

Guru Sishya Mutual Relations and Conduct Rules

The nature of the *Guru-sishya* relation may vary from individual to individual amongst the *gurus* and *sishyas*. But on the whole there are certain well defined principles. We shall here take the best *Guru* and the best *sishya* to show what the mutual relations and conduct rules should be. Sai Baba was the best *sishya* and as *Guru* was the best *Guru* that we can think of. So his behaviour and conduct may be taken to establish rules for others. Guruship of a mere technical or commercial sort cannot lead us to correct behaviour or conduct. If the engagement of a teacher is a mercenary affair, then very few of the following rules would apply, though in any case a teacher must be treated with some respect, whatever his capacity or failings may be. But in respect of the ideal, that is, Baba's ideal, a *Guru* is loved heart and soul by the *sishya* and the *sishyas* forsakes everything including his kith, kin and property, and relies entirely upon the *Guru* for looking after his temporal and spiritual needs. The *Guru* responds

with equally strong love to the *sishya's* love. In such a case, it is not necessary to go to the *sastras* to find out what the mutual relations should be. Perfect love casts out fear and shows preparedness for any sacrifice and every sacrifice. A *sishya* like Aruni is prepared to give up even his life to save the water in the wet fields of his master.

Sariram vasu vijnanam
Vasah Karma Gunan Asun
Gurvartham dharayet yastu
Sa shisyah Na Itarah Smritah.

that is, He who maintains his body, wealth or property, knowledge, residence, work, qualities, and life, barely to serve the purposes of the *Guru*, is called a *sishya* and others are not *sishyas*. The counterpart of this is the *Guru's* duty which *Rishaba* mentions to his sons in Srimad Bhagavata,

Guruh na sasyat Svajano na sasyat
Pita na sasyat Jnani na sasyat
Daivatn na sasyat svapatih na sasyat
Na mochayet yas samupeta mrityum

that is, He is no *Guru* nor kinsman nor a father nor she a mother nor he a husband nor he a God, who does not save one's life when one is threatened with imminent death. The *Guru-sishya* relation is perfectly mutual. If the *sishya* must sacrifice even his life for the beloved *Guru's* property, the *Guru* also sacrifices his life and everything for the sake of *sishyas*. Baba's *Guru* saved him from being stoned to death by ordering the brick that came near his head to stand still in mid air, *Sthambhanam*, and it stood. Baba himself said he would give up his very life to save those who were constantly thinking of him and were absorbed in him¹⁴².

It is noted in G.S. Khaparde's diary that Baba pointed out to him that his body had got emaciated, his digestion impaired, and his food reduced to bare bread and water, due to worries of looking after innumerable devotees. Yet in spite of this, he must, up to the time of his departure from this world go on doing his duty whatever be the consequences. Baba put his hand¹⁴³ into the fire *Dhuni* at *Dwarakamayee* to save the life of a blacksmith's child that had fallen into a

blacksmith's fire elsewhere. And, when asked about the pain and the trouble caused by burning. Baba said that he had saved the child and that God would cure his burn. It is believed that when Baba passed away in October, 1918¹⁴⁴. Tatya Patel was lying ill in a critical condition, and Baba gave up his own life to save the life of Tatya, his much favoured pupil to whose family he was indebted all his life, especially in his earliest days, for sustenance. Giving up life is very dramatic. But what is more painful and requires greater ability perhaps is to devote one's life to constant service not minding any question of health or comfort. That is the real *Seva* referred to in the Bhagavad Gita¹⁴⁵, as commented upon by Baba himself. The *sishta* as stated by Lord Krishna has to render perpetual service to the *Guru*, having dedicated to him at the very beginning his *Tan, Man, Dhan*, and he must not retain any idea when rendering service to the master that he is free either to render or not to render service, but think he is only carrying out his surrender of body and mind by devoting every little power possessed by him to the service of the master. Instances may be found of *seva* in various parts of this book, and the instance quoted in the earliest Sanskrit authorities on the subject of *Guru-sishta* relation is generally the collection by the *sishta*, of fuel for the *Guru*. In ancient days forests abounded and fuel could be got by any one who went into the woods to collect sufficient dried branches. Fuel was wanted for maintaining the. sacrificial fire as well as the fire for cooking the food, and the third fire in each *Ashram*. Therefore, the *Mundakaupanishad* says,

