ROLE & IMPORTANCE OF “GURU” IN INDIAN SPIRITUAL TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

The notion that God incarnates in the form of Guru is one that is central in the Bhagavad Gita. The Guru is the link between the Universal Self and the individual self. He removes ignorance by making the seeker realize His presence in him or her. Without the Guru (initiation), it is impossible to secure self revelation. Indian scriptures declare that to treat the Guru as an ordinary human being is the greatest of sins. It is in fact a maha-papam or the greatest of sins. The Guru’s essential nature is to sacrifice. He takes name and form by assuming human birth out of compassion. His actions are above human understanding because He has realized Absolute Reality and has become That. The word That is used to describe Reality because it is in fact indescribable! It can only be experienced.

Keywords: Indian Spirituality, Self Realization, God, Atman, Guru

INTRODUCTION

According to the Indian spirituality, the Guru is above any kind of human law because Guru is the Supreme Self. So long as the Self is not realized the Guru is essential. For self realization to happen, the Grace of the Guru is essential. God or the Self or the Atman has manifest aspect and a manifest aspect. The Guru is a ladder. He is none other than God in human form. It is because human beings tend to identify themselves strongly with their bodies (and their minds and intellects) that they project the same identification to the Guru. In their ignorance, they come under the belief that the Guru is limited to the body. But the fact of the matter is that neither is the Guru the body and nor is the human being the body. The Guru is God and so is the human being. The only difference lies in the fact that the Guru is aware of who He or She really is while the ordinary human being is not.

Importance of Guru and Ancient Indian Scriptures

The Upanisads are the first scriptures in which the Guru is described as a figure of spiritual eminence and absolute consciousness. According to Indian philosophy and spirituality, Guru is the Supreme Self. So long as the Self is not realized the Guru is essential. For self realization to happen, the Grace of the Guru is essential. God or the Self or the Atman has an un manifest aspect and a manifest aspect. The Guru is the ladder. He is none other than God in human form. The Guru is the Word. It is because human beings tend to identify themselves strongly with their bodies (and their minds and intellects) that they project the same identification to the Guru. In their ignorance, they come under the belief that the Guru is limited to the body. But the fact of the matter is that neither is the Guru the body and nor is the human being the body. The Guru is God and so is the human being. The only difference lies in the fact that the Guru is aware of who He or She really is while the ordinary human being is not. The ordinary human being remains unaware of his or her divinity and becomes a victim of the endless cycle of births and deaths. In between spirit and matter or between the Paramatman or the Universal...
Self and the atman or the individual soul, there arises a spurious entity called the ego which masquerades as the Self. Being embodied in human form, the individual self mistakes itself to be the body and imagines that it is limited. Millions of births convince the individual soul of the futility of such existence and it is then that such a soul begins to desire liberation from the cycle. This is why our scriptures affirm that human birth is precious. Its sole purpose lies in realizing the Self and the opportunity must not be wasted. It must realize here and now! Genuine prayer, earnest spiritual practice and faith bring the Grace of the Guru to such a seeker. The Guru is the link between the Universal Self and the individual self. He removes ignorance by making the seeker realize His presence in him or her. Without the passport issued by the Guru (initiation), it is impossible to secure the visa (blessing) of self revelation. The term Guru is often loosely used to describe anyone who gives out spiritual advice, but in spiritual world, 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 Maharishi 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 power works 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.

**Role of Guru**

1. Guru as the Immortal Being
2. Guru as Liberator

**Guru as the Immortal Being**

In attaining the perfection of enlightenment, the Guru has attained the state of immortality (amrta), and is thus said to be unborn (ajara) and undying (amara). “Knowing that immortal Brahman I am immortal (vidvan Brahma ‘mrto’mrtam).” The sublime meaning of this teaching is that the realized one is no longer subject to the changes caused by birth and death. He has crossed the threshold of human consciousness. Though such a declaration seems unimaginable, to the realized one it is the truth

**Guru as Liberator**

The Guru’s role is to exhibit freedom, and effect freedom in those souls aspiring to perfect freedom. The Guru is the only one who can guide the soul to its own perfection, for the Guru is the one who has travelled that path and reached the destination. Thus, Guru is the only one who can create Guru. Each person is a unique universe, and only the enlightened being has the capacity to comprehend the mysteries of these individual universes, guiding each specifically, so that each will be assisted to reach the goal.

