

Divya Darshan

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Guru Purnima: Sanskriti Divas Issue 2013

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NA TU MAM SHAKYASE DRASHTUMANENAIV SVACHAKSHUSHA I

This issue includes:

Satya Narayan Vrat

Guru Purnima or Sanskriti Diwas

Guru Mahima

Krishnam Vande Jagad Gurum

The Guru: by various Authors

Message of the Guru

Teaching of Raman Maharshi

Guru and Disciple

Hindu Sects

Other Sects

The Greatness of the Guru

Prayer of Guru

Upanayan Samskar

Your external eyes will not be able to comprehend my Divine form. I grant you the Divine Eye to enable you to behold Me in my Divine Yoga. **Gita Chapter 11.**



य इदं कुरुते सत्य व्रतं परम दुर्लभम् । धन धान्यादिकम् तस्य भवेत् सत्य प्रसादतः ॥

विषेशतः कलियुगे सत्य पूजा फल प्रदा ॥

अर्थ : जो लोग परम दुर्लभ इस सत्य नारायण के व्रत को करते हैं वे धन धान्य से परि पूर्ण रहते हैं ।

कलि युग के लिये यह व्रत् विशेष फल दायक है ।

॥ स्कन्द पुराण ॥

On the occasion of Guru Purnima
Group Satya Narayan puja for peace and prosperity
Day :- Sunday. Date:- 21st of July 2013
Venue: TBA

Aim to promote Scripture classes in NSW schools
For complete details go to www.hinduheritage.org.au

Satya Narayan Puja

Satya Narayan is the Narayan form of Lord Vishnu. The Lord in this form is considered an embodiment of truth. Satyanarayan is worshipped commonly by Hindus in their homes with family and friends, usually on a full moon (purnima) day of the month. In this puja called **Satyanarayan Pooja**, people worship by reciting the gracious story of Lord Satyanarayan. This story was originally told by **Lord Vishnu** himself to the sage **Narada** for the benefit of humankind.

This puja is conducted to ensure abundance in one's life. Many people carry out this puja immediately after or along with an auspicious occasion like a marriage or moving into a new house or any other success in life. The Satyanarayan puja can be performed on any day. It is not a puja confined to any festivities. But Purnima (full moon day) or Sankranti are considered to be most auspicious days for this puja. Performing this puja in the evening is considered more appropriate. On the day of the puja, the devotee has to fast.

The prasada for this vrata is known as **Sapaad** which is prepared thus: Take an equal measure of rava, Milk, Ghee, Banana, Sugar (the measure should be 1 1/4 or multiples thereof) cook it till all mix into a paste.

The Pooja or Vrata

The vrata is explained in five chapters. The first or the introductory chapter deals with the timing of the vrata and the procedure to go about it. The remaining four chapters contain three stories to reassert the greatness and benevolence of the Almighty. The stories weave out such anecdotes, which reveal the significance of the vrata quite effectively. The vrata is also revealed in nine chapters in some books.

On the day of the **vrata**, it is required to fast and perform the pooja towards the evening. In a sacred pooja room, a new cloth has to be spread on an elevated platform. Rice about a Kg is to be spread on the cloth and in the centre and a kalash capped with a new cloth piece should be placed and on that the token or a small idol of the Lord has to be positioned. A **Panchamruta** (a mixture of ghee, milk, sugar, honey and curds) abhishekam has to be performed.

Vrata begins with the lighting of the lamp, a symbolic gesture of lighting the lamp of devotion in one's heart. Then we pray to Lord Ganesha, the dispeller of obstacles, Lakshmi, the giver of prosperity, Vishnu, the sustainer, Lord Shiva and Parvati, the primordial couple who dance their way to cosmic rhythm, Sun God, the giver of good health, the nine planets and Ashtadikpaalakas including Lord Indra.

सत्य नारायण पूजा: एक बिचार

सत्य नारायण की कथा का श्री गणेश देवर्षी नारद जी की चिन्ता से होता है । लौकिक चिन्ता जीवन को उलझा देती है जबकि पारमार्थिक चिन्तन व्यक्ति को दिशा प्रदान करता है । पुराणों में अनेक स्थानों पर जब कभी ऋषियों के मन में चिन्ता उत्पन्न हुई तो समाज को एक नयी दिशा मिली । स्कन्द पुराण के रेवा खण्ड में जब नारद जी को चिन्ता हुई तो सत्य नारायण की उत्पत्ती हुयी । चिन्ता करते करते यदि अचिन्त्य परमात्मा का चिन्तन हो जाय तो समस्या समाधान बन जाती है ॥

जीवन में सत्य आ जाय तो नारायण स्वयं चले आते हैं । जिस के जीवन में सत्य होता है उसे यश, कीर्ति और प्रतिष्ठा कभी नहीं छोड़ते । सत्य के साथ नारायण का बड़ा सम्बन्ध है । नारायण उसे कहते हैं जो जल में निवास करता हो । जल को विशुद्ध प्रेम माना गया है । विशुद्ध प्रेम के लिये पवित्र अन्तः करण चाहिये । अन्तः करण पवित्र होता है सद् विचार से । निर्मल मन में ही शुद्ध विचार उत्पन्न होंगे और मन निर्मल होगा हरिगुण गान से या कथा श्रवण से । शरीर से सेवा, मन से चिन्तन तथा वाणी से गुणगान करना ही पूजा है । पूजा में प्रसाद तथा पंचामृत का प्रयोग होता है । सत्य नारायण भगवान को पंचामृत चढ़ाने का अर्थ होता है अपनी ज्ञानेन्द्रियों और कर्मेन्द्रियों को पंच तत्वों से स्नान कराना । असली पंचामृत है सत्य, दया, क्षमा, धैर्य एवं नम्रता ।

पंच तत्वों में विशेष शक्ति होती है जैसे पृथ्वी में सुगन्ध । जल में शीतलता । अग्नि या तेज में सुरक्षा । वायु में पवित्रता तथा आकाश में व्यापकता ।

सत्य नारायण के पूजन से भक्त के अन्दर ये सभी गुण समाजाते हैं ॥ जीवन दिव्य बन जाता है ॥

पण्डित नारायण भट्ट

Guru Purnima or Sanskriti Diwas.

Hindu religion is the world's oldest religion. When, how or where its origin is, is not only difficult but near impossible to ascertain. It is widely believed that the Lord himself is the preceptor of this religion. The great "Seers" believe the universe was created by the Lord and all in it is His creation also. The Vedas believe that each element of His creation is not only sacred but neigh to being "DEVAS" or Goddesses. This "shloka" in the Vedas is proof of it:

***"Agnir devta, Vaato devta, Suryo devta, Chandrama devta,
Vasvo devta, Rudra devta, Aaditya devta, Maruto devta,
Vishvadeva devta, Brihaspatirdev-tendro devta, Varuno devta".
(14 – 20).***

Lord Brahma created the universe in His own form and handed over the responsibility of preservation and destruction to Vishnu and Rudr respectively.. Lord Vishnu took numerous incarnations to rid the universe of sins and preserved religion and heritage on earth. The effect of this is today present in all corners of the world. However, the aim of all folks is the same – salvation.

Thousands of years ago Hindu religion was prominent in most parts of the world. However, advent of other religions, effects of war and natural migratory practices saw a diminishing effect in Hindu religious beliefs and cultural changes. About 5 thousand years ago Lord Vishnu incarnated as "Vedavyas" who reinvigorated the Hindu religion, with the blessing of Lord Ganesha and Mata Saraswati, through the Vedas and other Purans and Upanishads.

Guru Purnima is celebrated to recognize the birthday of Vedavyas and the historical significance that he has to our culture and heritage. All the Sects associated with Hinduism, celebrate and honor their own "GURUS" on this auspicious occasion. They pray to them and remember their sacrifices to have preserved the religion and heritage for the forth coming generations.

The Hindu Heritage Society has recognized this event as their main celebration each year. It is our firm belief that this will help propagate a sense of "belonging" to our future generations. In recognition of the Rishis, Munis and various Gurus each year we pay absolutions to them. So far we have held events such as:

- *Sarva Dharma Sammelan,*
- *Shri Krishna Leela,*
- *108 Shiva Linga Abhishek,*
- *Shri Vishnu Sahastra Naam Yagya,*
- *108 Kundi Maha Yagya*
- *1,111 Hanuman Chalisa Parayan,*
- *Akhand Ramayana Path,*
- *Shri Hari Gita Gyan Yoga etc.*

From time to time HHS has also displayed articles and pictures of these revered Gurus at our events. To us and our devotee, they are an important link to our great religious heritage.

Although the festival of “Raksha Bandhan” is typically known as the Sanskriti Diwas, in our view the “Guru Purnima” fulfills this definition appropriately. Vedavyas Ji was born to provide this path to our heritage and the Lord’s incarnation was for the purpose of Sanskriti Diwas celebrations. As the State defense force protects the boundary of the country –likewise religion and heritage protects ones inner belief and personal space. This is an opportune day to celebrate the vast sacrifices of our Gurus and HHS provides you with this opportunity to partake in this event and offer thanks and obeisance to your Gurus.

**“SRUNUSVA DHARM SARWASWAM SRUTVA CHA AVADHARYATAM
ATMANAH PRATIKULANI PARESAN NA SAMACHARET”**

(After the Mahabharat war ended, Lord Krishna said to Arjun "O Partha, now that you have been victorious in the war, I am going to tell you the summary of Dharma (or religion) which you should listen to attentively and accept it only after understanding it. Your behavior should never be such that you don't expect others to behave like you do." Some sages have gone to the extent of saying that there is no distinction between man and animal if a man lacks religious.

Pt. Narayan Bhatt (Shastri).

Pt Jagdish Maharaj (J.P.) translated from Hindi.

Guru Parampara

Paramparā denotes a succession of teachers and disciples in traditional Indian culture. It is also known as guru-shishya paramparā, succession from guru to disciple. In the paramparā system, knowledge (in any field) is passed down (undiluted) through successive generations. The Sanskrit word literally means an uninterrupted series or succession. In the traditional residential form of education, the shishya remains with his guru as a family member and gets education as a true learner.

In some traditions there is never more than one active master at the same time in the same guru parampara (lineage).

Guru Mahima

*Sab Dharti Kagaz Karu, Lekhan Ban Raye
Sath Samundra Ki Mas Karu Guru Gun Likha Na Jaye ~ Kabir Das*

This beautiful doha (couplet) is by the great saint Kabir. The meaning of this doha is “Even if the whole earth is transformed into paper with all the big trees made into pens and if the entire water in the seven oceans are transformed into writing ink, even then the glories of the Guru cannot be written. So much is the greatness of the Guru.”

Guru means a teacher, master, mentor etc. “Gu” means the dark and “Ru” means preventing. Thus the literary meaning of “Guru” is preventing the dark. It means showing the path which leads to the light. Therefore, Kabir again, expresses his feelings for Guru as follows:

*Guru Govind donou khade, kake lagav paay
Balihari guru apne, jin Govind diyo dikhay*

And meaning of this doha is “Guru and Govind (God) stand together, to whose feet should I bow. I will bow to my Guru as he guided the way to reach the Govind (God)”.

Today is **Guru Purnima**. The full moon day in the Hindu month of Ashad (July-August) is observed as the auspicious day of Guru Purnima. This particular day has been chosen to give ritualistic expression to this feeling because it is the birth anniversary of Sage Veda Vyasa, who is regarded as the greatest Guru of all and edited the four Vedas, wrote the 18 Puranas, the Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavata. Vyasa even taught Dattatreya, who is regarded as the Guru of Gurus.

Guru refers to spiritual preceptor. Most Hindus would have Gurus. On Guru Purnima the devotees pay obeisance to their Gurus as thanksgiving for guiding them through the travails of life and towards spiritual liberation. Therefore, we have a shloka in which it says that Guru's place is higher than the Divine Trinity.

*Guru Brahma Gurur Vishnu Guru Devo Maheshwaraha
Guru Saakshat Para Brahma Tasmai Sree Gurave Namaha*

Guru is verily the representative of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. He creates, sustains knowledge and destroys the weeds of ignorance. I salute such a Guru.

In the Bhagavata Purana, Dattatreya enumerates a list of his twenty-four gurus- earth, air, sky or ether, water, fire, sun, moon, python, pigeons, sea, moth, bee, bull elephant, bear, deer, fish, osprey, a child, a maiden, a courtesan, a blacksmith, serpent, spider, and wasp. It proves that we can learn and get wisdom from anyone and everything. Everyone and everything can be our Guru from whom/which we can learn something and enrich our knowledge and wisdom. Therefore we must be thankful to our parents, gurus, teachers, our elders, youngsters, siblings, friends, acquaintances etc. from whom we learnt something new in our life.

Although we respect elders as our shiksha gurus, there is a difference between Shiksha Guru and Diksha Guru, thus: Lord Sri Krishna made an earthly appearance in roughly 3220 B.C., and He left this planet in 3102 B.C. However, because He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of all causes, He is eternally existing. Therefore these dates are simply a recording of His incarnation in Dvapara-yuga (the age prior to the present Age of Kali). He spoke the Bhagavad-Gita to Arjuna in Dvapara-yuga, but this does not limit His position as the Adi-purusha (the original

Supreme Person) and the Adi-guru (the original teacher). In the Vedic literature Lord Krishna is described as the ultimate source of all knowledge; hence, He is the most reliable source of knowledge. The whole Guru-parampara—the disciple succession—begins with Him because He is the original preceptor.

