

Stories
on
Guru Disciple Relationship



Eklavya paying guru-dakshina to Dronacharya

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Guru - Disciple Relationship

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1. THE MOST PERFECT GURU AND MOST PERFECT DISCIPLE

Once there was a man who searched the whole world to find a Perfect Guru. But, unfortunately he could not find one. All were either greedy, deceivers, fools or madmen. Finally he did find one who fulfilled all his expectations. A friend of his asked him, "What made you decide that he was perfect?" He replied, "Oh, after talking to him, I came to that conclusion." "And what did he say to you?" his friend asked. "Well, he told me that I was the most perfect disciple in the world!"

2. DHAUMYA TESTS UPAMANYU AND ARUNI

The sage Dhaumya of Mahabharata fame was the high priest of the Pandavas. He had a big ashram and many disciples. Many children were sent there to study. Regular classes were held and most of the children were asked to attend. But there were two who were entrusted with other jobs and did not attend the classes. These were Upamanyu who was given the charge of the cows and Aruni who looked after the cultivation. The other boys made fun at their apparent dull-headedness, thinking that they were unfit for study, but those two boys were happy and satisfied with their work. They were surrendered to their Guru's will.

Years passed and still these two boys discharged their duties faithfully. The other boys continued to make fun of them. Dhaumya was aware of the situation and decided to show their greatness to the rest of the ashramites. He called Upamanyu one day and questioned him, "Upamanyu, what do you eat that you are growing so fat?" "Sir, I eat only what the ashram Mother gives me," replied the boy. "Well then, do not eat

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anything from the ashram hereafter," said the Guru. A week passed when the master called the disciple again. "One week has passed and you still have not lost any weight. What do you eat now-a-days?" asked Dhaumya. "Swami, when I am very hungry I go out and beg for my food," replied Upamanyu. "Don't you know that you are supposed to give such food to the Guru? Henceforth, bring it here to me." But Dhaumya would not give any of the begged food to the boy to eat. After some days the Guru called the boy again. "Now what are you eating?" The boy replied, "When I am very hungry I drink a little milk from the cows." "Don't do that in future," said the Guru. Another week passed and the Guru called the boy. "You are still looking healthy. What are you eating now-a-days?" "Sir, after the calves have finished drinking the cow's milk, there will be froth on their mouth. I lick up that froth and thus satisfy my hunger," replied the boy. "Do not do that hereafter," told Dhaumya.

The poor Upamanyu could not find anything to eat in the forest. His hunger also became unbearable. He therefore drank the milk of a poisonous tree but this resulted in his losing his

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sight. One evening while bringing in the cows, the blind boy fell into a dry well. The cows reached the ashram without him. Seeing him missing, the Guru went out in search of him calling, "Upamanyu, where are you?"

Upamanyu was thrilled to hear his master's voice. "Master, here I am. I cannot see anything but I can hear your voice." "Son, meditate on the twin gods Aswini Kumaras and you will become all right," told the Guru. Upamanyu did as he was told and immediately the Aswins appeared and restored his sight. He came out of the well and prostrated at his Master's feet. Dhaumya's heart overflowed with affection for his obedient disciple and he said, "May your knowledge be perfect in all the Scriptures." In this way, Upamanyu became a learned scholar without even attending a class. He is an example of implicit faith in the Guru.

Now what about Aruni? Dhaumya once went out to inspect the fields and told Aruni that the water in the fields should not be allowed to escape at any cost. A few days later there was a heavy rain and the bund around the field started to give way. Try as he may, Aruni could not stop the water from flowing out. Finally, in desperation, he laid

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his body down in the mud where the bund was weak and in this way he plugged up the leak. The next morning the Guru and his disciples went out into the fields to search for the missing boy, calling his name out loud. Finding him buried in the mud, the Guru pulled him out and hugged him affectionately. "May all the Scriptures come to you at your beck and call," was the blessing that the Guru gave Aruni while holding his hand on the boy's head. It was this Aruni who later became the famous Upanishadic sage Uddalaka.

3. SUTIKSHNA BOWS TO GURU BEFORE GOD

There is a devotee in the Ramayana named Sutikshna, a disciple of Bharadwaja. One day he was absorbed in meditation when Bharadwaja appeared at the door with Sri Rama. Sutikshna had to think for a moment to whom to bow first, God or Guru. He bowed to his Guru first because it was his Guru who had showed him God.

4. DISCIPLE REALIZES GOD BY SHOVELLING COWDUNG

A man went to a Guru desiring instruction. The Guru said, "Thou art That." "Is that all?" asked the man. He was not satisfied and went to another Guru who understood his condition. "Well, you will have to work very hard before I will instruct you," said this Guru. The disciple was ready to do anything. "All right, the only thing you have to do is shovel cow dung for twelve years," said the Guru and gave the man a shovel. After twelve years, the Guru called the man and told him, "Thou art That." The disciple immediately realized Brahman as his own Self.

5. EKALAVYA'S DEVOTION TO DRONACHARYA

Dronacharya refused to instruct Ekalavya in the science of archery on the grounds that the boy did not belong to the warrior (kshatriya) caste; he was a tribal boy from the forest. Ekalavya went back to his village, made a clay image of Drona and worshipped it with such concentration and dedication that he was able to imbibe all of Drona's skills and teachings, even the most secret.

One day a dog ran through the ashram of Drona with arrows shot between its teeth. This wonder was seen by everyone. Drona asked who had done it. Only an expert like himself could have done so. Everyone searched the area for the master archer and finally came across Ekalavya. "Where did you learn such skillful archery?" asked Drona. Ekalavya showed Drona the clay image that he had been worshipping. "Though you rejected me, I did not reject you and have learned by your grace," replied Ekalavya.

6. PURANPOLYA GETS EKNATH'S GRACE

Gauba was an illiterate and voracious boy who loved a kind of sweet called puranpoli. He used to nag his poor, widowed mother for the sweets all of the time. Finally, out of disgust and desperation, she took him to the house of the great saint Eknath and requested him to look after the boy and told him about the boy's craziness for puranpolis. Eknath saw some dormant spirituality in the boy and accepted him as a disciple. In Eknath's house he was able to get puranpolis everyday and therefore was given the name Puranpolya. He became extremely devoted to Eknath and served and worshipped him at all times.

Eknath had been writing a commentary on the Ramayana called the Bhavartha Ramayana. Now he knew that the time for his departure from this world had arrived, but he had still not finished the book. Touching Puranpolya's head, Eknath transmitted his spiritual power to him. After Eknath's departure, Puranpolya completed the commentary and his verses were virtually indistinguishable from those written by his Guru.