Tat Vijnanartham sa Gurumeva Abhigachchet

Samit panih scrotriyam Brahmanishtam.

that is, For obtaining learning or wisdom, a student ought to go to his *Guru*, well versed in the knowledge of *Brahman* that is, a man of God realisation carrying a bundle of faggots in hand. This might be thought inapplicable to modern days by reason of our reserved forests, but in Baba's case, when he was taken by Javar Ali as a *sishta* to Rahata, Baba did such work, namely, carrying faggots, heating water and cooking the food for his *guru*. And the *Guru Gita* says that one ought to do menial service and stand like a menial servant waiting upon the *Guru* at all times *Nati Dure Nichavat*. That is, like a peon at the beck and call, he must wait

for the *Guru*'s orders. Baba did such work not minding the hardships involved. Baba always set the example in everything that he undertook, and his services to Javar Ali were a good example set to others for what they ought to do for their master. Many pupils however go out from life to *Gurus* as lawyers, retired teachers, and merchants, and they cannot be expected to carry faggots or cook food for their master. But even these are seen in several *Ashrams*, like those in the Himalayas and other hills, to be rendering service of various sorts suited to each one's capacity. The essence consists in self denial and a readiness to serve willingly a master from whom one expects the most valuable aid if not everything. That is why, the Gita lays emphasis on *sevaya* in the above verse. Incidentally it may be noticed that service is only one form in which the disciple chooses to help or favour his master. The master's interest must always be treated as the interest of the pupil and the master's reputation, property, good name and economic welfare, must all be the chief interest that guides the conduct of the pupil. This is the basis of the several rules we shall note below as laid down in the Guru Gita and other books. The pupil has to render service and this is both a gain and a burden. Physically it is a burden. Sentimentally it may be a burden, though it ought not to be felt as a burden by a really enthusiastic disciple. Such enthusiastic devotees take pride and pleasure in serving their master. The gain is chiefly the privilege of *Satsang* of being always in attendance upon and under the eye of a great and powerful *Guru*, a perfect specimen of purity, wisdom, courage and goodness. Such a *Guru*, a real saint, will purify one of taints, *durvasanas*. All previous traces of bad tendencies and habits would be burnt up by such contact. Guru Gita says *Dussanga* has to be avoided by a *sishta* in order to become fit to be a *sishta*. But the traces of *Dussanga* may still be there, and the *Guru* burns up all such evil traces. Apart from bad company and vices, there are a number of defects in the pupil, and the constant companionship and advice of the *Guru* will remove these and make the *sishta* fit to take further steps on to reach the highest goal of knowledge and perfection. The *sishta* has generally, in spite of himself, a tendency to be proud of his caste, his learning, his good qualities, his wealth and his family. These are called

Ashtapasas of the *sishya*, and the *Guru* has to bum up all these eight pasas or knots, obstacles or hindrances of the pupil. The *Guru Gita* says in verse¹²⁹,

Karuna Khadga patena
Chitva pasa ashtakam sisoh
Samyak Ananda Janakah
Sadguruh sa Abhidhiyate.

that is, The *Guru's* grace is the sword with which he cuts off the eight bonds of his child, the pupil and thereby provides for his happiness. Such a person is called a *Sadguru*. The eight bonds are stated to be,

Daya compassion wrongly directed like Arjuna's compassion for his foes in battle
Shanka doubts,
Bhayam fear,
Lajja false sense of shame and shyness,
Ninda tendency to scoff or find fault,
Kula pride of family, caste,
Seelam pride of high breeding and
Dhanam pride of wealth.