Matter is temporary, and spirit is eternal. Therefore we eternal souls are more important than our bodies. To understand this point is real knowledge. Man has a two-fold duty here on earth - to preserve his life, and to realize his Self. To preserve his life, he has to learn to work for his daily bread. To realize his Self, he has to serve, love, and meditate. The Guru who teaches him the knowledge of worldly arts is the Siksha Guru. The Guru who shows him the path of Realization is the Diksha Guru. Siksha Gurus can be many -as many as the things he wishes to learn. The Diksha Guru can be only one - the one who leads him to Moksha).

Krishnam Vande Jagad Gurum

by Swami Krishnananda - Divine Life Society

This day happens to be the most blessed and pious day of the advent of Bhagwan Shri Krishna, which goes by the name of Shri Krishna Janmashtami. Shri Krishna is Jagatguru; He is the teacher of all teachers, the Guru of all Gurus – **Krishnam vande jagadguru**. There is no Guru equal to him. Bhagwan Shri Krishna is an incarnation of the Supreme Being. There are 24 incarnations of Shri Vishnu, of which 10 are most revered: Mastya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashuram, Shri Ramchandra, Bhagwan Shri Krishna and Kalki.

One of the traits of the human being is to observe and evaluate everything from the viewpoint of the human being only. We judge even God from our point of view. "Where is the goodness of God," we ask, "when He has created a world of evil – tempests, tornados, earthquakes, sufferings, drought and flood? What kind of God has created this world? God could have created milk and honey through the waters of the Ganga, instead of giving plain water. He could have created a round earth, without ups and downs, so that we may not fall down and break our legs. Why did God not do that, in all His capacity?" This is how we think.

So, the object that we think remains what it is, and it refuses to get into the yardstick of comprehension of the human being. People find fault with Rama and Krishna, also. "What kind of Rama is he? He killed Vali, and banished Sita, and so many things." We do not understand that these Avatars are the indications and symbols of the development of divine consciousness. There is a gradational ascent through the evolutionary process of consciousness, into greater and greater perfections. Rama was not supposed to have behaved in any other way than he did behave. It was one stage in the evolution of the incarnation. He was Maryada-purushottama, an ideal human being, with all the qualities that we can find in a human being; and we cannot, and should not, expect qualities which are not in a human being, because he is Maryada-purushottama, a perfected human being – God manifested as a gentleman.

Here we have Shri Krishna Avatara, which is supposed to be a symbolic representation of the manner in which God Himself works. Nobody can know how God works, and whatever ideas we may have of the manner in which God works, it is not appreciable to us because He devastates our ideas of propriety, ethicality, necessity, human-ness, and social values. Everything is put upside down.

We have systems of observation psychologically, humanly and socially. These are turned upside down by God. Actually, God is nothing but the total topsy-turvy operation of the human way of thinking. It is a Shirshasana of the consciousness of man that is required to understand what God

is. We should not stand on the footstool of our consciousness, but on the brain of our consciousness.

The universal comprehensiveness and adjustability in a perfected order is something incomprehensible to a human being. We cannot think the whole universe in our minds; and God is supposed to think only in that manner. God's thought is universal thought, whereas our thought is social thought, family thought, community thought, national thought, political thought, army thought, police thought, courtcase thought, and any other thoughts we have in our minds.

There is always something that we grab and something that we exclude in our perception, which is the opposite of God's way of inclusiveness. There is nothing that God can exclude from His thought, whereas in a human being, it is impossible not to exclude something. We seem to be the opposite of God in our way of thinking. We cannot grab the whole world into our comprehension at any time. Our way of thinking is only of our family, our office, our salary, our community, our relations, our property, and whatever belongs to us. When we say we are concerned with whatever belongs to us, we are not concerned with that which does not belong to us; so, to whom does the other thing belong? It is not our concern.

Here is the difference between God thinking and a human being thinking. Inclusiveness is the nature of God's operation; exclusiveness is the nature of the human way of thinking. Whenever we think something, we have to exclude something from the purview of our thought. That is to say, total thought is something unknown to a human being, and God is nothing but total thought.

I am referring particularly to the great incarnation of Bhagwan Shri Krishna today on the occasion of this spiritual advent. Whatever He said and whatever He did was totally beyond the comprehension of the human psyche. Whatever He did from childhood until the end of His life is beyond our comprehension.

Read the Bhagawat Gita, which He spoke. Everything is difficult. One Sloka seems to be contradicting another. One thing is said, then another thing is said. Everything is said in the seven hundred verses of the Bhagavadgita, but what is said, finally? We cannot make it out, due to the multifarious and multifaceted instruction that has been given to us through the multi-faced Universal Being, Vishvarupa. The one brain, and two eyes, and one thought of the human being cannot comprehend it. We must have as many heads as the Vishvarupa has in order to understand what the Gita said – as many eyes, as many mouths, as many processes of thinking, and as wide a consciousness.

The necessity to portray the advent and actions of these incarnations is precisely to present before us a picture of the divine way of operation taking place in the world. We do not like floods overflowing, destroying villages and killing people. We do not like cyclones breaking everything, throwing off rooftops and cutting off trees. We do not like tornadoes, or drought. What is it that we like? Sri Krishna's comprehensiveness is itself an instruction. We do not require any commentary for the Bhagavadgita. The life of Krishna is a commentary on what he has said. As intricate as the multifaceted activity of Sri Krishna is, so intricate is also the multifaceted teaching of the Bhagavadgita. If we can understand who Krishna was, we can understand also what the Gita is.

Suffice it to say that Shri Krishna is considered as the ray of the Absolute, something like total comprehensiveness and infinite capacity, omnipotent in behaviour, with nothing impossible. He can set right anything in one minute, and if the necessity arises, he can dismantle the whole parliament of the cosmos and take up the reins in his own hands, which he did sometimes in his own career. Rules and regulations did he follow, but he could break any rule if the necessity arose, just as we can do anything to our own body for the sake of its sustenance. We can have surgery performed on the limbs of our body. We can lose half the body by surgery. It is a very unfortunate thing, yet we may go to a doctor, pay lakhs of rupees as fee, and remove half of the body so that

we may be happy. Where is the happiness when we have lost half of the body? This losing of half the body is necessary in order that we may exist as a complete human being. A complete human being is not the whole body. Even a half body can be a whole human being. We can ask any person who has lost everything below his thighs, with only the other half remaining, "Are you a half man?" "No, no! I am a full man," he will say. That means the person is not the body. In a like manner, impossible it is to understand this divinity operating; and it is futile on the part of anyone to understand either Krishna or Jesus.

Another example before us is Jesus Christ. He never behaved like a human being. He behaved like God Himself. All that he said is beyond the comprehension of the world. The way in which he behaved is not the behaviour of an ordinary human being. He toppled the existing laws, and broke the norms; the stereotyped procrustean bed of ethics was broken to pieces and he brought a divine law, which we have beautifully quoted in what is known as his Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament is something like a counterpart of the Bhagavadgita teachings.

Great men think alike, and they perform actions in a similar way. They belong to a different fraternity altogether. God-men are God-men everywhere, and there is no such thing as an Eastern God-man or a Western God-man. And we should not use the word 'men', also. They are not men; they are not women – they are persons. We have no language to use. A woman can be a God-man, but because of the linguistic limitations we do not want to use words like 'woman' and 'man' and all that. So, we have to coin some new word. These days we say it is a 'person', a God-intoxicated person. It can be what is called a man or a woman; at that time, they cease to be human beings, and are neither men nor women.

Shri Krishna and Jesus Christ were neither men nor women. They were androgynous perfections, standing for the word of the Almighty, who Himself is not a man or a woman. We may say "God, the Father in heaven" – it is a human, paternal way of addressing God. It is a psychological necessity; but God is impersonality - not human in nature.

That was portrayed dramatically, as if in a theatrical performance, in the picturesque drama of the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. This wonderful day we are observing it, and it is up to us to invoke the great blessings of this master so that he may enter into us. Mighty we may become. A mighty person was Jesus Christ; mighty was Bhagavan Sri Krishna. May you all be mighty people!

The Guru

In paramapara, not only is the immediate guru revered, the three preceding gurus are also worshipped or revered. These are known variously as the kala-guru or as the "four gurus" and are designated as follows:

- Guru - the immediate guru
- Parama-guru - the Guru's guru
- Parapara-guru - the Parama-guru's guru
- Parameshti-guru - the Parapara-guru's guru

In the Vedic culture therefore we find four primary disciplic lines which have come down through countless ages, sometimes appearing manifest, sometimes not, yet still the pure and unadulterated messages of Veda span our concepts of the temporal (material realm), and were, and are handed down from 'guru' to disciple. Guru parampara (Sanskrit: from guru teacher + parampara a row or uninterrupted series or succession) or "from one teacher to another") means a line of spiritual gurus in authentic succession of initiation; the chain of mystical power and authorized continuity, passed from guru to guru.

Overview

There are two types of guru parampara: first, those who rise one above the other in spiritual dignity and in progressively greater esoteric degree; and, second, those who succeed each other in time and in one line in the outer world. Yet these two types are but the same rule of series manifesting in two slightly differing manners. This process copies the hierarchical structure of nature itself.

In the Indian religious and philosophical traditions, all knowledge is traced back to the Gods and to the Rishi who saw the Vedas. For instance, the advaita guru-parampara begins with the daiva-parampara, followed by the rishi-parampara.

- Brahma Madhwa Guru Paramparā —
- Advaita Guru Paramparā —
- Kailasa Parampara — The ancient spiritual lineage of Kauai's Hindu Monastery.

Advaita Guru Parampara

Paramparā » Guru Parampara » Advaita Guru Parampara

The prominent gurus of advaita, starts from Narayana through Sankara and his disciples, upto the Acaryas of today. It is typical of advaita that the first guru is called nArAyaNa (vishNu) in the first verse and sadASiva (Siva) in the second. The paramparA thus lists:

- Narayana
- padmabhuva (Brahma)
- Vasishtha
- Sakti
- parasara
- Vyasa
- Suka
- Gaudapada
- Govinda bhagavatpada
- Adi Sankara

Sankara's four well-known disciples were named padmapada, hastamalaka, totaka and suresvara (varttikakara). Tradition has it that Sankara appointed these four disciples as heads of the four mathas that he founded. The others are the gurus who come later in the tradition.

In the Brahma Sampradaya, which is the 'sampradaya' of Sri Sripad Madhwacarya, up until Madhwa, I have included in the flow of devotees the lineage accepted by the general Brahma Sampradaya, but after Sripad Madhwacarya there are some changes. The reason for this is that there is no mention of anyone from Brahma, and Narad, to Vyasa, and then to Madhwa. Definately they were the great 'acaryas' in our line, but as well as them there were many worthy souls who gave in many cases their very life to the mission of the 'parampara'.

Over the course of the entire span of time that the 'parampara' has existed there has been one main root of the tree, with many four main trunks, and then many branches, sub-branches, etc., coming from them. During the sojourn of that tree in spanning the yugas to reach where we are today in the Kali Yuga different devotees have branched out to further spread the 'parampara'. I have tried to include some of these changes, but with branches, and sub-branches,this tree is so vast!

On various trips to India it has brought great pleasure and inspiration to visit the various temples in the mutts especially in South India. The devotees there, in those 'mutts', and associated with them, in most cases, seem to carry a special quality of Madhwacarya with them. Naturally there will always be more or lesser favourites, that's the nature of individuality.

However, as an aspiring Brahma-Madhwa-Gaudiya Vaisnava my main presentation is of that line. To those in other Madhwa Mutts I offer my respects as great Vaishnavas, but for a moment let us look into the dynamic preaching arm of the Madhwa body, the ISKCON Gaudiya line, which has now spread the glories of Sripad Madhwacarya not only throughout the world, but throughout the universe.

(A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in the purport of Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Adi lila 1:19.)

I hope and pray, that as no offence is intended, that no offence will be taken due to my presentation. Although we unfortunate souls, due to karmas and the Lord's design have taken our present birth in families outside of the Vedic culture it was not entirely an ordinary thing, by the great good fortune and extreme mercy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and by the mercy of our Srila Prabhupada, we have been brought back into the Vedic culture, and have received 'Vaishnava diksha', initiation again according to the 'agamas' of the 'Pancaratriki' system of 'Vaishnava' initiation - such initiation has been recognised by the line of guru parampara purvacharyas.

The Guru

From The Mahabharata

Santi Parva, Section CCCXXVII

Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Addressing Suka,

Janaka said: Without the aid of an understanding cleansed by study of the scriptures and without that true conception of all things which is known by the name of Vijnana, the attainment of Emancipation is impossible. That cleansed understanding, again, it is said, is unattainable without one's connection with a preceptor. The preceptor is the helmsman, and knowledge is the boat (aided by whom and which one succeeds in crossing the ocean of the world). After having acquired that boat, one becomes crowned with success.

Guru

From The Mahabharata

Santi Parva, Section CCCXXVIII

Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Vyasa the son of Parsara, after the arrival of his puissant son, continued to dwell there on the Himavat (Himalayas) engaged in teaching his disciples and his son. One day, as he was seated, his disciples, all well skilled in the Vedas, having their senses under control, and endued with tranquil souls, sat themselves around him. All of them had thoroughly mastered the Vedas with their branches. All of them were observant of penances. With joined hands they addressed their preceptor in the following words:

The disciples said: We have through thy grace, been endued with great energy. Our fame also has spread. There is one favour that we humbly solicit thee to grant us.

