

The Grace of A Guru

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Abstract

The Blessings & guidance of a Spiritual Guru in every sphere of life is unquestionable. The Guru or teacher guides, reprimands, loves & protects his disciples. He shows them the right path to reach the ultimate truth. He puts on the role of a father & a mother to take the student to his ultimate destiny –communion with God. The true Guru is a gift of God for the earnest seeker & appears only when the disciple's heart pines for him. He is there to quench the spiritual thirst of the seeker. This paper traces the role of a Guru in the life of a spiritual seeker.

Keywords: Blessings, Guidance, Guru, Disciple, Seeker.

gururbrahmaa gururvishnuh gururdevo maheshvarah
gurureva para.nbrahma tasmai shriigurave namah

Salutation to the noble Guru, who is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, the direct Parabrahma,
the Supreme Reality.

Spirituality is termed as a means of finding oneself & to connect with the source within. It often arises in the mind of the seeker when he starts to question the very basics of his existence & his role in the greater scheme of things. In the Spiritual quest, the seeker often finds that there are questions that need to be answered, doubts that need to be dispelled. Thus arises the need for a teacher- a Guru who can help the seeker know the final truth- knowing the Absolute. This person arrives in the form of a “Guru”.

The Guru Gita aptly describes the Guru as “dispeller of darkness” (from gu “darkness” & ru, “that which dispels”). A true Guru is a self enlightened person who has mastered his self & has merged his identity with the omnipotent spirit. Only such a man is qualified enough to lead the seekers of truth to their correct destination. Swami Paramhansa Yoganandji says:

The blind cannot lead the blind. Only a master, one who knows God, may rightly teach others about Him. To regain one’s divinity, one must have such a master of Guru. He, who faithfully follows a true Guru, becomes like him, for the Guru, helps to elevate the disciple to his own level of realization.

The Guru- Disciple relationship cannot be expressed in mere words. It is the highest form of friendship that ever was. Based on unconditional divine love, it is the loftiest & most sacred of all relationships. Oft times, we have heard that spiritual seekers strive to attain a Guru who would help them realise their divinity. The seeker yearns to have this pious relationship because it is the Guru who would help him understand the mysteries of the Cosmos. But many a times, Spiritual Gurus also yearn for pupils, for sincere, dedicated disciples who have a thirst for the Almighty, who have the deepest yearnings to know God & who would be persistent enough to know Him, by all means.

In the Christian tradition, Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus Christ is clearly that of the disciple & the teacher. When she was weeping at his empty tomb & He spoke to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She mistook him for a gardener, but he spoke her name, "Mary" & "she turned herself & saith unto him, 'Rabboni,' which is to say, Master".

The spiritual Journey is the most difficult & challenging one can ever make. It involves a lot of struggle to reach our inner realms of consciousness. Without a Guru, a guide we would be easily misled & demotivated. It is the Guru, who, by his words of wisdom & care helps us to reach God. In the words of the Sufi mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi:

Without a master, this journey is full of tribulations, fears
& dangers. With no escort, you would be lost on a road
you would have already taken. Do not travel alone on the
path.

Guru- the spiritual guide acts as a torch bearer in our journey towards our inner selves. An enlightened Guru has himself undergone such severities in his search for the infinite & thus he knows that there are no shortcuts on this journey. One has to dedicate oneself wholeheartedly, undergo various spiritual disciplines, and undertake rigorous training to find the 'Absolute' that he is looking for. A guru is one who is already one with the Divine spirit & thus can lead his disciples on this path.

One cannot be a Guru simply by thinking that he is. The true Guru simply acts on the commands of God. A person, who is spiritually deprived himself, is not fit to be a Guru.

It is also a well known fact that the sincere devotion, dedicatedness, purity & deep yearning of a true devotee stirs the heart of the Infinite & he sends a master – a Guru to lead the devotee to the inner chambers of his heart. It is not the disciple who finds a teacher. The teacher finds him. This meeting- of the Guru & the disciple is one, which is filled with pure ecstasy & bliss. It is, as if two lovers unite with each other after being separated for a long time.

When Swami Paramhansa Yogananda met his Guru Sri Yukteshwar Giri for the first time, both of them were in a state of blissful joy. It was like a reunion for them, with the Guru crying out in bliss, "O my own, you have come to me! How many years I have waited for you!"