7. KABIR SHOWS KAMAL TO BE A PERFECT DISCIPLE

Some devotees came to Kabir one day and asked him, "Who is a true disciple?" Kabir called his son and foremost disciple, Kamal. "I have dropped my spindle while weaving. Bring me a lamp so that I can find it." It was broad daylight yet Kamal brought a lamp without questioning. "Kamal, today many devotees will be coming here for lunch. Please prepare some sweets and add a handful of salt to them," said Kabir. Kamal obeyed implicitly. Turning to the devotees, Kabir said, "Don't you think that Kamal knew that my commands were ridiculous? But the moment you begin to obey the Guru's command without question, that moment meditation comes to you spontaneously and the Lord grants His darshan."

8. NAMDEV HUMBLLED AND GETS A GURU

Namdev had been having the vision of the Lord at Pandharpur since his childhood and therefore had a bit of self-pride that he was something special. The Lord decided that it was necessary for Namdev to have a Guru. A feast for the saints was arranged at the village of the potter-saint Gora, whereat the saints were each tested by Gora the potter. Jnaneswar asked Gora to test each of the 'pots' to see which ones were fully baked in the Knowledge of Brahman. They were asked to sit in a line while Gora hit each one of them on the head with a stick. All of them humbly submitted to this, but Namdev refused to be hit. All the saints laughed at him, calling him 'half-baked.' He went running to the Lord who comforted him and told him that unless he attained Enlightenment, he would not understand the significance of the saints' actions. For that purpose, He asked Namdev to go to Vishoba Kechara who was staying in a Shiva temple on the outskirts of some village.

Reaching there, he entered the temple and saw an old man lying down with his feet resting on the Shiva Lingam. Indignant at this sacrilege,

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Namdev clapped his hands to wake up the old man. Waking with a start, the old man saw Namdev and said, "Oh, you are that Namdev who Vittal has sent, aren't you?" Namdev was shocked and thought that this man must be a great being. He said, "You seem to be a great man, but why are you resting your feet on the Lingam?" "Oh, are they on the Lingam? Please remove them for me. I am very tired," said the saint. Namdev lifted the old man's legs and placed them in various spots, but wherever he put them, a Shiva Lingam appeared on the spot. Finally, he put them in his own lap and himself attained the State of Shiva.

Please note that it was only after he surrendered himself to the Guru and touched his feet did Enlightenment come to him. Now Vishoba Kechara asked him to go. He returned to his village and spent most of his time in his house. Noticing that Namdev was not coming to the temple anymore, Vittal went to his house and enquired why. "You cannot fool me anymore, O Lord. Where is it that You are not? And can I exist in any way apart from You?" It was to learn this lesson that the Lord sent him to a Guru.

9. IMPORTANCE OF A GURU ACCORDING TO GURU NANAK

One day Govinda Singh asked his teacher Guru Nanak about the importance of the Guru. "The better you become as a disciple, the better you will understand about the Guru," replied Nanak. He then gave a jewel to him and asked him to take it to the market to get it priced by various people and then bring it back. A flower seller offered Govinda one rupee; a fruit vendor offered him three apples; a petty goldsmith offered him a hundred rupees while another jeweller offered him a thousand rupees. One of the best jewellers offered him twenty-thousand rupees while the best jeweller in the town told him, "This is invaluable. Don't sell it for any amount."

**10. GRACE ON TOTAKACHARYA BY
SANKARACHARYA**

Giri was a humble and devoted disciple of Sankaracharya. One day he was washing the sage's clothes when the scriptural class began. The other students made fun of him in front of the Acharya. Sankara felt compassionate towards Giri and wanted to teach a lesson to the proud students. Even as Giri was washing the clothes, the knowledge of all the scriptures spontaneously flashed on his mind due to the special transmission of Grace by his Guru. He came running to the class reciting beautiful Sanskrit verses composed extemporaneously in the difficult totaka metre. The other students were humbled. Giri was later given the name Totakacharya.

11. GURU ARJAN TESTS BHAI MANJH

Bhai Manjh was a wealthy landlord who owned a whole village. His form of devotion was to worship the tomb of a holy man named Sakhi Sarwar. But one day he heard the Sikh Guru Arjan during a satsang which made such a profound impression on him that he decided to seek initiation from the Guru.

Guru Arjan was an omniscient being yet he asked him whom he was following at present, to which he replied the name of the deceased saint. "I will grant you initiation after you have gone back to your house and dismantled your puja room," said the Guru. Manjh ran to his house as fast as he could and tore down every brick of the room. A number of people who had gathered to watch him solemnly warned him, "Bhai, you will have to pay very heavily for the desecration of this holy room. We would not like to be in your shoes."

Manjh boldly replied, "I have done it willingly and am ready to suffer any and all consequences." When he returned to the Guru, the Master bestowed initiation on him.

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But it was destined that he should be put to still further tests. Soon his horse died, then some of his bullocks. Thieves took some of his possessions. Then the people began to taunt him, saying, "This is the result of the disrespect shown to Sakhi Sarwar. You should go and rebuild the temple in your home." But none of this bothered Manjh. He said, "I do not care what happens. My Guru is all-knowing and he knows what is best. Of that, nothing can shake my belief."

But one misfortune then followed another, and before long he was not only destitute, but owed money to many people. All of them demanded immediate repayment saying, "Either pay us or leave the village immediately." Many of his friends pleaded with him saying, "If you would only rebuild the temple, things would be sure to take a turn for the better." But Manjh remained adamant and preferred to leave the village. So he and his wife and daughter packed up their few remaining belongings and found shelter in another village. As he had been a rich landlord, he had never had to learn a trade. But it was now necessary for him to earn some money, so he

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began to make his livelihood by cutting and selling grass.

Several months went by in this way, when one day Guru Arjan sent Manjh a letter which was delivered by one of his disciples. To the disciple, the Guru said, "Please be sure to demand twenty rupees as an offering before you give Bhai Manjh the letter. If he does not pay you, bring back the letter." Manjh was delighted to see the letter, but he had no money to pay the fee. He asked his wife what to do and she said, "I will take my ornaments and those of my daughter and sell them to the goldsmith." The goldsmith offered them exactly twenty rupees which was given to the disciple. Manjh received the letter, kissed it and held it to his heart. At that moment he went into samadhi.

But the Guru wished to test him still further, and so he told one of his disciples, "Ask Bhai Manjh to come to my ashram." Manjh and his family ran to the Guru's ashram and settled down there. They went to work in the kitchen cleaning vessels and cutting firewood. After a few days, the Guru asked, "Where does Bhai Manjh take his food?" "He eats with all the rest of us, getting his food from the free kitchen," replied one of the

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disciples. "It seems to me," said the Guru, "that he is not doing real service, for then he would expect nothing in return for his work. He is charging us for his wages, which he takes in the form of food."