Hearing these words of theirs, the regenerate Rishi answered them, saying: Ye sons, tell me what that boon is which ye wish I should grant you!

Hearing this answer of their preceptor, the disciple became filled with joy. Once more bowing their heads low unto their preceptor and joining their hands, all of them in one voice said these excellent words: If our preceptor has been pleased with us, then, O best of sages, we are sure to be crowned with success! We all solicit thee, O great Rishi, to grant us a boon. Be thou inclined to be graceful to us. Let no sixth disciple (besides us five) succeed in attaining to fame! We are four. Our preceptor's son forms the fifth. Let the Vedas shine in only us five! Even this is the boon that we solicit.

Hearing these words of his disciples, Vyasa, the son of Parsara, possessed of great intelligence, well conversant with the meaning of the Vedas, endued with a righteous soul, and always engaged in thinking of objects that confer benefits on a person in the world hereafter, said unto his disciples these righteous words fraught with great benefit: The Vedas should always be given unto him who is a Brahmana, or unto him who is desirous of listening to Vedic instructions, by him who eagerly wishes to attain a residence in the region of Brahman! Do ye multiply. Let the Vedas spread (through your exertions).

The Vedas should never be imparted unto one that has not formally become a disciple. Nor should they be given unto one who is not observant of good vows. Nor should they be given for dwelling in one that is of uncleansed soul. These should be known as the proper qualifications of persons that can be accepted as disciples (for the communication of Vedic knowledge).

The Message of the Guru

Reproduced from our page 'Stories and episodes (32)'

Taittiriya Upanishad

Paraphrased- simplified- abridged By R.R.Diwakar

[The span of ashrama life for students was usually twelve years. The students lived with their preceptors and served them and the ashrama during that period. They learnt the Vedas, maintained the sacrificial fire and studied whatever the guru taught them. Below is given a model message from a guru to a departing disciple at the end of the period. This might be said to be a 'Convocation Address' if we liken the ashramas of old to the 'residential universities' of today. This occurs in the Taittiriya Upanishad.]

Young boys eight or more entered the ashramas and were entrusted to the care of the guru or the preceptor. They spent twelve long years in study and sport, in service and sadhana or spiritual discipline. They were called brahmacharis, that is, those who adopt a particular discipline in order to know Brahman. Brahmacharya is not mere continence, but a whole code of disciplined conduct which aims at the conservation, development and concentration of physical, mental and moral energy, in order to attain the highest spiritual goal.

The twelve strenuous years thus spent by the youngsters in the very home of the guru in close association with him, built up very affectionate relations between them. The gurus were expected to take almost parental interest in their charges, while the disciples were to render filial obedience to the gurus.

Let us imagine in one such ashrama, a day dawns when a disciple or a group of them is about to depart and plunge into the wide world. He is leaving the charmed circle of the ashrama to battle with the currents and cross-currents of life. He is to transfer himself from the cloister to the market place. He is now to test in the world of experience what he has learnt within the precincts of the

academy. He is to cut off his moorings in the sheltered bay and launch the boat of his life into the open sea. Fears and thrills of anticipated adventures fill the young man as he contemplates the prospect before him. The guru too feels the wrench and his heart is full of emotion. He has some anxiety about the future of his young disciple. But the separation is inevitable- it has to come one day. In fact, by that separation alone can the future development of his student be ensured.

Such are the mixed feelings that surge in the heart when the Vedic guru gives the parting message to the brahmachari after his study of the Vedas is over.

“My dear child, your study of the Vedas is over. Now go forth into the wide world.

“Speak the truth and practise the Dharma or the Law. Never fail nor falter in the study of that part of the Veda that has been assigned to you. Study more but never less than thy portion.

“Give to your preceptor such wealth and such things as are dear to him. Never allow your line of life to lapse. Behind you, you must leave children.

“Never falter from the truth nor from the Law (Dharma). Never stint nor make mistakes in doing good. Never neglect to do that which would lead to prosperity.

“Do not give up your studies and do not stop teaching.

“You ought not to omit to do your duties towards your gods and ancestors; commit no mistakes in performing them.

“Revere your mother and your father as much as you revere god. Let your guru (preceptor) be looked upon as god. Let your guest get the same respect as is due to god.

“Be thou faultless and pure in thought and action. Only such of your qualities and actions as are clearly good should be cherished by you, and not others. Such knowers of Brahman as are greater than ourselves ought to be highly respected by you.

“Whilst giving, give with faith; never without it. Give richly. Give with humility. Give with fear, lest you give too little. Give with feeling and with full knowledge.

“At times you may be in doubt about the wisdom of a certain course of action. At such a time you should act in a manner in which thoughtful and virtuous knowers of Brahman who are desirous of following the Law, do act.

“So also, as regards your conduct towards men of ill fame; it should be like that of a thoughtful, virtuous knowers of Brahman who follow the Law.

“This is the message. This is the advice. This is the knowledge. This is the command. Thus should you live and act in life.”

The Guru

By Sri Ramana Maharshi

Preamble by David Godman

Preamble

God and Guru are in truth not different. Just as the prey that has fallen into the jaws of a tiger cannot escape, so those who have come under the glance of the Guru's grace will surely be saved and will never be forsaken; yet one should follow without fail the path shown by the Guru.

From Bhagavan's (Sri Ramana's) point of view there are no disciples but from the point of view of the disciple the grace of the Guru is like the ocean. If the disciple comes with a cup he will only get a cupful. It is no use complaining of the niggardliness of the ocean; the bigger the vessel the more he will be able to carry. It is entirely up to him.

The term Guru is often loosely used to describe anyone who gives out spiritual advice, but in Sri Ramana's vocabulary the word has a much more restricted definition. For him, a true Guru is someone who has realized the Self and who is able to use his power to assist others towards the goal of Self-realization.

Sri Ramana often said that God, Guru and the Self are identical; the Guru is God in human form and, simultaneously, he is also the Self in the Heart of each devotee. Because he is both inside and outside, his powers work in two different ways. The outer Guru gives instructions and by his power enables the devotee to keep his attention on the Self; the inner Guru pulls the devotee's mind back to its source, absorbs it in the Self and finally destroys it.

It is a basic tenet of Sri Ramana's teaching that a Guru is necessary for almost everyone who is striving towards a permanent awareness of the Self. The catalytic role of the Guru in spiritual development is therefore crucial; except in rare instances, ignorance of the Self is so deeply rooted that individual seekers are unable to escape from it by their own efforts.

Although Sri Ramana taught that a Guru is indispensable for those seeking Self-realization, he also pointed out that the Guru has no power to bring about realization in those who are not energetically seeking it. If the individual seeker makes a serious attempt to discover the Self, then the grace and power of the Guru will automatically start to flow. If no such attempt is made, the Guru is helpless.

The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Question: What is Guru's grace? How does it lead to Self-realisation?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Guru is the Self. Sometimes in his life a man becomes dissatisfied and not content with what he has, he seeks the satisfaction of his desires through prayer to God. His mind is gradually purified until he longs to know God, more to obtain his grace than to satisfy his worldly desires. Then, God's grace begins to manifest. God takes the form of a Guru and appears to the devotee, teaches him the truth and, more over, purifies his mind by association. The devotee's mind gains strength and is then able to turn inward. By meditation it is further purified and it remains still without the least ripple. That calm expanse is the Self. The Guru is both external and internal. From the exterior he gives a push to the mind to turn it inwards. From the interior he pulls the mind towards the Self and helps in the softening of the mind. That is Guru's grace. There is no difference between God, Guru and the Self.

Question: In the Theosophical Society they meditate in order to seek masters to guide them.

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

The master is within; meditation is meant to remove the ignorant idea that he is only outside. If he is a stranger whom you await, he is bound to disappear also. What is the use of a transient being like that? But so long as you think you are separate or that you are the body, an external master is also necessary and he will appear to have a body. When the wrong identification of oneself with the body ceases, the master will be found to be none other than the Self.

Question: Will the Guru help us to know the Self through initiation?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Does the Guru hold you by the hand and whisper in the ear? You may imagine him to be what you are yourself. Because you think you are with a body, you think he also has a body and that he will do something tangible to you. His work lies within, in the spiritual realm.

Question: How is a Guru found?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

God, who is immanent, in His grace takes pity on the loving devotee and manifests himself according to the devotee's development. The devotee thinks that he is a man and expects a relationship between two physical bodies. But the Guru, who is a God or the Self incarnate works from within, helps the man to see the error of his ways and guides him on the right path until he realises the Self within.

Question: What are the marks of a real teacher (sadaguru)?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Steady abidance in the Self, looking at all with an equal eye, unshakable courage at all times, in all places and circumstances.

Question: There are a number of spiritual teachers teaching various paths. Whom should one take for one's Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Choose that one where you find you get shanti (peace).

Question: How can I find my own Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: By intense meditation.

Question: What are the marks of the Guru's grace?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: It is beyond words or thoughts.

Question: Should we not also consider his teachings?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

He who instructs an ardent seeker to do this or that is not a true master. The seeker is already afflicted by his activities and wants peace and rest. In other words he wants cessation of his activities. If a teacher tells him to do something in addition to, or in place of, his other activities, can that be a help to the seeker? Activity is creation. Activity is the destruction of one's inherent happiness. If activity is advocated the adviser is not a master but a killer. In such circumstances either the Creator (Brahma) or death (Yama) may be said to have come in the guise of a master. Such a person cannot liberate the aspirant; he can only strengthen his fetters.

Question: If it is true that the Guru is one's own Self, what is the principle underlying the doctrine which says that, however learned a disciple may be or whatever occult powers he may possess, he cannot attain Self-realisation without the grace of the Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Although in absolute truth the state of the Guru is that of oneself (the Self), it is very hard for the self which has become the individual (jiva or embodied soul) through ignorance, to realise its true state or nature without the grace of the Guru.

Question: If that is so, how is it that it is said that the disciple realises his true state by the Guru's grace?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

It is like the elephant, which wakes up on seeing a lion in his dream. Even as the elephant wakes up at the mere sight of the lion, so too is it certain that the disciple wakes up from the sleep of ignorance into the wakefulness of true knowledge through the Guru's benevolent look of grace.

Question: What is the significance of the saying that the nature of the real Guru is that of the Supreme Lord (Sarvesvara)?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

First, the individual soul, which desires to attain the state of Godhood, or the state of true knowledge, practises incessant devotion. When the individual's devotion has reached a mature stage, the Lord, who is the witness of the individual soul and identical with it, manifests. He appears in human form with the help of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute), his three natural features, and form the name, which he also graciously assumes. In the guise of blessing the disciple he absorbs him in Himself. According to this doctrine the Guru can truly be called the Lord.

Question: How then some great persons attain knowledge without a Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

To a few mature persons the Lord shines as the formless light of knowledge and imparts awareness of the truth.

Question: How is one to decide upon a proper Guru? What is the swarupa (nature or real form) of a Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

He is the proper Guru to whom your mind is attuned. If you ask, "How to decide who is the Guru and what is his swarupa?", he should be endowed with tranquillity, patience, forgiveness and other virtues; he should be capable of attracting others even with his eyes just as a magnet attracts iron; he should have a feeling of equality towards all. He who has these virtues is the true Guru, but one wants to know the swarupa of the Guru, one must know one's own swarupa first. How can one know the real nature of the Guru if one does not know one's own real nature first? If you want to perceive the real nature or form of the Guru you must first learn to look upon the whole universe as Guru rupam (the form of the Guru). One must see the Guru in all living beings. It is the same with God. You must look upon all objects as God's rupa (form). How can he who does not know his own Self perceive the real form of God or the real form of the Guru? How can he determine them? Therefore, first of all know your own real form and nature.

Question: Isn't a Guru necessary to know even that?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

That is true. The world contains many great men. Look upon him as your Guru with whom your mind gets attuned. The one in whom you have faith is your Guru.

Question: What is the significance of Guru's grace in the attainment of liberation?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Liberation is not anywhere outside you. It is only within. If a man is anxious for deliverance, the internal Guru pulls him in and the external Guru pushes him into the Self. This is the grace of the Guru.

Question: Some people reported you to have said that there was no need for a Guru. Others gave the opposite report. What does Maharshi say?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: I have never said that there is no need for a Guru.

Questioner: Sri Aurobindo and others refer to you as having had no Guru.

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

It all depends on what you call a Guru. He need not be in a human form. Dattatreya had twenty-four Gurus including the five elements- earth, water, etc. Every object in this world was his Guru. The Guru is absolutely necessary. The Upanishads say that none but a Guru can take a man out of the jungle of intellect and sense perceptions. So there must be a Guru.

Questioner: I mean a human Guru- Maharshi did not have one.

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

I might have had one at one time or other. But did I not sing hymns to Arunachala? What is a Guru? Guru is God or the Self. First a man prays to God to fulfil his desires. A time comes when he will no more pray for the fulfilment of material desires but for God Himself. God then appears to him in some form or other, human or non-human, to guide him to Himself in answer to his prayer and according to his needs.

Question: When loyal to one master can you respect others?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Guru is only one. He is not physical. So long as there is weakness the support of strength is needed.

Questioner: J.Krishnamurti says, "No Guru is necessary."

Sri Ramana Maharshi: How did he know it? One can say so after realising but not before.

Question: Can Sri Bhagavan help us to realise truth?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Help is always there.

