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One of the tales Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to tell is about a holy man who had given up all his possessions.

His teacher had advised him to make a little hut thatched with palm leaves, in a solitary place away from the public. This he did. 1/n



He began to live there, meditating long hours and going out only to beg his one meal of the day.

But there was one problem.

After his morning bath, the sadhu (holy man) would hang his loincloth on the limb of a tree close to the hut. 2/n

When he returned from the village it would be dry. It would also have some holes in it!

It turned out that rats were running up the tree and chewing holes in the cloth.

Rats will munch on almost anything.3/n

One day he decided to dry it on the roof of his hut.

That was worse.

The rats tore it into shreds, and he had to go and beg a new one in the village. 4/n

When the villagers heard of his predicament, they said, "Who is going to supply you with cloth all the time? Why not keep a cat; that will chase rats away."

Someone in the village gave him a kitten, and sure enough, the rats disappeared and the trouble stopped. 5/n

The sadhu became delighted and took great care of the cat.

Not finding any rats, it needed milk, so he went again to the village and begged for milk for the cat. 6/n

After some days, a villager said,

"We can't go on this way. Who is going to supply you with milk all year long? Why not keep a cow; that way you too will have milk – you and your cat." 7/n

It took a long time for the man to acquire a cow.

Finally someone took pity on him and gave him one.

Of course the cow had to be milked.

Moreover eventually she ate up all the greenery for yards around. 8/n

"What will the cow eat now?" he thought.

Going to the village to beg for some straw, he got more advice. What do you think it was? 9/n

"Till the land around your place and grow your own grain!"

With great difficulty the sadhu was able to clear land, cultivate it with borrowed tools, and sow a crop.

His days were busy. His hut grew into more of a house. 10/n

One day his teacher came that way.

What he saw was a collection of possessions.

He inquired of a passerby,

"An ascetic used to live in this hut, a meditator with no possessions. Do you know where he has gone?" 11/n

But the traveler knew nothing.

The teacher ventured into the place and found his disciple. 12/n

"What! You went out to be alone, and to meditate. You were going to renounce everything and be free. What in the world happened?"

Shame-faced, the man told his story. 13/n

And this is why Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say,

"Be careful: 'All for a loincloth.'"

n/n