When Manjh heard this from his wife, he said, "I want nothing in return for service to the beloved Guru, who has given me the priceless gem of my mantra. We will get our food by some other means." So from that day onwards, he went to the forest each night to cut wood and sold it in the bazaar and used the proceeds to buy food. During the daytime, he and his wife continued to work in the kitchen.

Some time later, Manjh had gone to the forest to cut wood when there was a great wind storm. The wind was so fierce that it blew him and his bundle of wood into a well. The Guru was aware of everything and called some of his disciples and told them to get a board and some rope and follow him to the forest.

When they reached the forest, the Guru said, "Bai Manjh is at the bottom of this well. Shout down to him and tell him that we will lower a board tied to a rope. Tell him to cling to the board and we will put him out." He also added some

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words privately to one disciple, the one who was to call into the well.

After shouting into the well, the disciple added, "Brother, see the wretched condition you are in. And it is all due to the way the Guru has treated you. Why don't you forget a Guru who does such things?" "What? Forget the beloved Guru? Never!" shouted Bhai Manjh. "And as for you, ungrateful one, please never again speak so disrespectfully of the Guru in my presence. It makes me suffer agony to hear such shameful words."

Manjh was then asked to catch hold of the board but he insisted that the wood be pulled out of the well first. "It is for the Guru's kitchen and I am afraid that it will get wet and not burn," he said. Finally he came out of the well and came face to face with the Satguru who said to him,

"Brother, you have gone through many trials and have met all of them with courage, faith and devotion to the Satguru. Please ask for some gift or boon. You have earned it and it would make me very happy to give it to you."

At this, Bhai Manjh fell on his knees before his beloved Master and with tears streaming down

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his cheeks, he exclaimed, "What boon could I wish for but you alone? Nothing else could ever be of any interest to me."

Upon hearing these words spoken from his heart, the Guru embraced Bhai Manjh and said,

"Manjh is the darling of his Guru,
And Guru is Manjh's only love.
Manjh now, like the Guru,
Is a ship that carries people safely across
The ocean of life and death."

Kabir prayed, "Give me the gift of devotion, O my Guru. Nothing else do I desire except Thy service day and night."

"If ye love me and keep my commandments, then are ye my disciples indeed," said the Christ.

12. BHAI GURUDAS TESTED BY GURU ARJAN

Bhai Gurudas was the uncle and devoted disciple of the Sikh Guru Arjan. At one time he composed the following couplets and read them to the Guru:

If a mother is impious, it is not for her son to punish her;

If a cow swallows a diamond, her stomach should not be cut open;

If a husband is unfaithful, the wife should never imitate him or lose her chastity;

If a high caste lady takes to wine, people should not take it ill;

If the Guru test his disciple, the disciple's faith should not waver.

Guru Arjan listened attentively as Gurudas read. When he finished, the Guru thought, "All these things are easier said than done. Let me test his faith." Turning to Gurudas, he said, "Uncle, I have to buy some horses at Kabul. Will you be able to do this for me?" "Why not? Certainly," replied Gurudas.

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Accordingly, the Guru filled several bags with gold sovereigns. Gurudas counted them, and then sealed the bags and put them into strong wooden boxes. These were loaded onto the backs of mules and he along with a number of disciples started out on the long and arduous journey to Kabul from Lahore where the Guru was residing. In due course, after passing through the Khyber Pass, they reached Kabul among the mountains of Hindu Kush.

In the great horse market of this ancient city, Gurudas bargained with the horse traders and finally purchased the best horses that he could find. These were taken by the other disciples who were to take them slowly to Lahore. Meanwhile, Gurudas asked the horse traders to come to his tent to be paid. Leaving them outside, he entered the tent to get the gold.

Opening a few of the boxes, he took out the needed bags but felt that something was wrong. He opened all of the bags and to his horror he found that every one of them was filled with pebbles instead of gold. He was now beside himself with fear, for he knew the savage nature of the horse dealers. "There they are waiting outside the tent for

me to pay them, and if I don't, they will cut me to pieces," he thought. He taxed his brain and finally decided that the only way that he might escape was to cut the back of the tent and escape through the hole. He did not even pray to his Guru for help, so full of terror was he. Jumping through the hole, he escaped and ran away at full speed. Ashamed to face his Guru, he passed through Lahore and made his way all the way to Kashi, hundreds of miles to the east.

Meanwhile, the other members of his party entered his tent to find out why he was delaying in paying the horse dealers. There they found all of the boxes open and filled with gold, but there was no sign of Gurudas. They also saw the hole in the back of the tent. They then paid the horse traders and made their way back to Lahore where they told Guru Arjan about all that had happened.

After Gurudas had settled down in Kashi, he started to expound the great truths of the scriptures in public places and soon attracted a large crowd. Finally, even the Governor of Kashi also came to hear and admire his beautiful discourses.

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After a few months, Guru Arjan sent a letter to the Governor of Kashi in which he wrote, "There is a thief of mine in Kashi and I am writing to ask you kindly to take him prisoner, tie his hands and send him to me. You will not have to search hard for this thief. The mere reading of this letter in places of public assembly and religious discourses will find him, for the thief will himself speak out upon hearing the letter read."

In due course, the letter was read where Gurudas was giving a discourse to a large crowd of people. But the moment he heard the letter, he stood up and said, "I am the Guru's thief." His listeners were stunned. "You could never be a thief, for you are a holy man. The thief must be someone else," they said. But Gurudas insisted, "No, it is I who am the thief. there is no doubt about it. Please tie my hands so that I do not escape."

No one came forward to do so, for it was unthinkable to tie up a holy man like a common robber. So Gurudas unbound his turban and cutting it in two, he tied his own hands with it. Tied like this, he then happily made his way to

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Lahore. When he finally reached there and stood before the Guru, the Guru said,

"Brother, please repeat those couplets you read to me just before I asked you to go to Kabul."

But Gurudas, having been tested and put through some bitter experiences to try his love and faith, fell at the Guru's feet and exclaimed,

"If a mother gives poison to her son,
Who is it that will save him?
If the watchman breaks into the house,
Who can protect it?
If a guide misleads the traveller,
Who can set him on the right path?
If the fence starts to eat the crop, who can
save it?
Even so, if the Guru tests the disciples,
Who can help them to remain steadfast?"

Only the Satguru, through his spiritual power and grace, can keep the disciple steadfast and filled with devotion under trying circumstances.