Questioner: Then there is no need to ask questions. I do not feel the ever-present help.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Surrender and you will find it.

Questioner: I am always at your feet. Will Bhagavan give us some upadesa (teaching) to follow? Otherwise how can I get help living 600 miles away?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: The sadguru (the Guru who is one with Being) is within.

Questioner: Sadguru is necessary to guide me to understand it.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: The sadguru is within.

Questioner: I want a visible Guru.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: That visible Guru says that he is within.

Question: Is success not dependent on the Guru's grace?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Yes, it is. Is not your practice itself due to such grace? The fruits are the result of the practice and follow it automatically. There is a stanza in Kaivalya which says, 'O Guru! You have been always with me, watching me through several incarnations, and ordaining my course until I was liberated.' The Self manifests externally as the Guru when the occasion arises, otherwise he is always within, doing what is necessary.

Question: Some disciples of Shirdi Sai Baba worship a picture of him and say that it is their Guru. How could that be? They can worship it as God, but what benefit could they get by worshipping it as their Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: They secure concentration by that.

Question: That is all very well, I agree. It may be to some extent an exercise in concentration. But isn't a Guru required for that concentration?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Certainly, but after all, Guru only means guri (concentration).

Questioner: How can a lifeless picture help in developing deep concentration? It requires a living Guru who could show it in practice. It is possible perhaps for Bhagavan to attain perfection without a living Guru, but is it possible for people like myself?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

That is true. Even so, by worshipping a lifeless portrait, the mind gets concentrated to a certain extent. That concentration will not remain constant unless one knows one's own Self by enquiring. For that enquiry, a Guru's help is necessary.

Question: It is said that the Guru can make his disciple realise the Self by transmitting some of his own power to him? Is it true?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Yes. The Guru does not bring about Self-realisation. He simply removes all the obstacles to it. The Self is always realised.

Question: Is it absolutely necessary to have a Guru if one is seeking Self-realisation?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

So long as you seek Self-realisation the Guru is necessary. Guru is the Self. Take Guru to be the real Self and your self as the individual self. The disappearance of this sense of duality is the removal of ignorance. So long as duality persists in you the Guru is necessary. Because you identify yourself with the body, you think that the Guru is also a body. You are not the body, nor is the Guru. You are the Self and so is the Guru. This knowledge is gained by what you call Self-realisation.

Question: How can one know whether a particular individual is competent to be a Guru?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

By the peace of mind found in his presence and by the sense of respect you feel for him.

Question: If the Guru happens to turn out incompetent, what will be the fate of the disciple who has implicit faith in him?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Each one according to his merits.

Question: May I have Guru's grace?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Grace is always there.

Questioner: But I do not feel it.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Surrender will make one understand the grace.

Question: I have surrendered heart and soul. I am the best judge of my heart. Still I do not feel the grace.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: If you had surrendered the question would not arise.

Question: I have surrendered. Still the questions arise.

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Grace is constant. Your judgment is the variable. Where else should the fault lie?

Question: May one have more than one spiritual master?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Who is a master? He is the Self after all. According to the stages of development of the mind the Self manifests as the master externally. The famous ancient Dattatreya said that he had more than twenty-four masers. The master is one from whom one learns anything. The Guru may be sometimes inanimate also, as in the case of Dattatreya. God, Guru and the Self are identical.

A spiritually minded man thinks that God is all pervading and takes God for his Guru. Later, God brings him in contact with a personal Guru and the man recognizes him as all in all. Lastly the same man is made by the grace of the master to feel that his Self is the reality and nothing else. Thus he finds that the Self is the master.

Question: It is said in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita: "Realise the Self with pure intellect and also by service to the Guru and by enquiry." How are they to be reconciled?

Sri Ramana Maharshi:

‘Iswaro Gururatmeti’- Iswara, Guru and Self are identical. So long as the sense of duality persists in you, you seek a Guru, thinking that he is different from you. However, he teaches you the truth and you gain the insight.

He who bestows the supreme knowledge of Self upon the soul by making it face towards Self alone is the supreme Guru who is praised by sages as the form of God, who is Self. Cling to him. By approaching the Guru and serving him faithfully, one should learn through his grace the cause of one's birth and one's suffering. Knowing then that these are due to one's straying from Self, it is best to abide firmly as Self.

Although those who have embraced and are steadfastly following the path to salvation may at times happen to swerve from the Vedic path either due to forgetfulness or due to some other reasons, know that they should not at any time go against the words of the Guru. The words of sages assure that if one does a wrong to God, it can be rectified by the Guru, but that a wrong done to a Guru cannot be rectified even by God.

For one who, due to rare, intense and abundant love, has complete faith in the glance of grace bestowed by the Guru, there will be no suffering and he will live in this world like Puruhuta (a name if Indra, the king of the gods).

Peace, the one thing which is desired by everyone, cannot be attained in any way, by any one, at any time or in any place, unless stillness of mind is obtained through the grace of the Sadguru. Therefore, always seek that grace with a one-pointed mind.

The Guru

By Swami Vivekananda

The foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa

Every soul is destined to be perfect, and every being, in the end, will attain a state of perfection. Whatever we are now is the result of our acts and thoughts in the past; and whatever we shall be in the future will be the result of what we think and do now. But this, the shaping of our own destinies does not preclude our receiving help from outside; nay, in the vast majority of cases such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher powers and possibilities of the soul are

quicken, spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end.

This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can only receive impulses from another soul, and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, but in the end we find that we have not developed at all spiritually. It is not true that a high order of intellectual development always goes hand in hand with a proportionate development of the spiritual side in man. In studying books we are sometimes deluded into thinking that thereby we are being spiritually helped; but if we analyse the effect of the study of books on ourselves, we shall find that at the utmost it is only our intellect that derives profit from such studies, and not our inner spirit.

This inadequacy of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why, although almost every one of us can speak most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit, the impulse must come from another soul.

The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru – the teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the Shishya – the student. To convey such an impulse to any soul, in the first place, the soul from which it proceeds must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another; and in the second place, the soul to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed. And when both these conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of genuine religion takes place.

"The true preacher of religion has to be of wonderful capabilities, and clever shall his bearer be."

And when both of these are really wonderful and extraordinary, then will a splendid spiritual awakening result, and not otherwise. Such alone are the real teachers, and such alone are also the real students, the real aspirants. All others are only playing with spirituality. They have just a little curiosity awakened, just a little intellectual aspiration kindled in them, but are standing on the outward fringe of the horizon of religion.

There is no doubt, some value even in that, as it may, in course of time, result in the awakening of a real thirst for religion; and it is a mysterious law of nature that, as soon as the field is ready, the seed must and does come; as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious force must and does appear to help that soul. When the power that attracts the light of religion in the receiving soul is full and strong, the power that answers to that attraction and sends in light does come as a matter of course.

Dangers in regard to the Student

There are, however, certain great dangers in the way. There is, for instance, the danger to the receiving soul of its mistaking momentary emotions for real religious yearning. We may study that in ourselves. Many a times in our lives, somebody dies whom we loved. We receive a blow. We feel that the world is slipping between our fingers, that we want something surer and higher, and that we must become religious. In a few days that wave of feeling has passed away, and we are left stranded just where we were before.

We are all of us often mistaking such impulses for real thirst after religion; but as long as these momentary emotions are thus mistaken, that continuous, real craving of the soul for religion will not come; and we shall not find the true transmitter of spirituality into our nature. So whenever we are tempted to complain of our search after the truth, that we desire so much, proving vain, instead of so complaining, our first duty ought to be to look into our own souls, and find whether

the craving in the heart is real. Then, in the vast majority of cases it would be discovered that we were not fit for receiving the truth, that there was no real thirst for spirituality.

There are still greater dangers in regard to the transmitter, the Guru. There are many, who, though immersed in ignorance, yet, in the pride of their hearts, fancy they know everything, and not only do not stop there, but offer to take others on their shoulders; and thus the blind leading the blind, both fall into the ditch.

From Katha Upanishad, I.ii.5: "Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind."

The world is full of these. Every one wants to be a teacher. Every beggar wants to make a gift of a million dollars! Just as these beggars are ridiculous, so are these teachers.

Qualifications of the Aspirant and the Teacher

How are we to know the teacher then? The sun requires no torch to make him visible. We need not light a candle in order to see him. When the sun rises, we instinctively become aware of the fact, and when a teacher of men comes to help us, the soul will instinctively know that truth has already begun to shine upon it. Truth stands on its own evidence. It does not require any other testimony to prove it true; it is self-effulgent. It penetrates into the innermost corners of our nature, and in its presence, the whole universe stands up and says, "This is truth".

The teachers whose wisdom and truth shine like the light of the sun are the very greatest the world has known, and they are worshipped as God by the major portion of mankind. But we may get help from comparatively lesser ones also; only we ourselves do not possess intuition enough to judge properly of the man from whom we receive teaching and guidance. So there ought to be certain tests, certain conditions, for the teacher to satisfy, as there are also for the taught.

The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thirst after knowledge, and perseverance. No impure soul can be really religious. Purity in thought, speech and act is absolutely necessary for any one to be religious. As to the thirst after knowledge, it is an old law that we all get whatever we want. None of us can get anything other than what we fix our hearts upon. To pant for religion truly is a very difficult thing, not at all so easy as we generally imagine. Hearing religious talks or reading religious books is no proof yet of a real want felt in the heart. There must a continuous struggle, a constant fight, an unremitting grappling with our lower nature, till the higher want is actually felt and the victory is achieved. It is not a question of one or two days, of years, or of lives. The struggle may have to go on for hundreds of lifetimes. The success sometimes may come immediately, but we must be ready to wait patiently even for what may look like an infinite length of time. The student who sets out with such a spirit of perseverance will surely find success and realisation at last.

In regard to the teacher, we must see that he knows the spirit of the scriptures. The whole world reads Bibles, Vedas and Korans; but they are all only words, syntax, etymology, philology, the dry bones of religion. The teacher who deals too much in words, and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of the words, loses the spirit. It is the knowledge of the spirit of the scriptures alone that constitutes the true religious teacher. The network of the words of the scriptures is like a huge forest, in which the human mind often loses itself and finds no way out.

"The network of words is a big forest; it is the cause of a curious wandering of the mind."

"The various methods of joining words, the various methods of speaking in beautiful language, the various methods of explaining the diction of the scriptures are only for the disputations and enjoyment of the learned. They do not conduce to the development of spiritual perception."

Those who employ such methods to impart religion to others, are only desirous to show off their learning, so that the world may praise them as great scholars. You will find that no one of the great teachers of the world ever went into these various explanations of the texts. There is with them no attempt at "text-torturing", no eternal playing upon the meaning of words and their roots. Yet they nobly taught, while others who have nothing to teach, have taken up a word sometimes and written a three-volume book on its origin, on the man who used it first, and on what that man was accustomed to eat, and how long he slept, and so on.

The second condition necessary in the teacher is – sinlessness.

The question is often asked, "Why should we look into the character and personality of a teacher? We have only to judge of what he says, and take that up." This is not right. If a man wants to teach me something of dynamics, of chemistry, or any other physical science, he may be anything he likes, because what the physical sciences require is merely an intellectual equipment; but in the spiritual sciences it is impossible from first to last that there can be any spiritual light in the soul that is impure. What religion can an impure man teach? The sine qua non of acquiring spiritual truth for one's self, or for imparting it to others, is the purity of heart and soul. A vision of God, or a glimpse of the beyond, never comes until the soul is pure.

Hence with the teacher of religion we must see first what he is, and then what he says. He must be perfectly pure, and then alone comes the value of his words, because he is only then the true "transmitter". What can he transmit if he has not spiritual power in himself? There must be the worthy vibration of spirituality in the mind of the teacher, so that it may be sympathetically conveyed to the mind of the taught. The function of the teacher is indeed an affair of the transference of something, and not one of mere stimulation of the existing intellectual or other faculties in the taught. Something real and appreciable as an influence comes from the teacher and goes to the taught. Therefore the teacher must be pure.

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive – for money, name or fame. His work must be simply out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large. The only medium through which spiritual force can be transmitted is love. Any selfish motive, such the desire for gain or for name, will immediately destroy this conveying medium. God is love, and only he who has known God as love, can be a teacher of godliness and God to man.

When you see that in your teacher these conditions are all fulfilled, you are safe. If they are not, it is unsafe to allow yourself to be taught by him, for there is the great danger that, if he cannot convey goodness to your heart, he may convey wickedness. This danger must by all means be guarded against.

"He who is learned in the scriptures, sinless, unpolluted by lust, and is the greatest knower of the Brahman (Supreme Reality)" is the real teacher."

From what has been said, it naturally follows that we cannot be taught to love, appreciate and assimilate religion everywhere and by everybody. The "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything" is all very true as a poetical figure; but nothing can impart to a man a single grain of truth unless he has the undeveloped germs of it in himself. A blind man may go to a museum, but he will not profit by it in any way; his eyes must be opened first, and then alone he will be able to learn what the things in the museum can teach.

This eye-opener of the aspirant after religion is the teacher. With the teacher, therefore, our relationship is the same as that between an ancestor and his descendant. Without faith, humility, submission, and veneration in our hearts towards our religious teacher, there cannot be any growth of religion in us; and it is a significant fact that, where this kind of relation between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men are growing; while in those countries which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation, the religious teacher has become a mere lecturer, the teacher expecting his five dollars and the person taught expecting his brain to be filled with the teacher's words, and each going his own way after this much has been done. Under such circumstances spirituality becomes almost an unknown quantity.

