

गुरु (Guru)

- ॐ गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः, गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्मः, तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः । ।
- गुरु गोविन्द दोऊ खड़े, काके लागीं पांय ।
बलिहारी गुरु आपने, जिन गोविन्द दियो बताय । ।
- सब धरती कागज करूं, लेखनि सब बनराय ।
सात समुन्दर मसि करूं, गुरु गुण लिखा न जाय । ।

The **topic** of my talk today is: "Guru". What is the **meaning** of the word Guru ? What is the **purpose** of having a Guru ? **How many** Gurus can we have: **Only one, or many** ? What are the **basic principles** to be followed while considering someone as a Guru ? These are some of the questions that come to our mind, while we talk about "Guru".

Word Meaning of Guru:

"Guru" is originally a Sanskrit word, adopted by all Indian languages, and lately by the English language also. According to various dictionaries, the word "Guru" means:

- As per **Bhargav's Hindi dictionary**, it means: Adj.: "Heavy, large, great, eminent, respectable, esteemed, exalted, best, excellent, honourable, and important".
Masculine Noun: Teacher, master, spiritual guide, religious instructor, tutor, pastor, and one who explains law & theology to his disciples.
- The **Oxford dictionary** also gives some of the above meanings only.
- The **World Book dictionary** gives an additional meaning, i.e. an expert or authority.
- As per **Sanskrit** language literature, Guru means:

सः गुरुः यः क्रियाः कृत्वा, वेदम् अस्मै प्रयच्छति ।

Meaning: Guru is the one who teaches Gāyatrī Mantra and the Védas to his disciple.

- In **summary**, Guru means an expert & teacher in one or many fields of life.

How many Gurus should we have ? Can we have only one Guru ? Yes, we can have only one Guru. But having only one Guru needs a tremendous sacrifice, which most of us are not willing to make. In practice, we make Guru for different functions or aspects or activities or events in our life. Even the incarnation Dattātréya (दत्तात्रेय) had 24 Gurus ! In olden days, the education was done in the Gurukul. Then a Shishya (disciple) had only one Guru. That Guru was master of most of the aspects of life. But in modern times, in the school, we have a separate teacher for each subject. In the same way, it appears appropriate to have different Gurus for different functions. These Gurus can be human beings, other living creatures, or even a book. From whomsoever we learn anything, is our Guru for that specific function and for that limited period.

What is a Shishya ? One who takes "Shikshā" is the Shishya. One who idolizes a Guru, is called "Shishya" or disciple, or the learner. Most of you have heard the preachings of many Swamijis, Gurumās, Didijis & Granthijis. All talk about making a Guru, and in fact a Sad-Guru (सद्-गुरु). How do you find a Sad-Guru ?

Who comes first ? The Guru, or the Shishya ? पहले कौन बना :- गुरु या चेला ?
... I would say: The Shishya comes first. Why ? ... Because, first you must have the urge, the strong desire to be the Shishya, or the learner for a specific purpose. Then only can you look for a Guru, and then only you will find the Guru for that function.

Who is the first Guru in life ? The Mother is the first Guru of a child !

- Who comes first: The Mother, or the child ? पहले कौन बना :- मां या बेटा ?
First the child is born, then only a woman becomes a Mother.
- Who comes first: The Father, or the child ? पहले कौन बना :- बाप या बेटा ?
First the child is born, then only a man becomes a Father.
- Similarly, you have to be a Shishya first, then only can you find a Guru.

From Tulsi Rāmāyan:

Sant Tulasidās has said in the most popular Hindu epic Rāmāyan:

- मातु पिता गुरु प्रभु की बानी । बिनहि बिचारि करिअ शुभ जानी । ।

The word meaning is: You should follow the instructions of Mother, Father, Guru & Prabhu without questioning. These four people will think only good for you. They are your well-wishers, hence they can not think evil for you. A child learns honesty and also dishonesty primarily from the mother, father & Guru. The mother & father have the heredity as well as the environment component. The Guru is a major portion of the environment component.

How to attain the Truth: We always want to know the truth. A Guru always leads us to the truth. But for reaching the ultimate truth, there are four steps which we must climb one by one.

- ॐ व्रतेन दीक्षाम् आप्नोति, दीक्षया आप्नोति दक्षिणाम् ।
दक्षिणा श्रद्धाम् आप्नोति, श्रद्धया सत्यम् आप्यते । । (यजुर्वेद अध्याय 19 मंत्र 30)

This mantra means: You must have determination (व्रत), that facilitates your entry (दीक्षा) into the realm of other truth-seekers, which leads to progress & well being (दक्षिणा), which creates firm devotion (श्रद्धा), and then finally you attain the truth (सत्य).

In conclusion, we should respect a person or a thing from whom we acquire knowledge & truth for living an enlightened life, and regard them as our Guru for atleast a limited time.