

Who is a Guru?

Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

“Have you noticed that the general perception is that people can be broadly divided into two groups – the spiritual and the materialistic, those who are religious and those who are not?”



Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Do you really think that this classification is correct? That there is one set of people that seeks liberation and another set that does not give a thought about it? In reality this classification does not exist at all, because, knowingly or unknowingly everyone is after God.

I can see the surprise in your face and the unasked question in your lips!

‘What do you mean?’ you may ask.

Let me explain in detail. If you carefully watch the world in and around us, what is the one common thing that binds everything? What is the one thing that is common to all? Everyone is searching for happiness. That is common to one and all.

It is common to the ‘spiritual’ and ‘materialistic’ groups. Everyone – right from a small insect to every human being – is searching for happiness. A tiny ant believes that it will find joy in a sugar crystal. And we believe that we will find happiness in money, power, lust, etc. But do we stop with that (once it is achieved)? No. We want that happiness to be everlasting and total, without a tinge of sorrow. And all our life, we run in different directions in search of the joy in money, the joy in power, the joy in lust and what not! But have we found it? The answer is a big NO.

Let us delve a little deeper into it. If you take power for instance – there was a man who aspired to become a leader. He believed that he would find joy once he reached the coveted position. So all his life, he worked hard for it. He made many sacrifices, underwent many hardships patiently and finally reached his goal. His ambition was fulfilled. But was he happy then? Of course not! He was gripped by a new fear. He was afraid of losing his position. So everyday was a struggle to stay at the top. He was not happy. Finally one day, he did lose it. Is it even necessary to mention his state then? Miserable! That is how he felt. Can you see the paradox here?

We think power gives happiness. So we strive to attain the position of power. The struggle to get to the top was full of sorrow and pain. The time in power was also spent in sorrow. Losing the position of power was sorrowful again. This applies to all worldly goals. Do we see this clearly? Even if we find some pleasure, it is temporary and mixed with sorrow. There lies the apparent difference between spirituality and materialism. Religion shows the right direction in which we will find the absolute and permanent joy – that is in liberation, God realization. That is why, in the beginning, I said everyone who wants lasting happiness is indeed searching for God, knowingly or unknowingly. So we see that everyone is, in fact, spiritually oriented because everyone is after eternal joy.

We have to look in the right place. That's all. Who holds the key to God realization, which is the eternal source of bliss?

It is indeed the Guru.

All our scriptures attach the greatest significance to the Guru. This brings us to the question – Who is a Guru? What defines a Guru?

If a person teaches us something, say scriptures, the Vedas or some language, can we call him a Guru? If a person imparts education to us, can we call him a Guru? Yes they all are Gurus – Vidya Gurus, i.e., those who teach us a particular 'Vidya'.

But who forms a Guru that we are talking about (one who holds the key to God realization)?

Is he this person who is well read in scriptures? If this is the case, we can find innumerable scholars to fit this description.

Is the Guru a person who can predict the future? If that is the case, we can find so many astrologers and foretellers who can predict every minor detail of our future.

Is the Guru a person who can perform amazing feats? If that is the case, we can

find many expert magicians to fit the description of a Guru.

So, all these are not the criteria that define the Guru. So who is the Guru?

Once there was a man who went to the doctor. The doctor asked him, “What brings you here?”

“Doctor, I have not been eating very well.”

“Don’t you have enough money to buy your food?”

“No doctor. I am a landlord. I am pretty rich. I am rich enough to feed a hundred people everyday!”

“So what is your problem?”

“I do not feel hungry. That is my problem.”

Hearing this, the doctor gave medicines to stimulate the man’s hunger and his problem was solved.

This is one end of the spectrum. Now let us move on to the other side.

There is this poor beggar who lives by the gutter. He is very hungry but has no money to buy food. The hunger is so unbearable that he is prepared to beg for food. He is ready to eat from the trash and if he is still unable to satisfy his hunger, he is even prepared to steal.

On one end, there is this rich man who has the money but no appetite. At the other end, there is this beggar who is prepared to do anything to satisfy his hunger. So what is important – the appetite or the urge? Once there is urge, man finds his way to food by some means. So that is the most important factor – stimulation of the urge – once that is done, it automatically makes the person go after the goal.

Hence the one who stimulates the thirst for God is the Guru. He alone is the Guru. Any amount of book-reading and spiritual knowledge will not have any impact on us because it does not stimulate the thirst for God. A Guru is one whose every word, every movement and every action stimulates the great thirst for God in us. Every moment in his divine presence stimulates the great urge. Once the thirst is there, we will all find our way to Self-realization.”

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