13. SON LEARNS STEALING

Noticing that his father was growing old, the son of a burglar said, "Father, teach me your trade so that when you retire I may carry on the family tradition."

The father did not reply but that night he took the boy along with him to break into a house. Once inside, he opened a closet and asked his son to find out what was inside. No sooner had the lad stepped in then the father slammed the door shut and bolted it making such a noise in the process that the whole house was awakened. Then he himself slipped quietly away.

Inside the closet the boy was terrified, angry and puzzled as to how he was going to make his escape. Then an idea came to him. He began to make a noise like a cat; whereupon a servant lit a candle and opened the closet to let the cat out. The boy jumped out as soon as the closet door opened and everyone gave chase. Observing a well beside the road he threw a large stone into it and hid in the shadows; then stole away while his pursuers peered into the depths hoping to see the burglar drown.

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Back home again the boy forgot his anger in his eagerness to tell his story. But his father said. "Why tell me the tale? You are here. That is enough. You have learnt the trade."

14. SHIBLI TESTS TWO DISCIPLES, ONE FIT AND ONE UNFIT

Two men once came to a Mahatma named Shibli for initiation. The saint saw that one was deserving and the other was not. He therefore told them to come to him separately, since each would have to be dealt with differently.

When the first one came, the swami asked him to recite a verse in praise of God. "What would you like me to say?" asked the man. "God is One; there is none except Him; and Shibli is His prophet" said Shibli.

"O God, save me from this!" shouted the man. "Why do you speak like this? What do you mean? Are you out of your mind?"

The saint said, "Please, friend, why do you speak like this?"

Without hesitation, the man said, "Why, it is perfectly plain to see. What are you? Nothing but a common sadhu. There are hundreds like you, without any particular greatness. Yet you claim to be a holy prophet of God Himself. And now, you imposture, why did you utter such words?" demanded the man.

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"I uttered them because I was almost on the point of giving away a priceless gift to an undeserving person. My friend, you should not have come to me. It would be better if you would go to some priest in a temple," said the saint with great kindness.

When the second man came, Shibli asked him to repeat the same verse. "O, what a great pity! If you are only a prophet, then I have no need of you," said the man. "What was it then, that you were seeking, brother?" asked the saint. "Why, I was looking for one who is one with God. I have been told that such God-men exist and that they can teach their disciples how to become one with God. I heard that you were one such man, but now it turns out that you are only a prophet."

Sadly, the man turned to go. Shibli then touched him on the shoulder and the man experienced a deep ecstasy. Shibli said to him, "Brother, you are the deserving one for initiation. Have no doubts; I will initiate you into the mysteries of God." Only the Guru who is one with God deserves to be called a Guru and only such a one can take us to Him.

15. SUKADEV'S TEST BY JANAKA

Sukhadev was the son of the great rishi Vedavyasa, and due to his previous samskaras, he was endowed with True Knowledge even while in the womb of his mother. As a child, he used to spend all of his time meditating in the forest near his father's ashram.

One day while he was meditating, a desire arose in his mind to go to Vaikuntha to see Lord Vishnu. However, when he reached there, the gatekeepers informed Lord Vishnu who came and told him, "We are very sorry, but you have no Guru and those without a Guru can never enter here."

Suka returned to his father and told him what had happened. He was a bit vain and proud, thinking that he was the son of a great rishi, that he had already done so many years of tapas, and so there was no need of a Guru. However, as Lord Vishnu Himself had said that a Guru was necessary, Suka sought his father's advice as to who he should select as his Guru. His father told him,

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"There is only one Guru for you and that is King Janaka of Videha."

"Father, have you lost your mind? What is there in common between a king and a sannyasi? How can I take him as my Guru?" asked Suka.

"There is nobody else who could be your Guru," replied the sage.

Twelve times the sage sent the boy to King Janaka and twelve times he returned even before reaching there due to his doubts and misgivings. Once he even reached the palace, but on seeing the richness of the palace and the great assemblage of worldly people, he thought that the king must be one who is given up to sensual pleasure, and so he was not prepared to accept him as his Master.

The more doubts and suspicions one has about a Realized Soul, the more one harms oneself. Suspecting or slandering a Mahatma destroys one's merits (punyam). When Suka was being sent back to the king for the thirteenth time, the sage Narada took pity on him. He disguised himself as an old brahmin and was carrying a basket of earth on his head. As he approached a small river which was flowing nearby, he would throw the earth into it and it would get washed away. Seeing this, Suka

accosted him and said, "Look here, old man. First put some sticks across the stream and then some large lumps of earth on them and then only throw the earth on that. Otherwise it will be only fruitless labour if you are trying to build a dam across the river the way you are doing it."

"I am only losing my day's effort," said Narada, "but there is a young man who is a bigger fool than I am, and he is Suka Deva, the son of Vedavyasa. For he has already lost twelve of the fourteen merits that he possessed. He has only two left." When Suka heard this, he fell down in a faint. When he regained consciousness, he was all alone, but he remembered the words of the old man and rushed to the king's palace.

Still having some pride that he was the son of Vedavyasa, he thought that the king would come and meet him on the way. But no one came to meet him. When the king was informed of his arrival, he gave the orders, "Let him stand right where he is." Suka just happened to be standing on the spot where the palace garbage was thrown over the wall, and as a result, it was not long before he was buried under the refuse.

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Four days passed in this way when the king enquired, "What happened to Suka who had come to see me?" "He has been standing in the same spot, Maharaj," replied the servant. "Let him be extricated from the heap of rubbish, bathed, dressed and brought here," ordered the king.

King Janaka, knowing that Suka was proud of his renunciation, created an illusion. Just after Suka entered the room, a servant came running in with a report that the entire town was on fire. "It's all God's Will," said Janaka coolly. After a short while another report came that all of the king's courts were reduced to ashes. "God's Will," said the king. Then the news came that the king's own palace was on fire. "All God's Will," repeated the king. Suka was thinking what a fool the king was not to do anything about the fire. Suka grabbed his bag and started to run away to save himself from the approaching fire, but the king caught hold of his arm.

"Look," said the king, "all of my wealth and possessions have been burnt to ashes, but I haven't bothered about them. Now that the fire has reached the palace, you have taken hold of this small bundle of your possessions with the intention

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of saving them. After all, what are your things worth? Now, who exactly is the greater renunciate - you or I?"

Suka realized that the king was a true renunciate and sought initiation from him but the king said, "You do not deserve it."