Of course, these are only some instances of the teacher's attention to his pupil's nature. The perfect *guru* has himself perfect freedom from all vices and defects, from all ignorance and delusions, and by constantly being with such a *Guru*, a competent *sishya* absorbs all the qualities of the *Guru* in himself. By intimate contact between two loving people, each absorbs the likeness of the other. They talk alike, they think alike, they feel alike, and they behave alike. In consequence they become of the same nature. A powerful fearless, ever self-sacrificing, ever luminous, and calm *Guru* turns his *sishya* into an equally fearless, self sacrificing, ever luminous and calm person. *Jnana* thus flows from the *Guru* on to the *sishya* through these moral traits as also by the *Gurus* direct action on the soul. The *Guru* engages in *dhyana* and *Atma Nishta* and the *sishya* by intently concentrating on the *Guru* gets his *Jnana Nishta*. He is able to shake off all attachment, become thoroughly *sattvic*, and to rise to the fullest understanding and appreciation of *Brahma Jnana* or *Brahma Nishta*. The *Mahavakyas* which

get not merely repeated but also embodied in the *Guru* soak into the *sisya* and he also becomes an embodiment of them. This is the highest achievement of the *Guru*. It is for that the *Guru* is approached by the *sisya*. But many other feats are achieved before and in addition to this final achievement. The *Guru's* grace is bread and milk to the pupil and the *Guru* is treated as the only *sadhana* by him. These are not merely the words of Baba but are also found in the *Guru Gita* written centuries ago in *Skanda Parana*. Baba though never taught reading, was an All-Realiser and did not require any study of any *purana* for his purpose, being thoroughly absorbed in his *Guru* who gave him all knowledge, wisdom, and realisation which is the goal of all discipleship. Baba never having touched a single book, so far as we know, in his life and was never taught even the alphabet of any language, knew languages, thoughts, had all achievements, intellectual, moral, mental and could interpret any part of any scripture¹⁴⁶. How did he get that knowledge? By *Guru seva*! That was his answer. So, *Seva*, though looked down upon as something menial and disgusting and as a thing to be avoided by fashionable people, is the potent means by which Baba achieved the highest goal of life. One of the disqualifications, noted in a previous chapter, for a pupil is *Seva Vimuka*, that is, Disinclination to serve. One sees what a fatal drawback it will be in a *sisya* to assert himself and say 'I will not serve'. Such a person lacks humility and can achieve nothing. Tasting the *pada tirtham* of the *Guru* is said to be the means of attaining knowledge.

Perfect faith in the *Guru* and treating him as God, enables a man to take the water used for washing His feet, either in his mouth or on his head, as being more valuable than all the *tirthas* in the world and thus derives the fullest benefit. That is, to get rid of all bad *vasanas* or evil tendencies and by purity of his heart to be fitted for perfect *sattva* and illumination.

Conduct rules are the result of very great respect and regard for the *Guru*. *Puja* is enjoined. Avoid familiarity. Avoid contact with the irreverent and avoid listening to *ninda*, that is blame or disrespect of *Guru* or of saints.

Kularnava Tantra says, If any talk ill of the *Guru* shut yours ears and go away very far so as not to hear the talk and then have *Guru Namasmarana* to restore *Bhakti*¹⁴¹. Baba endorses this view.

MUTUAL RELATIONS OF GURU AND SHISYA

We have already noted that the *Guru* has to be treated as not in the least different from God, but as identical with God, on the authority of the Upanishads and numerous other works. A proper *sishya* must have therefore *Para bhakti* and *Dridha Sauhruda*, that is, strong devotion and attachment to his *Guru*. The latter returns the love and proves it by looking after and undertaking to look after everything that concerns the disciple temporally or spiritually. Behaviour naturally follows this heart felt love. The *sishya* feels there is nothing higher than the *Guru*

Na Guror Adhikam Na Guror Adhikam,
Idam eva Sivam, Idam eva Sivam,
Idam eva Sivam, Idam eva Sivam
Viditam, Viditam, Vijanam, Vijanam Viditam,
Viditam, Vijanam, Vijanam.¹⁴⁸

this means, There is nothing higher than the *Guru*. This is God, This is unique, This is known and experienced.

By meditation *Guru jnana* dawns upon the pupil¹⁴⁹. The *Guru Upadishta Marga* that is, the direction of the *Guru* has of course, to be strictly followed for purifying the heart. The ever changing phenomena are fleeting and unworthy of attachment. Hence turn the mind away from them on to the *Real Brahman*. This advice of the *Guru* must be followed¹⁵⁰. Peace of mind follows by *Guru's* grace¹⁵¹. The numerous directions in the *Guru Gita* as to the propriety of behaviour follow from the above attitude and relationship. The conduct rules are as follows.

