

A True Guru

The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher,
Preceptor, Guide and Advisor

---##---

Presented By:--

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Ayodhya (Faizabad, U.P.)

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >

Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >

(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >

Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

Google+: www.google.com/#AjaiKumarChhawchharia

Twitter < www.Twitter.com/AjaiChhawchharia >



© By Author—All rights reserved by the author. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission of the author-Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

NOTE: This Book is also available at:--

- (1) www.amazon.com in its Kindle + Paper Back Book (Printed) edition.
- (2) www.draft2digital.com in an e-book edition.
- (3) www.pothi.com in a Hard Cover Book edition.

Language: English.

Contents:

Dedication: Page 3

Preface: Page 4-6

Chapter 1: A True Guru as described in the Upanishads: Page 7-36

Chapter 2: A True Guru as described in Anand Ramayan: Page 37-42

Chapter 3: Verses from Ram Charit Manas in honour of a True Guru: Page 43-49

Chapter 4: Sage Dattatreya and his twenty-four Gurus: Page 50-56

About the Author: Page 57

-----*****-----

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram, and surely also to Lord Hanuman who was very dear to the Lord and whom I regard as my own Guru, with this humble little prayer that comes to my lips: 'Lord God; Glorious and Blessed be Thy Name. I yield Thee my most hearty thanks and reverential gratitude that Thou hast given me the honour and the privilege and the opportunity to serve Thee and fulfil Thy desire to spread Thine Good Word for the good and welfare of the human kind through the Books Thou hast got written through these humble hands of mine. And for that mercy and graciousness of Thee, I shall ever and for ever remain Thine grateful and thankful and obliged.'

“He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!”

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

A True Guru

The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher,
Preceptor, Guide and Advisor

Preface

Every person needs a Guru in his or her life. A Guru is a teacher, a guide, a moral preceptor and an advisor in a person's life. A Guru is a person who shows the right and the correct path to his disciple, his ward and his student, whatever we wish to call the latter. Right from the cradle to ripe old age, we need a Guru at some or the other point in life. He is someone upon whom we can put all our trust, upon whom we can rely fully for sincere and honest guidance and advice in all matters, whether such matters pertain to the temporal and mundane aspects of life in this world, or to the spiritual realm and the welfare of our soul.

Basically, a true Guru is an illustrious person who possesses knowledge, skill and wisdom; he is expected to have a noble character and excellent qualities that are beyond reproach. He is the one who eliminates the darkness of ignorance and delusions. Hence, he is worthy of high respect.

A 'Guru' is a wise person who shows the light of knowledge and removes the darkness of ignorance in an individual's life, both in the spiritual field as well as in one's affairs related to this temporal world. So it becomes obviously very important to have a good and competent 'Guru', for only someone well qualified to show the correct path in a selfless manner would be of actual help. Another pertinent question is 'the need of a Guru in one's life'. Hence, it becomes important to know what good qualities and characters a 'Guru' must possess so that one can make an informed and wise decision while selecting someone to be one's Guru as one's entire future depends on this single decision. This knowledge of who a True Guru is instills confidence and helps one to have full faith in a Guru in whom one can confide without reservations, and from whom one is sure to have selfless and competent guidance and help in all matters in which one needs any.

This Book 'A True Guru' serves this purpose. It quotes directly from the Indian scriptural texts such as the Upanishads, Anand Ramayan and Ram Charit Manas to tell us 'who a True Guru is', and what we must seek in a Guru before selecting one. Since the basis of our Book is the 'scripture' which speak the Truth and the Fact, hence whatever we learn about a Guru through them is solid and authentic information that cannot be challenged or doubted.

We also learn in the course of our reading that a 'Guru' need not only be a human being, for if we learn something or get some kind of wisdom or become acquainted

with some skill from any source in the Lord's creation then that entity becomes a de-facto Guru at least for that particular bit of knowledge.

In short, this Book titled 'A True Guru' would be of immense help to spiritual aspirants as well as those who wish to learn about the virtues and characters that one need to search or look for in a person before one selects him or her for help and guidance in matters of life, both spiritual and temporal.

A Guru may be someone who has taught us something as basic as the alphabets and grammar when we were in our primary school, or he may be someone who has helped us to acquire true spiritual knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment when we grew up. He may be someone who has taught us the tricks of the trade of the world so as to enable us to stand on our own two feet independently and cope with life as efficiently and successfully as is possible for us in this gross mundane world, or he may be one who has shown us the futility of pursuing this delusionary world and its false charms, and instead motivates us to follow the path of spiritualism in order to attain eternal peace and happiness for the soul.

Since one would repost full faith and reliance upon a Guru in all matters of life, both the temporal as well as the spiritual, that need guidance and advice, since a person is expected to have firm confidence in a Guru's abilities and knowledge inasmuch as he is putting his entire welfare in the hands of that Guru—it is of paramount importance therefore that the 'Guru' should carefully be chosen based entirely on his merits, his aptitude, his knowledge, his abilities, his character, his virtues and qualities. For it is very obvious that a wrong Guru will be as disastrous for the welfare of a person as a bad and incompetent doctor is to a patient or an ill-qualified and dishonest minister is to a king.

Now, the question arises: How does one know who is worthy to become a true and good Guru; what should one look for in a person when searching for a Guru. To wit, it indeed becomes important to know about the great virtues and grand qualities a Guru must possess by default. For it is not necessary that a person who appears appealing by the force of his attractive physical appearance may have the desired eclectic virtues in him that would make him qualified to be a Guru, for there are quite many instances when a most humble-looking person has certain rare qualities in him that others do not possess but are belied by his external look.

So therefore, the question that baffles many a scholar is: Who is a 'True Guru', or rather, 'who should be a True Guru'? What are his qualities and virtues? How do we know if a person is worthy to become a Guru? Or, is it necessary that a Guru should be a human being, and is it possible that any thing or any living being from which or from whom we learn anything can be called a Guru? In the latter case, the answer is a definite 'Yes', for we have the example of sage Dattatreya who has had as many as twenty-four Gurus. We shall read about him by-and-by in this Book.

Put simply, the word 'Guru' means a person who is one's teacher, his guide, his preceptor and his advisor—be it in the field of knowledge that pertains to the world or the field that relates to the spiritual. He is the person who makes a person acquire knowledge that he did not have earlier. He is someone who helps a person become wiser and more knowledgeable than what he had been previously. He must have a

thorough knowledge of the subject he deals with, and skilled in communication to properly deliver his message. He must have a proper aptitude and an attitude befitting a teacher and guide. And of course and not the least, he must have a purpose in mind and be sincere in it, which is to honestly help his disciple to attain the goal the latter has set out to achieve.

The Upanishads, which are classical treatises in Hinduism on spiritual philosophy and metaphysics, explain the term Guru in detail, and list the virtues that a wise and enlightened Guru is supposed to possess. They also outline the characteristics that a good disciple must have, and how best one can choose a good Guru. Such Upanishads are included in Chapter no. 1 of this Book.

In Anand Ramayan, said to be written by sage Valmiki, there are verses that describe the great and noble virtues of a True Guru. They are narrated in Manohar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 3, verse nos. 7-17. These verses are cited in Chapter no. 2.

In the beginning of the classical epic of Goswami Tulsidas, known as Ram Charit Manas, there are verses in praise of a True Guru. They appear in Baal Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Sortha line nos. 9-10 as well as Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede this Doha, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it. We shall read these verses in Chapter no. 3.

I hope the esteemed reader will find this Book on 'A True Guru' very interesting and informative as the subject has been covered in a comprehensive manner by citing authoritative ancient scriptural texts such as the Upanishads, the Anand Ramayan and the Ram Charit Manas. I have kept my version as straight and simple as I possibly could so as to make it easily understandable.

I wish also to mention in the passing that one of my other books titled 'Saints and Non-Saints, Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities', which is also available on-line in both e-book and printed book versions, will be a good companion for this present Book on A True Guru, as a saintly person is best qualified to become a Guru, though of course there are some stellar exceptions to this general rule as we have read herein above regarding sage Dattatreya.

Finally, a word of thanks for Sri Somil Bharti, B.Tech (IIT, Kanpur) and MBA (IIM, Calcutta), who has been kind to do the Roman Transliteration of the Sanskrit and Hindi texts of the Upanishads, the Anand Ramayan and the Ram Charit Manas for me to help me complete this book. He has always done so gladly even though he is a busy professional in his life. God bless him!

Amen !

Author: Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

Date: 25th September, 2028

-----*****-----

A True Guru

The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher,
Preceptor, Guide and Advisor

Chapter 1

A True Guru as described in the Upanishads

First, let us become acquainted with the basic meaning of the word 'GURU'.

The word 'GURU' has two parts—viz. 'Gu' meaning darkness, and 'Ru' meaning light. Hence the word 'Guru' means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters.

Therefore he is an exalted, revered and much sought after person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge and guides him whenever he finds himself in a moral dilemma and quandary. He is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual. The disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal or blackmail.

He is the one who is expected to have risen above all kinds of vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. Therefore it is deemed that only a person of high mental, intellectual, spiritual and ethical calibre can become a true Guru.

A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the 'Trinity Gods'—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple.

He is 'God like' because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond

reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal.

A Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies. He not teaches these virtues but practices them in his own life.

When the teacher (Guru) is especially pleased with a particular student, he would naturally be inclined to pay more attention to him as compared to others. This is natural for him because he sees in this student a spark of great future, a soul who would sincerely and honestly carry forward the teacher's legacy forward and make his teachings as well as his name and fame immortal. As for other less brilliant and devoted students, or those who are just mediocre and run-of-the-mill sort, the teacher has no such grand expectations from them. So he prefers to impart the best of education to his special and most-favoured student. The teacher would even unravel top secrets to him because he is confident that this disciple would never misuse them and also understand these secrets correctly and properly.

This relationship is just like a father of more than one son. The father would have a natural love for the son in whom he sees a bright future and from whom he expects the family's good name and fortune to get a boost as compared to those sons who are like blights on the family.

The importance of true Guru can never be underestimated or overstated as he is the primary source of motivation and a provider of spiritual energy to the spiritual aspirant, as well as his principal advisor and moral support. The aspirant relies on the authority of the Guru and his knowledge to faithfully move ahead in a field which is still unknown to him and un-chartered by him, without the fear of going on the wrong path or falling prey to uncertainties.

The wise, learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, guide and teacher) is a true advisor and guide for a spiritual aspirant. He is the one who acts as the primary source of strength and support that empowers the person to move ahead on his spiritual path and ultimately attain success in his endeavours. He is the virtual 'Shakti' or source of energy, motivation, strength, power and authority that provides the necessary support, impetus and dynamism to all the efforts made by the aspirant to reach his goal in life successfully. But for this to materialize, the Guru himself should be an expert in his field, and inclined to helpful and supporting; he should be a teacher, a preceptor, a motivator, an advisor, a friend and a guide all rolled into one.

The Guru should be shown due respect and saluted. He is the one who deftly guides the student of spiritualism, or for that matter in any field of learning, on the correct path, warning him of the numerous pitfalls, and how to overcome them successfully. A man who is wise, learned and enlightened is the one who is eligible to become a true teacher who guides and advises a spiritual aspirant. Such a teacher is the disciple's or a student's real friend and support; he provides his ward (the disciple or the student) the much-needed moral support, guidance, motivation and inspiration to move ahead even when the former appears to have lost hope and the drive to move ahead.

It is the teacher or the Guru who removes all darkness symbolized by ignorance and delusions, and instead lights up the path to success for his ward. The Guru picks up the ward whenever he stumbles and falls, or is down in the docks; the Guru instils confidence and hope in him when he is dejected and hopeless. The Guru provides the necessary impetus to the disciple to move ahead and rise up against all odds and misfortunes.

This is why the Guru is called the primary source of motivation and energy or 'Shakti' for the spiritual aspirant. Even as any endeavour needs 'Shakti' (dynamism, energy, vitality, strength, impetus, drive) to succeed, the Guru is the one who provides this much-needed Shakti to the spiritual aspirant.

Now, let us see what the different Upanishads have to say about a 'True Guru'.

(1) The *Dwayo-panishad* describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras but they quite clearly depict the grand virtues that a True Guru must possess. This Upanishad is being cited here verse-by-verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:-

आचार्यो वेदसंपन्नो विष्णुभक्तो विमत्सरः । मन्त्रज्ञो मन्त्रभक्तश्च सदामन्त्राश्रयः शुचिः ॥१॥
गुरुभक्तिसमायुक्तः पुराणज्ञो विशेषवित् । एवं लक्षणसंपन्नो गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥२॥

ācāryō vedasampannō viṣṇubhaktō vimatsaraḥ । mantrajñō mantrabhaktaśca
sadāmantrāśrayaḥ śuciḥ ॥1॥

gurubhaktisamayuktaḥ purāṇajñō viśeṣavit । evaṁ lakṣaṇasampannō
gururityabhidhīyate ॥2॥

'Verse nos. 1-2 = A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

आचिनोति हि शास्त्रार्थानाचारस्थापनादपि । स्वयमाचरते यस्तु तस्मादाचार्य उच्यते ॥३॥

ācinōti hi śāstrārthānācārasthāpanādapi । svayamācarate yastu tasmādācārya
ucyate ॥3॥

Verse no. 3 = A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

गुशब्दस्त्वन्धकारः स्यात् रुशब्दस्तन्निरोधकः । अन्धकारनिरोधित्वाद्गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥४॥

guśabdastvandhakāraḥ syāt ruśabdastannirōdhakaḥ ।
andhakāranirōdhitvādgururityabhidhīyate ॥4॥

Verse no. 4 = The letter ‘Gu’ means darkness, while the letter ‘Ru’ means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म गुरुरेव परा गतिः । गुरुरेव परं विद्या गुरुरेव परं धनम् ॥५॥

gurureva paraṁ brahma gurureva parā gatiḥ । gurureva paraṁ vidyā
gurureva paraṁ dhanam ॥5॥

Verse no. 5 = A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahm; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

गुरुरेव परः कामः गुरुरेव परायणः । यस्मात्तदुपदेष्टासौ तस्माद्गुरुतरो गुरुः ॥६॥

gurureva paraḥ kāmaḥ gurureva parāyaṇaḥ । yasmāttadupadeṣṭāsau
tasmādgurutarō guruḥ ॥6॥

Verse no. 6 = A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence,

who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

यस्सकृदुच्चारणः संसारविमोचनो भवति । सर्वपुरुषार्थसिद्धिर्भवति । न च पुनरावर्तते न च पुनरावर्तते इति । य एवं वेदेत्युपनिषत् ॥७॥

yassakṛduccāraṇaḥ saṁsāravimōcanō bhavati । sarvapuruṣārthasiddhirbhavati । na ca punarāvartate na ca punarāvartata iti । ya evaṁ vedetyupaniṣat ॥7॥

Verse no. 7 = Pronouncing the word ‘Guru’ even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit’. This is what this Upanishad says.”

(2) The *Shatyayani Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 39 describes the virtues of a true Guru. This verse describes the importance and glory of a moral preceptor, spiritual guide, an all-rounder advisor and a practical teacher, called a Guru. It is deemed here that he is wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened, simply because only a person who knows something himself can teach it to others; the rest are only impostors.

गुरुरेव परो धर्मो गुरुरेव परा गतिः । एकाक्षरप्रदातारं यो गुरुं नाभिनन्दति । तस्य श्रुतं तपो ज्ञानं स्रवत्यामघटाम्बुवत् ॥३९॥

gurureva parō dharmō gurureva parā gatiḥ । ekākṣarapradātāraṁ yō guruṁ nābhinandati । tasya śrutaṁ tapō jñānaṁ stravyāmaghaṭāmbuvat ॥39॥

It says—“Guru is the supreme Dharma. That is, one should faithfully serve and follow the advice and instructions of one’s Guru just like one must sincerely, diligently and ardently follow one’s religiously sanctioned norms of behaviour and righteous codes of conduct, duties and responsibilities, which are collectively called a person’s Dharma as established by the scriptures. It also refers to a noble conduct that is conducive to happiness and liberation from the shackles that tie a creature to the deluding and entrapping world.

