

Guru-Disciple Relationships

Incidents inscribed in the history with a golden pen

India has had a great culture of Guru-disciples and there are both great Gurus as well as their beloved disciples over the period of time. We present before you some great stories about these great pairs to evaluate ourselves where we stand in life.

Swami Ramdas and Shivaji

Chhatrapati Shivaji was a very faithful devotee of his Guru, **Samarth Ramdas Swami** and thus he was his Guru's favorite disciple. Samarth used to love him more than other disciples. Seeing this, other disciples started to feel that Shivaji is a king, so the Guru favors him much. Guru Samarth was able to understand the situation and decided to remove this misunderstanding of his disciples. Thus, one day he took all his disciples into the forest where they lost their way. Guru Samarth went into a cave and pretended that he was having severe pain in his stomach, a pain which might kill him. The disciples entered the cave and saw that Gurudev was in immense pain. They asked Gurudev how they could help him.



Samarth: I am having severe abdominal pain.

Shivaji: Is there any medicine for this Gurudev ?

Samarth: No! There is no medicine for this. It is a very rare illness. There is only one remedy, but let it be.

Shivaji: Gurudev! Please tell me the remedy. Do not hesitate. I can't sit quietly without relieving your discomfort.

Samarth: Milk of tigress, that too freshly milked; but it is impossible to get it.

Listening this, all the disciples started to look at each-others face as they knew how fatal it

can be. However, Shivaji picked up a **Kamandal** (ascetic's pot), bowed down to Samarth and left in search of a tigress. After wandering for some time, his eyes fell on two tiger cubs. Shivaji thought, 'Surely their mother must be around.' Within seconds the tigress appeared. On seeing a human near her cubs she started growling. Shivaji gathered courage and folded his hands in front of the tigress and requested, **'O Mother, I have not come here to harm either you or your cubs. I need your milk to cure my Guru's illness. Please let me take it. I shall give it to my Guru and come back to you. Then if you want, you can eat me.'** Saying so he lovingly moved his hands on her back.

Even deadly animals can be won by love. The tigress stopped growling and like a cat, started to lick Shivaji. On getting the opportunity, Shivaji milked her and filled the pot. He bowed down to her with gratitude and left the place. Shivaji went back to the cave where Samarth was. He kept the pot in his front and bowed down to him. Guru Samarth said, **"So finally you brought the milk of a tigress! God bless you Shiva! When there is such a faithful and devoted disciple like you, how can the Guru be in pain for long?"** Samarth put his palm on Shivaji's head and looked at the other disciples.

Now they realized that if a Guru loves a particular disciple, it is because he is worthy of it. He is worthy of that special grace. Jealousy increases one's weakness and defects. The take away here is that, instead of being jealous of such a worthy disciple we should try to remove our weaknesses and defects.

Ram Krishna Paramhans and Swami Vivekananda



This story was narrated by Swami Vivekananda himself. Someone asked Him how one can attain wisdom in life. To this Swami Vivekananda replied that I have asked for only spiritual knowledge, devotion and detachment from worldly pleasures from the Mother Goddess. While explaining how this can happen, Swami Vivekananda said, "There were thousands of worldly thoughts in my mind. I left my home in search of some job in order to earn some money. I earned some money by working at an attorney's office, but I could not succeed in

getting a permanent job. Thus, I failed to make permanent arrangements for my mother and brothers. One day, a thought came into my mind. I thought, God listens to Thakur (RamKrishna Paramhans), so I would ask Him to pray for relieving my mother and brothers of their ill fate. He will never refuse my request.'

Thinking so I reached Dakshineshwar and told Thakur repeatedly, 'You should pray to Goddess for relieving my mother and brothers of their financial problems.'

However, Thakur said, 'I cannot ask my Mother (Goddess Kali) for such things. Why don't you yourself tell the Mother about it? You suffer because you have no faith in Mother.'

However, I refused to follow and said 'I do not know Mother; you tell her. You must tell her. I shall not leave unless you do so.'

Again I was surprised and I said, 'No Master, I get spellbound due to Her Divine Energy when I stand before Her. I forget everything and only ask for knowledge and devotion. What will happen now?'

Thakur smiled and said, 'Ok boy, you could not even tell Her such a simple thing. If possible go quickly and tell Her everything you wish.'

Again I entered the temple and I was greatly ashamed. I started thinking, 'What an ordinary thing I have come to ask for!' This is just like what Thakur says, 'When the king is pleased with you, it is senseless to ask for a gourd.' Is my intellect so deteriorated, that I have come to ask for such an ordinary thing? Repeatedly praying to the Mother, I said, 'Just give me knowledge and devotion and nothing else.'

A thought came into my mind when I came out from the temple that all that had happened is Thakur's Divine play. Otherwise, having gone to the Mother thrice how could I not ask for anything from Her. Thereafter I told Thakur, 'I know that it was you who made me forget everything. So now, you only promise me that my mother and brothers will have enough food and clothing forever.'

He said, 'I have never prayed like this for anyone before. I cannot utter such prayers. I told you whatever you asked from the Mother, you would get it. You could not ask. What can I do if you are not destined to have worldly satisfaction?'

I said, 'Gurudev! I am absolutely sure that if you say then my mother and brothers will not suffer in their life.' When I told Him persistently, He said, 'Ok go, they will not have any problem in getting simple food and clothing henceforth.'

This incident proves how a Guru goes many steps ahead to fulfill His disciple's desires and even bestows what he or his family might not deserve.

Adi ShankaraCharya and Totaka

Adi Shankara was loved and respected by his disciples. Three of his disciples were intelligent and spent most of their time studying. Their classmate, Totaka, hardly studied. He kept himself busy in washing Guru's clothes, collecting flowers for his worship, making his bed and pressing his feet. Even though the other students were fond of Totaka, they did not consider him to be bright.

Though Totaka had no time for studies, he would sit with his classmates when their Guru taught them. He would sit at the back. While other disciples had lots of questions, Totaka would be silent.

One day, the disciples came to class fully prepared. They bowed to the Guru and sat in front of him, waiting for him to begin the lesson. But the Guru did not begin the lesson. He seemed to be waiting for someone. They looked at each other to make sure all of them were present. Then they realized Totaka was missing.

They were surprised that their Guru was waiting for a student who had no intelligence to understand his great teachings. Padmapada, one of the disciples, pointedly glanced at the pillar. His classmates got the message – teaching Totaka was as good as teaching a lifeless wall! They suppressed their smile as they looked at the Guru.

Guru Shankara did not miss anything that was taking place, though no words were spoken. He smiled. Then he called out to the missing disciple, “Totaka, come here.”

Totaka who was collecting flowers heard his Guru. He turned towards him and walked to him with a lotus in hand and a prayer on his lips.

His classmates were stunned to hear Totaka reciting verses in Sanskrit in praise of their Guru. This was for the first time they had ever heard Totaka speak! ***And he was reciting a poem that was his own composition! The one they considered an idiot was reciting a beautiful poem in praise of the Guru.*** They slowly rose to their feet. As Totaka neared them, they bowed to him. Totaka dropped the flower at the feet of the Guru as the Guru lovingly hugged him. The poem of eight verse in praise of the Guru that Totaka recited is famous as ***Totakashtakam.***

All the above incidents shows us what a Guru can make out of His beloved disciple. All that the disciple needs to do is to surrender himself or herself in the holy feet of the Guru and serve Him with full devotion. We all must go through these incidents multiple times and evaluate ourselves where we stand in life, how beloved are we to the Guru and how much we have instilled Guru in our heart!