There is none to transmit it, and none to have it transmitted to. Religion with such people becomes business. They think they can obtain it with their dollars. Would to God that religion could be obtained so easily! But unfortunately it cannot be.

Religion which is the highest knowledge and the highest wisdom, cannot be bought, nor can it be acquired from books. You must thrust your head into all the corners of the world, you may explore the Himalayas, the Alps, and the Caucasus, you may sound the bottom of the sea, and pry into every nook of Tibet and the desert of Gobi, you will not find it anywhere until your heart is ready for receiving it and your teacher has come. And when that divinely appointed teacher comes, serve him with childlike confidence and simplicity, freely open your heart to his influence, and see in him God manifested.

Those who come to seek truth with such a spirit of love and veneration, to them the Lord of Truth reveals the most wonderful things regarding truth, goodness and beauty.

Guru and disciple - An episode from real life

Narendra and Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa

(Narendra was Swami Vivekananda's name before taking sanyas)

One day when Narendra was on the ground floor, meditating, the Master (Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa) was lying awake in his bed upstairs. In the depths of his meditation Narendra felt as though a lamp were burning at the back of his head. Suddenly he lost consciousness. It was the yearned-for, all-effacing experience of nirvikalpa samadhi, when the embodied soul realises its unity with the Absolute.

After a very long time he regained partial consciousness but was unable to find his body. He could see only his head. "Where is my body?" he cried. The elder Gopal entered the room and said, "Why, it is here, Naren!" But Narendra could not find it. Gopal, frightened, ran upstairs to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna only said: "Let him stay that way for a time. He has worried me long enough."

After another long period Narendra regained full consciousness. Bathed in peace, he went to the Master, who said: "Now the Mother has shown you everything. But this revelation will remain under lock and key, and I shall keep the key. When you have accomplished the Mother's work you shall find the treasure again."

Some days later, Narendra being alone with the master, Sri Ramakrishna looked at him and went into samadhi. Narendra felt the penetration of a subtle force and lost all outer consciousness. Regaining presently the normal mood, he found the Master weeping.

Sri Ramakrishna said to him: "Today I have given you my all and I am now only a poor fakir, possessing nothing. By this power you will do immense good in the world, and not until it is accomplished will you return." Henceforth the Master lived in the disciple.

Hindu Sects

By Swami Shivananda, The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

Hinduism is extremely catholic, liberal, tolerant, and elastic. This is the wonderful feature of Hinduism. A foreigner (visiting India) is struck with astonishment when he hears about the diverse sects and creeds of Hinduism. But these varieties are really an ornament to Hinduism. They are certainly not its defects. There are various types of minds and temperaments. So there should be various faiths also. This is but natural. This is the cardinal tenet of Hinduism. There is room in Hinduism for all types of souls- from the highest to the lowest- for their growth and evolution.

The term 'Hinduism' is most elastic. It includes a number of sects and cults, allied, but different in many important points. Hinduism has, within its fold, various schools of Vedanta; Vaishnavism, Saivism, Saktism, etc. It has various cults and creeds. Hinduism accommodates all types of men. It prescribes spiritual food for everybody, according to his qualification and growth. This is the beauty of this magnanimous religion. This is the glory of Hinduism. Hence there is no conflict among the various cults and creeds.

The Rig-Veda declares: "Truth is one; sages call it various names- Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti." The Upanishads declare that all the paths lead to the same goal, just as cows of variegated colours yield the same white milk. Lord Krishna says in the Gita: 'Howsoever men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine.' All diversities are organized and united in the body of Hinduism.

Hinduism provides food for reflection for the different types of thinkers and philosophers all over the world. All sorts of philosophy are necessary. What appeals to one may not appeal to another, and what is easy for one may be difficult for another. Hence the need for different standpoints. All philosophies of Hinduism are points of view. They are true in their own way. They take the aspirant step by step, stage by stage, till he reaches the acme or the pinnacle of spiritual glory. Sanatana-Dharmists, Arya-Samajists, Deva- Samajists, Jainas, Buddhists, Sikhs and Brahmo-Samajists are all Hindus only, for they rose from Hinduism, and emphasized one or more of its aspects.

The Hindus are divided into three great classes, viz.,

1. Vaishnavas who worship the Lord as Vishnu;
2. Saivas who worship the Lord as Siva; and
3. Saktas who adore Devi or the Mother aspect of the Lord.

In addition, there are the Sauras, who worship the Sun-God; Ganapatyas who worship Ganesh as supreme; and Kumaras who worship Skanda as the godhead.

1. The Vaishnavas - Sri Sampradaya:

The Vadagalai School and The Tengalai School

The Vaishnavas are usually distinguished into four principal Sampradayas or sects. Of these, the most ancient is the Sri Sampradaya founded by Ramanuja Acharya about the middle of the twelfth century. The followers of Ramanuja adore Vishnu and Lakshmi, and their incarnations. They are called Ramanujas or Sri Sampradayins or Sri Vaishnavas. The teachers are Brahmins. The disciples may be of any caste. They all recite the Ashtakshara Mantra: "Om Namo Narayanaya." They put on (display) two white lines and a central red line on the forehead.

Vedantacharya, a follower of Ramanuja, made some reform in the Vaishnava faith. This gave rise to the formation of two antagonistic parties of Ramanujas, one called the Northern School (Vadagalai) and the other the Southern School (Tengalai). The Tengalais regard Prapatti or self-surrender as the only way to salvation. The Vadagalais think that it is only one of the ways. According to them, the Bhakta or the devotee is like the young one of a monkey which has to exert itself and cling to its mother (Markata-Nyaya or Monkey Theory); whereas, according to the Southern School, the Bhakta or the devotee is like the kitten which is carried about by the cat without any effort on its own part (Marjala-Nyaya or Cat Theory).

The Northern School accept the Sanskrit texts, the Vedas. The Southerners have compiled a Veda of their own called 'Nalayira Prabandha' or 'Four Thousand Verses', in Tamil, and hold it to be older than the Sanskrit Vedas. Really, their four thousand verses are based on the Upanishad portion of the Vedas. In all their worship, they repeat sections from their Tamil verses.

The Vadagalais regard Lakshmi as the consort of Vishnu, Herself infinite, uncreated and equally to be adored as a means (Upaya) for release. The Tengalais regard Lakshmi as a created female being, though divine. According to them, she acts as a mediator or minister (Purushakara), and not as an equal channel of release.

The two sects have different marks on their foreheads. The Vadagalais make a simple white line curved like the letter U to represent the sole of the right foot of Lord Vishnu, the source of the River Ganga (Ganges). They add a central red mark as a symbol of Lakshmi. The Tengalais make a white mark like the letter Y that represents both the feet of Lord Vishnu. They draw a white line half way down the nose.

Both the sects brand the emblems of Vishnu- the discus and the conch- on their breasts, shoulders and arms.

The Tengalais prohibit their widows from shaving their heads.

The usual surnames of the Ramanuja Brahmins are Aiyangar, Acharya, Charlu and Acharlu.

Ramanandis

The followers of Ramananda are the Ramanandis. They are well-known in upper Hindusthan (India). They are branch of the Ramanuja sect. They offer their worship to Lord Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman. Ramananda was a disciple of Ramanuja. He flourished at Varanasi about the beginning of the fourteenth century. His followers are numerous in the Ganga (Ganges) valley of India. Their favourite work is the 'Bhakti-Mala.' Their sectarian marks are like those of the Ramanujas. The Vairagis are the ascetics among the Ramanandis.

Vallabhacharins or Rudra Sampradayins (Rudra Sect)

The Vallabhacharins form a very important sect in Mumbai, Gujarat and the Central India. Their founder was born in the forest Camparanya in 1479. He is regarded as an incarnation of Krishna. The Vallabhacharins worship Krishna as Baba-Gopala. Their idol is one representing Krishna in his childhood till his twelfth year. The Gosains or teachers are family men. The eight daily ceremonials for God in the temples are Mangala, Sringara, Gvala, Raja Bhoga, Utthapana, Bhoga, Sandhya and Sayana. All these represent various forms of adoration of God.

The mark on the forehead consists of two red perpendicular lines meeting in a semicircle at the root of the nose and having a round dot of red between them. The necklace and rosary are made of the stalk of the Tulasi (holy Basil plant).

The great authority of the sect is the Srimad Bhagavata as explained in the Subodhini, the commentary thereon of Vallabhacharya. The members of the sect should visit Sri Nathdvara, a holy shrine, at least once in their lives.

The Chaitanyas (Hare Krishna Movement)

This sect is prominent in Bengal and Orissa. The founder Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or Lord Gouranga, was born in 1485. He was regarded as an incarnation of Lord Krishna. He took sannyasa (monkhood) at the age of twenty-four. He went to Jagannath where he taught Vaishnava doctrines.

The Chaitanyas worship Lord Krishna as the Supreme Being. All castes are admissible into the sect. The devotees constantly repeat the Name of Lord Krishna.

Chaitanya's Charitamrita by Krishna Das is a voluminous work. It contains anecdotes of Chaitanya and his principal disciples and the expositions of the doctrines of this sect. It is written in Bengali.

The Vaishnavas of this sect wear two white perpendicular streaks of sandalwood paste or Gopichandan (a kind of sacred clay). Down the forehead uniting at the root of the nose and continuing to near the tip. They wear a close necklace of small Tulasi beads of three strings.

[Note: During the twentieth century, Swami Prabhupada, A.C. Bhaktivedanta became the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness with branches all over the world. This movement urges devotees to recite with faith and devotion the following Hare-Krishna Mantra:

"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare"

'Rama' in the above mantra of the Hare-Krishna movement does not refer to Sri Rama from the Ramayana but to Balarama, the elder brother of Sri Krishna.]

The Nimbarkas

The founder of this sect was Nimbarka or Nimbaditya. He was originally named Bhaskara Acharya. He is regarded as an incarnation of the Sun-God (Surya). The followers worship Krishna and Radha (Krishna's consort) conjointly. Their chief scripture is the Srimad Bhagavata Purana.

The followers have two perpendicular yellowish lines made from Gopichandan clay and applied from the root of the hair to the commencement of each eye-brow and there meeting in a curve. This represents the footprint of Lord Vishnu.

The Nimbarkas or Nimavats are scattered throughout the whole of upper India. They are very numerous around Mathura. They are also the most numerous of the Vaishnava sects in Bengal.

The Madhavas

The Madhavas are Vaishnavas. They are known as Brahma Sampradayins. The founder of the sect was Madhavacharya, otherwise called Ananda Tirtha and also called Purna-Prajna. He was born in 1200 ad. He was a great opponent of Sankaracharya's Advaita system of philosophy. He is regarded as an incarnation of Vayu or the Wind-God. He erected and consecrated at Udipi the image of Lord Krishna.

The Gurus of the Madhava sect are Brahmins and Sannyasins. The followers bear the impress of the symbols of Vishnu upon their breasts and shoulders. They are stamped with a hot iron. Their marks on the foreheads consist of two perpendicular lines made with Gopichandana and joined at the root of the nose. They make a straight black line (using charcoal from incense offered to Krishna), which terminates in a round mark made with tumeric.

The Madhavas are divided into two classes called the Vyasakutas and the Dasakutas. They are found in Karnataka.

Truthfulness, study of scriptures, generosity, kindness, faith and freedom from envy form the moral code of Madhavas. They give the Lord's names to their children (Namakarana Sanskar), and mark the body with His symbols (Ankana). They practise virtue in thought, word and deed (Bhajana).

Radha Vallabhis

Radha Vallabhis worship Krishna as Radha-Vallabha, the Lord or the Lover of Radha. Harivans was the founder of this sect. Seva Sakhi Vani gives a detailed description of the notion of this sect and more of their traditions and observances.

Charana Dasis, Dadu Panthis, Hari Chandis, Kabir Panthis, Khakis, Maluk Dasis, Mira Bais, Madhavis, Rayi Dasis, Senais, Sakhi Bhavas, Sadma Panthis, are all Vaishnava sects.

2. The Saivas

- **Smarta Brahmins of the South**

The Saiva Brahmins of the Tamil India have their title Aiyer. They are called Smartas. They all wear three horizontal lines of Bhasma or Vibhuti (holy ash) on their forehead. They all worship Lord Siva. The different sects are:

1. Vadamas : Vada Desa Vadamas, Chola Desa Vadamas and Inji Vadamas
2. Brihatcharanam: Mazhainattu Brihatcharanam, Pazhamaneri Brihatcharanam, Milaghu Brihatcharanam and Kandramanikka Brihatcharanam
3. Vathimars
4. Ashtasahasram
5. Choliyas: Otherwise called Pandimars and inhabitants of Tiruchendur, and
6. Gurukkal: A sub-sect of Vadamas not recognized as one amongst them and whose duties are to worship at temples. They are also known by the name of Oattar in southern districts of Madras. These are different from Archaks. Archaks belong to any of the above sub-sects and inter-marry with persons of other professions, but not Gurukkal or Pattar. While Gurukkal is used only for Saivites, Pattar and Archak are used for Vaishnavites also.