Likewise, the Guru is the last shelter and refuge for a person (because it is he who guides a person when he is confused, doubtful and perplexed; when he needs support and succour; when he needs a true friend by his side). It is he who guides a person on the correct path and removes all consternations from his mind; it is in him that a disciple can confide without any fear of betrayal, back-stabbing, blackmailing and

revenge. It is he who sincerely and selflessly advises a person on all matters as it is in him a person blindly reposts all faith and confidence. In fact, a Guru is the best council.

A person who does not show due respect and honour to the Guru who has selflessly given him the bounty of truthful knowledge, who teaches him and makes him wiser, more knowledgeable, skilled and educated, then all the Gyan (i.e. all the knowledge, all skills, all wisdom, all erudition and all learning that the person has acquired or gained) as well as all the good effects of the Tapa (i.e. penances, austerities, sufferings and hardships that he has endured in his quest for an all round welfare and enhancement) gradually fade away or decline and lose their potentials, powers, prowess and effects, rendering that unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal disciple shorn of all glories, fame and moral strengths that should have otherwise accrued to him just like the case where water slowly seeps out of an earthen pot made from half-baked mud. [In other words, if a man does not show due respect to his teacher, he will be cursed and all the good virtues that would have normally given him good name and fame would abandon him. He would be deemed to be unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal, and would be just like a traitor who has betrayed his country. No good virtues would stay with him.] [39].”

(3) The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 56-59, and Canto 6, verse no. 79 describe the importance of a Guru and compares him with the supreme Lord. To quote—

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवः सदाशिवः । न गुरोरधिकः कश्चिन्निषु लोकेषु विद्यते ॥५६॥

gururbrahmā gururviṣṇurgururdevaḥ sadāśivaḥ । na gurōradhikaḥ kaścintriṣu
lōkeṣu vidyate ॥56॥

Canto 5, Verse no. 56 = The Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide who helps the spiritual aspirant to achieve his spiritual goal by showing him the correct path best suited for him and lending him a helping hand all the way through till the goal is achieved) is like Lords Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the sustainer and protector) and Sada Shiva (i.e. the eternal Lord named Shiva, the concluder of creation) personified for the ascetic (and therefore is to be honoured and shown the same reverence). There is no one more exalted and important in the three worlds than one’s Guru (56).

दिव्यज्ञानोपदेशारं देशिकं परमेश्वरम् । पूजयेत्परया भक्त्या तस्य ज्ञानफलं भवेत् ॥५७॥

divyajñānōpadeṣṭāraṁ deśikaṁ parameśvaram । pūjayetparayā bhaktayā
tasya jñānaphalaṁ bhavet ॥57॥

Canto 5, Verse no. 57 = When the disciple worships and reveres his Guru, who is selfless and unconcerned with any material gains and who has the necessary erudition himself so that he can show light to others, as the one who gives him the divine gift of eclectic knowledge and who lights up the spiritual path for him, when he has devotion for such a Guru and treats him with the same reverence that he shows for the Parmeshwar (the supreme Lord God), he is blessed by the Guru who rewards him with the fruit of knowledge and wisdom. As a result, the disciple acquires the eclectic knowledge that the Guru possesses in a comprehensive and holistic way. [The Guru would be pleased by his devotion and sincerity and would not hide anything from him like a father who would not conceal anything from the son who serves him with great devotion and love. The Guru might even tell him certain secrets that he may not tell his other disciples out of love and affection for this particularly devoted and committed disciple. The result being that this sincere disciple gets his special attention which translates into his chances of learning the great secrets that largely remain unknown to his fellow students.] (57).

यथा गुरुस्तथैवेशो यथैवेशस्तथा गुरुः पूजनीयो महाभक्त्या न भेदो विद्य तेऽनयोः ॥५८॥

yathā gurustathaiveśō yathaiveśastathā guruḥ pūjanīyō mahābhaktayā na
bhedō vidya te'nayōḥ ॥58॥

Canto 5, Verse no. 58 = There is no difference between the Guru and the supreme Lord (Shiva); both are alike. In other words, while the Guru is as exalted and worthy of the same honour and reverence as one shows to the supreme Lord, the Lord himself is to be honoured like an exalted and honourable Guru because he shows the devotee the correct and proper path for his spiritual well being.

One should therefore honour, worship and serve one's Guru with full commitment, devotion and sincerity (58).

नाद्वैतवादं कुर्वीत गुरुणा सह कुत्रचित् । अद्वैतं भावयेद्भक्त्या गुरोर्देवस्य चात्मनः ॥५९॥

nādvaitavādam kurvīta guruṇā saha kutracit | advaitam bhāvayedbhaktayā
gurōrdevasya cātmanah ॥59॥

Canto 5, Verse no. 59 = One should never treat the Guru at par with one's own self¹. On the contrary, one should certainly treat the Guru at par with the Supreme Being (59).

[Note—¹This is a very important observation especially in the context of the teaching of Upanishads that the same Atma lives in all living beings. The reason is that though this is a fact, the other truth that the knowledge of the Guru is far superior to what one knows oneself is also equally important and should be kept in mind. The teachings of the scriptures are universal but they have to be understood in the proper context and correctly interpreted. For example, if the Atma is the same in all living beings, then

would any man in his senses go and embrace a lion? The idea behind the universality of the Atma or soul is not as preposterous and ridiculous as embracing a lion because the animal also has an Atma—for if one pretends to be so enlightened as to treat a lion as one's dear and argue that one ought to go and embrace it to establish the truth of the tenets of the Upanishad that the same Atma lives in all the creatures, then why does he not think twice before killing innocent animals for fire sacrifices or to satisfy his hunger for meat, why does he treat someone as his friend and the other has his enemy, why is there so much strife and blood-letting in this world?

The idea of the universality and uniformity of the Atma, its quintessential and ubiquitous nature, is more subtle and sublime. The idea is to remove so much dichotomy, schism, discord and disharmony between men and communities in this world where strife and warfare, where blood spilling and hatred, where animosity, jealousy and ill-will are so rampant. Say, why should one treat one man as his brother while the other as his arch enemy if the Atma is the same in both? Instead of this, there ought to be universal brotherhood, compassion, love and grace all around.

The Guru has certain knowledge that the disciple does not have. And therefore he must be shown great respect for this simple reason that he is superior in knowledge than one's own self. Since knowledge is the greatest asset that one can ever hope to possess, the Guru is richer than one's own self, for money and other worldly riches can perish and be stolen by thieves but knowledge is an eternal and imperishable asset that would come in handy wherever one goes and would entitle him to respect and honour even in unknown countries. In fact it is this knowledge and wisdom that makes the Guru so revered and honourable. It is this knowledge and wisdom of the Guru that is worshipped and not his physical body or his Atma for the simple reason that the body is loathsome, perishable and gross, and the Atma is the same in all the creatures, including the disciple. But the degree of knowledge, erudition, wisdom and skills that the Guru possesses are unique to him and much superior to others.]

कर्णधारं गुरुं प्राप्य तद्वाक्यं प्लववद्दृढम् । अभ्यासवासनाशक्त्या तरन्ति भवसागरम् ॥७९॥

karnadhāraṃ guruṃ prāpya tadvākyaṃ plavavaddr̥ḍham ।
abhyāsavāsanāśaktayā taranti bhavasāgaram ॥79॥

Canto 6, verse no. 79 = The Guru is like the helmsman who holds the oar of a boat (i.e. he is like the expert boatman who steers the boat and knows how to go about his job with accurate precision), while the wise words or the advice that he gives are like the strong boat itself. The desire to cross this mundane and material world of transmigration marked by delusions and artificiality, and find eternal liberation and deliverance from its trap for all times to come, is the 'Vasana Shakti', or the 'power of desire' that drives one to embark upon this great journey to cross this ocean-like world and reach its other shore (i.e. to obtain emancipation and salvation for the soul) by using this boat and following the instructions of the Guru (who is an expert in this field) (79)."

(4) The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in Canto 6, verse no. 44 asserts that a self-realised and enlightened man is his own Guru, for the main objective of approaching any Guru is acquisition of True knowledge, and if that knowledge has been obtained then the Guru is deemed to have been accessed. To quote—

अहमेव गुणातीत अहमेव परात्परः । अहमेव परं ब्रह्म अहमेव गुरोगुरुः ॥४४॥

ahameva guṇātīta ahameva parātparaḥ । ahameva param brahma ahameva gurōrguruḥ ॥44॥

“I (the enlightened, wise and self-realised teacher who has recognised his true self as the pure conscious Atma, or the soul) am that supreme transcendental Brahm (the Supreme Being); I am the best Guru (moral preceptor and teacher)¹.

[Note—¹The spiritually enlightened person who is asserting that he is his own Guru is not being haughty and arrogant or egoist, because of the simple fact that he is ‘enlightened and wise and self-realised’. Such negative notions of arrogance, haughtiness or self pride are not expected from such a man. What actually he means is the fact that he has achieved the main objective for which one approaches and makes a Guru in the first place, i.e. he has realised the truth about Brahm and his own Atma (soul). He needs no further discourses and guidance. No one can show him this Truth better than his own self because self-realisation, self-witnessing and self-experiencing something first hand are more convincing, and the Truth is authoritatively ascertained than it is ever possible by merely hearing about it from someone else.]

(5) The *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse no. 14-18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition elaborately describes the virtues that a true Guru should possess. These verses are being quoted here for ready reference—

आचार्यो वेदसम्पन्नो विष्णुभक्तो विमत्सरः । योगज्ञो योगनिष्ठश्च सदा योगात्मकः शुचिः ॥४४॥
गुरुभक्तिसमायुक्तः पुरुषज्ञो विशेषतः । एवं लक्षणसंपन्नो गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥५५॥

ācāryō vedasampannō viṣṇubhaktō vimatsaraḥ । yōgajñō yōganiṣṭhaśca sadā
yōgātmaḥ śuciḥ ॥44॥

gurubhaktisamāyuktaḥ puruṣajñō viśeṣataḥ । evaṁ lakṣaṇasampannō
gururityabhidhīyate ॥55॥

“Verse no.14-15—A Guru should be well versed in the tenets of the Vedas or the knowledge contained in them, must possess the best of virtues and characters and be

exemplary in his behaviours and temperament, should be an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and Lord of the world), should be free from the tainting effects of such negative traits as Matsar (i.e. jealousy, envy, anger, wrathfulness) etc.¹, should be an expert in the art, craft and science of Yoga (meditation techniques and contemplative practices) and devoted towards them (i.e. must practice them himself, and be sincere and honest about his firm conviction about their efficacy), should be so involved in the philosophy of Yoga that it forms his way of life and soul (i.e. the philosophy of Yoga should be reflected in his personal life and his preaching should hold conviction), should be immaculate, pure and incorrupt, should be devoted towards his own Guru, and should be diligent and committed towards attaining the supreme Lord at all costs.

[Note—¹According to the Varaaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six enemies which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will).]

गुशब्दस्त्वन्धकारः स्याद्राशब्दस्तन्निरोधकः । अन्धकारनिरोधित्वाद्गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥१६॥

guśabdastvandhakāraḥ syādraśabdastannirōdhakaḥ ।
andhakāranirōdhitvādgururityabhidhīyate ॥16॥

“Verse no. 16—The word Guru has two letters—viz. ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’. The word Gu means darkness, while the word Ru refers to that which can remove or dispel that darkness. Hence, he who is able to remove or dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions, who prevents these elements from spreading their tentacles of darkness, and in case the darkness already exists then he is able to remove it with his auspicious advice and guidance, and who is able to liberate his disciple from the clutches of this all engulfing darkness that threatens to drown him is called a Guru.

गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म गुरुरेव परा गतिः । गुरुरेव परा विद्या गुरुरेव परायणम् ॥१७॥

gurureva param brahma gurureva parā gatiḥ । gurureva parā vidyā gurureva
parāyaṇam ॥17॥

“Verse no. 17—A Guru is akin to the supreme Brahm¹ personified; a Guru is the supreme abode or shelter that provides succour and solace to the tormented soul of the disciple and the last port of call for him, a Guru is like a treasury of transcendental and eclectic knowledge of divinity, and a Guru is the best person who should be consulted and followed by a disciple who sees him as a role model to be emulated.

[Note—¹Brahm: This word refers to the Supreme Being; the Supreme Lord of creation.]

गुरुरेव परा काष्ठा गुरुरेव परं धनम् । यस्मात्तदुपदेष्टासौ तस्माद्गुरुरतो गुरुरिति ॥१८॥

gurureva parā kāṣṭhā gurureva param dhanam । yasmāttadupadeṣṭāsau
tasmādgurutarō gururiti ॥18॥

“Verse no. 18—A Guru represents the best of values and the highest stature a person can ever hope to attain, and a Guru is the best asset that a person possesses (because he gives him good advice and props up his sagging morale during his bad days, he can be faithfully relied upon with no fear of betrayal, he shows him the auspicious, noble and righteous path when he is in a dilemma, he acts as a beacon of hope for his disciple when the rest of the world has betrayed him, and he never has any vested interest in anything other than what is good and fortunate for his disciple and which would ensure his all round welfare and happiness). A person who gives the best advice according to given circumstances and time is said to be the best of all Gurus as far as the disciple is concerned.

[Note—We should note here that the Upanishads have a very broad and open minded approach to any subject; they are not dogmatic and rigid in their doctrines. A person may be expert in any one field but not in another, and this does not mean that the disciple should not benefit from this man for the knowledge that he possesses. Therefore, for a particular problem a disciple may have one Guru, but for another problem that confronts him he might as well have another. It is not binding upon him that once he has accepted a particular person as his Guru he cannot accept another person as his second Guru. The main function of the institution of a Guru is to help a disciple in all his endeavours, but in an auspicious and righteous manner. Even one’s own father and mother and wife and son and friend, and for that matter even one’s enemy can be a Guru if they can enlighten the person in a particular field.]

(6) The importance of a Guru has been highlighted in *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 76 which says—

दुर्लभो विषयत्यागो दुर्लभं तत्त्वदर्शनम् । दुर्लभा सहजावस्था सद्गुरोः करुणां विना ॥७६॥

durlabhō viṣayatyaḡō durlabham tattvadarśanam । durlabhā sahajāvasthā
sadgurōḥ karuṇām vinā ॥76॥

“It is very difficult and rare to be able to renounce attractions for the material things of this sensual world, and to experience and know about the natural state in which the Jivatma (the individual Atma of the living being) stays in close proximity with the

Parmatma (the supreme Atma of the creation that pervades uniformly and universally everywhere) without the help, guidance and grace of a wise, self-realised and experienced Guru (moral preceptor, spiritual teacher and guide).

[This is because though the scriptures tell everything in detail, but there must be some one who is experienced and well-versed in the intricacies of this subject to explain them to the spiritual aspirant and remove all his doubts and practical hurdles. The Guru gives him practical tips and eggs him on when he falters and loses hope of attaining success in his spiritual endeavour.] (76).”

(7) The *Shukrahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 describes the glory of a true Guru. This verse pays respects to the enlightened Guru or moral preceptor and spiritual guide of the aspirant. Careful reading would show that a person who possesses the virtues listed herein is like a personification of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. He deserves the same honour and respect that one gives to Brahm. He is deemed to possess all the mystical powers and potentials, all the authority and divinity possessed by Brahm.

नित्यानन्दं परमसुखदं केवलं ज्ञानमूर्तिं द्वन्द्वातीतं गगनसदृशं तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यम् । एकं नित्यं विमलमचलं सर्वधीसाक्षिभूतं भावातीतं त्रिगुणरहितं सद्गुरुं तं नमामि ॥२१॥

nityānandaṁ paramasukhadam kevalam jñānamūrtim dvandvātitaṁ
gaganasadr̥śam tattvamasyaḍilakṣyam | ekaṁ nityaṁ vimalamacalaṁ
sarvadhīśākṣibhūtaṁ bhāvātitaṁ triguṇarahitaṁ sadguruṁ taṁ namāmi
॥21॥

“One should mentally remember one’s Guru, show due respect and pay homage to him most reverentially in the following words—‘He (i.e. the wise, erudite, sagacious, most learned, enlightened, and self-realised moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher) always sports a cheerful and pleasant disposition.

