

The Glory of the Guru

Search for a Guru:

Two kinds of knowledge exist - Secular knowledge and Spiritual knowledge. Both of these are wonderful in their own ways. Both of these ought to be sought after in our life. Secular knowledge consists of everything that concerns our present daily life. Spiritual knowledge contains the subtle secrets of the innermost core of our being. Both of these are essential for us. The true path of evolution lies in maturing from secular knowledge to spiritual knowledge. Therefore we should learn all that secular knowledge has to teach us and then progress with our lives. This necessitates approaching different teachers, each of whom is qualified to impart a particular aspect of secular knowledge. It is only when the ephemeral nature of this world is intensely felt by the heart that man can wholeheartedly turn to spiritual life. Until then, secular knowledge is everything for him. From the blessed moment when this world stops satisfying the man, he develops an inquiry into the 'other worldly' knowledge or spiritual knowledge. What he then needs is the powerful beacon light of a spiritual teacher, also called a 'Guru'. A search for such a Guru has to awaken in us.

Regarding our search for a Guru who can impart knowledge about our self, we need to know that there is no guarantee that we shall find him at hand. But once the search starts, even if we get a person more advanced than us in the spiritual search, it is a very great good fortune. Sri Ramakrishna proclaims that when the real cry of the soul for a Guru reaches a feverish pitch, the able spiritual Guru himself approaches that fit student!

Who is the Guru?

Some say "He that teaches you even one alphabet is a Guru". But in the course of our life, so many people teach us so many things. Are all of them our Guru then? How can that be? Can we have more than one Guru? With respect to secular knowledge, we can understand many Gurus, but regarding spiritual knowledge, can we have many Gurus?

Here, we need to clarify a distinction between the two words 'Teacher' and 'Guru'. In the English language, we generally use the word 'Teacher' to denote anyone who teaches us secular knowledge. The word 'Guru' is generally used with respect to one who deals with our spiritual life. Although now-a-days, we do find the frequent use of words such as 'Management-Guru' or 'Technical-Guru'. In this book, however, we shall be using the two words as mentioned above.

- Before starting *any* activity, as per our ancient Hindu tradition, our first step ought to be - offering our salutations to the Guru. The first step in the studies of the Vedas is uttering the mantra - '*Sri Gurubhyo Namaha*' which means 'Salutations to the Guru'.
- Supposing someone makes the absurd claim that he has sufficiently praised God, we may believe him. But if someone says that he is done praising his Guru sufficiently, that is unacceptable. Because, it is the Guru who shows us and puts us on the path to God. Without the Guru to help us, there would be no God-realization.
- There is no power greater than the power of the Guru. What is this power? What can it achieve? How and where does it operate? Our attempts to answer all these questions will fall short of reality. In order to correctly understand these subtle aspects of the Guru-Shakti, we need to see a disciple who has achieved life-fulfilment by receiving his Guru's Grace!