- **Saiva Brahmins of Malabar**

1.Nambuduri 2.Muse 3.Embrantiri

- **Saiva Brahmins of Bengal**

1.Chakravarti 2.Chunder 3.Roy 4.Ganguli 5.Choudhury 6. Biswas
7. Bagchi 8. Majumdar 9.Bhattacharji

- **Saiva Brahmins of Karnataka**

1.Smarta 2. Haviga 3.Kota 4.Shivalli 5.Tantri 6.Kardi 7.Padya

- **Telugu Smartas**

1. Murukinadu, 2.Velanadu 3.Karanakammalu 4.Puduru
Dravidis 5. Telahanyam 6.Konasima Dravidi 7.Aruvela
Niyogis

Lingayats

They are called Vira Saivas. They are found in Mysore and Karnataka. They wear on their neck a Linga of Lord Shiva that is placed in a small silver box.

Other Saiva sects

Akas Mukhis, Gudasas, Jangamas, Karalingis, Nakhis, Rukharas, Sukharas, Urdhabahus, Ukkaras are al Saiva sects.

3. The Saktas

The saktas are worshippers of Devi, the Universal Mother. Dakshinis,

- Vamis,
- Kanchelias,
- Kararis are all Sakta sects.

Miscellaneous

The Sauras adore the Sun, the Ganapatyas adore Ganesh, and the Kaumaras adore Skanda.

The non-Brahmins of South India are Naidu, Kamma Naidu, Chetty, Mudaliar, Gounder, Pillai, Nair,Nayanar and Reddy.

Nanak Shahis of seven classes (viz., Udasis, Ganj-bhakshis, Ramrayis, Sutra Shahis, Govinda Sinhis, Nirmalas, Nagas), Baba Lalis, Prana nathis, Sadhus, Satnamis, Siva Narayanis are other miscellaneous sects.

The Arya Samaj

The founder of the Arya Samaj was Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who was born in Kathiawar in 1824. This Samaj is more of a social institution, with a religious background. It has Gurukulas, schools, and Pathshalas. The Suddhi Sabha is a proselytizing branch of the Arya Samaj.

[Note: The followers of the Arya Samaj do not perform idol worship. Swami Dayanand Saraswati wrote "Satyarth Parkash" (Light of Truth). This volume serves as the principal guiding light of the Arya Samaj. Some of the principles of the Arya Samaj are: God is the primary source of true knowledge and of all that is known by its means. The Vedas are the scriptures of all true knowledge. All acts ought to be performed in conformity with Dharma i.e. after due consideration of right and wrong. The primary object of the Arya Samaj is to do good to the world i.e. to ameliorate physical, spiritual and social standards of all men. All ought to be treated with love, justice, righteousness and due regard to their merits.]

The Brahmo Samaj

The Brahmo Samaj was founded originally by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, early in the nineteenth century. The Brahmo Samajists do not perform idol worship. Keshab Chandra Sen introduced some changes in the year 1860. There are now two branches within the Samaj, viz., Adi Brahmo Samaj which holds to the tenets laid down by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Sadharana Barahmo Samaj which is somewhat modern and which follows Keshab Chandra Sen more closely. This Samaj has followers in Bengal.

The Jains

The first founder of the sect was Parsvanatha. Its first active propagator was Mahavira. The Jains are found in great numbers especially in the western coast of India. They are divided into two principal sects- the Svetambaras (clothed in white garments) and the Digambaras (sky-clad or naked).

The Jains do not admit the divine origin of the Vedas. They do not believe in any Supreme Deity. They pay reverence to holy men or saints who are styled Tirthankaras, who dwell in the heavenly abode and who, by long discipline, have raised themselves to divine perfection. The images of one or more of these Tirthankaras are placed in every Jain temple.

The Jains are strict vegetarians. They attach great sanctity to life. They practise Ahimsa (non-killing, non-violence). Strict Jains strain water before drinking, sweep the ground with a brush before treading on it or before sitting, never eat or drink at night and sometimes cover their mouths with muslin to prevent the risk of swallowing minute organisms.

There are two classes of Jains, viz., Sravakas who engage themselves in secular occupations and Yatis or monks who lead an ascetic life.

The Sikhs

"Sikhism, while some of its' founding Guru's were Hindu, was created as a response to Hinduism and the reign of the Muslim Mughal empires." -KS Gidda

'Obedience to the Guru brings release from future births' this is a firm conviction of the Sikhs. Sikhs adopt the five Kakas, viz., 1. The Kes (uncut hair), 2. The Kachhca (short drawers), 3. The Kara (iron bangle), 4. The Kirpan (steel dagger), and 5. The Kangha (small-tooth comb worn in the hair).

The Udasis are an ascetic order of the Nanaksahi Sikhs. Srichand, son of Guru Nanak, embraced Sannyasa. Udasis are his followers. Lakshmidhara, another son of Guru Nanak, led the life of a householder. Vedis are his followers. Nirmalas are ascetic followers of Guru Govind Singh.

The Akalis are brave warriors. The Akalis wear a distinctive dress of blue, and a black turban.

The teachings of Guru Nanak are contained in the first book of the Adi Granth.

No Sikh smokes tobacco.

Sadhus and Sannyasins

Salutations unto the ancient Rishis, seers, saints, paramhansa sannyasins and sadhus, who are the repositories of divine knowledge and wisdom and who guide the destiny of the world in the past, present and future.

Every religion has a band of anchorites who lead the life of seclusion and meditation. There are Bhikshus in Buddhism, Fakirs in Mohammedanism (Islam), Sufistic Fakirs in Sufism, and Fathers and Reverends in Christianity. The glory of a religion will be lost absolutely if you remove these hermits or Sannyasins or those who lead a life of renunciation and divine contemplation. It is these people who maintain or preserve the religions of the world. It is these people who give solace to the householders when they are in trouble and distress. They are the messengers of the Atman-knowledge and heavenly peace. They are the harbingers of divine wisdom and peace. They are the disseminators of Adhyatmic science and Upanishadic revelations. They heal the sick, comfort the forlorn and nurse the bed-ridden. They bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak and courage to the timid, by imparting the knowledge of the Vedanta and the significance of the "'Tat Tvam Asi" Mahavakya (great saying).

Dasanama Sanyasins

Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanat-Kumara and Sanat-Sujata were the four mind-born sons of Lord Brahma. They refused to enter the Pravritti Marga or worldly life and entered the Nivritti Marga or the path of renunciation. The four Kumaras were the pioneers in the path of Sannyasa. Sri Dattatreya also is among the original Sannyasins. The Sannyasins of the present day are all descendants of the four Kumaras, Dattatreya and Sankaracharya.

Sri Sankaracharya, regarded as an Avatara of Lord Siva and the eminent exponent of Kevala Advaita philosophy, established four Maths (monasteries) one at Sringeri, another at Dvaraka, a third at Puri and a fourth at Joshi Math in the Himalayas, on the way to Badrinarayana shrine.

Sri Sankara had four Sannyasin disciples, viz., Suresvara, Padmapada, Hastamalaka and Totaka. Suresvara was in charge of Sringeri Math, Padmapada was in charge of Puri Math, Hastamalaka was in charge of Dvarka Math and Totaka was in charge of Joshi Math.

The Sannyasins of Sringeri Math, the spiritual descendants of Sri Sankara and Suresvacharya, have three names, viz., Sarasvati, Puri and Bharati. The Sannyasins of the Dvaraka Math have two names, viz., Tirtha and Asrama. The Sannyasins of the Puri Math have two names, viz., Vana and Aranya. The Sannyasins of the Joshi Math have three names, viz., Giri, Parvata and Sagara.

The Dasanamis worship Lord Siva or Lord Vishnu, and meditate on Nirguna Brahman. The Dandi Sannyasins, who hold staff in their hands, belong to the order of Sri Sankara. Paramhansa Sannyasins do not hold staff. They freely move about as itinerant monks. Avadhutas are naked Sannyasins. They do not keep any property with them.

The Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission belong to the order of Sri Sankara. They have the name Puri.

Then, there are Akhada Sannyasins, viz., Niranjana Akhada and Jhuni Akhda. They belong to the order of Sri Sankara. They are Dasanamis. They are found in the Uttar Pradesh State only.

Rishikesh and Haridwar are colonies for Sannyasins. Varanasi also is among the chief abodes of Sannyasins.

Saiva

In South India, there are Tamil Sannyasins who belong to the Kovilur Math and Dharmaputram Adhinam. They do not belong to the Sri Sankara order. They are Saivas.

Nagas

Nagas are Saiva Sannyasins. They are in a naked state. They smear their bodies with ashes. They have beard and matted locks.

Udasis

Guru Nanak's order of ascetics is called Udasis. They correspond to Sannyasins and Vairagis. They are indifferent to the sensual pleasures of this world (Udasina). Hence they are called Udasis.

Vairagis

A Vairagi is one who is devoid of passion. Vairagis are Vaishnavas. They worship Lord Rama, Sita and Hanuman. They read the Ramayana of Tulasidas. The mendicant Vaishnavas of the Ramanandi class are the Vairagis. Sri Ananda, the twelfth disciple of Ramananda, instituted this ascetic order.

RamaSanehis

The founder of this order was Ramcharan who was born in the year 1718 in a village near Jaipur in Rajasthan. The Rama Sanehi mendicants are of two classes, viz., the Videhis who are naked and the Mihinis who wear two pieces of cotton cloth dyed red in ochre. Their monastery is in Shahapur in Rajasthan. The Rama Sanehi sect has the largest following in Mewar and Alwar. They are found also in Mumbai and Poona (in Maharashtra State), Surat, Ahmedabad in Gujarat State), and Hyderabad and Varanasi.

Kabir Panthis (panthi = followers)

Kabir Panthis are the followers of saint Kabir. They are numerous in all the provinces of Upper and Central India. There are twelve branches. Kabir Chaura is at Varanasi. It is a big monastery of Kabir Panthis. Dharamdas was the chief disciple of Kabir. The followers are expected to have implicit devotion to the Gurus, in thought, word and deed. They should practise truthfulness, mercy, non-injury and seclusion. The followers of Kamal, son of Kabir, practise Yoga.

Dadu Panthis

The Dadu Panthis form one of the Vaishnava cults. Dadu, the founder of this sect, was a disciple of one of the Kabir Panthi teachers. The followers worship Lord Rama.

Dadu was a cotton cleaner. He was born at Ahmedabad. He flourished about the year 1600. The Dadu Panthis are of three classes, viz., the Viraktas who are bareheaded (clean shaven head) and have one cloth and one water-pot, the Nagas who carry arms and who are regarded as soldiers and the Vistar Dharis who do the avocations of ordinary life.

The Dadu Panthis are numerous in Marwar and Ajmer. Their chief place of worship is at Naraina, which is near Sambhur and Jaipur. Passages from the Kabor writings are inserted in their religious scriptures.

Gorakhnath Panthis

Gorakhnath was a contemporary of Kabir. He is regarded as the incarnation of Lord Siva. He calls himself as the son of Matsyendranath and grandson of Adinath. There is a temple of Gorakhnath at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. Bhartrihari was a disciple of Gorakhnath.

Gorakhnath wrote Goraksha-Sataka, Goraksha-Kalpa and Goraksha-Nama. They are in Sanskrit.

The followers of Gorakhnath are usually called Kanphatas, because their ears are pierced and rings are inserted in them, at the time of their initiation. They worship Lord Siva.

Nimbarka Sampradayis and Ramanuja Sampradayis

These are Sadhus of the Nimbarka Sampradaya. They are Vaishnavas. The Sannyasins of the Ramanuja Sampradaya wear orange coloured cloth, a holy thread and tuft and Tri-danda or three-staff. At present, they are very few in number.

Parinami Sect

Sri Pirannath was the founder of this sect. He was born in 1675 at Jamnagarh, district Rajkot, in Kathiawar. He was the Devan (chief minister) of Raja Jam Jasa. The followers are to practise Ahimsa, Satya and Daya – non-violence, truthfulness and compassion. They study the sacred book, Kul Jam Svarup or Atma-Bodha, in Hindi, which contains the teachings of Sri Pirannath. It contains 18000 Chaupais. They worship Bala-Krishna, i.e., Krishna as a small child.

The followers are found mostly in the Punjab, Gujarat, Assam, Nepal and Mumbai. There are two Maths or monasteries –one at Jamnagarh and the other at Pamna.

Non Hindu Sects

All religions, including Hinduism, have sects. A brief survey of Sects (past and present) in other religions produced the following results: (Religions listed in alphabetical order)

Some Buddhist sects:

- Mahayana,
- Hinayana,
- Vajrayana, or the Diamond Vehicle,
- the Theravada School.
- By the time of King Ashoka the Great, there were eighteen or twenty different cults of Buddhism.

Some Christian Sects:

- Christian Science,

- Jehovah's Witnesses,
- Mormonism,
- Rasfatarianism,
- Unification Church,
- Protestant Church,
- Roman Catholic Church,
- Seventh Day Adventists,
- Baptist,
- Lutheran,
- Methodist,
- Orthodox,
- Pentecostal,
- Presbyterian,
- Universal Church from Brazil,
- Awakening Churches, etc.

Some Islamic sects:

Ahmadia, Ismail, Salafi, Shia, Sufi, Sunni, Nizari Isma'ilis,
Wahhabism, The Submitters, Nation of Islam etc.

Some sects in Judaism:

Conservative, Hasidic, Humanistic, Karaite, Orthodox, Reconstructionist,
Reform, Sephardic, Traditional, Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees, Temple Israel,
Zealots etc.