He is an embodiment of the best of blessings and virtues that bestow all round welfare and happiness to his followers (disciples), and whose mere presence is very comforting and reassuring for them.

He is a living personification of Gyan (which is pure and truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment).

He is beyond the reach of perplexities and vexations created by the sense of duality in this world, leading to contradictory thoughts, emotions and sentiments that create unnecessary doubts, dichotomy and confusions. That is, he is mentally stable and steadfast in his convictions and beliefs; he is not swayed by the buffeting effects of adversities, turmoil and suspense that are so characteristic of this delusory world.

He has the subtle and sublime characteristics that are so unique to the sky. That is, he remains aloof and detached from everything like the sky; he is not tainted or affected

by anything or any circumstance in this world much like the sky in which uncountable varieties of things are embedded in Nature but which remains inherently untainted and uncorrupted by any of them. This is inspite of him (the Guru) being surrounded by all the material objects, impurities and delusions that are so characteristic of this world. The Guru is constantly being buffeted by so many numerous and divergent impulses originating from this material world which is like a trap in which even the most learned persons fall, but inspite of these distractions and constant gnawing he remains flawless and faultless like the sky. He is a repository of knowledge and has a depth of enlightenment that is as vast, endless and fathomless as the sky; he remains calm and serene like the distant recesses of the vast and endless sky. In short, a true Guru is comparable to the grand virtues as possessed by the sky element.

He keeps his attention fixed on one essential 'truth', the element which is supreme, transcendental, non-dual and most truthful, instead of allowing his mind and intellect to wander here and there in myriad theories, doctrines and philosophies, leading to immense confusions, uncertainties and consternations as well as distress and vexations for the spirit much like a ship that is being tossed around in a choppy ocean.

He is 'one and perpetual'. That is, he is steady and stable as a rock in his beliefs, convictions, words, emotions, sentiments and thoughts; he is not of a fickle mind and character; he is not swayed by and swept off his moorings by myriad distractions and divergent influences which are characteristic attributes of this material world of delusions; he is unchanging and unwavering; he believes in one non-dual supreme Truth which is eternal and infinite.

He is most pure, incorrupt, untainted and without any blemish of any kind.

He remains unruffled and unmoved, maintaining his equanimity and calmness even under adversities and unfavourable circumstances, such as during periods of extreme emotional turmoil and stress because he is full of the eclectic virtues of being dispassionate, calm, neutral and detached from everything. Instead, he remains ever submerged in a perpetual state of equanimity and bliss.

He is like an all-knowing, wise, expert and sagacious, but a neutral and detached witness to what the mortal world and its inhabitants do, being a dispassionate and uninvolved observer to the happenings around him in this world.

He is full of equanimity, fortitude and evenness of mind and heart, remaining untouched and unaffected by the rocking effects of various emotions and sentiments that continuously pummel his heart, mind and intellect, and perpetually disturb him by intruding into his stoic calmness and peaceful demeanors.

He is free from being tainted or affected by the apparent good or bad effects of the three legendary Gunas or qualities inherent in all the living creatures, and which create distortions in the basically clean fibre symbolising the inherently pure and immaculate character of any individual's true self (i.e. his Atma; his consciousness).

[These three Gunas are Sata or the noble quality which creates propensity for righteousness and noble behaviour, Raja is the second quality which creates worldly desires and aspirations, leading to the predominance of such characters that make a

creature worldly wise, and Tama which is the meanest and lowest quality, creating the tendency for sinful conduct. All these three qualities are present in a person, but his individuality is decided by the ratio in which these three are present. The ‘inherent purity’ refers to the immaculacy of the Atma which is the ‘true self’ of all living beings. These Gunas cast their shadow on the shine of the self-illuminated and immaculate Atma, making the individual appear to exhibit certain artificial taints and characteristics that are extraneous to his true self. This is like the case of the shadow of the moon falling upon the earth when it comes between the sun and the earth, giving rise to the solar eclipse. The sun has not lost its shine and neither is there a night during the day, but the optical impression created by this intervention of the moon makes it appear to be so. Similarly, the immaculate Atma appears to be tainted and darkened when these Gunas cast their shadow upon it. The resultant effect is that the individual does not appear to be as holy and divine as he actually is. In the case of a wise Guru, it is deemed that he has gained sufficient control over his self that none of these three Gunas are able to display their characteristic behaviour, thereby making the Guru absolutely neutral and pristine pure like a piece of crystal.]

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to such a Guru who possesses these virtues as narrated in this verse.

[It is to be noted here that the eclectic and sublime virtues enumerated here are the virtues of the Supreme Being or Brahm. In other words, that Guru who is possessed of these attributes is no less revered than Brahm; he is equivalent to Brahm; he is Divinity personified.] (21).”

(8) The *Niralamba Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 30 describes the characteristics of a good Guru as follows—

उपास्य इति च सर्वशरीरस्थचैतन्यब्रह्मप्रापको गुरुरुपास्यः ॥३०॥

upāsyā iti ca sarvaśarīrasthacaitanyabrahmaprāpakō gururupāsyah ॥30॥

“Only a true and self-realised Guru (moral preceptor; teacher and guide) who is able to advise the disciple, inspire him and guide him on how to access that supreme Brahm who resides in the body of all the creatures of this creation as their pure consciousness, is worthy of worshipping, honouring and admiring. [He is the only one who is worthy of keeping company with and to sit with.] (30).”

The *Niralamba Upanishad*, verse no. 31 describes the characteristics of a good disciple as follows—

शिष्य इति च विद्याध्वस्तप्रपञ्चावगाहितज्ञानावशिष्टं ब्रह्मैव शिष्यः ॥३१॥

śiṣya iti ca vidyādhvastaprapñcāvagāhitajñānāvaśiṣṭam brahmaiva śiṣyaḥ
 ॥31॥

“A true disciple is one in whose heart or bosom only the eclectic and sublime knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahm remains after thorough investigation, examination and understanding of the actual nature of the mundane, artificial, temporary and mortal world. This has created a strong and sincere sense of renunciation in him accompanied by the kindling of enlightenment. Such a disciple has applied Gyan (rational mind and analytical thoughts laced with erudition and wisdom to arrive at the factual truth about what is real and what is imaginary) to determine the falsehood of the world and its objects, and this knowledge has inspired him to concentrate upon the factual thing represented by the truthful Brahm, which is consciousness and truth personified, and which resides in the heart of the disciple as his Atma. In other words, a true disciple is one who has no confusions about what is true and what is false; he would not be led astray by false charms created by the deluding effects of this artificial and entrapping world, and instead strive to constantly focus his attention on the truthful path of self-realisation (31).”

(9) The *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 35-36 describe the virtues of a true Guru as well as the need for a Guru as follows—

ज्ञानेनैव हि संसारविनाशो नैव कर्मणा । श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठं स्वगुरुं गच्छेद्यथाविधि ॥३५॥

jñānenaiva hi saṁsāravinaśō naiva karmaṇā । śrōtriyam brahmaniṣṭham
 svagurum gacchedyathavidhi ॥35॥

Verse no. 35 - The only way to break free from the fetters that tie the soul of the creature to this ensnaring world of delusions, artificiality and miseries is by the means of Gyan (i.e. with the aid of truthful knowledge and wisdom about the spiritual reality of the soul, its quintessential divine nature, and the truth about the Supreme Being), and not by doing deeds (even the auspicious and righteous ones in the hope that they can help break the shackle represented by this world).

In order to achieve this end (i.e. in order to acquire this true Gyan), one should approach a self-realised and wise Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) in the proper way to acquire this knowledge from him. The Guru should himself be well-versed in the scriptures (so that he can give proper and correct guidance and present a well considered and filtered version of them to the spiritual aspirant, instead of misleading him with wrong guidance and confusing him with contradictory advice, as that would be suicidal for the disciple), should himself have firm belief and conviction in Brahm, should himself be Brahm-realised, and should himself be extremely devoted and faithful to Brahm (because it is only then that he would have the

necessary commitment, conviction and faith when he preaches about Brahm to his disciple) (35).

गुरुस्तस्मै परां विद्यां दद्याद्ब्रह्मात्मबोधिन् । गुहायां निहितं साक्षादक्षरं वेद चेन्नरः ॥३६॥

gurustasmai parām vidyām dadyādbrahmātmabōdhinam । guhāyām nihitam
sākṣādakṣaram veda cennaraḥ ॥36॥

Verse no. 36 - The Guru should impart the eclectic knowledge that would enlighten his disciple about the oneness of the Atma and Brahm, called the ‘Paraa Vidya’.

A spiritual aspirant who is able to witness and experience the secret presence of the imperishable and eternal Brahm inside his own inner self (as his pristine pure and self-illuminated consciousness known as the Atma) is able to untie the great spiritual knot representing misconceptions, ignorance and delusions about the truth and reality pertaining to his own ‘self’ as well as the rest of the world, and consequentially obtain freedom from its shackling effects. This helps him to receive the reward of spiritual freedom by way of realising the eternal essence of ‘Shiva’— the imperishable and infinite bliss and ecstasy that comes with realising the eternal truth about the Atma and Brahm, the knowledge which itself is truthful, beautiful and auspicious, hence ‘Shiva’ in its nature, contents and essence.

Those desirous of reaching the ultimate fount of eternal spiritual bliss and ecstasy, the citadel of spiritual peace and tranquillity, the pinnacle of unbound spiritual happiness and joys, should endeavour to acquire this knowledge and unfold this secret as described herein above (36).

(10) The importance of a Guru has also been described in *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 39 as follows—

विदित्वा स्वात्मरूपेण न बिभेति कुतश्चन । एवं यस्तु विजानाति स्वगुरोरुपदेशतः ॥३९॥

viditvā svātmārūpeṇa na bibheti kutaścana । evam yastu vijānāti
svagurōrupadeśataḥ ॥39॥

“Any diligent and self-controlled person who has established full restraint over his self and the body is able to obtain access to the divine and eclectic fount of eternal bliss that comes with Brahm-realisation by witnessing his own Atma residing in his own bosom by relying upon the spiritual guidance provided to him by his Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide). Such a self-realised man is no longer deluded, and neither is he any longer tormented by deeds, whether good or bad.”

(11) The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 52-53 describes that there are three categories of Gurus and explains their basic differences—viz. Prerak, Bodhak and Moksha Dayak. To quote this Upanishad—

इत्येषां त्रिविधो श्रेय आचार्यस्तु महीतले । चोदको दर्शयेन्मार्गं बोधकः स्थानमाचरेत् ॥५२॥
मोक्षदस्तु परं तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञात्वा परमश्नुते । प्रत्यक्षयजनं देहे संक्षेपाच्छृणु गौतम ॥५३॥

ityeṣāṃ trividhō śreya ācāryastu mahītale । cōdakō darśayenmārgaṃ
bōdhakaḥ sthānamācaret ॥52॥

mōkṣadastu paraṃ tattvaṃ yajjñātvā paramaśnute । pratyakṣayajanaṃ dehe
saṅkṣepācchr̥ṇu gautama ॥53॥

“In this world, all true teachers come under these three categories. The ‘Prerak’ are the ones who show others the auspicious and righteous path to be followed; they inspire and motivate and egg-on their followers to follow this path. In fact, their own lives are living examples to be emulated; they show the auspicious way and the eclectic rewards to be had by following this path.

The ‘Bodhak’ makes others aware of the intricacies of the various aspects of this path, guides them and teaches them the smallest issues that are relevant, enlightens them about the real goal of life, and acts as a constant companion and friend to help them in solving all their problems that they might encounter off and on.

The ‘Moksha-Data’ is the one who gifts the best and the most excellent gift that can be given to someone, i.e. the gift of ‘Moksha’, the treasure trove of emancipation and salvation, the blessing that enables the disciple to reach the true final goal of life, and it is the breaking of the fetter that shackles him to the endless cycle of birth and death, to liberate him from the fathomless pit of ignorance and delusions in which he is presently trapped. With the knowledge imparted to a spiritual aspirant by a wise, selfless, enlightened and competent teacher, and under his able guidance and inspiration, the disciple is able to attain the aim of freeing himself from the fetters that shackle him to ignorance and its attendant delusions, thereby liberating his soul and delivering him from the torments of bondage and serfdom to the gross body and the world with its horrors and impertinence. Armed with this knowledge, the aspirant is able to attain the supreme bliss and reach the highest stature in life.

Oh Gautam¹! Now you listen about a symbolic way of doing a sacred sacrifice in the context of the body² (52-53).

[Note—¹The word ‘Gautam’ pertains to any enlightened ascetic, sage or seer belonging to the lineage of the exalted legendary sage Gautam. It is like a surname adopted by the followers of sage Gautam.

²The symbolic fire sacrifice where the oblations are offered internally to the deity which in this case is the supreme Brahm residing in the subtle heart of the worshipper as his Atma is elaborately described in Pran Agnihotra Upanishad also. This latter

Upanishad is Chapter 29 of this volume. This philosophy does away with the necessity of doing elaborate fire sacrifices in order to attain some spiritual goals such as seeking emancipation and salvation, as well as general welfare.]”

(12) The *Mundak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Mundak 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13 describes the importance of the Guru as follows—

परीक्ष्य लोकान्कर्मचितान्ब्राह्मणे निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥१२॥

parīkṣya lōkānkarmacitānbrāhmaṇe nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena ।
tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurumevābhigacchetsamitpāṇiḥ śrōtriyam brahmaniṣṭham
॥12॥

“Verse no. 12 = Wise men (who have understood this reality and are eager for finding the truthful way that would give permanent spiritual rewards) approach some learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, teacher and guide) who is not only well-versed in the ‘truth’ of Brahm as enshrined in the Vedas but is also a firm believer in this ‘truth’ known as Brahm and is a practitioner of this ‘truth’. It is only he who can show the spiritual aspirant the correct path leading to Brahm and teach him about the supreme knowledge of Brahm (12).

तस्मै स विद्वानुपसन्नाय सम्यक् प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय ।
येनाक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् ॥१३॥

tasmai sa vidvānupasannāya samyak praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya ।
yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyam prōvāca tāṁ tattvatō brahmavidyām
॥13॥

“Verse no. 13 = This enlightened and Brahm-realised Guru is obliged to welcome the aspirant, who is calm in his demeanours and has obtained full control over his sense organs, as his disciple. The teacher should teach him the divine and eclectic knowledge of Brahm, a knowledge called ‘Brahm Vidya’, so that the eager disciple can have a comprehensive knowledge of the truthful and eternal Brahm (13).