- A little reflection will show you that everyone, on whom we depend in this world, will desert us one day or the other. But the Guru's Grace protects us and sustains us, life after life.
- Most people look at the human form of the Guru and ask 'He is a man just like us; what indeed can he achieve for us?' This is but natural. He eats and drinks just like us. He experiences all joys & pains associated with the body just like us. He ages just like us. He even dies one day, just like the rest of us. Seeing all these, this conclusion that the run-of-the-mill people arrive at, is quite natural. But, a true disciple sees the Guru from *a totally different perspective*. Guru is All-Powerful to him. No, not just that. Guru is the veritable Infinite to him!
- The Guru heartily welcomes the blessed soul that approaches him. However, he does not despise the wretched souls that come to him. He welcomes them too, with great compassion.
- The Guru teaches the highest secrets of spiritual sadhana to the pure souls that approach him. However, he starts with the first lessons of basic inner purification to the impure ones that seek refuge in him.
- Those who come to him as disciples have each their own different levels of competence, and their own distinct inner tendencies. The experienced Guru imparts training in accordance with each disciple's inner propensities and spiritual capabilities.
- The true Guru is one, who has not only the moral power of an austere life behind him, but also has drunk deep out of the fountain of spiritual realization. He slowly starts pouring his spiritual power into those whom he accepts as his own dear disciples. As the disciple starts performing spiritual sadhana as per the guidance of the Guru, the intensity of this flow becomes greater and greater.
- What is spiritual sadhana? It is something similar to what a farmer does – a farmer digs a channel from the water reservoir to his own field. Guru's Grace is like the water from the reservoir. The more enthusiastically the farmer digs the channel, the more forcefully does the water rush into his field. Even so, as the disciple performs his sadhana with great sincerity & *Shraddha*, the Guru Shakti infills the disciple.
- If the disciple embarks on his Sadhana sincerely, Guru ensures that the disciple gets established on his path and progresses onwards on his path. Not only that, he also ensures that his disciple achieves fulfilment along that path.
- We often see all kinds of teachers in India calling themselves as 'Guru' or 'Guruji'. That is alright. We have no objection to that. But, if even a little bit of sense dawns in the teachers of this world, they too will start seeking a true spiritual Guru. This is but inevitable.
- If the disciple but possesses sincerity, the Guru gladly pardons him a thousand omissions and leads him again along the disciple's chosen path. If the disciple does not correct himself quickly, progress may be slow, but it doesn't stop altogether. Surprisingly, stagnation is avoided because he has Guru Shakti behind him.

- A spiritual Guru may sometimes not be revered by worldly people. They may be unable to see any speciality in him that warrants their reverence. This is because, the worldly people need the help of teachers who can show them the way to earn a livelihood. But a spiritual person will not look down upon a teacher of secular knowledge. This is because they know very well that even in those teachers, it is the same Guru Shakti that is working. But, they accord the highest place to the spiritual Guru. It is impossible for a disciple who has tasted even a little bit of true spiritual bliss, not to accord the highest place to a spiritual Guru. It is but natural.
- A person who has no money is called poor. A person who has no food is called poor. But, there is none poorer than a person who has not received the supremely uplifting Grace of a Guru.
- In this world, many people suffer reversals of fate in various ways. But there is no greater loss than losing the Grace of the Guru.
- A person may somehow manage to retain the Grace of Guru even after exhibiting the grossest arrogance; a person may somehow manage to retain the Grace of Guru even after committing the greatest blunders; but a disciple with a treacherous heart, whose heart, mind & actions are not in unison, *cannot* retain the Grace of the Guru in himself, no matter how intelligent he considers himself to be!
- Divine Love manifests in various forms – Mother’s love, Father’s love, Friend’s love, love of the Spouse, etc. But none of these even remotely approach the level of the Guru’s love!
- What indeed can equal the Guru’s love that dispels the darkness of the soul, by lighting the lamp of self-consciousness within us, and enabling us to taste the ambrosial nectar of self-realization!
- The human Guru, no matter how exalted he be today, was indeed a humble disciple, once upon a time. Isn’t it so? Then, won’t he be able to sympathize with the conflicts, doubts and troubles of the disciples who approach him today?
- What can be the best gift from a disciple to his Guru? Enthusiastic Sadhana, filled with *Shraddha*, performed most sincerely by the disciple.
- It is said that service rendered to the Guru is most beneficial and is the highest service that one can perform in this world. However, whole-heartedly believing all the advices that the Guru has given to us, and based on *Shraddha* in his words, performing Sadhana enthusiastically, day after day, is not in any way lesser than personal service rendered to the Guru!
- The spiritual path is *most dangerous* for the person who has *no devotion* to his Guru. And, that same spiritual path is *most enjoyable* to one who has *great devotion* to his Guru.
- If we consider only the external, visible man and offer our adoration to his physical frame & corporal personality, it ends up as a Personality Cult. But, the same adoration accorded by a disciple who perceives the brilliant light burning within that frail frame of the Guru culminates into a veritable ‘*Shaktipuja*’.
- No matter how far a disciple be from the Guru in terms of physical distance, one thought-wave such as ‘*May this person prosper*’, coming out of the Guru’s heart will catapult the disciple to empyrean heights along his chosen spiritual path; the disciple thus lifted up, starts experiencing the world of Light.