One of the most through descriptions of the nature, role, and qualities of the Guru is located in the Kularnava Tantra. According to the Kularnava Tantra, the Guru has the following qualities: he is charming (manohara); endowed with all attributes (sarvalaksahana-sampanna); is a knower of all the agamas (sarvagamartha-tattvajna); knows the application of all the mantras (mantra-vidhanavid); bewitches the world (lokasammohanakara); is of happy countenance (sumukha); is clean (svaccha), is easily accessible (sulabha); dissipates doubt and delusion (bhrama-samsayanasaka); looks upon the world with an inner vision (antarlaksya bahirdrsti); is all knowing (sarvajna); knows the mysteries of time and place (desakalavid); knows the meaning of gestures (ingitakaravid); knows past, present and future (trikalajna); is capable of penetrating to the inner depths of the being (vedhaka); is peaceful (santa); is compassionate to all creatures (sarvajivadayapara); has conquered the six enemies: desire, anger, greed, delusion, jealousy, and pride (sadvargavidjayaksama); can distinguish between the fit and unfit disciple (patrdpatravisesavid); is stainless (nirmala); is ever content (nityasantusta); is independent (svatantra); is endowed with the power of mantra (mantraasaktimana); is a lover of genuine devotees (sadbhakta-vatsala); is dear to devotees...
(bhaktapriya); is ever generous (sadodara); is profound (gambhira); is an excellent practicant of the spiritual sciences (sistasadhaka); is free from attachment, hate, fear, pain, and ostentation (dambha); can distinguish between what is good and what is bad (gunadosavibhedaka); is unattached to the opposite sex and wealth, and dislikes bad company or other vices (anasakta); has a feeling of Oneness with all (sarvahambhavasanyukta); has the power to be silent (mauni); is free of preference (nirapeksa); is unaffected by praise or criticism (tulyanindatuti).

The Guru Gita, a significant section of the Skanda Purana and an authoritative scripture about the Guru, states that unless one has understood the guru-tatva, or the Guru principle, the Vedas, sastras, puranas, smriti, mantras, yantras, vows, penances, and pilgrimages will not be comprehensible or beneficial.

The Guru Gita identifies the Guru as the nearer of light, and states; “He by whose light (true knowledge) arises is known by the word ‘Guru.’” The enlightened intellect is the instrument by which an avidya-ridden intellect can be illumined, much like a lit candle can be used to light an . This process of enlightenment cannot take place without the flame contacting the wick. In the respect the Guru’s very presence is potent with knowledge; contact with it transforms the disciple into Guru. The Guru Gita’s claims that even by remembering the Guru, knowledge will spontaneously arise in the devotee. The power of the Guru to illumine the devotee is so heightened that even through the subtly of thought, illumination can be attained.

The Guru Gita defines the two syllables of the word ‘Guru’. Gu, “That which transcends all attributes,” and ru, “that which is without form.” It proceeds to explain that Guru is, therefore, the “one who bestows state that is beyond attributes (and form)”. By contact with the Guru and by effort of sadhana or spiritual practices the student will experience and ultimately attain that state of consciousness which perceives, beyond forms and attributes, the Oneness of Brahman. The contact with a genuine Guru results in this achievement of awareness.

The Guru Gita, in defining the Guru, immortalize the description in the verse: “gururbrahma guruvisnur gururdevo mahesvarah, guruureva parabrahma tasmai Srigurave namah: the Guru is Brahman. The Guru is Vishnu. The Guru is Lord Shiva. The Guru is indeed Parabrahaman Salutations to Sri Guru.” The enlightened being is acknowledged as empowering the attributes of the Godhead. The identity of the Guru with God or the Godhead is the unique features of the Guru Tradition. In the Indian philosophical tradition the perfected being is synonymous with God, the concept of perfected being is synonymous to God, as presented in the Guru Tradition, is its unrivalled contribution to the spiritual heritage of humankind.

CONCLUSION

The Upanisads elucidate that the Consciousness of the Guru is one with the Pure Consciousness (suddha-cetana) and, thus, contains its attributes of sat (pure existence), cit (pure Consciousness), and ananda (pure bliss). As sat, the Guru Consciousness is aorta (immortal), ajara (unborn), and amara (undying). The Guru Consciousness can never be affected or altered by any experience because it is suddha-cetana, or pure Consciousness. Because it remains unaffected by change it is nirmala pure, and devoid of attributes, nirguna.

By this Upanisads definition, it is understood how the person of the Guru acts and how his Consciousness is truly niranjana (beyond increase or decrease) or nirdvandva (beyond the pairs of opposites) when confronted by, what to the unrealized are, the situations and people of the world, through he has perfect discrimination. The Guru is the epitome of wisdom, knowledge, self-control, simplicity, compassion, purity, kindness, bliss, and love. In Indian spiritual tradition Guru is the epitome of evolved spiritual Consciousness. There is no possibility of this enlightened: being falling from the height of this awareness. It is perfection.
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