(13) The *Rudra Upanishad*, verse no. 3 explicitly asserts that Lord Shiva is the universal Guru of all, and that the Guru is Shiva personified in this form. Let us read what this Upanishad says:-

ॐ आत्मा परशिवद्वयो गुरुः शिवः । गुरुणां सर्वविश्वमिदं विश्वमन्त्रेण धार्यम् । दैवाधीनं जगदिदम् । तदैवं तन्मन्त्रात् तनुते । तन्मे दैवं गुरुरिति । गुरुणां सर्वज्ञानिनां गुरुणा दत्तमेतदन्नं परब्रह्म । ब्रह्म स्वानुभूतिः । गुरुः शिवो देवः । गुरुः शिव एव लिङ्गम् । उभयोर्मिश्रप्रकाशत्वात् । प्राणवत्त्वात् महेश्वरत्वाच्च शिवस्तदैव गुरुः । यत्र गुरुस्तत्र शिवः । शिवगुरुस्वरूपो महेश्वरः । भ्रमरकीटकार्येण दीक्षिताः शिवयोगिनः शिवपूजापथे गुरुपूजाविधौ च महेश्वरपूजनान्मुक्ताः । लिङ्गाभिषेकं निर्माल्यं गुरोरभिषेकतीर्थं महेश्वरपादोदकं जन्ममालिन्यं क्षालयन्ति । तेषां प्रीतिः शिवप्रीतिः । तेषां तृप्तिः शिवतृप्तिः । तैश्च पावनो वासः । तेषां निरसनं शिवनिरसनम् । आनन्दपारायणः । तस्माच्छिवं व्रजन्तु । गुरुं व्रजन्तु । इत्येव पावनम् ॥३॥

aum ātmā paraśivadvayō guruḥ śivaḥ । gurūṇām sarvaviśvamiḍam
viśvamantreṇa dhāryam । daivādīnāṁ jagadidam । taddaivaṁ tanmantrāt
tanute । tanme daivaṁ gururiti । gurūṇām sarvajñānīnām guruṇā
dattametadannaṁ parabrahma । brahma svānubhūtiḥ । guruḥ śivō devaḥ ।
guruḥ śiva eva liṅgam । ubhayōrmiśraprakāṣatvāt । prāṇavattvāt
maheśvaratvācca śivastadaiva guruḥ । yatra gurustatra śivaḥ ।
śivagurusvarūpō maheśvaraḥ । bhramarakīṭakāryeṇa dīkṣitāḥ śivayōgināḥ
śivapūjāpathe gurupūjāvidhau ca maheśvarapūjanānmuktāḥ । liṅgābhiṣekaṁ
nirmālyaṁ gurōrabhiṣekatīrthaṁ maheśvarapādōdakaṁ janmamālinyaṁ
kṣālayanti । teṣāṁ prītiḥ śivaprītiḥ । teṣāṁ trptiḥ śivatṛptiḥ । taiśca pāvanō
vāsaḥ । teṣāṁ nirasanaṁ śivanirasanam । ānandapārāyaṇaḥ । tasmācchivaṁ
vrajantu । guruṁ vrajantu । ityeva pāvanam ॥3॥

“OM salutations! The Atma (pure consciousness) is an embodiment of the (supreme transcendental) Brahm as well as of (the auspicious and truthful, the holy and divine) Shiva.

The Atma is a personification of the moral preceptor who is wise and enlightened, i.e. the Guru, as well as Shiva (the enlightened, wise, most erudite and all-knowing Lord who is the teacher and preacher for the whole world in his form as Dakshin Mukhi Shiva).

It is the moral duty of a true Guru to lend moral and advisory support to the entire world with his high level of wisdom, knowledge and erudition. He should prevent the world from sinking under the weight of sins and perversions by providing it with correct and practical guidance; it is tantamount to his bearing the world and preventing it from breaking apart or sinking into chaos. This is achieved by them by harnessing the stupendous dynamic powers that are encapsulated in the various divine Mantras by chanting them or repeating them systematically so that the powerful energy of the Mantra can actually be utilized constructively for the welfare of the entire world. This world is dependent upon such Mantras. [That is, the world needs knowledge and wise council to survive. Without knowledge and information, life on earth would be very difficult and hostile. It is the duty of Brahmins to act as wise,

selfless, neutral and sincere teachers and advisors—or Gurus—to guide the people and help them fulfill their desires in a righteous manner.]

The supreme Lord's glories and magnificence, his majestic powers and authority, his astounding abilities and prowess are being expressed through these Mantras. [This is because the whole world is a manifestation of Brahm, the supreme Lord, and since the Mantras are nothing but formulas to solve various problems that occur in a person's life, they are an expression of the Lord's multidimensional ability to sustain and protect this creation.]

That Lord is the universal Guru of all of us. [Here, the 'Lord' being referred to is Shiva in his form as the moral preceptor and teacher of the entire world in his form as Dakshin Mukhi Shiva described in the Upanishad named after him.]

The truthful spiritual knowledge and divine wisdom which is imparted by Shiva in his capacity as the creation's Guru is like the food for the creature that sustains his life in this creation. This knowledge is as sublime and supreme as the supreme Brahm. [This is because without Brahm the world would not have come into being in the beginning. This has a parallel in food without which no life can be ever sustained. Food is needed to sustain physical life in creation while spiritual knowledge is needed to sustain one's spiritual life and help him in his progress to obtain his true goal in life. Therefore, food and knowledge bear close resemblance and kinship with the creature just like the supreme Brahm whose physical features are represented by this gross visible world and whose subtle features are represented by such glorious virtues as knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment etc. While the physical features form the gross body of the creation, the subtle features are represented by the faculty of mind and intellect. The Brahm himself is represented by the Atma residing inside the body consisting of both the gross form as well as the subtle form.]

Brahm is so esoteric, mysterious and enigmatic that he can be known only by a person's own experience and not by being told or taught by others.

Lord Shiva is the universal Guru, and this form of Shiva is a subtle and sublime form. [That is, the Shiva principle is present in all wise teachers and preachers. Extended further, it implies that self-realisation or self teaching or self awareness is also a form of Shiva because no knowledge is ever possible without Shiva being an integral part of the process.]

Shiva is an image or personification of both the aspects of the supreme transcendental Brahm—i.e. as a manifested God he has a well defined body with known attributes and character traits, and as the un-manifested sublime principle he reveals himself as the pure consciousness or the self-illuminate Atma of all living beings. He is therefore the 'life' of all; he is the 'Pran' of all.

Being an authority of such glorious magnificence and divine virtues, he is called 'Maheshwar', the great God. [This 'great god' is none other but Brahm himself. In other words, Shiva and Brahm are one and the same.]

Therefore, Shiva is the great Guru as well. [This is because the word Guru means one who removes darkness, and the Atma, being self-illuminated and a treasury of wisdom and enlightenment, would naturally remove the darkness of ignorance that had been engulfing the creature once he comes to realise the presence of the Shiva principle in his own Atma present inside his own bosom by meditating upon the Shiva Tattva, or the principle tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism that talk about the ultimate and non-dual Truth about the pure divinity known as the 'self' in this creation.]

Where there is a Guru there is Shiva present. [That is, a teacher is a personification of Shiva because he gives knowledge and wisdom that removes the darkness of ignorance for his disciple. Hence, a sincere and worthy Guru should be given the same degree of respect and honour that one would give Shiva.]

The great God called Maheshwar is indeed a personified form of a Guru and Shiva. [The form that combines the excellent virtues of a wise, learned and knowledgeable teacher or Guru, and the one who is truthful, auspicious, divine, holy, enlightened and dispassionate or Shiva is indeed rare to find even amongst the Gods. That is why one personifies the eclectic and glorious virtues of a Guru and Shiva is indeed eligible to be called a great God or Maheshwar.]

Applying the principle of 'Bhramar-Keet'¹, a devotee who remains perpetually engrossed in the deep thoughts and devoted worship of Shiva not only as his chosen deity but also as his Guru, i.e. one who worships Lord Shiva as his Guru besides worshipping him as the personification of the Supreme Being, becomes, in due course of time, indistinguishable from Shiva so much so that he need not then offer separate worship to the Lord anymore. In other words, he keeps on worshipping Shiva involuntarily each moment of his conscious life so that he need not do so consciously and separately.

[¹The *Bhramar* is the wasp who catches hold of smaller insects, the *Keet*, and keeps them trapped in its comb. The incarcerated insect is subjected to constant close humming sound made by the wasp that hovers constantly around it at very close quarters. The resultant psychological effect is so profound that by and by the insect also assumes the nature of the wasp and transforms into one; the insect is brain-washed to such an extent that it thinks and imagines of nothing else but the wasp and begins to imagine itself also as a wasp. This example is cited here to explain the phenomenon how the devotees who constantly think of Shiva and keeps on repeating his Mantras becomes one like Shiva. This is because constant practice and thoughts of Shiva would have had a profound effect on his psyche, and his sub-conscious mind would think of nothing else but Shiva not only as some revered God but also as the one who imparts divine wisdom and eclectic knowledge of the fundamental Truth of creation.]

By doing 'Abhishek' of Shiva Lingam (i.e. by anointing the Shiva Lingam with milk or water as a token of honouring and paying obeisance to Lord Shiva through his symbol), all the sins and other forms of evil deeds done by the devotee are made null and void. That is, he does not have to suffer from their horrendous consequences.

By doing 'Abhishek' of the Guru (i.e. by anointing the teacher with milk or water as a token of honouring him and paying one's obeisance to him) and by sipping the water used to wash the feet of Maheshwar (Lord Shiva), one can wash off the sins of many generations.

To have love and devotion for them (i.e. by doing Abhishek of the Lord and washing his feet, by doing Abhishek of the Guru, and by worshipping them both) is tantamount to having love and devotion for Shiva. [In other words, the Guru here may be Lord Shiva himself or some other person or God, but the worshipper should think, while offering his obeisance to the Guru, that he is worshipping Shiva in the form of the Guru.]

The great satisfaction and contentedness derived by the worshipper from this form of worship is tantamount to Shiva himself deriving this satisfaction and contentedness. [This is an obvious inference from the fact that the Atma or soul or pure self of the worshipper is the actual entity which enjoys the mental satisfaction

and derives pleasures from doing something noble, holy and auspicious, and this Atma is a personification of Brahm who is none other but Shiva himself. Therefore, the one who is actually enjoying the rewards of good deeds is Shiva himself.]

To live in its proximity is the most auspicious and holy deed. [When one lives close by something noble, holy and auspicious, his whole being undergoes a radical transformation, because one becomes like the company one keeps. In other words, the worshipper becomes a changed man in due course of time. He becomes as holy, noble and auspicious as Shiva.]

Elimination or destruction of all delusions and ignorance is like Shiva annihilating or concluding this material, deluding and falsehood-ridden world. [The symbolism of Shiva as the concluder of the world is very cleverly brought out here.]

A person who has inculcated this divine and eclectic knowledge is always submerged in a perpetual state of bliss and ecstasy. [This is why Lord Shiva has been depicted as always being in a state of utmost bliss and ecstasy. Once all delusions and ignorance are removed, there will be no cause for any confusions and consternations to create any kind restlessness and unhappiness. Once the light of enlightenment shines through, the darkness of ignorance and delusions will automatically vanish.]

That is why one should take the refuge and shelter of Lord Shiva. That is also why one should take the refuge and shelter of a Guru (because it is the latter who would direct the seeker towards the Truth in the form of Shiva).

This is the best and the most holy thing, or the most auspicious and righteous path to be followed (3).”

(14) The Guru is regarded as a personification of the great knowledge of the scriptures (refer *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 10), as well as Lord Maha Vishnu (the Great God known as Vishnu) himself. It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the eternal ‘soul’ and not the physical gross body is venerable. The ‘soul’ present in the Guru’s physical body of the Guru is a personified form of the supreme Consciousness. A true Guru is therefore a person who has realised this fact, that he is not an ordinary person but a personified form of supreme cosmic Consciousness. That is to say, the true Guru is a ‘self-realised and enlightened soul’.

Again, the importance of a true Guru in a person’s life has also been described in Atharva Veda’s *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 11-12, and Canto 8, paragraph no. 17.

Now, let us read this Upanishad in detail:-

देशिकस्तमेव कथयति । सकलवेदशास्त्रसिद्धान्तरहस्यजन्माभ्यस्तात्यन्तोत्कृष्टसुकृतपरिपाकवशात्सद्भिः
सङ्गो जायते । तस्माद्विधिनिषेधविवेको भवति । ततः सदाचारप्रवृत्तिर्जायते । सदाचारादखिलदुरितक्षयो
भवति । तस्मादन्तःकरणमतिविमलं भवति । 10.

deśikastameva kathayati ।

sakalavedaśāstrasiddhāntarahasyajanmābhyastātyantōtkṛṣṭsukṛtaparipākavaś

ātsadbhiḥ saṅgō jāyate | tasmādvīdhiniṣedhavivekō bhavati | tataḥ
 sadācārapravṛttirjāyate | sadācārādakhiladuritakṣayō bhavati |
 tasmādantaḥkaraṇamativimalam bhavati | 10.

“Canto 5, paragraph no. 10 = The wise teacher replied, outlining this way—‘As an auspicious reward of numerous good deeds done by a creature (living being) over many births (or lives) in the past, he is fortunate enough to find company of wise, erudite and enlightened ones. These wise ones are like the ripe fruits of the teaching of the numerous scriptures; they are embodiments of the grand knowledge enshrined in the scriptures; they are filtered form of the eclectic tenets and principles of the scriptures¹.

Their association (contact, company and communion) kindles natural wisdom and erudition in a creature to judge for himself what is lawful, morally correct, ethical, right and auspicious, and what is not; what ought to be done and what ought to be avoided; what would be good for him and uplifting for his soul, and what would bog him down and lead to his downfall and degradation.

Armed with this wisdom, sagacity and erudition he would be naturally inclined towards auspiciousness and righteousness; he would be naturally swerving towards higher goals in life, and away from objectives that would be denigrating for him and his soul.

With this auspicious way of thinking and its corresponding behaviour, deeds, actions and activities, all evils and sins are slowly done away with. With this elimination of evil deeds and sinful activities, their attending evil consequences are also eliminated. This results in the Antahakaran, the inner self, to become cleansed, purified and holy (10).

[¹That is, just like the physical fruit of a tree presents the vital nutrients in a ready-made form to be just picked up and eaten, the wise teacher is similarly an embodiment of the knowledge contained in the scriptures because he has already studied them thoroughly, has churned them and extracted their essence to be presented to eager student in a refined and made-easy format through his preaching. It is just like the case of honey that is the essence produced by the honey-bee from the nectar it collects from a wide variety of flowers over a long period of time. Once the fortunate student reaches such a wise and enlightened Guru he would be straight-away accessing the nectar of the scriptures without having to undergo the arduous task of studying the voluminous texts which involves an obvious strenuous exercise of plodding through their endless volumes and then spending a life-time understanding them correctly. Besides this, there is always the risk of misinterpreting the tenets, the principles, the doctrines, the axioms and maxims proclaimed by the scriptures because they are so esoteric and secret that more often than not they seem contradictory and confusing, which would lead to perplexity and frustration on the part of the student. The teacher on the other hand has already done the spade work so to say, and virtually presents the ready-to-eat and pre-cooked meal for the benefit of the hungry and eager spiritual aspirant.]

ततः सद्गुरुकटाक्षमन्तःकरणमाकाङ्क्षति । तस्मात्सद्गुरुकटाक्षलेशविशेषेण सर्वसिद्धयः सिद्ध्यन्ति । सर्वबन्धाः प्रविनश्यन्ति । श्रेयोविघ्नाः सर्वे प्रलयं यान्ति । सर्वाणि श्रेयांसि स्वयमेवायान्ति । यथा जात्यन्धस्य रूपज्ञानं न विद्यते तथा गुरूपदेशेन विना कल्पकोटिभिस्तत्त्वज्ञानं न विद्यते । तस्मात्सद्गुरुकटाक्षलेशविशेषेणाचिरादेव तत्त्वज्ञानं भवति । 11.

tataḥ sadgurukaṭākṣamantaḥkaraṇamākāṅkṣatiḥ ।

tasmātsadgurukaṭākṣaleśaviśeṣeṇa sarvāṁsiddhayaḥ siddhanti ।

sarvabandhāḥ pravinaśyanti । śreyōvighnāḥ sarve pralayaṁ yānti । sarvāṇi

śreyāṁsi svayamevāyānti । yathā jātyandhasya rūpajñānaṁ na vidyate tathā

gurūpadeśena vinā kalpakōṭibhistattvajñānaṁ na vidyate ।

tasmātsadgurukaṭākṣaleśaviśeṣeṇācirādeva tattvajñānaṁ bhavati । 11.

Canto 5, paragraph no. 11 = The cleansed and purified inner self is now ripe to receive the blessings of the wise and learned Guru.

[To wit, once the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect which are the subtle bodies of the creature and collectively called the Antahakaran of a creature, are scrubbed clean of all worldly impurities and imperfections that had earlier tarnished them and had cast their dark shadow on them, the creature becomes ready to receive the light of true knowledge. This can be understood by a simple example. If one wishes to see the Sun being properly reflected in a mirror, the mirror has to be shining clean. Otherwise the brilliance of the Sun would be mired by the unclean and grimy surface of the mirror which would not reflect the glory of the Sun in its true intensity.]

When the Guru becomes pleased, the disciple is blessed by all mystical powers, and he is able to access all knowledge which then becomes easy for him.