Now the king ordered that a great festival be held in honour of Suka's visit to the city. Festivities, dances, plays and various stalls were set up. All was to entertain Suka. When everything was ready, the king ask Suka to go through the city and enjoy everything, "But," said the king, "please carry this full cup of milk with you wherever you go." He then bade the soldiers who were to accompany Suka,

"Take Suka through every part of the city. Let him see everything and miss nothing. But if he should spill a single drop of milk from this cup, my orders are that you should behead him on the spot."

Suka went out with the soldiers and came back in the evening. "I am sure that you had a nice time? How did you enjoy everything?"

"O king, as it turned out, I saw nothing, for at every moment all of my thoughts were

concentrated on this cup, lest I should spill a drop and lose my life," said Suka.

"Suka, that is how I live in the midst of all this luxury and grandeur. I see nothing. For at every moment my thoughts are centered on the Lord lest I too should lose my life," said the king. "Imagine that the cup is death, the milk is your mind, and the festivities are the ephemeral pleasures and splendours of the world. I pass through this world with great caution, so that the milk of the mind is not spilled, or agitated, and all attention is concentrated every moment on Him. For even a moment spent in not thinking of Him would be death to me."

The king could now see that Suka's mind was cleansed of pride and was ready, so he initiated him.

16. GURU AMARDAS HAS DISCIPLES BUILT MUD PLATFORMS

When the Sikh Guru Amardas was 105 years old, he wanted to appoint a successor, but as there were many candidates, he decided to put them all through a test. He asked each one of them to get some earth and build a mud platform.

Everyone ran and got a basket of earth and then built a platform. When all of them were completed, the Guru said, "I am sorry, but these platforms are not as good as I expected them to be. Will you please tear them down and build them over again?"

This was done and then the Guru said, "This is not a suitable place for these. Please tear them down and build them on that piece of land over there."

When this was done, the Guru came to inspect them. "Hmm, I don't like this piece of land either. So why don't you build your platforms over there?" said the Guru.

Many of the disciples thought that the Guru had become senile in his old age and was no longer in full possession of his senses. So much so, many

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of them abandoned the work, leaving only a few. But even when these few built up their platforms, the Guru continued to reject them again and again.

After some time, there was only one man left, a middle-aged man named Ramdas. Seeing him continue to build and tear down platforms, the other disciples taunted and jeered at him, telling him how foolish he was to try to please the Guru, since he did not seem to be in his right mind. Ramdas stopped his work for a moment and said to them,

"Brother, the whole world is blind, but if there is one man who can see, it is the Satguru. Then, too, the whole world is mad. It is only the Satguru who is sane." They then told him that both he and the Guru were no doubt out of their minds. "You may say whatever you like about my humble self, but do not utter a single disrespectful word about my Satguru. Even if I should have to make platforms for the rest of my life in obedience to his wishes, by his grace I would continue to do so," said Ramdas.

In the end, Ramdas cheerfully made and remade the platforms seventy times in all. Then Guru Amardas said to him, "You may stop

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building now, Ramdas. I am very pleased with you. For you alone have given me implicit obedience and complete surrender to my will and wishes." Turning to the others, he said, "There was not one of you who cheerfully obeyed one of the first rules of being a true disciple - to give the Guru your full love and devotion, have utter faith in him and obey his wishes with a cheerful heart." The Guru then made Ramdas the next Sikh Guru.

The disciple who serves at the Guru's feet,
and patiently obeys the Guru's orders,
And abandons his will to the True Guru-
such a man's doings shall prosper. (Guru Arjan)

17. KABIR HUMBLER DHARAMDAS, THE MERCHANT

Dharamdas was a wealthy merchant who had been a companion of Kabir's in his previous life. Kabir wanted to grant him Liberation and therefore went to his house. At that time, Dharamdas and his wife, Amna, were sitting near a wooden fire. Kabir said,

"You are a very great sinner, my friend, for you kill jivas."

Amna was annoyed and said, "My husband is not a sinner; it is you who are the sinner for accusing my husband like this."

"Please cut open the piece of wood there and see what you are actually burning," replied Kabir. He then got up and went away.

Dharamdas then cut open the wood and found that it was full of ants. Seeing this, he repented and told his wife that it was her bad temper that had driven the saint away. If he had understood Kabir's greatness before, he would have sought initiation from him and obtained peace. Amna said,

"Wherever there is anything sweet, there is no dearth of flies. You are a wealthy man and once

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you announce that you are giving a great feast, the saints will come of themselves and this one (Kabir) will be among them."

So, at her suggestion, he gave a great feast at Kashi, where Kabir lived, but Kabir did not come. The same sort of feast was held in other pilgrimage places, but Kabir never came to any of them.

Dharamdas grew more and more downhearted as the years passed, for he could not find Kabir. Finally he decided to drown himself in the Ganga. As he was walking along the bank, he saw Kabir sitting there. Falling at his feet, he asked,

"Why didn't you meet me earlier so that I could have served you with all the wealth that I possessed? Now I am a pauper, having spent all of my wealth in giving feasts to attract you." Kabir replied,

"That is just why I did not wish to meet you before this. If you still possessed your great wealth and were attached to it, you would not be ready for initiation. Also, if I had met you then, you would have thought that I was greedy and that the saints, as your wife told you, are attracted by the wealth of seekers. Now you are no longer intoxicated by wealth and your mind is not poisoned by false

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ideas. You have been forced to learn humility and have developed the insatiable longing for a Guru which arises in the hearts of all true seekers. So now you are ready to receive initiation." Dharamdas later rose to such spiritual heights that Kabir appointed him as his successor.

Though thou art like a guest for the night,
Who must part betimes in the morning,
Thou makest thyself busy with the world's affairs.
Remember, this is a garden of flowers that must
fade. (Guru Arjan)

18. TWO FARMERS MISS THE GURU'S DARSHAN

Two farmers were both steeped in the love of their Guru. They would never start their daily duties until they had sat in meditation for some hours and had witnessed the form of their Master.

Such sincere seekers are always and invariably put through tests of faith by the Guru. During the growing season, these two farmers were sitting in meditation. It was the day that the reservoir would release water for the farmers' cultivation. But on that day, in spite of the fact that they sat for a long time, they did not get the darshan of their Guru. One said to the other,

"I am not seeing the Master within today."

"I too have failed," said the other. "But if we don't go to the fields soon, we will miss our chance to get the water and our crops will die."

"Let them die, for they belong to the Satguru," said the other farmer with devotional fervour.

With this attitude, they both sat down again for meditation, and lo! the radiant form of their Master immediately appeared before them.

