

## IS GURU NECESSARY

*By Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj*

As Ramana Maharishi had often affirmed, in the spiritual path, a Guru is a 'must'. Just as any newborn child requires a mother, the need for a Guru is indispensable.



In the case of Namadeva, a great devotee of Lord Krishna (Panduranga), the latter used to come to him daily in an embodied form and converse and play with him. One day when Namadeva complained to the Lord on having been declared as a 'raw pot' (immature) in an assembly of great devotees, Krishna sternly told him that one who has not had a Guru is immature and cannot get the ultimate Bliss or God realisation even though he may be intimately moving with the lord in the latter's embodied form. One has to go through the proper channel.

No doubt the real Guru (Sadguru) is the Supreme Self (Parmatma) who dwells in our hearts. Except in very rare exceptional cases like anatyasrami (who is above all types of Sannyasins, though he himself does not bear the insignia of any situation in life – eg. Suka Deva, Vamadeva and Ramana Maharishi) a normal person is not capable of extracting the necessary guidance directly from the Lord residing in his Heart. In fact many sadhakas who consider themselves capable of getting directions directly from the Lord or adopt a great and renowned saint of the past who is no longer alive physically as their Guru may delude themselves into thinking that all the inspirations or directions which they are getting in their own heart come directly from the Supreme Lord or their adopted Guru while they are all expressions of their own vasanas (latent tendencies derived from the past). As per a well known prayer – "Mahima tavagochara suddhamane" – only when our mind gets purified by Sadhana, the glory of the Supreme Lord begins to reveal itself.

It is told in Srimad Bhagwatam that this body is a boat which requires an individual Guru as a helmsman as otherwise it will get lost in the ebullient tides of the ocean of the Samsara (phenomenal world). In Viveka Chudamani, a standard Vedantic text, Acharya Sankara has described in detail inter alia the qualifications a disciple should look for in a Guru and how the latter should be approached for guidance.

Even the greatest of saints like Mahaprabhu Chaitanya, Rama Krishna Paramhansa, Adi Sankara, Gowdapada, Kabir, Vidyananda, Ramanujacharya and in recent days, Nisarg Dutt Maharaj of Bombay, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, Paramhansa Yogananda (SRF) and even Lord Krishna did have individual Gurus.

If we apply a small burning match stick to a big and dry log of wood, the latter catches fire and burns brilliantly for hours. Where from has the fire come out? It must have been very much inside the log of wood. Otherwise the fire could not have come out as in the case of an iron bar which cannot be made to burn. The entire Divinity is inside each one of us to the fullest extent. It requires a matchstick called 'Guru' to kindle it.

Further, the moment I accept a Guru I subordinate my ego by recognising the former's superiority in the spiritual field. This is first step towards eliminating our ego and surrendering ourselves to the Supreme Totality. After coming into contact with a Guru it is highly essential that we should not get stuck up in his physical form but we should consider him as the Supreme being or as our favourite Lord (Siva, Krishna, Divine Mother etc). Such an attitude makes our meditation a spiritual sadhana highly effective.

Some people adopt a current or a non living (physically) saint mentally as their Guru and quote the historical story of Eklavya who attained mastery in archery by adopting Dronacharya mentally as his Guru. It is not correct as it is the story of an epic more than three thousand years old (or belonging to Dwapar yuga), where veracity cannot be verified and which also belongs to the worldly arts and cannot be applied to the Spiritual path which is governed by injunctions and instructions in the Scriptures.

### ***How to get a Guru***

A competent and qualified Guru is not to be procured by advertising in the T. V. Network, etc. The best way to adopt a Guru is to develop a volcanic longing to get self-realisation or God realisation and be glued to that one ideal at all times. This desire will become stronger and stronger when we begin to love God more and more to the exclusion of all objects of the world like money, status, wife, home, children etc. When once our desire to seek God and get Moksha (liberation) becomes one-pointed and deep, automatically we draw the proper master towards us. In my earlier book "The Fragrant Flowers" I have already narrated how I happened to get my Guru who fulfilled all the specifications and standards I had foolishly set up earlier in my ignorance. As per Srimad Bhagawatam, Dhruva, a child of

five years was walking in the forest in order to please Lord Narayana forgetting a boon, blissfully unaware of the modus operandi of the sadhana and the need of a Guru. His deep desire to seek the Lord renouncing all the comforts of a home and his firm determination impelled Narada, a divine saint to come voluntarily to him, to initiate him in a mantra and to give all necessary instructions. We may also pray to the Lord daily to give us all things necessary to enable us to do Spiritual Sadhana, including a Guru. Such prayers are very effective but personally I feel that we should pray to god only for God-realisation or liberation and not dilute our prayers by adding other accessories to the marketing list which should contain God and God alone. If we stick to God as the only goal, all necessary equipments and accessories including the Guru will be automatically provided without seeking them. When we buy a car, all the necessary accessories come with it. I have seen that this method does work. A volcanic longing to get God-realisation will bring in its wake all the pre-requisites including the Guru to do proper spiritual practices needed to reach our goal. The entire glory of a Guru is described in detail in 'Guru Gita' which forms part of our scriptures. Selected portions of Guru Gita have already been put in my website.

**\*\*Hari OM \*\***