With the blessings of the Guru and access to high knowledge, all the disciple's worldly fetters of ignorance and delusions are broken; he is set free automatically.

All auspicious virtues and noble qualities come naturally to him; nothing remains between him and the acquisition of these auspicious virtues and noble qualities.

Just like a man who is born blind can never even imagine what is meant by the shape, form or size of anything, a person who has not had the good fortune of being blessed by a Guru and taught by him can never hope to access any knowledge that is truthful and profound. Without the help of the Guru he is not able to learn the Tattvas (the essential principles of the scriptures) even in crore of Kalpas.

[The phrase 'crore of Kalpas' is to indicate a very long period of time. This is because without the help of a practical guide, the complicated and most intricate doctrines of the scriptures would not be properly and correctly understood by him just as in the case of modern learning in schools, colleges and universities when a student needs proper grooming under the care of an expert teacher in his field of learning to actually become an expert on the subject himself.]

This is why as soon as the Guru becomes pleased and blesses the disciple, all sorts of esoteric knowledge becomes known to him. [This statement is just a symbolic way of saying that the blessing and benevolent grace of the Guru are necessary for acquiring good education. When the teacher is pleased he would take great personal interest and care in the education of the ward, and would not withhold any information from him.] (11).

यदा सद्गुरुकटाक्षो भवति तदा भगवत्कथाश्रवणध्यानादौ श्रद्धा जायते ।
तस्माद्बद्धदयस्थितानादिदुर्वासनाग्रन्थिविनाशो भवति । ततो हृदयस्थिताः कामाः सर्वे विनश्यन्ति ।
तस्माद्बद्धदय पुण्डरीककर्णिकायां परमात्माविर्भावो भवति । ततो दृढतरा वैष्णवी भक्तिर्जायते । ततो
वैराग्यमुदेति । वैराग्याद्बुद्धिविज्ञानाविर्भावो भवति । अभ्यासात्तज्ज्ञानं क्रमेण परिपक्वविज्ञानाज्जीवन्मुक्तो
भवति । 12.

yadā sadgurukaṭākṣō bhavati tadā bhagavat kathāśravaṇadhyānādau śraddhā
jāyate । tasmādbhṛdayasthitānādidurvāsanāgranthivināṣō bhavati । tatō
hṛdayasthitāḥ kāmāḥ sarve vinaśyanti । tasmāddhṛdaya puṇḍarīkakarnīkāyām
paramātmāvirbhāvō bhavati । tatō dṛḍhatarā vaiṣṇavī bhaktirjāyate । tatō
vairāgyamudeti । vairāgyādbuddhivijñānāvirbhāvō bhavati ।
abhyāsāttajjñānaṁ krameṇa paripakvavijñānāj्jīvanmuktō bhavati । 12.

Canto 5, paragraph no. 12 = When a truly spiritual, devoted, self-realised and wise Guru showers his divine grace upon the spiritual aspirant it is then that the latter develops an interest in listening to the preaching and being taught about God besides paying attention to such spiritual practices as doing Dhyan (contemplation and meditation) etc.

[When the learned teacher is interested in what he is teaching as well as when he pays a personal interest in the pupil whom he treats more as his ward towards whom he has moral responsibility rather than just fulfilling some formal obligation, he puts in his best of effort in what he teaches. The teaching becomes more of a one-to-one conversation and discussion, for the student does not feel shy in asking questions to remove his doubts and the teacher too takes full interest in quenching the student's thirst for knowledge and information. So, when the preaching or teaching becomes a personal interaction, it becomes meaningful and effective. The student and the teacher both feel fulfilled—the former by accepting the knowledge in its entirety, and the latter by giving all that he has.]

With this spiritual pursuit done diligently, all the different Granthis (knots) representing numerous evil Vasanas and Vrittis (passions, desires, inclinations, habits and tendencies) that are present in the heart of the aspirant from time immemorial are untied and done away with. As a consequence, all the Kaamanaas (numerous desires, wishes, hopes, yearnings, expectations etc.) that are present in the heart and the mind (i.e. in the inner self of the spiritual aspirant) are also eliminated (just like a student

clarifying his doubts on a topic when his learned teacher explains it to him threadbare).

When this happens, the Parmatma makes his glorious appearance in the thallus at the end of the stalk of the symbolic Lotus that is present in the subtle heart.

[To wit, when the spiritual aspirant starts practicing meditation and contemplation, when his inner self called the Antahakaran has withdrawn from the external world and instead is focused on higher objectives of life marked by knowledge and enlightenment, when he concentrates his attention inwards and experiences the presence of the self-illuminated and pure consciousness inside his own subtle heart, he is able to have a symbolic vision of the supreme Atma there. This is because his individual Atma is a reflection of the cosmic Atma, as there is no notion of duality in Atma because it is a synonym for the eternal cosmic 'Consciousness' that is non-dual, immutable and universal. It is to be noted here that the subtle aspect of the heart is deemed to be like a lotus flower.]

This fructifies into the development of strong and steady Bhakti (devotion, dedication) for Lord Vishnu.

This leads to the development of Vairagya (complete renunciation, detachment and dispassion) towards the sense objects of the material world.

Vairagya fosters the development of Vigyan (the ability to analyse available information intelligently to deduce the truth behind the external façade which is more often misleading and deceptive, and the ability to find out the reality of anything or any given situation).

The Gyan (knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment) that comes with Vigyan and Vairagya (obtained as a grace of the Guru as well as of Lord Vishnu) becomes ripe, fruitful, strong, steady and effective by constant, persistent and consistent practice.

When Gyan reaches its full maturity, the spiritual aspirant obtains Jivan Mukti.

[It basically refers to that form of Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance when the aspirant is still alive in this world, has a gross body, does all his required deeds and duties, and generally lives a normal life, but internally he remains completely detached from the both and its sense organs as well as the material world and its sense objects. He remains in a perpetual state of meditation and has reached higher echelons of spiritual realisation when his consciousness stays in the transcendental state called Turiya.] (12).

गुरुः क इति । गुरुः साक्षादादिना रायणः पुरुषः । स आदिनारायणोऽहमेव । तस्मान्नामेकं शरणं ब्रज । मद्भक्तिनिष्ठो भव । मदीयोपासनां कुरु । भामेव प्राप्स्यसि । मद्भक्तिरिक्तं सर्वं बाधितम् । मद्भक्तिरिक्तमबाधितं न किञ्चिदस्ति । निरतिशयानन्दाद्वितीयोऽहमेव । सर्वपरिपूर्णोऽहमेव । सर्वाश्रयोऽहमेव । वाचामगोचरनिराकारपरब्रह्मस्वरूपोऽहमेव । मद्भक्तिरिक्तमणुमात्रं न विद्यते । 17

guruḥ ka iti | guruḥ sāksādādinā rāyaṇaḥ puruṣaḥ | sa ādinārāyaṇō'hameva |
 tasmānmāmekam śaraṇam vraja | madbhaktiniṣṭō bhava | madīyōpāsanām
 kuru | bhāmeva prāpsyasi | mabdyatiriktaṁ sarvaṁ bādhitam |
 mabdyatiriktamabādhitam na kimcidasti | niratiśayānandādvitīyō'hameva |
 sarvaparipūrṇō'hameva | sarvāśrayō'hameva |
 vācāmagōcaranirākāraparabrahmasvarūpō'hameva |
 mabdyatiriktamaṇumātraṁ na vidyate | 17.

Canto 8, paragraph no. 17 = Brahma (the creator) asked—‘Who is a Guru?’

Maha Vishnu (the Great Lord Vishnu) replied—‘The Guru is a personified form of Lord Adi-Narayan, the Lord who existed even before this creation came into being. That Adi-Narayan is none else but ‘me’.

Hence, you should take refuge in my holy feet only (instead of exploring so many other avenues for finding your spiritual destination). Be devoted to ‘me’, and be steady and firm in it. Worship me and meditate upon ‘me’. In this way, you would attain ‘me’ (i.e. the Supreme Being; you would attain the holy stature of being truly Brahm-realised or reaching Brahm-hood).

Indeed, anything other than ‘me²’ is to be abandoned; it is a hindrance and an impediment in one’s spiritual success, and attainment of glory and divinity. There is nothing except ‘me’ that is truthful and having any essence. [This is because anything except ‘me’ or ‘I’ is un-truth and therefore worth not paying any attention to by a wise man.]

It is ‘me’ who is a personification of eternal and extreme Anand (spiritual bliss, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) that is unique and unmatched in this world.

It is ‘me’ who is complete in all respects.

It is ‘me’ who is the basis of everything in this creation; ‘I’ am the foundation that supports everything in this creation.

It is ‘me’ who am the ‘Nirakar Param Brahm’ (the formless and attribute-less supreme transcendental Brahm) that is beyond the reach and purview of the faculty of speech. [That is, words cannot describe ‘me’.]

Not even an atom exists that is separate, different or distinct from ‘me’. Or in other words, not a single atom or unit of creation can be said to have an existence that is not one of my countless forms.’ (17).

[The main idea in this verse is that the supreme Lord is the best Guru of a person in the world. But since it is practically difficult for a common man to communicate with the supreme Lord, it is advisable to seek the Lord’s representative in the form of another Guru, such as an illustrious person who is self-realised, wise, enlightened, learned and selfless, a person who has overcome all worldly taints and temptations, who practices exemplary self-restraint over his senses and urges, who is calm and composed even under the greatest of provocations and adversities, who is free from pretensions and deceit, and who can actually show the light of Truth to his disciple instead of leading him astray by boastful talks.]

(15) The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4 describes the qualities of a Guru, and Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13 stress that he must be practicing himself what he teaches his disciple, and that such a Guru is as revered as Lord Shiva, the patron God of ascetics. The importance of the Guru is also mentioned in its Canto 3, verse nos. 17. Now let us see these verses in detail:-

जरामृत्युगदघ्नो यः खेचरीं वेत्ति भूतले । ग्रन्थतश्चार्थतश्चैव तदभ्यासप्रयोगतः ॥३॥
तं मुने सर्वभावेन गुरुं मत्वा समाश्रयेत् । दुर्लभा खेचरी विद्या तदभ्यासोऽपि दुर्लभः ॥४॥

jarāmṛtyugadaghno yaḥ khecarīm vetti bhūtale । granthataścārthataścaiva
tadabhyāsaprayōgataḥ ॥3॥

taṁ mune sarvabhāvena gurum matvā samāśrayet । durlabhā khecarī vidyā
tadabhyāsō'pi durlabhaḥ ॥4॥

“Canto 2, Verse no. 3-4 = One should acquire a thorough knowledge of this Khechari Vidya by seeking it from some wise and expert teacher by taking shelter with him and becoming his devoted disciple.

[In other words, an aspirant who wishes to overcome the various problems of the body should practice Yoga, and for this he must first seek out a competent teacher who himself is an expert in this field and then request the latter to accept him as his student. He should take refuge with such a wise teacher of Yoga, and put himself in his care and guidance.]

The teacher ought to be carefully selected as he must be well accomplished and well known in this world as an expert in this specialised field of knowledge called Khechari. He should have thoroughly studied this Vidya from scriptures dealing with it, should be an acknowledged expert in this field who has an in-depth knowledge of all its finer intricacies and different aspects, besides actually practicing this form of Yoga himself.

[Because it is only then that he would be able to give correct and precise guidance to the aspirant and alert him on its various pitfalls and perils besides advising on how to best avoid them or overcome them.]

This Khechari Vidya has the mystical potentials of eliminating the miseries and torments associated with old age, death and various diseases. Its knowledge and practice are both very difficult (3-4).

न शास्त्रेण विना सिद्धिर्दृष्टा चैव जगत्त्रये । तस्मान्मेलनदातारं शास्त्रदातारमच्युतम् ॥२॥
तदभ्यासप्रदातारं शिवं मत्वा समाश्रयेत् । लब्ध्वा शास्त्रमिदं मह्यमन्येषां प्रकाशयेत् ॥३॥

na śāstrēṇa vinā siddhidṛiṣṭā caiva jagattrayē /

tasmānmēlanadātāraṃ śāstrdātāramachutam //12//

tadabhyāsapradātāraṃ śivaṃ matvā samāśrayēt /
labdhvā śāstramidam mahyāmanyēṣhāṃ prakāśayēt //13//

“Canto 2, Verse no. 12-13 = Success and accomplishment in any field, let alone spiritual practice, is not possible in the whole world having three dimensions (i.e. in the past, the present and the future time; in the terrestrial, the heavenly and the nether worlds) without a thorough study and implementation of the various principles and doctrines enunciated by the scriptures.

[That is, one should always consult standard texts if one expects to inculcate truthful knowledge in any field, and metaphysics is no exception. If the source material of any knowledge is corrupted, it is obvious that the knowledge it imparts would also be corrupted and prove detrimental for the good of the seeker of this knowledge. So, great importance should be placed on accessing truthful and authentic scriptures from reliable sources.]

That is why the Guru who teaches the scriptures and explains them, who himself practices the great tenets of these scriptures as well as the Yoga of Melan (i.e. who puts the knowledge of the scriptures into practice himself and practices meditation that helps to bring about a union between the individual and his true self as the pure conscious Atma), is deemed to be a revered image of the exalted God himself¹.

[¹This is basically meant to emphasise the point that since it is the teacher who makes a man worth his salt as a human being, what he is worth for, since it is the teacher who him the light and spiritual path by unfolding the great secrets enshrined in the scriptures—or for that matter any field of knowledge—and explains them threadbare to the disciple, removing all his doubts and misgivings, and generally bringing the esoteric texts and their mysteries and hidden meaning within his grasp, for otherwise the same knowledge might have been worthless for the student like a set of meaningless words had they not been explained to him by the teacher, it follows therefore that the teacher deserves all the respects and regards that a disciple can muster for someone who has shown him the true path of knowledge and made him educated and enlightened by removing the veil of ignorance that had shrouded him earlier like a foreboding dark shadow.

The teacher is like someone who comes to the rescue of a person trapped in a bog and is being rapidly sucked in. The material world and its delusions are like entrapments that not only ensnare the creature but rob him of all his peace and happiness for all times to come. He is so pre-occupied with the world and its never-ending work that he does not realise that he is trapped at all. It is only when he reads the scriptures or comes in contact with liberated souls who are fortunate enough to have tested spiritual freedom that he realises his predicament and precarious state of existence. A wise creature would then decide that it is never too late to make a beginning, for without making the first move, without taking the first step, no one can reach the destination however far it is. So, he takes the shelter of a Guru because the person is totally ignorant of the path ahead and the proper way to walk on it with full preparation. He needs expert advice and guidance.

Citing the example of the bog here as mentioned above, even his own companions are of no help to him because they themselves are trapped and need help. Therefore, when he comes in contact with a wise and self-realised Guru, it's like a boon from the heaven for him. The Guru extends a helping hand and extricates him from the bog represented by his ignorance, delusions and entrapments of the world. The Guru puts him on solid ground and shows him the path that would lead him to his destination. How can anyone with scruples ever be ungrateful to such a Guru who has given his doomed destiny new lease of life and salvaged his soul from the pit of darkness and endless miseries? It's a basic obligation on the part of the disciple, and a sign of decent and civilised behaviour that he pays due respect and recognition to the Guru.]

Such a wise teacher who is a regular practitioner of what he teaches is to be regarded as a living image of Shiva, a personification of Shiva, and offered due reverence and worship. An aspirant should seek his shelter and patronage in his own spiritual pursuit.

[This is because such a man is the right guide who would show the correct path to the aspirant. He has had a first hand experience of the pitfall, perils and obstacles of Yoga and the precautions needed to avoid them or overcome them. This expert guidance makes the path all the more easier for the aspirant.]

It is expected that once one has acquired this eclectic mystical knowledge, he would not disclose it to unworthy people (because this knowledge of the Khechari Mudra of Yoga is like live fire, and put into wrong hands it would be catastrophic and devastating). (12-13).