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Just as metal is purified by melting it in fire,
So does a true lover of God become transmuted
into gold by successfully passing through a trial.
(Kabir)

19. JANAKA RECEIVES TRUE KNOWLEDGE FROM ASHTAVAKRA

King Janaka had read that Knowledge could be attained in the time it takes to mount a horse. He became eager for attaining spiritual knowledge and called a meeting of all the rishis, scholars and mahatmas in the land and had a stage built. He said, "Whoever can reveal to me True Knowledge in the length of time that it takes to mount a horse, please come and sit on the stage." The assembled crowd thought that this was an impossible request and so kept quiet.

Just then, an ugly hunchback with bent limbs, entered the court. The people laughed and jeered at him in their ignorance. After receiving their insults, the hunchback started to laugh. When asked as to why he was laughing, he said, "I was under the impression that this was a meeting of saints and sages, and not of cobblers and dealers in prostitution."

The king asked him what he meant by that. "Judging the beauty and appearance of the skin is the work of cobblers and people who deal with prostitutes," replied the hunchback. Hearing this

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reply, the king realized that he was a Realized Soul and sought Knowledge from him. His name was Ashtavakra (one whose limbs are bent in eight places).

Ashtavakra asked, "O king, are you sure that you really want your request granted?"

"There is no doubt whatever in my mind," replied the king. "I am seeking for the True Knowledge with the utmost earnestness."

The sage then turned to the assembled holy men and asked, "Is there anyone among you who can impart True Knowledge to the king, and that too, quickly?"

There was utter silence. Addressing the king, Ashtavakra said, "King Janaka, there is a price that must be paid for obtaining this. Are you prepared to pay it, no matter what it may be?"

"Yes," said the king.

"Then I will tell you the price. The price consists of three things that you must give me - your body, your mind, and your wealth. Is this agreeable to you?"

"Yes," replied the king.

Ashtavakra then said, "You should think this matter over very carefully, and only after thorough

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deliberation should you promise to hand over to me these three things."

"I have already given the matter the most careful thought. There is no doubt whatever in my mind. I will be glad to pay the price," said the king.

"Now that you have surrendered everything to me, will you please leave your throne and come down and sit where all the shoes of your subjects are lying?" said Ashtavakra>

The king was quite annoyed at this, but soon realized that he had already given everything to the rishi. So he quietly left his throne and sat among the shoes. When Ashtavakra made this request, he was aware that many people do not advance spiritually because of their sense of ego, honour and glory.

When the king had seated himself amongst the shoes, the sage told him,

"Now, please do not allow your mind to think of your wealth, since you now have no wealth of your own to think about. It all belongs to me." At that time, the king had in fact been thinking about his treasury, palace, kingdom and family. Now he realized that nothing belonged to him and he gave up the thought of these things.

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Like a bird in mid-ocean that comes back to the ship, the king's mind returned to its center.

"This mind is now mine. You have no right to think with it or to desire with it," said the sage. The king withdrew his attention from all objective existence and concentrated his mind within. Due to the gracious glance of the rishi, his mind went up to the higher planes of spiritual existence and merged in the Inner Bliss. He became silent and still.

After some time, the sage brought the king's mind down to the body and said, "Have you obtained the True Knowledge that you requested?"

"Yes, Mahatmaji, and it is far greater, glorious and blissful than I had ever dreamed it could be," said the king.

Ashtavakra said, "O king, I have no need for your body, mind or wealth and so I return them to you. You are to act as a trustee and use them on my behalf. By giving up everything, you have received the All.

I will tell you the truth - the real mark of a disciple is that amidst a sea of desires, he is desireless. Such

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a one undoubtedly is accepted by the Creator.
(Guru Nanak)

20. KING OF BOKHARA SERVES KABIR FOR 12 YEARS

Ibrahim Adham was the king of Bokhara in Persia. He was very fond of the spiritual way of life and always sought the company of saints. However, he lived in such luxury that he slept on a bed that was at all times covered with one foot of flowers. One day, when he was about to lie down, he heard a noise on the roof of the palace above his room. On investigation, he found two men roaming up there.

"What are you doing here?" he asked them sharply.

"Sir, we are camel drivers and are searching for our lost camels," they replied. Amazed at their stupidity, he said to them,

"How do you ever expect to find camels on the roof of a palace?"

"In the same way that you are trying to realize God in your bed of flowers," they replied.

This reply greatly shocked the king and changed his way of life completely. He left his kingdom for India in order to find a Realized Guru. When he reached Kashi, he heard about

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Kabir. Going to his house, he asked him to accept him as a disciple.

Kabir said, "There is nothing in common between a king and a common weaver like myself and two such different persons could hardly get on together."

But the king pleaded with him and said, "I have not come to your door as a king but as a beggar. Again I beg of you the boon which I seek." Loi, Kabir's wife, asked him to accept the king and so Kabir acceded to her request.

The king was given the menial work of the house - cleaning the wool and thread, bringing water and firewood and other such jobs. Six years passed and the king did all the work without a murmur. One day, Loi entreated Kabir, saying,

"This king has now been with us for six long years, has been eating what we offered him, and has been doing what we have ordered him to do, without uttering a word of complaint. He appears to be highly deserving of initiation."

Kabir said, "As far as I can see, the king's mind is not yet crystal clear." But Loi again entreated the saint saying that she could not believe that he was unfit for initiation. Kabir replied, "The

best way to prove it to yourself is to do what I ask you to do, and thereafter come and tell me what you heard from his mouth. Please go on the top of the roof and, as the king comes into the street, throw the entire sweepings of the house upon his head."

Loi did as she was told and as the rubbish fell on the king's head, he looked up and sighed, "If only this were Bokhara, you would not have dared do this to me."

Loi returned to her husband and told him what the king had said. "Didn't I tell you that the king was not yet fully deserving of initiation?" said Kabir.

Another six years passed during which the king worked just as hard as he had during the first six. One day, Kabir said to his wife, "Now the vessel is completely ready to receive the gift." His wife said, "I do not find any difference between the condition of the king six years ago and now. He has been ever dutiful and willing and has never uttered a word of complaint even on days when there was not enough food to feed him. Kabir said, "If you want to see the difference, you may once again throw the rubbish on his head.

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So the next day, when the king was passing the house, she did exactly as her husband had told her. The king looked up and said, "May you live long. This mind was still full of ego and self. It had to be treated this way."

Loi then went and told her husband what the king said. He called the king and gazed at him. By the power of Kabir's gaze, the king's mind went up and up and merged into the Supreme Being.

"Your sadhana is complete. Now you had better return to your kingdom," said Kabir.

The king went back to his country but not as a king. He lived as a sannyasi by the side of the Tigris River. One day he was sitting by the river stitching his cloth with a small needle and thread. Just then, a man from the royal court who was out hunting, rode by on his horse. He recognized the king and enquired whether he was the same person to which the king replied in the affirmative. The man said,

"Your Majesty, I am your prime minister and have raised your children in your absence. They are all now grown up and well. I request you to return to your throne."