- Owing to ignorance, it is not possible to tell, how many wrong paths the disciple will be walking along. But, the Guru keeps a close watch on his footsteps. And very slowly, he changes the direction along which his disciple is walking. Oh! How wonderful it is to watch this divine ‘Cat & Mouse’ game!!
- There are only two things that follow us across lifetimes, across many births – one is our *Karma*; the other is Guru’s Grace. One who hasn’t accepted a Guru, only his own *Karma* follows him birth after birth.
- There are thousands of Gurus all over the world. But the power behind all of them is only one – the selfsame Guru Shakti.
- We may accept a human Guru and obtain *Mantra-Diksha* from him. But the one who has actually accepted our inner surrender is the same entity – the one Guru of the whole world, the *Vishwa-Guru*.
- A disciple may accept a human being saying ‘He is my Guru’. But, in reality, only the Guru knows who the *real* Guru is!
- Some say that Guru is greater than God. Some others argue that God is greater than Guru. But why this meaningless argument? Guru *IS* God; and God *IS* Guru!

Diksha Guru – Shiksha Guru:

These two terms are not very common in certain parts of India. But they are very popular wherever Vaishnavism has a stronghold. The word *Diksha* or Initiation befuddles most of us. Most people are even afraid of this word since it has connotations of renunciation! Words such as *Sannyasa-Diksha*, *Yajna-Diksha* are also in vogue. What *Diksha* does a *Diksha* Guru give? Questions such as these will naturally arise. In Bengal, the Guru who imparts *Mantra-Diksha* is called *Diksha* Guru. What is meant by saying that a Guru gives *Mantra-Diksha*? It means ‘imparting the *mantra*’, by uttering the *mantra* aloud. What is meant by *Mantra*? The Sanskrit root for this word *Mantra* is – ‘*Mananaat traayate*’ – It is a word, which, when uttered repeatedly, has the power to take the person across the ocean of grief & sorrow. So, the Guru who imparts the *mantra* that has the power to ferry us across the ocean of birth & death, is the *Diksha-Guru*.

The *Diksha-Guru* imparts the *Mantra*, gives a few invaluable advices, and then goes elsewhere to continue his divine ministrations. The disciple starts his spiritual sadhana by doing *Japa*, *Dhyana*, *Swadhyaya*, etc. As he begins his sadhana, he starts facing certain problems; as he progresses further along the spiritual path, he faces more problems, obstacles & doubts. This is most natural. But how is he to solve his problems? The one who helps him at that juncture is the one who is close at hand, the *Shiksha-Guru*. The *Shiksha-Guru* explains in great detail the various stages of sadhana, brings about an understanding of the entire path in the disciple’s mind, acclimatizes him with the spiritual path and makes his progress easy for him. Every once in a while, the disciple will face what has been called the ‘dark night of the soul’; he starts losing faith in the efficacy of the path he is following; he loses *Shraddha*; doubts assail him; fear of the unknown grips him. The *Shiksha-Guru* helps him cross over all these obstacles, fills him up with renewed enthusiasm and eggs him along the path to perfection.

Among sadhakas, many will be householders. Some others will be bound by the vows of perfect chastity. These two categories of sadhakas have different capabilities and necessities in spiritual life. The *Shiksha*-Guru watches over all these aspects with great concern and in great detail. At the right psychological time, he gives apt suggestions and makes their progress smooth.

Sadhakas have to remember one very important point here. When some progress is made along the spiritual path, the external Guru remains outside. He can no longer be of much assistance. Then, the sadhaka has to start depending more and more on his 'inner-Guru', also called '*Antaryamin*-Guru'. This is because, it is the *Antaryamin*-Guru alone who knows the inner workings of the sadhaka's mind and consciousness.

We offer our salutations to all Gurus.

Translation of a small booklet called 'Sri Guru Mahime' by Swami Purushottamananda