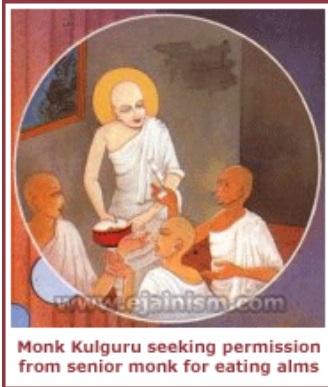


Monk Kurgadu or Kulguru



In ancient times there was a businessman named Dhandatta. He was highly religious. He had a son who was also full of religious perspective. Once, Dharmaghosh-suri, the highly enlightened Acharya of that time, came to town, where Dhandatta lived. Thereafter Dhandatta went to listen to his sermon along with his young son. The boy was much impressed by the talk of the Acharya and decided to become his pupil. Accordingly he renounced the worldly life and became a monk at the very young age. The Acharya could foresee that the boy was destined to be a great entity. He therefore named him as Kulguru. In the native language of that area, he came to be known as Kurgadu.

Kurgadu seriously studied the holy books and correctly grasped their essence.

He realized the role of Karma in the life of every being and thereby he learned to maintain a high level of equanimity. He also rigorously observed the code of conduct for monks. However, he had a problem. He could not stay hungry and as such could not fast. He had to eat at least once a day. Even during ParyushanParva, he could not fast for a single day. When he had to eat on such days of Parva, he felt bad and regretted that he had acquired incapability to fast because of his previous Karma. When other monks observed long or short fasts, he praised them and rendered every type of service to them. He wished, in heart of hearts, that he too could observe fasts.

Jain monks do not move from place to place during monsoon that normally sets in June and ends in October. The ParyushanParva occurs roughly in the middle of that period. While the Acharya was once camping in the monsoon season, ParyushanParva came. On that occasion, many of the monks undertook long fasts extending to more than a month. The senior monk, under whom Kurgadu was working, had undertaken one month's fast. Kurgadu felt sad that he could not undertake such austerities. Seven days passed that way and the day of Samvatsari dawned. He wished that he could observe fast at least on that day. Before noon, however he felt very hungry and could not stay without food. He wondered what sort of body he had acquired that he could not fast even for one day! As it was impossible for him to stay without food, he went to the senior monk and begged his permission to go for alms. The latter scornfully asked him why he could not survive without food at least for one day. He should be inspired to observe fast at least for that day, especially when all his colleagues were on long fasts. Kurgadu humbly replied that he did wish to observe fast but very much regretted his inability to fast. The senior monk pitied his miserable fate and resentfully allowed him to go for alms.

Kurgadu went for alms and most regretfully accepted the food that was offered to him. Coming back, he presented the same to the senior monk, as a part of the code of monks' conduct and begged his permission to eat. He had done that in all modesty. That monk however became very annoyed by that request. He could not believe that it was beyond the capacity of Kurgadu to fast for one day. He therefore took the humble gesture of Kurgadu as an audacity and disparagingly said that the miserable wretch did not deserve to be a monk. So saying he spitefully pushed the food bowl towards him. Kurgadu accepted that scornful gesture as the graceful permission and going to his place he most reluctantly started to eat.

All the other monks were watching with disgust the taking of food by Kurgadu on that auspicious day and pitied that he was acquiring unwholesome Karma by eating on the day of Samvatsari. While eating Kurgadu himself dwelt deep into the inability of his body to remain without food even for a day. Well-read as he was, he could see that it must have been the outcome of his previous Karma. He knew that all Karma drip off after extending the appropriate consequence and this Karma too was going to drop off. He therefore made up his mind to dispassionately bear what had been ordained by his Karma.

Because of his study of the scriptures, he had gained enough insight about the true nature of soul. His despising himself for not observing fast was functioning as a handicap for the full realization of that true nature. Now, his willingness to accept what was destined endowed him the insight of distinguishing the nature of soul from the varying states of the body and mind. That gave rise to the manifestation of the true nature of the soul. His realization was strong enough to destroy all the defiling Karmas on the spot and he gained omniscience, while eating the food.

When one attains omniscience, even the heavenly beings come to the place for offering their obeisance. When other monks saw the heavenly beings approaching the place for the purpose, everyone thought that they must have been pleased by the acute austerities of some of them and were coming to bow to those monks. Instead, the heavenly beings turned to Kurgadu and offered their obeisance to him. No one could understand why those observing acute austerity were left out, while the one who could not observe it at all, had gained full enlightenment.

In all amazement they went to Dharmaghosh-suri and asked the reason for what had happened. The Acharya said that all of them were feeling too much proud of their austerities and were unnecessarily disparaging Kurgadu for not observing fast. Thereby they were smeared by perception obscuring Karma that obscured right perception. He urged them to bear in mind that the primary purpose of undertaking austerities or any other religious practice was to gain modesty which leads to right perception and in turn helps in attaining equanimity. They had misjudged Kurgadu who had realized the essence of religion. Earlier, he had acquired austerity obstructing Karma that did not allow him to observe the austerity. He did feel sad and sincerely repented for that Karma which had become operative in his current life. By properly comprehending the role of Karma, he had been imbibed with right perception. He did regret for that but was bearing the consequence of the Karma with equanimity. This could help in wiping out the previously acquired Karmas without incurring new bondage.

Key Message:

All the monks realized that they were indulging in unnecessary vanity that obstructed the dawn of right perception. The Acharya also explained that the soul had really nothing to do with the state and activities of the body. The body is obtained as a consequence of the operative Karma and should be used simply as an instrument for realizing the true nature of soul. It can be an effective instrument only if it were used purposefully. Understanding the true nature of soul was the essence of religion and that is the main thing worth pursuing in this life.

