighting up fire, cooking, sweeping, and doing all menial services in the presence of all and with sweet complacency. That was due to the fact that Baba had no attachment, no self-conceit, and realised himself as the pure soul that is not demeaned by such services.

Name Manapamanow Sthah

I care not for honour and dishonour¹²⁴ was his view. Baba set the above example and expected people who went to him or to other *Gurus* to show similar earnestness and Baba realised that no one could serve him like that. Once Baba asked, Is there anyone who would serve me as I served my *Gurul* H.S. Dixit, of all the persons mentioned in this book, was one of the best of the *sisnyas* who could stick to the *Guru* and show his intense attachment to the *Guru* and non-attachment to worldly objects including wife, wealth, honour, and fame. Yet Baba kindly critical and watchful in order to develop his *Sthairya* and avoidance of *Asthairya* noted at times that Dixit was *Asthira* wanting in firmness though, H.S.Dixit. had more *Sthairya* than most devotees. Baba said on one occasion, *Vo-chalta*, that is, he is wobbling. He is not yet a full *Sthira*. Fullest faith and

surrender cannot easily get into a mans heart after he has spent 40 years, that is the best part of his life at the bar, in politics and in the world. Most people went to Baba without understanding that he was a *Guru* but merely out of curiosity or to get in a cheap way the benefit of serving a *sadhu* once in a way, and never thought of becoming his *sishtyas*.

Even in respect of some of these, Baba assumed the responsibility of a *Guru*¹²⁵. He once told D.V. Sambhare who had his foibles and faults, 'Once or twice I will warn. If the warning is not heeded, our end will be bitter'. Luckily Sambhare took the hint and dropped his vices. Most of the persons mentioned in this book failed to grasp the exact situation of mutual relations between a *Guru* and a *sishtya* and were not thinking of such ideal relations in their contact with Baba. So despite the very great sacrifices that Baba made, hardly one was found fit to become a thorough *sishtya* and his successor in point of spiritual eminence or at any rate possess a sufficient portion of his qualifications, to continue his mission and service from his *gadi*. As we have discussed at present, the question of a disciple's position to attain spiritual perfection and God-realisation at the hands of a *Guru*, we have to lay emphasis on each one of the above qualifications. If any readers are anxious to have such a *Guru* they will discover that the unseen Sai Baba is still such a *Guru*, and if one puts oneself into contact with him and adopts the fullest possible quantum of qualifications herein described, then he has the very best chance of being moulded by Baba into the perfection of sainthood, perfection of *Atma nishta* and *Brahma nishta sishya*. By his *vatsalya*, Baba is still going on, from his unseen position, undertaking the entire responsibility for the temporal and spiritual welfare of earnest devotees or disciples who get prepared and are eager to meet him.

This is the stage at which the question of the technique for getting a *Guru* may be taken up. The orthodox way of getting a *Guru* is slightly different in different regions. In the South, *Dakshinamurthi puja* and *upasana* are recognised as the best means and resorted to. In Maharashtra, *Datta Charitra Pothi* is considered the best means by which one can get a *Guru*. *Parayana* of *Datta charitra*, which is a description of the lives of the three *avatars* of Datta fills one with *bhakti* towards the *Guru* and has frequently helped

people to obtain a *Guru*. The *Guru* obtained is generally a *Guru* living in the flesh. But when Sri V.D. Bhawe took a regular *Parayana* of *Datta charitra*, he got the vision of a tomb, and he discovered that, it was the tomb of Sai.Baba. But he was dissatisfied with getting only a tomb for the *Guru* instead of having a *Guru* living in the flesh. So, he went to Khedgaonbet of Narayan Maharaja who in a dream sent him back to Shirdi Sai Baba.