गुरुवाक्यसमाभिन्ने ब्रह्मज्ञानं स्फुटीभवेत् । कर्णधारं गुरुं प्राप्य कृत्वा सूक्ष्मं तरन्ति च ॥१७॥

guruvākyasamābhinnē brahmajñānaṃ sphuṭībhavēt /
karṇadhāraṃ guruṃ prāpya kṛtvā shūkṣhamaṃ taranti c //17//

“Canto 3, verse no. 17 = The Guru is like a ‘Karnadhaar¹’, i.e. a helmsman or a boatman, who can take a man across this world which is like a deep sea that is choppy and awe inspiring [17].

[¹The word Karnadhaar literally means a helmsman, but here the meaning ‘a boatman’ is more apt because a Guru is supposed to take his ward, the spiritual aspirant or his disciple, across a ‘sea’ of ignorance and delusions that is represented by this world. Only an expert boatman can do this.]

-----*****-----

A True Guru

The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher,
Preceptor, Guide and Advisor

Chapter 2

A True Guru as described in Anand Ramayan

Anand Ramayan is an exotic Sanskrit Text that describes the story of the Ramayana, the magnificent story of the life and time of Lord Ram that has been described in this book in a very fascinating and charming way, thereby giving it its name ‘Anand Ramayan’—the Ramayan that exults and cheers the mind and the heart. It is said that it was a classic written by the legendary sage Valmiki whose other more popular version of this story is known as the classical version of the Ramayan, i.e. the ‘Ramayan of Valmiki’. By the way, Valmiki had also penned another version of the epic story of the Ramayan, and it is known as the ‘Adbhut Ramayan’; an English rendering of this later book has been published by this author (Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) separately.

The grand and eclectic virtues and qualities of a noble and true Guru are enumerated in Anand Ramayan, Manohar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 3, verse nos. 6-17. It is in the form of a discourse given by Sri Ramdas, a sage, in response to a query by Sri Vishnudas, his disciple. Vishnudas had asked Ramdas about the characteristics of a true and competent Guru, and Ramdas’ reply lists the glorious virtues by which a person can identify a true Guru.

Now, let us read the relevant verses as follows:-

आनन्दरामायण

ānandarāmāyaṇa, manōhara kāṇḍa, canto 3, verse nos. 6-17

आदौ गुरुं परीक्ष्यात्र तच्चिद्वैश्व द्विजोत्तम । उपदेशस्ततस्तस्माद्ग्राह्यस्तीर्थे विधानतः ॥६॥

ādau gurum parīkṣyātra taccihainuśca dvijōttama ।
upadeśastatastasmādgrāhyastīrthe vidhānataḥ ॥6॥

Verse no. 6 – [Sri Ramdas replied to Sri Vishnudas—] ‘People (or seekers of truthful knowledge and spiritual aspirants) ought to first test a Guru (from whom they seek knowledge and guidance), and see if the latter has the required virtues and qualities that are absolutely necessary to qualify him to become a Guru, before accepting him as such.

After that (i.e. after a true Guru has been found by due diligence), the person should request the Guru to initiate him in a formal way. It would of course be better if this is done at some sanctified place suitable for the purpose, such as a site of pilgrimage. [This can include a shrine, the bank of a river or lake, the shade of a tree, or any other clean and sanctified place suitable for the exercise.]

गुरोश्चैवात्र चिह्नानि तवादौ प्रवदाम्यम् । क्रोधी कुष्ठी महारोगी मलिनो निर्घृणो जडः ॥७॥

gurōścaivātra cihnāni tavādau pravadāmyam । krōdhī kuṣṭhī mahārōgī malinō
nirghṛṇṇō jaḍaḥ ॥7॥

Verse no. 7 – Now, let me (Sri Ramdas) first tell you (Sri Vishnudas) the characteristics of a good and true Guru (for this guideline would help you to determine whom to select as your Guru).

For this purpose I shall first list those negative qualities which, if present in a person, would immediately disqualify him from becoming a Guru. [What are these negative qualities then? They are being enumerated herein below—]

(i) A person who is angry and short-tempered (given to cursing and swearing, and becoming easily annoyed and wrathful); (ii) a person who is suffering from leprosy or some other serious contagious disease; (iii) a person who is susceptible to superstition and is prone to hallucinatory thoughts that he is possessed by spirits and super-natural powers; (iv) a person who remains dirty and unclean; (v) a person who lacks mercy and compassion, being of a cruel and harsh disposition; (vi) a person who is dull and dim-witted, who is of a gross, lethargic and indolent nature; ----

अपण्डितो निन्दकश्च लोलुपो विषयातुरः । दांभिको गर्वसंयुक्तः पापात्मा दुष्टवंशजः ॥८॥

apaṇḍitō nindakaśca lōlupō viṣayāturaḥ । dāmbhikō garvasamyuktaḥ
pāpātmā duṣṭavaṃśajaḥ ॥8॥

Verse no. 8 – --- (vii) A person who is stupid and ignorant, who can't discriminate between what is good and what is bad; (viii) a person who is inclined to find fault with others and criticise one and all; (ix) a person who is greedy and rapacious; (x) a person who is lustful and passionate about sensual objects and their pleasures; (xi) a person who is pretentious, deceitful, full of conceit and boast; (xii) a person who is

proud, haughty and egoist; (xiii) a person who is ignoble, sinful and evil, one who has done shameful and dishonourable deeds; (xiv) a person who is born in a fallen and tainted family or clan; ---

घाती परद्रोहकर्ता परद्रव्यापहारकः । अजितात्मा वेदबाह्यः परदाररतः सदा ॥९॥

ghātī paradrōhakarttā paradravvyāpahārakaḥ । ajitātmā vedabāhyaḥ
paradārarataḥ sadā ॥9॥

Verse no. 9 – --- (xv) A person who betrays and back-stabs, one who is untrustworthy, is not loyal and reliable; (xvi) a person who is inclined to be hateful and vengeful, harbouring animosity and ill-will for others; (xvii) a person who covets and steals the wealth of others; (xviii) a person who has not become self-realised and has understood the true nature of his own ‘self’ as the Atma (which is pure consciousness and a person’s true self as opposed to his gross physical body); (xix) a person who has discarded the Vedas (i.e. who is a non-believer, an atheist); (xx) a person who covets and loves the woman of another person; ---

परदोषारोपकश्च कृपणश्चाजितेन्द्रियः । वेददेवद्विजातीनां यतितीर्थगवामपि ॥१०॥
तुलसीवह्निसूर्याणां द्वेष्टा योग्यो गुरुर्न हि । वेत्ता सकलधर्माणां शास्त्रेषु परिनिष्ठितः ॥११॥

paradōṣārōpakaśca kṛpaṇaścājitendriyaḥ । vedadevadvijātīnām
yatitīrthagavāmapi ॥10॥

tulasīrvahnīsūryāṇām dveṣṭā yōgyō gururna hi । vettā sakaladharmāṇām
śāstreṣu pariniṣṭhitaḥ ॥11॥

Verse nos. 10-11 – --- (xxi) A person who is inclined to accuse others at the slightest pretext; (xxii) a person who is a miser and self-centred; and (xxiii) a person who harbours animosity and hatred for, and treats with disgust the Vedas, the Gods, the Brahmins, the Saints and Holy Men, the different Holy Places and Pilgrimage sites, the Cows, the holy Tulsi (Basil) plant, the sacred Fire, and the Sun.

One should never make any such person a Guru even by a mistake.

[Now, we shall list the grand qualities that must be looked for in a person, for these are the eclectic virtues that would make their possessor a person qualified to become a true Guru. These noble qualities are as follows—]

A person truly qualified to be a Guru is: (i) a person who is well-versed in the tenets of all the religions as well as the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity,

propriety, nobility and ethics); (ii) a person who believes in the scriptures and their truth; ---

सत्यवाङ् मितभुगज्ञानी कलावान्द्विजवंशजः । सत्कर्मनिष्ठो धर्माणामुपदेष्टा सुबुद्धिदः ॥१२॥

satyavān mitabhugajñānī kalāvāndvijavaṁśajaḥ । satkarmaniṣṭhō
dharmāṇāmupadeṣṭā subuddhidaḥ ॥12॥

Verse no. 12 – --- (iii) A person who speaks the truth as a matter of habit; (iv) a person who eats with restraint and exercises control over his taste buds; (v) a person who is a Gyani (wise, enlightened, self-realised and knowledgeable), (vi) a person who is born in a family of learned and illustrious Brahmins (i.e. a person who has a noble birth, whose ancestors were learned and wise themselves, as this would ensure that he was brought up in a good environment that was conducive for him to inculcate excellent virtues); (vii) a person who keeps himself engaged in meritorious deeds; (viii) a person who preaches and gives discourses on religion and the principles of Dharma; (ix) a person who gives sane and good advice, who himself has good thoughts and is of a noble mind; ---

योगाभ्यासकलाभिज्ञो योगवान्समदर्शनः कृतकर्मा तीर्थक्षेवी धर्माधर्मविवेचकः ॥१३॥

yōgābhyāsakalābhijñō yōgavānsamadarśanaḥ kṛtakarmā tīrthakṣevī
dharmādharmavivecaḥ ॥13॥

Verse no. 13 – --- (x) A person who is well acquainted with the different aspects of Yoga (meditation); (xi) a person who himself is an ascetic, who practices the virtues of asceticism (such as self-restraint, equanimity, evenness of mind, austerity, penance, meditation, contemplation, truthfulness, renunciation, dispassion, detachment, pursuing of knowledge etc.); (xii) a person who treats all alike without any discrimination (as to caste, creed, colour, religion, birth, vocation etc. because he sees the same Atma or soul in all living beings irrespective of who they are); (xiii) a person who not only preaches but practices himself what he preaches to others (i.e. a person who walks the talk; a person whose life is a living example of all that he teaches and stands for); (xiv) a person who respects and loves to go on pilgrimage to different holy places and derives immense satisfaction in doing so; (xv) a person who is wise enough and an expert in being able to distinguish between what is good and meritorious and what is otherwise, a person who is able to separate the grain from the chaff so to say; ---

ब्रह्मचारी गृहस्थो वा वानप्रस्थाश्रमी यतिः । स्वाश्रमाचारसन्निष्ठो बुद्धिमान्विजितेन्द्रियः ॥१४॥

brahmacārī gr̥hasthō vā vānaprasthāśramī yatiḥ | svāśramācārasanniṣṭhō
buddhimānvijitendriyaḥ ||14||

Verse no. 14 – --- (xvi), A person who lives like a true Brahmachari (i.e. who practices self-control over his sense organs and passions, and the natural urge for self-gratification); (xvii) a person who lives a life of a good and an exemplary householder (i.e. who lives by the law and is honourable, noble, upright, honest, truthful, rightful, and sincere and diligent towards his duties and responsibilities); (xviii) a person who follows the rules laid out for a Vanprastha (i.e. who obeys the rules and regulations of an ascetic way of life designated for a person during the third phase of life when he has fulfilled his worldly responsibilities as a householder and presently decides to renounce the world and lead the rest of his life as an ascetic, spending his time in pursuing spiritual matters); (xix) a person who is an Yogi (i.e. an ascetic; a person who has completely renounced all his ties with the material world and leads the life of an ascetic)—to wit, a person who faithfully follows the tenets and principles of an auspicious and righteous way of life in whatever phase of life he is living at a given point of time; ---

--- (xx) A person who is intelligent and wise; (xxi) a person who is able to exercise control over his sense organs; ---

क्षमी कृपालुर्मृदुवाक् सुमुखः सौम्यदर्शनः । अनिद्रश्च समुद्योगी शांतात्मा परतोषकृत् ॥१५॥

kṣamī kṛpālurmr̥duvāk sumukhaḥ saumyadarśanaḥ | anidraśca samudyōgī
śāntātmā paratōṣakṛt ||15||

Verse no. 15 – --- (xxii) A person who is forgiving, tolerant and compassionate; (xxiii) a person who is merciful, gracious and kind; (xxiv) a person who is polite, amiable and courteous in his speech (and manners); (xxv) a person who has a pleasing and welcoming countenance, whose face shows grace and civility; (xxvi) a person who is calm, unruffled and graceful, one who practices equanimity, forbearance and tolerance; (xxvii) a person who sleeps little (i.e. one who is not lazy, sluggish and indolent); (xxviii) a person who keeps himself busy in constructive activity (of a noble and meritorious kind); (xxix) a person who is calm and steady from the within, who remains peaceful and contented internally; (xxx) a person who is ever eager to make others happy (even if may mean some suffering or exertion or sacrifice on his own part); ---

औदार्यवान् ज्ञाननिष्ठः शुचिस्त्यक्तपरिग्रहः । इत्यादिगुणयुक्तो यः स गुरुः परमोत्तमः ॥१६॥

audāryavān jñānaniṣṭhaḥ śucistyaktaparigrahaḥ | ityādiguṇayuktō yaḥ sa
guruḥ paramōttamaḥ ||16||

Verse no. 16 – --- (xxxix) A person who is generous, liberal, benevolent and magnanimous; (xxxixii) a person who is firmly established in truthful knowledge and wisdom (Gyan); (xxxixiii) a person who is un-corrupt and untainted, who is pure and clean within and without; (xxxixiv) a person who feels contented with whatever he gets by way of gifts and alms, without yearning for more and coveting nothing—to wit, a person who has these wonderful eclectic virtues in him is indeed qualified to be a person's excellent Guru.

तस्य सेवां चिरं कृत्वा सेवया तं प्रसाद्य च । तस्मादुपासना ग्राह्या सुतीर्थे विधिपूर्विका ॥१७॥

tasya sevām ciraṁ kṛtvā sevayā taṁ prasādyā ca । tasmādupāsanā grāhyā
sutīrthe vidhipūrvikā ॥17॥

Verse no. 17 – A wise spiritual aspirant and a seeker of knowledge should first search out and then diligently serve such a Guru, whose excellent qualities have been outlined herein above, for a period of time in order to please him. Once the Guru is pleased, the seeker should request him (the Guru) to grant him his discipleship and initiate him. This request and initiation process should be ideally done at a holy and sanctified place such as a pilgrimage site.”

-----*****-----

A True Guru

The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher,
Preceptor, Guide and Advisor

Chapter 3

Verses from Ram Charit Manas in honour of a True Guru

In Goswami Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas there are verses that honour a Guru and offer obeisance to him. These verses are in Baal Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Sortha line nos. 9-10 as well as Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede this Doha, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Let us now proceed with their reading as follows:-

बंदउँ गुरु पद कंज कृपा सिंधु नररूप हरि । ९ ।
महामोह तम पुंज जासु बचन रबि कर निकर ॥ १० ॥

banda'um' guru pada kaṅja kṛpā sindhu naraṛūpa hari. 9.
mahāmōha tama puṅja jāsu bacana rabi kara nikara. 10.

I pay my obeisance at the holy lotus-like feet of a Guru who is like an ocean of mercy and grace, who is like a personified human form of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Lord), and whose words of wisdom are equivalent to the brilliant rays of the sun so far as removing the darkness of ignorance is concerned. (Stanza no. 5 of the first Sortha of Baal Kand)

चौ०. बंदउँ गुरु पद पदुम परागा । सुरुचि सुबास सरस अनुरागा ॥ १ ॥
अमिअ मूरिमय चूरन चारू । समन सकल भव रुज परिवारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

banda'um' guru pada paduma parāgā. suruci subāsa sarasa anurāgā. 1.
ami'a mūrimaya cūrana cārū. samana sakala bhava ruja parivārū. 2.

I pay my obeisance to the holy feet of an illustrious Guru and offer my thanks to him for granting me the privilege of getting access to the nectar of spiritual bliss and happiness that drips from his lotus-like feet. This nectar is extremely delicious, fragrant and succulent (i.e. it provides succour to me and helps me to feel contented just like a bee feels when it gets access to the nectar of the lotus flower).