On hearing this, the king threw his needle into the river. "Can you get the needle back for me?" asked the king. "It is not possible to do that, but if Your Majesty can wait a little while, I can bring a hundred thousand such needles from the city," said the minister. "No, I am interested only in my own needle," said the king. "Sir, the water is very deep and the current is rapid. It is absolutely impossible for anyone to recover that needle," said the minister.

The king then gazed at the river and lo! a small fish jumped out of the water, placed the needle that was in its mouth at the feet of the king, and jumped back into the river. The king said,

"What would I do with your kingdom when I have now gone into the Court of the Lord who rules over all the universe? Please go and do whatever you like. I am not interested in your kingdom."

Love not this world for a single instant; birth, death, and return consume the body every moment; the lure of the world enslaves body, mind and soul; through Knowledge some enlightened saint obtains release. (Dadu)

21. THE IMPURE FIRE

On his journey to Rabbi Elimelekh whom--after the death of the Great Maggid--he had chosen for his second teacher, young Jacob Yitzhak, later the rabbi of Lublin, came to a little town, and in the House of Prayer heard the rav of that place reciting the Morning Prayer with deep fervor. He stayed with him over the sabbath and noticed the same fervor in all he said and did. When he came to know him a little better, he asked him whether he had ever served a zaddik. The answer was "no." This surprised Jacob Yitzhak, for the *way* cannot be learned out of a book, or from hearsay, but can only be communicated from person to person. He asked the devout rav to go to his teacher with him, and he agreed. But when they crossed Rabbi Elimelekh's threshold, he did not come forward to meet his disciple with his customary affectionate greeting, but turned to the window and paid no attention to his visitors. Jacob Yitzhak realized that the rejection was directed to his companion, took the violently excited rav to an inn and returned alone. Rabbi Elimelekh advanced toward him, greeted him fondly, and then said: "What struck

you, my friend, to bring with you a man in whose face I can see the tainted image of God?" Jacob Yitzhak listened to these words in dismay, but did not venture to reply or to ask a question. But Rabbi Elimelekh understood what was going on within him and continued: "You know that there is one place lit only by the planet Venus, where good and evil are blended. Sometimes a man begins to serve God and ulterior motives and pride enter into his service. Then, unless he makes a very great effort to change, he comes to live in that dim place and does not even know it. He is even able to exert great fervor, for close by is the place of the impure fire. From there he fetches his blaze and kindles his service with it, and does not know from where he has taken the flame."

Jacob Yitzhak told the stranger the words of Rabbi Elimelekh and the rav recognized the truth in them. In that very hour, he turned to God, ran weeping to the master, who instantly gave him his help, and with this help, he found the way.

22. BHAI BELLA GETS GURU GOBIND SINGH'S GRACE

In the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the Mughals would very often kidnap Sikh girls. Under the circumstances, the Guru felt that the Sikhs should wage war in order to do away with the cruelty which was being inflicted on them. A simple peasant, Bhai Bella, came to the Guru and asked for some service.

"Do you know how to use a gun?" asked the Guru.

"No, sir," replied Bella.

"Can you ride a horse?"

"No, sir," was the answer.

"Well, brother, what kind of service do you think you can do?" asked the Guru.

"Sir, I could work in the stables and take care of the horses," was the reply.

"Very good, you may go to the stables and start your service," said the Guru.

Bhai Bella started his work and did it with the utmost devotion and sincerity. Within two or three months, the horses had all greatly improved in

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appearance and health. One day the Guru himself went to see the horses and was much impressed.

"Who is responsible for making these horses look so well?" asked the Guru.

"Sir, it is Bhai Bella."

Turning to Bella, the Guru asked him if he had ever had any education. "No, sir. I have never been to a school of any kind." "All right, from today you start studying and I myself will teach you," said the Guru.

Every morning thereafter, the Guru would tell him one line or sentence and the rest of the day, Bhai Bella would repeat it with utmost devotion.

One morning the Guru was on his way to a battle and had no time to give a sentence to Bella. When the latter saw the Guru riding away, he asked him for a new line for the day. The Guru smiled and said, "Oh Bhai, you do not recognise the proper time nor an appropriate moment. Don't you know where I am going?"

Bella was under the impression that this was the sentence for the day and devotedly repeated it as always. All of the scholars who heard the Guru say this to Bhai Bella had great fun thinking that he

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was such a fool that he didn't understand what the Guru meant.

When the Guru returned after the battle, the scholars asked him, "Sir, what was the line that you gave Bhai Bella for today?"

"I did not give him a new line today," said the Guru.

"But sir, he has been repeating all day long, 'Oh Bhai, you do not recognise the proper time nor an appropriate moment. Don't you know where I am going?'"

When he heard this, he smiled and said, "Such a simple soul has already received all the knowledge that he needs. He has earned the Guru's Grace." As soon as he said this, Bhai Bella's mind soared up into the higher spiritual realms and he continued to remain in communion with his Guru irregardless of what he was doing.

Seeing this state of his, the other disciples were greatly annoyed and felt that that this was certainly not justice on the part of the Guru. They said,

"We have been serving the Master for many years and at no time has such grace been bestowed on us. Whereas this man, who came here only

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recently, has already been the recipient of Divine Grace. Where is justice?"

When the Guru saw that they were all angry, he gave them a large quantity of ganja, asked them to boil it in water and then told them, "Now, each one of you should rinse your mouth with this until the pot is empty."

After the pot was empty, he asked them, "Do any of you feel intoxicated?" "No. How could we feel intoxicated when none of us has swallowed any of it?" they replied.

"That is the answer to your question," said the Guru. "The Guru can give you initiation, but if you do not do your spiritual practice and develop love and faith for your Guru, you will never make any spiritual progress."

"Bhai Bella is a very simple man and whatever comes out of the lips of the Satguru, he takes as truth and practises it with love, faith and devotion throughout the day and night, until he is given the new line the following day. Whatever the Guru says, it is the duty of the disciple to carry it out implicitly. Only such a one will receive the Grace of the Guru."

23. THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

It is told in the Midrash: The ministering angels once said to God: "You have permitted Moses to write whatever he wants to, so there is nothing to prevent him from saying to Israel: I have given you the Torah." God replied: "This he would not do, but if he did, he would still be keeping faith with me."