The first encounter between the Sufi saint & poet Rumi & his master & friend, Shams e-Tabriz also recounts a similar mystical experience- that of “Fana”- the cosmic consciousness. The sudden appearance of Shams is described thus by Connie Zweig in her book ‘A Moth to the Flame: The Life of the Sufi Poet Rumi’,

The desert dervish appears out of nowhere. Rumi is transfixed by his sudden, dream-like appearance. Emaciated as a reed & covered with road dust, the man’s head & eyebrows are shaven clean. Draped an old black cloak & wearing a strange, pointed hat, he carries himself like a Biblical prophet [Page 85].

The saint like appearance of Shams sends Rumi, into a state of Ecstasy:

Just then his body seems to float up, & the men shops below recede into miniatures. The trees vanish.....Reaching out his arms like a child he whispers to no one in particular, ‘The God that I have worshipped all my life appears to me today in human form [Page 86].

The job of a guru is to mellow down the inflated ego of his disciple. He cannot do this without being free himself. The Guru is the one person who teaches his pupils how to dissociate themselves from worldly affairs, in order to attach themselves to the highest truths. For this purpose, the Guru should go down to the level of the disciple & teach him things from the scratch. Swami Vivekananda says: The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student & transfer his soul to the student’s soul & see through the student’s eyes & hear through his ears & understand through his mind.

The Guru has the power to transform others. He possesses the will to convert his disciples from meek feebly minded people to spiritually strong ones. His love is that of a mother & reproaches are that of an elder. He takes his disciples out of their comfort zones & guides them to the path to the infinite- the unknown. He reminds us constantly of their true selves. “A real Guru is very aware that what he is in actuality, the disciples are in potential.”

Sathya Sai Baba once told a devotee, “The only difference between me & you is that I know that I am God, but you don’t know that you are God.”

The Guru’s goal is to teach the disciple to reach the depth of calmness within himself- his untouched spirit. He takes the disciple onto a path of spirituality. An enlightened Guru is a treasure-house. He is wisdom personified. His mere presence is enough in order to instil courage, hope & bliss in the heart of his disciples. ‘The disciple thus becomes charged with the master’s essence.’ Some Gurus also possess the powers to awaken the student by virtue of a look or a mere touch. This awakening, this cosmic consciousness, was experienced by Swami Paramhansa Yogananda, when his master Sri Yukteswar Giri struck him gently on his chest above the heart. The experience is described thus in “The Autobiography of a Yogi”:

My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul & mind instantly lost their physical bondage & streamed out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore...The whole vicinity lay bare before me. My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical sight, simultaneously all perceptive. (Page 141).

This state of ecstasy sometimes intoxicates the disciple who wishes to be in the communion of the divine, forever. However, this does not mean that the disciple is enlightened. This glimpse of cosmic unity is just a stepping stone in the journey of the cosmos. This is only a precursor to the goal. The task of the Guru also is to stop the student from indulging in short spells of bliss, for his target is to help the disciple get into a state of complete, permanent communion with God

The Search for a Guru

The question may inadvertently be asked as to who is our perfect Guru? The answer is that the disciple draws the Guru that he deserves. A Guru appears exactly at the crucial time when we need him the most & he may be parallel to our nature & temperaments, for instance, if we are looking for someone to take care of us & guide us in everything we do, we will attract a paternalistic Guru.

The Perfect Guru can also be evaluated on the basis of the following questions which are to be answered by the potential disciple:

- Is the Guru free of all desires?
- Does s/he chase power, money, fame?
- Is s/he always on the lookout for publicising himself/herself?
- Do you feel a positive aura around him?
- Do you feel a sense of peace while talking to him/her?
- Do you feel like you have got answers to most of your problems while or after talking to your Guru?
- Do you feel joyful, able to be yourself, in your Guru's presence?
- Does the Guru radiate acceptance & love?

Most of the people feel a sense of awe & respect for their Gurus & hence are tongue-tied in their presence. But the issue here is that if one feels uncomfortable & uneasy pouring out one's heart to the Guru then something is amiss. A Guru is one who can guess that you are in trouble by merely looking at your face. Here the communication should be between two souls- one enlightened & the other on the path of spiritual progression.

The revered Guru is one who shows the disciple the true meaning of life. The true Guru does not always ask the disciple to depend on him but teaches him also to realise the God head within himself & see the presence of the Almighty in the mundane occurrences & incidents of daily existence. He radiates love & acceptance to all beings & sets an example for his disciples also to do the same- for all life, all living beings are but a manifestation of the supreme reality. He is truly one, who dispels darkness from the heart of his disciples & from the world.

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