Some Shinto Sects:

Tenrikyo, Konkokyo, Kurozumikyo, Shinto Taikyo, Fuso-kyo (which included
Omoto-kyo), Izumo-oyashiro-kyo, Jikko-kyo, Misogi-kyo, Shinshu-kyo,
Shinto-shuseiha, Shinri-kyo, Shinto Taisei-kyo, Ontake-kyo. etc

Some sects in Taoism:

The Heavenly (or Celestial) Masters sect, The Supreme Peace sect, The Mao-shan
(Mount Mao) sect, The Ling-pao (Marvellous Treasure) sect, The Ch'uan-chen
(Completely Real) sect.

THE GREATNESS OF THE GURU

By Dr. J. Das, Kabir Association of Canada.

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(Note: Satguru Kabir exalted the position of the guru even above God, for it is the guru that enlightens you about God. In one of his famous couplets he stated,

guru govind dono khade, kis ko lage panw; balihari guru apko, govind diyo lakhai

If the Guru and Govind (Lord Krishna) are standing together, at whose feet will you bow down first? I am a sacrifice onto the guru for he has revealed Govind to me. [Guru Kabir uses various conventional names for God, but refers to the formless God]

bando charan saroj guru, mud mangal agar, jihi sewak nar hot hain, bhowagar ke par

guru ke sumiran matra se, nashat vighan anant, tase sarva arambh men, dhyavat hain sab sant

I salute the lotus feet of the guru. He is the place of happiness and bliss. Serving him man is able to cross the ocean of birth and death. With only remembering the guru, limitless obstacles vanish. Therefore, in beginning anything, all the saints meditate on him.

guru guru kahi sab vishva pukare, guru soi jo bharm nivare

bahut guru hain as jag mahin, hare dravya bhow dukh kou nahin

The entire world is saying "Guru, Guru" and is calling him. The guru is he who removes. There are many gurus in this world who take your wealth but do not remove any of your suffering.

tase pratham pariksha kije, pachhe shishya hoi diksha lije

binu jane jo koi guru karahi, so nar bhowagar men parahin

Therefore, at first test the guru, then afterwards become his disciple. If one accepts a guru without testing him, he will drown in the ocean of birth and death.

pakhandi papi avichari, nastik kutil vriti bakdhari

abhimani nindak shath natkhat, duracharyit abla lampat

He who is hypocritical, sinful, thoughtless, disbelieving, crooked and having the nature of a heron; who is egotistic, backbiting, wicked or sly, naughty, full of misconduct, and lustful towards women;

krodhi krur kutark vivadi, lobhi samta rahit vishadi

as guru kabahun bhuli na kije, inko durahi se taji dije

And who is angry, cruel, argumentative, quarrelsome, greedy, without evenness of mind, and always sad, never accept such a guru even by mistake. Reject him from far away.

nigamagam rahasya ke gyata, nispriha hit anushasan data

daya kshama santosh sanyukta, param bichar man bhow mukta

Accept a guru who knows the secrets of the scriptures, and who is unattached, is a well wisher, and disciplinarian; who is full of mercy, forgiveness, contentment, is highly thoughtful, and free from worldly bondage;

lobh mohh mad matsar adi, rahit sada parmarath vadi

rag dvesh dukh dwand niwari, rahen akhand satya vrat dhari

Who is free of greed, attachment, ego, jealousy etc., and always speaks of the highest good; who removes the suffering of dualities (pleasure-pain) of attraction and repulsion, and who is unmovable from his vow of truthfulness;

bhadra vesh mudra ati sundar, gati apar mati dharm dhurandhar

kripya bhaktan par kar priti, yatha shastra sikhve shubh niti

Who wears proper clothes, has a very beautiful countenance, is very approachable, intelligent, and is a leader in religion; who is kind, affectionate towards the devotees, and teaches the noble way according to the scriptures.

jin ke swapanehu krodh ur, kabahun na hot pravesh

madhur bachan kahi pritiyut, det sabahi updes

In a true guru, anger never enters his heart even in a dream; with sweet words he teaches everyone affectionately.

haren abodh dodhprad janke, nashi ashesh klesh jivan ke

kriyakritya vikritya karm ko, nyaianyai adharm dharm ko

The guru removes ignorance, and bestows knowledge to the people, and destroys all the miseries of life. He teaches to discriminate between actions that are good or bad, and inaction, and between justice and injustice and between righteousness and unrighteousness.

vividh bhanti nischai karvayi, bhinn bhinn sab bhed lakhai

sat mithya vastu parkhavai, sugati kugati marag darsavai

In many ways, he teaches us to determine all the differences separately, in detail. He lets us see the way of a good life and a bad life, and how to examine things that are eternal.

tihi guruki sharanagati lije, tan man dhan sab arpan kije

asan basan vahan aru bhushan, sut dara nij paricharak gan

Take refuge in such a guru, and surrender all your body, mind and wealth to him. Offer him food, clothing, transportation and jewelry, and let your son, wife and servants serve him.

kari sab bhent guru ke age, bhakti bhav ur men anurage

tan yatra nirvahh ke karan, mange deya so kije dharan

Put all offerings in front of the guru and express your spirit of devotion from your heart. To maintain the body on the journey of life, accept what he gives.

lai bhikshuk sam din bhav man, kare pranam dandavat charanan

maha yagya ko phal vahn pave, sakrit bandi guru shish navave

Be like a beggar and accept his gift with humility, and prostrate yourself at his feet in salutation. You will obtain the highest benefit once you bow your head to the guru.

yahi vidhi guruke sharan hoi, kare nirantar sev

guru sam jane ovr nahin, tribhuvan men koi dev

Accepting the refuge of the guru in this way, serve him constantly. Do not accept any god in the three worlds as equal to the guru.

jin guru ko manush kari jane, tin sam ko nirbhagya ayane

buddhi rahit nar pashu samana, hai pratyaksh bin pachh vishana

He who thinks the guru as a mere man, there is no one as unfortunate or foolish like him. He is without discriminative intellect, and it is clear he is like an animal without tail or horns.

vishva vidit vishesh prabhutai, govind se guru ki hai bhai

govind ki maya vash prani, bhugte dukh chowrashi khani

O Brother! The greatness of the guru, compared to God, is known in the world. Due to God's Maya, living beings suffer in the 8.4 millions of life forms.

guru pratap bhowmul vinashe, vimal buddhi hoi gyan prakahse

sukh akhand nar bhoge jai, satyalok men basa pai

By the grace of the guru, the causes of births (karmas) perish, and man's intellect becomes pure. Man then enjoys perfect bliss and dwells in Satyalok.

guru se shresht ovr jag mahin, hari biranchi shankar kou nahin

suhrid bandu sut pitu mahatari, guru sam ko duja hitkari

In the world, there is no one better than the guru, including Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva. Besides a friend, relative, son, father or mother, who else is a well wisher equal to the guru?

jake rakshak guru dhani, sake kahh kari ovr

hari ruthe guru sharan hai, guru ruthe nahin thowr

What can others do to a person who has the protection of the mighty guru? If God is displeased with you, then the guru is your shelter, but if the guru is displeased, you have no place to go.

yog yagya jap tap vyowhara, nem dharm sanyam achara

ved puran kahain goharai, guru bin sab nishphal hai bhai

O Brothers! The Vedas and Puranas repeatedly say that without a guru, all yoga, yajna, japa, penance, worldly activities, discipline, righteousness, control of passions, and noble actions, do not bear the desired fruit.

guru bin hridai shudh nahin hoi, koti upai kare jo koi

guru bin gyan bichar na awe, guru bin koi na mukti pawe

Without a guru the heart cannot become pure, even if one tries in millions of ways. Without a guru, spiritual knowledge and noble thinking are not attained, and without a guru no one gets salvation.

guru bin bhut pret tandhari, bhrame sahastra varsh nar nari

guru bin yamke hath bikai, pai dusahh dukh man pachhitai

Without a guru, man and woman wander in doubt for a thousand years in the body of ghosts and spirits. Without a guru, man is sold into the hands of Yama and endures unbearable sorrows, and repents.

guru bin sanshai kown niware, hridai vivek kown vidhi dhare

guru bin nahin agyan vinashe, nahin nij atam rup prakashe

Without a guru, who else can remove doubts; in what way can the heart possess discriminative spiritual knowledge? Without a guru ignorance cannot be removed, and the soul does not realize its true form.

guru bin brahmgyan jo gaven, so nahin mukti padarath pawe

tehi karan nischai guru kije, sur durlabh tan khoi na dije

Without a guru, if one sings of divine knowledge, he will not attain liberation. For these reasons certainly accept a guru, and do not waste the body that even the gods have difficulty obtaining.

ved shastra aru bhagavat, gita padhe jo koi

tin kal santusht man, bin guru kripa na hoi

If one reads the Vedas, Shastras, Bhagavatam, and Gita, still without the grace of the guru, the mind cannot be satisfied in the three times – past, present and future.

akhil vibudh jagmen adhikari, vyas vashisht mahan achari

gowtam kapil kanad patanjali, jaimini valmik charanan bali

In the entire scholarly world, the authoritative people – Vyas and Vashisht were noble characters. I bow to the feet of the rishis Gautam, Kapil, Kannad, Patanjali, Jaimini and Valmiki

ye sab guruke sharane aye, tase jagmen shresht kahaye

yagyavalkya aru janak videhi, dattatraya guru param sanehi

All of them came to the refuge of the guru, so in the world they are called great. Yagyavalkya and Janak, who was liberated in his lifetime, and Dattatraya greatly loved their gurus.

chowbis guru kinhe jag mahin, ahankar ur rakhyo nahin

ambarish prahalad vibhishan, ityadik jo bhaye bhakt jan

Dattatreya accepted twenty-four gurus in the world, and kept no pride in his heart. Ambarish, Prahalad, Vivishan, and others became devotees of gurus.

owrahu yati tapi vanvasi, ye sab guruke param upasi

hari biranchi shiv diksha linha, narad dhimar ko guru kinha

Many others such as ascetics, practitioners of austerity, and forest renunciates were great worshippers of the guru. Even Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva took initiation, and Narad accepted a fisherman as his guru.

sant mahant sadhu hain jete, guru pad pankaj sewahin tete

shesh sahas mukh bahu gun gave, guru mahima ko par na pave

As many saints, mahants and sadhus there were, they all served at the lotus feet of the guru. Shesh Nag, with one thousand mouths, sang the attributes of the guru, but could not fathom the grace of the guru.

ram krishna se ko bada, inahun toh guru kinhh, tin lok ke ve dhani, guru age adhin

Who is greater than Ram and Krishna? Even they accepted a guru. They were masters of the three worlds, but were humble before the guru.

nij mukh jo guru ninda karahin, kalp sahastra nark men parahin

guru ki ninda sune jo koi, rasabh swan janm tehi hoi

The state of the person who slanders his guru will be like dwelling in hell for thousands of years. If he listens to slander of the guru, then he is like having birth as a mule or a dog.

guru se ahankar ur dhari, kare vivad mudh avichari

te nar maru nirjal ban jai, trishit maren rakshas tan pai

He who has pride in his heart, and argues with the guru, is foolish and thoughtless. Such a person is like being in the waterless desert and dies of thirst and inhabits the body of a demon.

jo guru ko taji owrahi dhyave, hoi daridra ati dukh pave

bin darshan nanin guru ke rahiye, yahh dridh niyam hridai men gahiye

He who gives up the guru and worships others, becomes poor, and suffers a great deal. Do not go through life without a guru. Keep this firm principle in mind!

jo bin darshan karen ahara, hoi vyadhi tan vividh prakara

yathashakti jan chuke nahi, hoi ashakt dosh nahin tahi

He who eats without ever seeing a guru, develops various bodily ailments. As much as possible, people should not make mistakes. If one becomes helpless, then no blame attaches to him.

guru sanmukh nahin baithe jai, khali hath hilawat ai

jo kuchh ovr nahin bani awe, patra pushp phal bhent chadhawe

Do not sit improperly in front of the guru, and do not go to him with empty dangling hands. If you cannot afford much of anything, then at least offer leaves, flowers or fruit to him.

namra bhav ati pritiyut, charankamal shirnai

jo satguru agya karain, lije shish chadhai

With humility and a great deal of love, bow down at the lotus feet of the guru. Whatever command the guru gives, accept it and place it on your head (obey)

ati adhin hoi bole vani, rank saman jori yug pani

kabahun na baithe panv pasari, jangha pad dhari asan mari

Be very humble and speak respectfully to the guru. Be like a beggar with folded hands. Never sit with your legs outstretched, and do not sit with one leg on the other thigh.

sanmukh hoike gaman na kije, guru chhaya par panw na dije

gupt bat kischit nahin rakhe, kari chhal kapat na mithya bhakhe

Do not walk in front of the guru, and do not step on his shadow. Do not keep the smallest secret from the guru, and do not speak lies, or be deceitful or hypocritical.

ved mantra sam kahana mane, guru ko parmatam sam jane

satyasatya vichar na kije, guru ka kathan mani sab lije

Accept the words of the guru as Vedic mantra, and accept the guru as equal to God. Do not analyze the guru's words as true or false, but accept all his sayings.

jo kuchh shresht padarath pave, so guru charanan ani chadhave

guru ki adbhut hai prabhutai, mile sahastra guna hoi ai

Whatever good things you obtain, bring it and offer it at the feet of the guru. The grace of the guru is wonderful, and your offering will increase a thousand fold.