Rabbi Yitzhak of Vorki's disciples once asked him to interpret this. He answered by telling them a parable:

A merchant wanted to go on a journey. He took on an assistant and let him work in his shop. He himself spent most of his time in the adjoining room from where he could hear what was going on next door. During the first year he sometimes heard his assistant tell a customer: "The master cannot let this go for so low a price." The merchant did not go on his journey. In the course of the second year he occasionally heard the voice next door say: "We cannot let it go for so low a price." He postponed his journey. But in the third year he heard his assistant say: "I can't let this go

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for so low a price." It was then that he started on his journey.

24. GURU GOES TO PROSTITUTE'S HOUSE

There was a saint by the name of Nityanand who had many disciples each of whom wanted to be appointed the successor. To determine which was the most devoted and sincere, he contrived a test.

One day he took all of his disciples to the town and showed them around the entire city. Finally, the Guru took them to the street where all the prostitutes plied their trade. The townspeople as well as the disciples were wondering what on earth they were going to do. Having stopped in front of one of the houses, the Guru turned to the disciples and told them,

"I have some work to do here. Have no fear. When the work is finished, I will return to you." He then entered the house.

When the prostitute saw the holy man, she bowed down to him. "Sir, it is my great good fortune that you have come into my humble dwelling. Please tell me what are your commands," she said.

"I wish to spend the night here. If therefore, you can spare me a separate room and you will go and sleep in another room yourself, it will serve my

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purpose. Also, please tell your servant to bring me a covered plate with some cooked vegetables, bread and a bottle of syrup."

"It shall be done exactly as you wish," said the prostitute.

When the disciples saw the plate being brought to their Guru with a tall bottle prominently showing, they started to talk to each other.

"Oh, that we should have lived to see so miserable a sight! Our Guru has fallen! He is now indulging in meat, wine and women!"

Filled with despair and convinced that their Master had been deceiving them, all but one of them left the place.

The next day, the Guru came out and found only one of his disciples there. "Where are all the others?" he asked.

"One left soon after you entered this house. One by one, they all believed the worst and went away," said the disciple.

"And why didn't you go away also?" asked the Guru.

"Sir, I have no place in this world to go except at your feet. Where could I go?"

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Embracing the disciple, the Guru made him the successor the next day.

25. FIRST EMPTY YOURSELF BEFORE RECEIVING A TEACHING

There was once a monk living in a forest ashram. A professor of philosophy from the nearby town came to visit him and said, "Please tell me something about spirituality, about the inner Reality, and how to attain it."

The monk said, "You look very tired after travelling all this way. Please rest a little and have some tea." The monk then went and prepared some tea and brought it. He put a cup in the professor's hand and started to pour the tea from a pot. Even after the cup was full, he continued to pour while the tea was going all over the man's hand and onto the floor. "Stop! Stop! Are you mad? My cup cannot hold another drop; it is full to overflowing!" shouted the professor. The monk laughed and said, "You know well that when the cup is full it cannot hold anymore however much we try to pour into it. And even then, you ask me to teach you about spirituality when you are so full of preconceptions inside. Please come back after emptying your cup, for now it cannot hold even

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another drop and it would be a waste of energy to try pouring anything into it."

26. THE TASTE OF BANSO'S SWORD

Matajuro Yagyū was the son of a famous swordsman. His father, believing that his son's work was too mediocre to anticipate mastership, disowned him.

Matajuro went to Mount Vutara and there found the famous swordsman Banzo. But Banzo confirmed the father's judgement. "You wish to learn swordsmanship under my guidance?" asked Banzo. "You cannot fulfill the requirements."

"But if I work hard, how many years will it take me to become a master?" persisted the youth.

"The rest of your life," replied Banzo.

"I cannot wait that long," explained Matajuro. "I am willing to pass through any hardship if only you will teach me. If I become your devoted servant, how long might it be?"

"Oh, maybe ten years," Banzo relented.

"My father is getting old, and soon I must take care of him," continued Matajuro. "If I work far more intensively, how long would it take me?"

"Oh, maybe thirty years," said Banzo.

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"Why is that?" asked Matajuro. "First you say ten and now thirty years. I will undergo any hardship to master this art in the shortest time!"

"Well," said Banzo, "in that case you will have to remain with me for seventy years. A man in such a hurry as you are to get results seldom learns quickly."

"Very well," declared the youth, understanding at last that he was being rebuked for impatience, "I agree."

Matajuro was told never to speak of fencing and never to touch a sword. He cooked for his master, washed the dishes, made his bed, cleaned the yard, cared for the garden, all without a word of swordsmanship.

Three years passed. Still Matajuro labored on. Thinking of his future, he was sad. He had not even begun to learn the art to which he had devoted his life.

But one day Banzo crept up behind him and gave him a terrific blow with a wooden sword.

The following day, when Matajuro was cooking rice, Banzo again sprang upon him unexpectedly.

After that, day and night, Matajuro had to defend himself from unexpected thrusts. Not a moment

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passed in any day that he did not have to think of the taste of Banzo's sword.

He learned so rapidly he brought smiles to the face of his master. Matajuro became the greatest swordsman in the land.

27. MIDNIGHT EXCURSION

Many pupils were studying meditation under the Zen master Sengai. One of them used to arise at night, climb over the temple wall, and go to town on a pleasure jaunt.

Sengai, inspecting the dormitory quarters, found this pupil missing one night and also discovered the high stool he had used to scale the wall. Sengai removed the stool and stood there in its place.

When the wanderer returned, not knowing that Sengai was the stool, he put his feet on the master's head and jumped down into the grounds. Discovering what he had done, he was aghast.

Sengai said: "It is very chilly in the early morning. Do be careful not to catch cold yourself."

The pupil never went out at night again.

28. COMPETITION AMONGST DISCIPLES

It once happened that a Master had two disciples who were always competing with each other. Each wished to be the Guru's favourite disciple and there was no end to their competition.

One summer afternoon the Master was tired and laid down to rest. He asked the two disciples to massage his legs. They were only too happy to do so. As soon as the Guru fell asleep, the disciples decided to divide the Master's body into two different territories and so they drew a line with chalk down the center of his front side. The Guru, however, was not aware of what had happened. He did not know that he had become two. In his sleep, he placed one of his legs over the other. The disciples started to argue. "Both of the legs have come over to my territory, so don't you dare touch either one!" said one disciple. "What, you rascal! How is that? The line of demarcation is still there. How can it be called yours? Stop interfering with my service!" said the other. "You just try and remove it and see what happens!" said the first disciple.

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The disciples now got up and were about to come to blows with sticks. Suddenly, hearing the commotion, the Guru woke up and saw the two of them and asked, "What is happening?"

They said, "You need not interfere. You can just go back to sleep. We'll decide by ourselves what has to be done." Wonderful disciples!