[To wit, when one serves the Guru and worships his holy feet with the same faith and reverence as one would have for the Lord God, for it has already been said in the previous verse that a Guru is a living form of the Lord, then surely the Guru would be obliged to grant his blessings and divine grace upon the disciple even as the Lord does for his devotee. The dust of the feet of an enlightened and wise Guru is compared here to the pollen that falls from the lotus flower. It provides happiness and bliss to the worshipper in the same way as the nectar does to the bee.] (1)

The auspicious dust of the holy feet of the Guru is like a medicinal powder made from the herb known as Sanjivani¹ that helps to eliminate all sorts of torments and miseries associated with life in this vast ocean-like mundane world of grossness and pain, as it helps alleviate a disciple's spiritual and temporal problems, and dispel all his doubts and confusions.

[¹The Sanjivani herb is a rare medicinal plant that can revive even a dying man. It rejuvenates the spirit and injects a fresh lease of life.

Here it means that when a person finds himself in a quandary in this world, when he is utterly perplexed and confused due to circumstances, when he sees darkness all around him, when he sees no friend in this world who would help him, show him a way, and stand by him, when he thinks he is virtually doomed and marooned in a hostile and selfish world —at that time he can turn to his Guru for support, guidance, advice, solace and succour. A Guru would give him a selfless and wise advice; he would apply a soothing balm over his troubled mind and wounded heart.

From the spiritual and metaphysical perspective, there are no greater torments and fears as the ones that this mortal world of transmigration presents. It's a vicious trap from which one finds it almost impossible to escape. In this situation, the Guru helps one to see the path that would lead to his freedom and emancipation. It is like a good and compassionate doctor who would not only prescribe the correct medicine to his patient but also ensures that the patient duly takes his doses and is on the path of recovery. If the need so arises, the compassionate doctor would personally tend to the patient's wounds and nurse him back to complete recovery. The grateful patient can never sufficiently thank his doctor! A Guru's role in the spiritual field is almost like it; that is why the metaphor of the Sanjivani herb is cited in this verse. Whereas the doctor can heal only the physical body of the suffering man, the Guru can heal his spiritual and emotional wounds.

To wit, by worshipping the holy feet of the Guru the worshipper receives his blessings, and this in turn rejuvenates his inner-self by eliminating all sorts of consternations, fears, confusions, doubts and delusions that are tormenting him endlessly. These negative emotions are a part and parcel of life in this gross mundane world, and the remedy for this misery is found in the form of blessings that come to a person when the Guru is pleased. It is because the Guru is one's best friend and associate, and he is also qualified and skilled enough to show the person a way out of his problems in a very practical way.

A wise and true Guru is like a person's anchor in this tumultuous world where one finds it too difficult to hold ground and find one's mooring. The Guru is also like

a symbolic lighthouse that warns a ship of any danger that may lurk underground inasmuch as that he faithfully alerts his disciple of any pitfalls that he may encounter in his journey through life, whether in the spiritual field or the humdrum affairs of the world, showing him a way out of any predicament that he may find himself in. A Guru would illuminate the path for his disciple with the light of knowledge, and should the disciple need the Guru would be there to assist him to reach his destination.] (2)

सुकृति संभु तन बिमल बिभूती । मंजुल मंगल मोद प्रसूती ॥ ३ ॥

जन मन मंजु मुकुर मल हरनी । किँँ तिलक गुन गन बस करनी ॥ ४ ॥

sukṛti sambhu tana bimala bibhūti. maṅjula maṅgala mōda prasūti. 3.

jana mana maṅju mukura mala haranī. ki'ēṁ' tilaka guna gana basa karanī. 4.

The auspicious dust of the Guru's august feet is equivalent to the holy ash that is smeared on the divine body of Lord Shiva¹, and is therefore equally reverential. It is a producer and a bestower of all welfare and happiness upon the worshipper; it grants him joy and blessings.

[¹If a devotee uses the dust of the feet of his Guru to be smeared on his body then it would be equivalent to smearing the ash of the sacred fire sacrifice that Lord Shiva smears over his own body. To wit, the dust of the Guru's feet is as holy and auspicious as the ash of a fire sacrifice.] (3)

This dust removes the (spiritual) dirt clinging to the mirror represented by the devotee's heart and mind¹.

If it is used to mark the three lines of the Tilak on the forehead then it helps (the disciple) to overcome the effects of the three Gunas² and invites a host of good values and qualities³.

[¹To wit, just like the case when one can see an object clearly when the mirror is scrubbed clean, the worshipper is able to remove all delusions from his mind and free his heart of all worldly attachments by the grace of the Guru so much so that now he can experience the bliss of self-realisation that comes with experiencing the presence of the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Conscious Being, in his own bosom.

Once all veils of ignorance are removed, once the thick layers after layers of numerous faults and impurities and taints are scrubbed off, the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the inherent blissful and peaceful nature of the 'truthful self' known as the Atma within his own self. This is the aim of all spiritual practices—to realise the Truth and Reality by overcoming all delusions and ignorance.

This verse draws from the popular way of cleaning mirrors. A tarnished mirror, or any other smooth surface like it, is made to shine once again if sand or some ash is spread over its surface and then rubbed with a clean piece of cloth.

²The Tilak mark is an auspicious sign marked on the forehead, just above the root of the nose and between the eyebrows. It normally has three vertical lines in the shape of a tuning fork or a trident. These three lines represent the three Gunas—the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna. These three basic and inherent qualities are present in all living beings, and their mutual ratio and activeness would

determine an individual's character, nature, habit and temperament, his overall personality, and the way he deals with the world and circumstances of life. Among the three, the best is the Sata Guna, the worst is the Tama Guna, and in between lies the Raja Guna.

In a symbolic manner, the Tilak mark—or shall we say the 'trident'—helps one to remind him that he is supposed to remain vigilant and overcome his tormentors in the form of the different Gunas that constantly cause mental restlessness and emotional problems for a living being, pulling him this way and that, and leaving him exasperated and bewildered. A disciple is reminded that his Guru is always there to watch him like a commander of an army who may not be physically present at all times but his token presence is enough to keep huge battalions disciplined. The purpose is nevertheless served.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3 where king Dasrath has praised the holy dust of a Guru's feet when he went to meet his own Guru, sage Vashistha. Dasrath said: "He who puts the dust of his Guru's feet on his own head is able to conquer the whole earth in a symbolic manner".

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 352 that when Lord Ram and his three brothers returned home after their marriage, their father Dasrath and his queens had put the dust of sage Vishwamitra's feet on their heads as a mark of great respect to the latter. The sage had been instrumental in getting the four brothers married to the princesses of Janakpur.

³Just like the 'lightening rod' put atop a building attracts the lightening of the clouds, or the antenna of a radio receiver attracts relevant signals of the frequency to which the radio is tuned, the Tilak mark attracts good qualities while repelling bad ones.] (4)

श्रीगुर पद नख मनि गन जोती । सुमिरत दिव्य दृष्टि हियँ होती ॥ ५ ॥
दलन मोह तम सो सप्रकासू । बड़े भाग उर आवड़ जासू ॥ ६ ॥

śrīgura pada nakha mani gana jōtī. sumirata dibya drṣṭi hiyaṁ hōtī. 5.
dalana mōha tama sō saprakāsū. baṛē bhāga ur āva'i jāsū. 6.

The nails of the feet of the Guru have the sublime shine resembling that of priceless gems so much so that their light illuminates the subtle heart of the worshipper as soon as he remembers them.

[This is symbolism only. It simply means that when one worships the Guru's holy feet his mind and heart should be focused on its subtle and holy aspect, its sublime and spiritual value, and not on its grosser physical appearance such as the colour of the skin of the feet, whether they are wrinkled and chafed due to old age and hardships of life, if the nails are healthy or rough and brittle, etc. Just as a pearl or piece of diamond, for instance, has a subtle glow and smoothness that is inherent to them inspite of the fact that its origin is in an oyster and the ocean or in the dark bowls of the earth respectively, the nails of the feet of the Guru also enables the worshipper to illuminate his inner self with the light of 'consciousness' that comes from within.

The 'consciousness' lives in the subtle space of the heart of the spiritual aspirant in the form of an ethereal entity that is known as the Atma, the soul. This Atma is self-illuminated, and its realisation makes the inner-self of the worshipper glow with the light of self-realisation like the inherent shine of a priceless piece of gem. This is possible by the grace and blessing of a Guru.] (5)

This light of knowledge and self-realisation that springs forth spontaneously in the subtle heart of the spiritual aspirant is able to dispel and eliminate completely all traces of darkness of ignorance and delusions that had earlier shrouded his inner-self. He is very lucky and fortunate in whose heart this light shines (brilliantly).

[Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 159 where Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, says: "He who has devotion and affection for the lotus-like feet of his Guru is respected and lauded by the Vedas as well as the whole world which regards him as the most fortunate one."] (6)

उघरहिं बिमल बिलोचन ही के । मिटहिं दोष दुख भव रजनी के ॥ ७ ॥
सूझहिं राम चरित मनि मानिक । गुपुत प्रगट जहँ जो जेहि खानिक ॥ ८ ॥

ugharahim bimala bilōcana hī kē. miṭahim dōṣa dukha bhava rajanī kē. 7.
sūjhahim rāma carita mani mānika. guputa pragaṭa jaham̃ jō jēhi khānika. 8.

As soon as this light (of spiritual awakening, self-realisation, true knowledge) illuminates one's heart, the subtle eyes of wisdom and enlightenment open spontaneously. This in turn removes all the fears and horrors arising from the darkness of night symbolized by this mortal world of transmigration and its delusions that are like the terror of a huge roaring ocean that a man faces in the pitch darkness of the night.

[A man sees many imaginary ghosts and phantoms in the darkness of the night, but as soon as daylight dawns, they vanish, and all fears and terrors arising from these phantoms go away automatically. Similarly, as soon as wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment sprouts in the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant, all his fears having their genesis in the darkness of ignorance run away. By the grace of the Guru his disciple is able to see the reality of things because the light of knowledge provided by the Guru removes the dark veil that surrounds the truth.

The mortal gross world is likened to an ocean here, the mere sight of which instils fear in the heart. When a person faces the horrifying prospect of having to cross a huge obstacle in the form of the heaving and surging ocean with its huge dark waves looming menacingly on the horizon and the roar of the ocean as if it would devour anyone who dares to challenge its might, the sight of a sturdy ship is very heart-warming and reassuring. Likewise, when a person has to cross this world of transmigration which is no less awesome and fearsome than a mighty ocean, the support and help of an illustrious Guru is of no less importance than that of a great ship to cross the physical ocean!] (7)

The grand spiritual benefits of this self-illuminating light of wisdom and enlightenment that begins to shine in one's inner-being upon self-realisation attained

by the blessing of the Guru, accompanied by the ability to see things that have a subtle, sublime and ethereal existence (as opposed to those that have gross and mundane existence in this physical gross material world) due to the grace of the Guru, enables the seeker to see and understand the esoteric secrets of the divine story of Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Being), and be privileged enough to be able to peer behind the exterior to have a divine glimpse the glittering gems, large and small, of profound spiritual value that lie embedded in the holy story of Lord Ram that are normally hidden from view.

[To wit, by the grace of the Guru a disciple is able to understand the real meaning of the story that narrates the time and life of Lord Ram, and see the reality behind the apparent worldly deeds of the Supreme Being when he manifested himself in the form of a human prince known by the name of Lord Ram.

The idea here is that by the grace of the Guru a disciple is able to get at the bottom of the teaching of the scriptures that would otherwise baffle him. He is able to separate the grain from the chaff, and draw meaningful message from the scriptures. Obviously only an expert can tell him these things, and this expert is his learned and wise Guru who satisfies all queries and removes all doubts.] (8).

दो०. जथा सुअंजन अंजि दृग साधक सिद्ध सुजान ।
कौतुक देखत सैल बन भूतल भूरि निधान ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

jathā su'anjāna anjī dṛga sādḥaka sid'dha sujāna.
kautuka dēkhata saila bana bhūtala bhūri nidhāna. 1.

It is like the case of some magical eye ointment having some mystical or occult powers that, when applied over the eye, enables a person to see some secret and esoteric things that are normally not visible to the naked eye, such as being able to see wonderful treasure troves of wealth that is hidden from view on mountains and forests and in the deep bowls of the earth.

[To wit, with the grace of the Guru the disciple is able to learn many secrets of life and spiritualism that are not easily known and understood. Here the metaphor of the forests, the mountains and bowls of the earth is used because priceless herbs, gems and precious metals are found on mountains, forests and in mines dug deep into the earth, about which only experts can know. Without the help of an expert one may not be aware of them even if one perchance happens to see them right before his eyes; he won't be able to recognise them nor determine what their worth is.] (Doha no. 1)

चौ०. गुरु पद रज मृदु मंजुल अंजन । नयन अमिअ दृग दोष बिभंजन ॥ १ ॥
तेहिं करि बिमल बिबेक बिलोचन । बरनउँ राम चरित भव मोचन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

guru pada raja mṛdu maṅjula aṅjana. nayana ami'a dr̥ga dōṣa bibhaṅjana. 1.
tēhiṁ kari bimala bibēka bilōcana. barana'um̐ rāma carita bhava mōcana. 2.

The holy dust of the Guru's august feet is like this especially empowered magical ointment (as narrated in Doha no. 1 herein above) that is soothing and soft for the eyes, and it removes all diseases of the eyes and enables a person to see clearly.

[This line must be properly interpreted. The 'eye' referred to here in this verse is the subtle inner-eye of the mind and intellect, and not the physical eye of the gross body. It is not the physical organ of the gross body that is known as the eye with which one sees the grosser aspects of the equally gross world of material sense objects, and therefore the 'disease' mentioned in this verse also does not refer to some physical disease that afflicts the physical organ of sight known as the eye.

The 'disease' here is the spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance that prevents the creature to see the Truth and Reality. Worshipping the holy feet of the Guru and focusing the mind on the dust of his holy feet acts like a medicine for this subtle disease. It enables a person to develop wisdom and ability to see what is wrong, unethical and unrighteous, and segregate it from what is wise, righteous, ethical and correct. It opens the eyes of wisdom, erudition and discrimination that allow the man to see and examine the surrounding world intelligently and analytically. It is like removing cataract from one's eyes when suddenly he begins to see the whole world clearly, brightly. The auspicious reward of worshipping the holy feet of the Guru is that this empowers the spiritual aspirant to have the ability to have deep insight into the reality of the world and its existence with eyes of wisdom that can see behind the shroud of delusions that surround the entire world like a thick veil of smoke, preventing clarity of sight.] (1)

Using this dust like an eye-ointment, I (Tulsidas) clean my eyes of wisdom and erudition so that I may be able to narrate the wonderful, the sublime, the holy and the divine story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas. This divine story is able to free its listener from the snare of this mortal world of transmigration that is like a huge ocean known as 'Bhavasagar' (2). [Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 2]

-----*****-----

A True Guru

The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher,
Preceptor, Guide and Advisor

Chapter 4

Sage Dattatreya and his twenty-four Gurus

In ancient Indian scriptures we come across a fascinating story of Lord Dattatreya wherein we learn that he had as many as ‘twenty-four’ Gurus. This means that he determined that if he learned anything from anyone or anything, then for that piece of knowledge or wisdom that particular entity was his Guru.

Now, let us see who or what his twenty-four Gurus were. It makes a very fascinating reading, and an eye-opener as well, as it tells us to learn from everything and everyone with which or whom we come in contact in our day-to-day lives. The main objective of making a Guru is to acquire knowledge and wisdom, and so therefore all sources are to be tapped.

(1) Earth—the earth sustain all sorts of life and nourishes each creature, even those who virtually eat into her bosom by mercilessly and ruthlessly exploit her. The human race is the greatest exploiter of the earth by digging into her bowels and extracting whatever it can to satisfy its selfish vested interests without bothering for the future of earth much like a vulture digging its beak and extracting last bit of flesh from a cadaver. The earth is very magnanimous and forgiving. It goes on giving and giving without expecting any thing in return, and does not complain like a loving mother who would rather prefer to die than deny her child whatever she can afford. The greatness is that still she does not complain!

(2) Water—it is refreshing and cool and nourishing. No life is possible without water, and it is regarded as the only universal elixir of life. This taught him to sustain all and be soothing, comforting and refreshing for all the creatures. Like the inherent quality of water to act as the universal soother and lubricant of this creation, to cool down the heat and provide solace and succour to tormented creature, a true saint should also act as the one whose company gives happiness and joys to all, whose company provides the much-needed spiritual solace and succour to all.