kiye yathavidhi guru ki puja, shesh rahe kartabya na duja

prabal pap nashe sab tanke, hoi manorath puran man ke

jo guru ko bhojan karvave, mano trilokahi nyont jimave

If one worships the guru in the prescribed manner, then there remain no other duties outstanding. All the grave sins of the body are destroyed, and all wishes are fulfilled. He who offers food to the guru, does as if he invites and feeds the three worlds.

guru ki mahima hai amit, kahi na sake shruti shesh,

jin ki kripa kataksh se, rankahu hot naresh

The grace of the guru is limitless, and the Vedas and Shesh Nag cannot explain it. By his grace and merciful look, the poor can become a king.

as prabhav hai susar kehiman, jas kuchh hai satguru ki mahima

sarv siddhprad ati vardayak, dukh sankat men param sahayak

Which other person can have the same influence as the Satguru through his grace? His grace gives all success and great boons, and is the main remover of suffering and miseries.

nit uthi path kare jo koi, sakal pap kshai take hoi

chit chinta santap vinashe, sukh santap aishvarya prakashe

The person, who daily wakes in the morning and recites the Guru Mihama, will have all his sins removed. His anxieties and sorrows disappear, and wealth, happiness and prosperity appear.

mahavyadhi jwar adi niware, dei akal mrityu bhi tari

lahen sakal sukh je jag kere, kabahun daridra na ave nere

Serious diseases and fever etc. disappear, and he avoids the fear of untimely death. He will attain all pleasures of the world, and poverty never comes to him.

hoi alabhya labh maragmen, pave man pratishtha jagmen

param mantra yahh akhil phalprad, haran sakal bhav janm maran gad

Inaccessible gains come to you when you follow the good path, and you attain respect and a good reputation in the world. This Guru Mihama is a great recitation and gives all good fruits, and destroys all births, deaths and diseases.

shraddhavan bhakt lakhi lije, tako yahh guru mahima dije

param rahasya gudh ehi jani, kahe na sabahin prasiddh bakhani

Examine a devotee who is truly devoted and give him this Guru Mihama. Knowing this Guru Mihama's great and deep secret, do not boast about it to others.

dhanya mat pitu dhanya hai, dhanya suhud anurakt

dhanya gram vahh janiye, janh janme guru bhakt

Fortunate are the mother and father, and fortunate is the loving friend, and fortunate is the village where a devotee of the guru is born.

bhakt prabhav miti sakal, dharamdas ki pir koti janam ke punya se, satguru mile kabir

By devotion, all the sufferings of Dharam Dass vanished. It is by the good deeds of millions of births that he met Satguru Kabir.

Guru Vandana

He mere Gurudev karuna sindhu karuna keejiye.
Hun adham aadhin asharaan , ab sharaan me leeejiye.

Kha raha gote hun mai bhav sindhu ke mazdhar me.
Dusara hai aasara koi na es sansar me.
He mere Gurudev karuna sindhu karuna keejiye.

Muz me nahi jap tap va sadhan, our nahi kuch gyan hai.
Nirlajjyata hai ek baki, our bus abhiman hai.
He mere Gurudev karuna sindhu karuna keejiye.

Pap boze se ladi, naiyya bhanwar me ja rahee.
Nath dodo ab bachawo, shighra doobee ja rahee.
He mere Gurudev karuna sindhu karuna keejiye.

Aap bhi yadi chod thenge, fir kanha jawunga mai.
Janma dukh se nav kaise, par kar pawunga mai.
He mere Gurudev karuna sindhu karuna keejiye.

Sab jagah manjul bhatak kar lee sharaan ab aapkee.
Par karana ya na karana, dono marji aapkee.
He mere Gurudev karuna sindhu karuna keejiye.
Hun adham aadhin asharaan , ab sharaan me leeejiye.

Guru Stavan

Akhand mandalakaram Vyaptam Yen Characharam
Tatpadam Darshitam Yen Tasmayy Shree Guruve Namah

That which permeates the whole cosmos- the moving and the unmoving;
That through the grace of whose feet I witness all this, To that honored Guru are my salutatons!

Guror-brahmah Gurur-Vishnuh Guror-Devah Maheshwarah
Guruh Sakshat Param Brahman Tasmayy Shree Guruve Namah

Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Divine Shiva Himself; Guru indeed is that Supreme God;
To that honored Guru are my salutatons!

Ajnan Timir Ahdhasaya Jnananjana Shalakaya
Chakshurun Militam Yen Tasmayy Shree Guruve Namah

One who guides out of the blinding darkness of ignorance With the stick of knowledge;
One through whose grace The spiritual eye is found again; To that honored Guru are my salutatons!

Mannath Shree jagannathah Madguru Shree Jagadguruh
Mamatma Sarv-bhootama Tasmayy Shree Guruve Namah

My Lord is the Lord of whole world; My Guru is the Guru of whole world;
My soul is the soul of whole world; To that honored Guru are my salutatons!

Dhyan Moolam Guror-murtim Pooja Moolam Guror-padam
Mantra Moolam Guror-vakyam Moksha moolam Guror- kripah

The source of concentration is (concentration on) Guru's form; The source of worship is (worship of) Guru's feet; The source of mantra is (meditation on) Guru's word; The source of liberation is Guru's grace!

Guror-madhye Sthita Mata , Matri Madhya Sthitah Guru
Guror-mata Namastestu, Matri Gurum Namamyaham

In the heart of Guru dwells the Mother; In the heart of Mother dwells the Guru.
Salutations of mine to Guru in Mother! Salutations of mine to Mother in Guru!

Note: Guru Vandana is from Guru Gita (Song of Guru) which forms a section of Skanada Purana (Sacred Lore of Skanda). Skanda is Shiva's son, elder brother of Ganesha. Guru Gita is a dialogue between Lord Shiva and His consort Parvati. Before reciting the rest of Guru Gita, Lord Shiva declares:" Guru is Shiva and Shiva is Guru. One who sees difference knows neither." Guru Gita is a treatise on finding a true Guru and then surrendering to him with totality of one's being.

Our Vedic culture is very ancient and traditional. It is highly scientific life style and strong tradition that is the only base of humanity. Our Rishis (Known as a seers) are observers of all times whether it is past, present, or future. They have determined very high norms in society for the evolution of mankind that is known as sixteen SAMSKARAS, out of all that from conception of a child till death there are various stages of evolution. Each SAMSKARS contains a certain state of consciousness

That develops in human beings after a certain ceremony performed time to time in the lifetime of a child.

Originally every newly born child comes in the category of SHUDRA. That is his first birth from the womb of a mother. When he is initiated in different cader of the social reformation, that is known as second birth in this ceremony he joins the family of the father. If the father is brahmin, he becomes Brahmin if the father is vaishya (businessman) or Kshatriya (warier) he becomes the same and follows the path of his father. If the same child is initiated in same Ashram in a cader of Rishi he follows the path of rishi that is beyond all the categories.

It is relay very sad social structure seen to day that the whole humanity is following the path of ignorance beyond all caste, cried, religion and humanity. We can only say that such a derailed society is creating a dark future for the coming generation. A father is not performing his duty properly.

Fatherhood and motherhood is very challenging status. They are responsible for the future generation. Rebirthing oneself into positive cadae is very essential duty of mankind. It doesn't matter what others are doing in society, but it matters if I am not choosing the right path, but following the sick social behavior and soiling us as well as our generation. We don't need to teach society, but it is a must to choose the right path, that free from greed, selfishness, drugism, anti – social behavior and lust. Humanity is totally away from such life style.

Upnayan samskar indicates the right path of humanity. It is oath of adopting the ideal Life style, acting according to nature, behavior according to the instruction of SASTRAS, and to follow the way of our forefathers, Rishis seers, and great men of the traditional Heritage. Every Hindu should follow the ideal life style. Adopting such way of

Life is Known as YAGNOPAVEET SAMSKAR. It is also known as BRATH BANDH.

Meaning of JANEU

The child dears the holy thread that contains three sutras and each sutra signifies as devin's debt, Parental debt, and seer's debt. Following good deed's is only way to get rid of the divine debt. By following path of Veda, teaching of Vedic knowledge, and propagation of Vedic cultural, is the way to get rid of from Rishi debt. The third debt is parental debt, which could be fulfilled by following our cultural, respecting our parents and mentioning social believes.

The child gets initiation of mantras and the instruction to adopt the path of right thinking, purity, peace, courage, stability, patience, dutifulness, vitality, wealth, and socialization. This ceremony is parental role for the child's purified life.

Gayatri is the mother of hindu culture. The combination of both is like YAGNYA. By doing japa of Gayatri mantra it removes all inner impurity and gives strength, peace to the mind.

Some important point to follow.

- (1) janeu must be hanged up right ear before going toilet or urinal.
- (2) If any thread of Yajnopaveeta is broken or it is used for about six month, it must be changed.
- (3) If you are visiting in birth or death of some one it must be changed afterwards.
- (4) Yajnopaveeta is never kept away from body, during bath it should be rapped in the body.
- (5) This yajna sutra determines our life path and is pure like Bhagawati Gayatri. It must be respected all the time.

Upanayanam

Upanayanam is the Samaskara or the ceremonial rite in which the young Brahmin boy is invested with the sacred thread and initiated into the Gayathri - the Holiest of all mantras in the legacy of the Rishis.

After the Upanayanam is performed, the boy or the Vatu - as the young Brahmachari is called, becomes eligible to study the Vedas. As this Samaskara signifies a spiritual rebirth as it were, the boy becomes a Dvija or a "Twice Born" after the Upanayanam is performed. Etymologically speaking, the word means, taking (NAYANAM) near (UPA). In the ancient days when the scripturally ordained modes of conduct were strictly followed, the father took his son near the Gayathri Mantra, and there after near a Guru and left him under his care and tutelage soon after the Upanayanam was performed. The Guru took him near the Vedas (i.e.taught him to chant them in the traditional way) which in turn ultimately took him near God. Thus, the ceremony opens for the young Brahmachari, a succession of gates, leading to the ultimate goal of human existence - the realisation of God. In the scheme of the four ashramas prescribed for the individual, the Upanayanam Ceremony signifies the boy's entry into the ashrama namely Brahmacharya.

The Investiture

Ideally, this Samaskara is to be performed when the boy is just past seven. In any case, the investiture with the sacred thread should not be delayed beyond the sixteenth year. Before the onset of adolescence, and before the dormant primordial biological urges in an individual surface, he must be initiated into the Gayathri.

The Gayathri Mantra

Literally, Gayathri means which protects him who chants it. She is the mother of all the mantras, and when chanted with devotion and single pointed concentration and purity, takes the chanter to the ultimate bliss - the knowledge of the Supreme Truth, called the Brahman. The Gayathri is a mantra praying for divine guidance to inspire and illumine the intellect so that the Jiva may know his real self - the Atman. Universal in its approach, it does not seek any personal benefit for the chanter. The venerable Bhisma, while extolling the greatness of the Gayathri from his bed of arrows declares - Where the Gayathri is chanted, ultimately deaths, involving the performance of obsequies for children by their elders will not occur. Thus it is a prayer for universal welfare which the brahmin must perform as a sacred trust enjoined on him.

Method to perform the Gayathri Mantra

The Gayathri, must be chanted in the prescribed manner, thrice a day, as a part of the religious duty called the Sandhyavandanam, ordained for all brahmins. The Sandhyavandanam is an excellent daily exercise in quietening the mind and rendering it fit for meditation on the highest truth epitomized by the Gayathri. Because of its great importance as a spiritual practice, the sastras have proclaimed its primacy of place in unequivocal terms, to the extent that no exceptions are provided. It has to be definitely performed thrice daily, throughout one's life. All the good things a brahmin may do are of no avail, if he fails to perform his Sandhyavandanam and Gayathri Japa regularly. The scriptures are unanimous on this point. The immense benefit accruing from regular and assiduous practice of the Sandhyavandanam and chanting of the Gayathri, is something that each individual can corroborate by his own experience.

The Sacred Thread

The sacred thread with which the Vatu is invested on the holy occasion of Upanayanam, may be compared to an electric circuit. Even as any leakage point in an electric circuit will result in a drain of precious electrical energy, any object, like key or coin, tied to the sacred thread, serve as leakage points through which the carefully garnered spiritual power of the Gayathri is frittered away. The sacred thread must therefore be kept free from association with any other object. Bhikshakaranam.

In the days to yore, the brahmachari went out into the streets to beg for alms from various houses - Bhikshakaranam. This is being done symbolically today. While it may be very difficult to practice Bhikshakaranam daily in today's conditions, we would do well at least keep in mind the spirit underlying the Bhikshakaranam and try to imbibe the virtues it inculcates. The practice of Bhikshakaranam will induce humility and quell the ego - it will root out all difference of high and low, wealthy and poor, as every brahmachari, regardless of his family's standing, has to practice it. Above all, it will enable the young Vatu to overcome the craving of the tongue, and induce the restraint of the senses so very necessary for properly imbibing the Vedic Knowledge.

The various lofty truths explained above are only illustrative, but by no means exhaustive of the innumerable nuggets of wisdom that lie embedded in our scriptures. It is for us to practice these observances in our daily life to the extent possible and direct measure, ennoble our lives.

May the Divine Vedic Mother in her quintessential form as Gayathri bless us and inspire us to rediscover our extraordinary rich Vedic legacy, on the occasion of the Panchangam Homepage

Next Issue

In our next Durga puja issue, we will include articles as below:

- Complete Shakti Upasna and its practice
- The different forms of Shakti, how and why?
- Events between August and October