A *sishya* should not and can never be blaming his *Guru*, and should not feel pride, envy, jealousy, hatred, contempt or entertain any similar feelings towards the *Guru*. Of course, he cannot threaten the *Guru*¹⁵², nor treat himself as equal¹⁵³. But on the other hand, he must fall at the *Guru's* feet, drink the

Padatirtha water washing the *Guru's* feet and always think of the *Guru* as long as his body lasts.

Guru is the *Sathee Akaraka* that is, the last moment helper, the one person or force that can help to save the *sishya* at the moment of his death and make the end happy, which wife, children, wealth, fame, cannot positively do, which infact they render painful. If the *Guru* has been rejected or forgotten, then at the last moment, the *sishya's* mind will be greatly perturbed and agitated or frightened¹⁵⁴.

The *Guru's* orders must be strictly obeyed and carried out personally and not delegated to others. Nothing should be done without consulting the *Guru*.

In the *Guru's* presence, the *sishya* must avoid:

Playing the part of a master and giving *upadesa* or orders,

Drinking spirituous liquor,

Sauntering about jauntily,

Shaving,

Placing oneself on a cot,

Stretching one's legs,

Getting oneself shampooed or having other similar enjoyment,

Dressing foppishly or ornamenting oneself,

One must day and night attend upon the *Guru* like a peon.

One must not take the *Guru's* property.

What he gives must be respectfully received.

The *Guru's padukas, asana* must all be respected and not touched with the *sishya's* feet.

When the *Guru* moves, the *Sishya*, like a shadow, must follow him.

The *Guru's uchchishta* remnant of his eatings, must be consumed reverently as sacrificial offerings and not given away¹⁵⁵.

No untrue or harsh, proud word or command should be uttered in the *Guru's* presence.

The *Guru* must always be addressed as *Prabhu, Deva, Kulesa, Swami, Raja Maharajah* with reverence¹⁵⁶.

The *Guru* saves the *sishtya* from curses of Gods and men and even from death¹⁵⁷.

The *Guru's* name must be used as the Supreme *Mantra*¹⁵⁸ which will work wonders. By bare service to the *Guru*, the import of the *Mahavakyas* will be absorbed by the *sishtya*¹⁵⁹. The *Guru* is full of *Mahavakya* illumination and the *sishtya's* torch is kindled from that flame and *Atma Jnana* is the result¹⁶⁰.

The *Guru* must be meditated on, *dhyana*, and bowed to *pranama*, as being the Universe and all Gods¹⁶¹ as *Paramatma Swarupam*, as *Satchitdananda Bhavatita*, *Nitya Puma*, *Nirakara*, *Nirguna*, within one's own self¹⁶². This is illustrated by a mirror reflecting a mirror, *Soham* represents that state¹⁶³. The *Guru* must be treated as *Angushta Matrah purushah*¹⁶⁴, in the heart¹⁶⁵. According to *Bhramara kita nyaya*, *Srimad Bhagavata*¹⁶⁶ the *sishtya* thinking of the *Guru* becomes That, *Tat*¹⁶⁷

Yatra Yatra manodehi dharayet
Sakalam dhiya Snehat
dveshat Bhayatvaapi
yati tat tat sarupatam.

that is, Intense thought by love, hate or fear on a form transforms one into that form

Guru dhyanam tatahkritva
Svayam Brahma Mayo bhavet
Pinde pade tatha rupe
Muktas tena nasamscaayah.¹⁶⁸

this means, The *sishtya* becomes a liberated soul in *Pinda*, that is in *Kundalini Sakti*, in *Pada*, that is by reaching the *Hamsa padam* and in *Rupa*, that is by attaining .the *bindu* and finally becoming the *Rupatita*.

The above summarises the conduct rules for the *sishtya* and the benefits he attains thereby. Whether these rules are contained in *Saivaite purana*, *Skanda Purana*, or in *Bhagavata Vaishnavite Purana*, the course of conduct prescribed and the fruits are the same.