(3) Air—the wind moves everywhere, visits all kinds of places but never gets attached to any place or thing. The air is free from all attachments, relations and bonding though it touches all and pervades everywhere. It purifies everything and gives life to all in the form of ‘Pran’ or breath without any discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, race, creed etc. It gives life to a friend as much as it gives life to one’s enemy. The air taught him to be totally detached in his dealings with the world inspite of

living in it and helping it by infusing fresh breath of knowledge and hope to the best of his ability.

(4) Fire—it gives light, heat and energy. It is upwardly mobile—as is evident from the direction the flame of a raging fire takes. It is all-purifying on the one hand, and burns to ashes whatever impurity is put into it on the other hand. This taught him to welcome everything like the fire does, but purify them before finally accepting anything, and to reduce to ashes all that is impure and tainting that would affect the purity of the Atma.

(5) Sky or Akash—the space of the sky accommodates everything and everyone in its vast bosom. This taught him to accept and accommodate all in life, but remain uninvolved in or unattached with them just like the sky which harbours uncountable number of things in its vast bosom but remains totally indifferent to them and unaffected by them.

(6) Moon—it appears to wax and wane, but really it remains the same. This taught him the fact that the world and the body undergo innumerable changes but the true ‘self’ always remains unchanging, steady, uniform and immutable.

(7) Sun—it is the ‘eye’ of the world and gives the latter light, heat and energy in a selfless and unbiased manner. The sun illuminates all but does not need anything to illuminate its own self, and neither does it get tainted by the dark and gloomy things it illuminates. On the contrary, the darkness of all things vanishes as soon as the brilliant light of the sun falls upon them. The glory of the sun is so overwhelming that no form of gloom and darkness can ever survive in its presence. This taught him to illuminate the world and remove its darkness of ignorance by the light of knowledge and wisdom while remaining immune himself to the darkening and spiritually denigrating affects that are caused by this deluding and corrupt world.

(8) Pigeon—this is the typical story of a householder’s life. The parent pigeons went out in search of food for their young one day when a bird-catcher spread his nets and caught the offspring. When the parents returned, the mother pigeon saw the plight of the young one and jumped into the net. Then the male pigeon too jumps into the net because he cannot live without the family. The bird-catcher was overjoyed. This taught him that worldly attachments only lead to one’s ruin and downfall.

(9) Python—it stays at one place and swallows any creature that happens to pass that way. He would not forage for food but wait for it to come to him. This taught him to be contented with whatever comes his way.

(10) Ocean—The ocean is a vast and fathomless reservoir of water but it continues to continuously receive waters from all the rivers that incessantly pour their contents into it. In spite of this, the ocean never overflows with water, and it never breaks self-imposed restrictions of not submerging the earth. This taught the sage that no matter how much knowledge and wisdom one possesses or thinks that he has, he must keep on learning throughout his life; he must have an open and receptive mind that welcomes all sorts of knowledge. Again, as all the waters being poured into the ocean from different rivers having their sources in myriad of places becoming one and homogenous with the water of the ocean, the wise and enlightened man should accept

knowledge from all sources but extract their essence and convert them all into one uniform body of knowledge that would not act as a distraction or a cause of perplexity for him but would only add to his profound knowledge and wisdom. Like the ocean remaining within its boundaries, the wise man is one who never shows off his knowledge, or becomes haughty and arrogant because of his mystical powers and knowledge. The ocean harbours a complete marine eco-system inspite of its harsh salty waters—this taught the sage to be benevolent, compassionate, magnanimous and kind towards all inspite of the harsh conditions in which he might be forced to live; he must give shelter to all who come seeking refuge with him, and take care of his dependants to the best of his ability. Like the ocean, he too must be self-contented and aloof from the world, because the ocean never expects any water from the rivers, and is unconcerned with what is happening on land.

(11) Moth—it gets attracted to the fire, and as a result of his infatuation with the fire and its light it gets caught and burnt. This taught him not to be tempted by the beauty and charm, the fascinating colours and magnificent forms of this artificial world of sense objects, for they would trap him and eventually drain him of all his energy and vitality, leading to his destruction. Any sort of worldly attachments would sear and scorch his soul and rob it of its peace and bliss. The attractions of the world are like the trap that would scorch his spirit by forcing it to lead a lifetime pursuing the sense objects of the world which keep on burning him with desires and expectations that are never fully fulfilled. Jealousy, hatred, frustration, animosity, malice and greed are its natural attendants. After having spent a lifetime in realizing the material objects of the world, a day would finally come when his worn out and descript body would die. Like the fire of the flame burning the moth, the attachments with this world and desire for it would also burn the man.

(12) Honey Gatherer—he stealthily takes away all the honey so painstakingly collected by the honey-bee over a long period of time involving immense labour. This taught him two things—it is useless to hoard things as one day death would snatch everything away, and second it is futile to hoard without sharing things with others because one day they are bound to be snatched away from us.

(13) Honey Bee—it collects nectar from numerous flowers and converts them into one homogenous honey. This taught him to imbibe knowledge from whatever source available, and then convert it into one body of knowledge that is ‘truthful’. A wise man is one who draws the essence, the nectar, from all sources of knowledge, and then deduces the ‘truth’ from it which would of any value for him like the ‘honey’ produced from the nectar drawn by the bee from various flowers. It also taught him that a mendicant should also collect a little bit of food from different households instead of relying on one house.

(14) Elephant—it is notorious for the sense of touch. During the mating season they rub against each other. This weakness is exploited by hunters to catch them. This weakness taught the sage that he should be wary of the pleasures obtained by touching sensual things in this world.

(15) Deer—it is by nature attracted to music, a weakness exploited by the hunter to trap it. So, one should be wary of pleasant and sweet sounds emanating from this world because poison is more often than not laced with sugar.

(16) Fish—it is attracted to the hook and got caught due to its desire to eat the bait. So, the fish taught him to have control over the taste buds of his tongue.

(17) Pingala—she was a dancing girl and a prostitute. One day the saint, during his wanderings, came to take rest under the tree on a street where she lived. He watched her eagerly waiting for a customer who never turned up. She finally gave up and went to sleep with the realization that if she had spent so much time invoking the Lord present in her own bosom, she would not have to wait for the Lord so long. This taught the saint that disappointments come to us when we expect something from this world and then hope that it would provide it to us. It is therefore an exercise in futility to expect the world to give real comfort and joy to anyone. The real happiness lies inside.

(18) The Kurara Bird (a species of Hawk; an Osprey; a raven)—the bird had a small piece of flesh in its beak. Seeing it, other larger and stronger birds pounced on the unsuspecting poor Kurara bird. Distraught, the Kurara suddenly realised that the cause of its torments is the piece of meat, and so it dropped it instantly from its beak. The other birds swooped on the meat and stopped pursuing the Kurara. This incident taught the saint that if one clings on to material things in this world, no matter how desirable they are, they would never let him live in peace. It is better to drop them at the earliest; it is better to drop all worldly attachments, and instead devote time in the search of the Truth of life.

(19) Child—a child becomes so engrossed in his playthings that he forgets hunger and other bodily needs. Children fight with each other during the course of playing, but soon forget everything. This taught him to remain engrossed in contemplation and meditation on the ‘self’ and enjoy this state of existence like a child remaining engrossed in its playthings and being oblivious to anything else around him in this world. A wise ascetic should also be as deeply submerged in meditation as this child playing with his toys so much so that he becomes totally oblivious of the surrounding world around him. He should be immune to the world as well as even to one’s own bodily problems. A wise man must be innocent like a child—he might get angry at others but never takes anything to heart. The child plays with toys, but suddenly throws them away and wants something new. Likewise, the wise man enjoys the world, but he never gets hooked to it at the emotional and sentimental plane.

(20) A Girl—Some people had come to see the girl with a proposal of marriage. She went inside the house to prepare food for them. In the course of grinding spices her bangles clashed with each other and made a disturbing noise. She removed them one by one until one remained—then there was no noise. This taught him that when the mind is distracted by so many things, the man never finds peace. So the best way to concentrate the mind is to remove all extraneous distractions in the form of numerous paths and philosophies, and instead focus on one path that would lead him to the ultimate Truth preached by the Upanishads, the Truth that is absolute, uniform and immutable.

(21) Snake—it never makes its own hole and lives in holes made by nature or other animals. A true saint should realise that the Atma has no body of its own but lives on borrowed bodies during its sojourn in this world. Again, the snake effortlessly leaves

its dead cuticle, and this taught the sage that the Atma would similarly leave this body one day at the time of the body's death, without any effort, pain or attachment to the older body, to find a new abode for its self. Hence, one should not be unduly concerned about the gross body which is bound to be abandoned one day. Another thing that the sage learnt was that the body is not one's true identity as the 'truthful self'; it is merely a temporary habitat for the 'self'. This 'self' is the pure consciousness known as the Atma that would move to another body when the latter becomes too old and useless for it just like the snake leaving its dead cuticle and moving out into a new skin.

(22) An Arrow-smith—he was so engrossed in his single-pointed devotion to his work of preparing the arrows and giving them the right contours, aerodynamic shape and sharpness to their tip that he was unaware that the king's entourage was passing by. This taught the saint the importance of single-minded pursuit of one's goal.

(23) Spider—it creates a web from its own body, moves around it, and then swallows it. Similarly, the supreme Lord has created this world, sustains it, and finally retracts it into himself. Further, the spider creates the web and remains trapped in it much like the creature who creates this artificial world by his mind and then remains trapped in it for life.

(24) A beetle and the worm—a beetle or a wasp caught hold of a worm and kept it in a hole. The insect kept humming around this worm that was so terrified of the wasp and continuously subjected to this humming that ultimately it became wasp-like itself. Similarly, when a man concentrates upon something continuously, whether willingly or unwillingly, he would become one like the subject on which he contemplates. If he contemplates upon the world, he would become one like other mortal ignorant creatures, and if he contemplates upon something that is sublime and divine, he would become sublime and divine himself.

It would be interesting to learn more about this great sage named Dattatreya.

Lord Dattatreya is a fractional incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation in his cosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whom the rest of the creation, including the creator Brahma himself, was created.

The word 'Dattatreya' means 'one who was given to Atri'. It also means 'the form of the Trinity Gods which gives or bestows or grants boons to his devotees'.

According to mythological accounts, sage Atri and his chaste wife Anusuya were childless, and having a desire to have a son they prayed and did severe penance. All the three gods of the Hindu Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder appeared before the couple and requested them to ask for a boon. Upon the couple's request, all the three Gods became their sons. Brahma became the sage known as Chandra representing the Moon God, Vishnu became the wise and enlightened sage Dattatreya, and Shiva became the angry sage Durvasa.

The word 'Dattatreya' has two parts—'Datta' and 'Treya'. The first half 'Datta' refers to the Lord who gives boons, and the second part 'Treya' refers to something that has three dimensions.

This latter part 'Treya' again has the following meanings—(1) It refers to Lord Shiva who has three eyes, and hence called 'Trinetra', because Shiva is also known as

‘Maheshwar’, the great Lord by which epithet the Supreme Being is honoured (refer Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 5-6 of Shandilya Upanishad). (ii) It refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm which has three forms known as Sakal, Nishkal and Sakal-Nishkal which incorporates in their ambit the entire creation, both the visible and the non-visible, the gross and the subtle (refer Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 2-6 of Shandilya Upanishad).

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 7, verse no. 3 asserts that Dattatreya was one of the great ascetics who were known as ‘Paramhans’, showing that he was extremely wise, erudite, enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised besides being exemplarily detached and dispassionate towards this world and its material objects. He was renunciation personified.

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition endorses this episode with a slight change in its Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 7-8 wherein it is said that the Supreme Being himself revealed in the form of sage Atri. Now let us see what it says—

“Verse no. 7 = [Sage Shandilya asked—] ‘Why is it (Brahm) known as Lord Dattatreya?’ [Refer last stanzas of verse no. 6 of section 1 of Canto 3 of this Upanishad.] (7).

“Verse no. 8= [Sage Atharvaa replied—] ‘It is because sage Atri did very severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to wish for a son. Pleased by his sincerity and devotion, the splendorous and self-illuminated ‘Bhagwan’ (Lord God; the Supreme Being) blessed the sage and offered himself as his son. Thereafter, the Lord himself revealed as a son to sage Atri and his wife Anusuiya. In this way he (the Lord) became famous as Lord Dattatreya (8).”

According to another version of this story, the three Gods decided to check the chastity vows of the wife of Atri and came disguised to cheat on her. Anusuiya was no ordinary lady, and realizing their ill intentions she transformed them into her son with three heads and six arms, each head standing for one of the Gods.

Dattatreya is counted amongst the seven celestial sages called the Sapta Rishis. He is said to have created the Soma Plant whose juice, called the ‘Som Rasa’, is used during fire sacrifices as an offering to Gods.

Iconographically, Dattatreya is shown with three heads and six arms holding the emblems of the three Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, viz. a water pot, a conch and a discus, and a trident respectively. In fact, this great sage is regarded as a combined revelation of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, in as much as he possessed the virtues of them all.

A bull representing Dharma (righteousness) is depicted as his mount. Four dogs representing the four Vedas are his constant companion.

The concept of Dattatreya is an attempt by ancient sages and seems to harmonize the three cults of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva that had created an artificial and unwarranted rift in the edifice of religious unity amongst the Hindus.

An entire Upanishad titled ‘Dattatreya Upanishad’ is dedicated to this great sage, and it appears in the Atharva Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad.

Dattatreya is also credited with expounding the great characteristics of Avadhut Sanyas in Avadhut Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition when he taught them to sage Sankriti.

The Jabal Darshan Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition is also credited to Lord Dattatreya in which he has preached in detail the 8-fold path of Yoga, called the Ashtang Yoga, to Sankriti, his disciple.

He had taught many kings and saints on the essential principles of metaphysics and spiritual truth. The prominent ones are the following—

During the Sata Yuga (the first of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction) he had taught Lord Kaartikeya and Lord Ganesh, as well as to Prahalad, the great devotee of Lord Vishnu, about the eclectic state of Avadhut Sanyasi by the example of a huge python.

During the second era of Treta Yuga (when Lord Vishnu manifested as Lord Ram), he had preached to king Alark, king Purukhaa and king Aayu.

In the third era known as Dwapar (when Lord Vishnu manifested as Lord Krishna), he had preached sage Parashuraam as well as king Yadu about Tattva Gyan (the fundamental knowledge of spiritual Truth and the quintessential philosophy of metaphysics). One other great king named Kaartaviryarjuna, son of Kaartavirya, was also his disciple.

It is believed that during the current era of Kali Yuga, the fourth in the cycle, he had taught renowned saints and preachers such as Adi Shankaracharya, the great ascetic Gorakhaath, saint Chaitanya Mahaaprabhu, siddha Naagaarjuna, saint Eknaath, saint Gyaneshwar, and saint Tukaaraam.

Being a great Sanyasi himself, he was endowed with stupendous mystical powers called Siddhis. One of the sects of Siddhas regards him as their patron sage.

Sage Dattatreya had made twenty-four Gurus or teachers. The remarkable thing is that none of these twenty four Gurus was a human being—he had learnt even from the elements (earth, water, fire, air, sky), animals (elephant, deer), birds (pigeon, hawk), reptiles (snake, worm), insects (moth, bee, spider), a fish, the moon and the sun, a child, a girl, a prostitute, an arrow-smith etc.

-----*****-----

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' version),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) 24 Symbols, (iv) Kobo, (v) Page Foundry, (vi) Scribd, (vii) Tolino etc.:-

List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) "Narad Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) "Shandilya Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious

sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor).

(B) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

The rest of the Books are in various stages of production, and would be made available on-line at the above websites as and when they are ready.

Contact details of Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia—

Postal address:-36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg, P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123, Distt. Faizabad, U.P. India.

Phone:—(India) +919451290400; +919935613060.

Email of Author: (1) ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com

(2) ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com

Facebook ID: www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

Goodreads:

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia