

31. God Alone Can Be Your True Guru

సరిచరణాంబుజ నిర్మలబక్తః
 స్మరణాచాచరణాదకమీకః
 శ్రీశ్రీయమానసస్సనియమాజేవం
 (శ్రీశ్రీనినిజహృదయస్థంబౌతమ్)

సమీచరణాంబుజైర్బక్తైః
 త్ర్యంబకైశ్చైతాశ్చమాత్రమ్
 శ్రీశ్రీయమానసస్సాంధ్యేయమకై
 హృదయస్థంబౌతమ్

The vision of God who resides in the heart can be had through an unwavering devotion for the Lotus Feet of the Guru, and by relieving oneself from the shackles of family and by controlling the vagrant mind and the sense organs.

Divyatma Swarupas!

This is the last verse of the *Bhaja Govindam* series. After composing it Sankara left Benares. It has been stressed in this verse that you must have unwavering faith in the *guru*, but you must try to understand as to what kind of *guru* Sankara had in mind in this context. One who lights up the *Atmajyothi* in you by teaching you what is right and what is good, helping you to practise the sacred principles contained in the *Sastras*, disciplining your mind, can be regarded as the proper *guru*. The word “*gu*” means darkness or ignorance and “*ru*” stands for the removal thereof. This means that the darkness of ignorance can be dispelled by the light of wisdom. Such is the function of a *guru*. “*Gu*” also stands for one who is beyond all attributes and “*ru*” is *rupa varjita* or one who has no form. One who has neither attributes nor a form is only God.

In the present-day world it is possible that the *gurus* will teach the right path and right ideas, but it is not possible for them to lead you from darkness to light or from ignorance to knowledge. Only God can do this. The present day teachers are of two types. There are those who claim to be exponents of *Vedanta*, but their main intent being catering to the worldly desires. They conform to the whims of their disciples and in doing so they succeed in dispossessing them of their possessions. Such *gurus* are an unbearable burden upon the surface of the earth. They correspond to another meaning of the

word *guru*, which means weight or burden. The second type of *gurus* are those who can expound the sacred texts and help the disciples to discipline them-selves to some extent. They impress upon their disciples that the *guru* himself is *Brahma*, Vishnu, Easwara and also *Para Brahma*. This is how such teachers enhance their own stature in the eyes of their disciples.

There is a lot of difference between a teacher and a *guru*. A teacher transmits what he has learnt in return for a reward, whereas a *guru*, through his grace, enters your heart, broadens it and enables you to comprehend the aspects of divinity. Such a being, in the form of a *guru*, appears at an appropriate time. For example, when King Parikshith prayed, Suka immediately appeared.

The entire world of manifestation is the play of *Brahma*, Vishnu and Easwara. *Brahma* creates, Vishnu sustains and Easwara dissolves or merges. *Brahma* determines your next birth according to your previous *karmas*, whereas Vishnu sustains the creation of *Brahma*. A plant cannot grow of its own accord. It has to be looked after, watered and fenced. Only then it will become a big tree. In the same manner, it is not enough for the *guru* to merely suggest to you to recite the name of the Lord and to carry on meditation, but he has also to look after your practice and progress by giving you the necessary support and strength.

The work of *Easwara* is to make things merge with infinity. *Laya* or dissolution means merging the soul

with *Paramatma*. *Easwara* dissolves the individual into universal. Thus, the entire process consists of creation, sustenance and merger. The trinity of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheswara* does not represent the three *gurus* but relates to the same being functioning in three different directions at three different times.

Now let me clarify the significance of *Sakshat Para Brahma*, distinguishing it from the trinity of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheswara*. We classify *Brahma* into four types. First is the four faced *Brahma*, then we have the *Srishti Brahma* or the aspect of creation. We also have the *Sabda Brahma* and the *Ananda Brahma*. The four faced *Brahma* causes sound resulting in creation and becomes the *Sabda Brahma*. There cannot be creation without sound and sound itself is caused by vibration. This sound has been compared to *Akasa*, the space or the sky and since sound is everywhere, the sky too is everywhere.

It is in this context that we describe God as being above all attributes. All the five human senses, *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*: hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell are the material attributes.

One who is above all these and not affected by any of them is God. This may be illustrated in the following manner. All these five attributes: hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell are present in the earth. Earth is the first of the five elemental substances: earth,

water, fire, air and space. That is the reason why earth is very heavy and cannot be moved easily from one place to another. While all these attributes are present for the earth, there are only four attributes for water. The smell has gone away and because of this, water is lighter and easily moves from one place to another. In case of fire, there are only three attributes. It has neither taste nor smell and is even more free in its movements. When we take the fourth element air, we find that it has no form, no taste and no smell. It has become even lighter and can move very freely. The fifth element is space or sky. It has only one attribute and that is sound. All other attributes are missing and therefore the sky is the lightest and spreads all over. If the sky—characterised by the attribute of sound alone—is present all over, God who has no attributes at all will naturally be present everywhere. He is omnipresent. That is why God is described as *Gunateeta* or one who is above all *gunas*. These five elements which compose the material world—earth, water, fire, air and space—have attributes; but when all the attributes are extinct, we conceive of something which is all-pervading. When we say that God is omnipresent, we mean that none of these things which weigh us down are present in Him. On the other hand, God, who is beyond all *Gunas*, remains unaffected even by pervading them. For instance, there is mud in the pot but there is no pot in the original mud.

Sankara expressed the same idea in another place in another context by saying, “*Brahma Sathyam Jagan*

Mithya” or *Brahman* is real and the world is an illusion. In another place, Sankara said, “*Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat.*” This means that the entire world is filled with Vishnu. It is common for the young students to refer to such apparently contradictory statements with some ridicule. Such observations have been made by great people, who have pondered over these matters very deeply.

It is for us to interpret them correctly. I will give you an example to convey the proper meaning. Among the people sitting here, ninety-nine percent of them are accustomed to seeing cinemas. It is common that you sit facing the screen and then feel impatient that the pictures are not appearing on the screen. After some time, pictures begin to appear on the screen and you feel happy. These pictures on the screen are continually changing. They do not remain permanently on the screen. The pictures that appear on the screen are *Mithya*. They are not permanent, but the screen is permanent. In this context, we should understand that the screen is real and the pictures are an illusion. The screen can be compared to *Brahman*. The permanent and all-pervasive Vishnu, and the impermanence of the world explain the true meaning of “*Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat.*”

All that you cannot see, hear or understand cannot be ruled out as non-existent. Even if you put a powerful light in front of a blind man, he will only see darkness, because he does not have the eyes to see the light. Likewise, persons having no faith will not perceive God

even if you show God to them. They do not have the eyes to see divinity and they proclaim that there is no divinity. There is an example for this. A blind man can neither see his body nor describe his looks, but it does not follow that he has no body. In the same manner, the *Atma* pervades the entire universe, but we are not able to perceive it because we do not have the eye of wisdom.

Once a *sadhaka*, who had a great ambition to know something about the divine, wanted his eye of wisdom to be opened. He entered a cave where a *guru* was residing. While entering the cave, he saw a small light. As he moved forward, even that little light got extinguished. In darkness one feels frightened and in fear, we think of God very intensively. Thus, he uttered loudly the word “*Namassivaya*” and on hearing this, the saint asked him who he was. This person said that he had come to seek his grace. This great saint, who was sustaining himself in the cave only by breathing the air around him, had the competence to know the mind of his visitor. He said that he will answer his questions later but asked him to first go and light the lamp which had just been extinguished. The visitor took a match box and tried to light the lamp but did not succeed. He told the *guru* that he had finished all the match sticks and yet he had not succeeded in lighting the lamp. The *guru* asked him to see if there was oil in the lamp. After seeing the lamp, he found that there was no oil and reported to the *guru* that there was only water in the lamp. The *guru*

then asked him to open the lamp, remove all the water and pour oil in it, and then try to light it. The person did this but the lamp would not light even then. The *guru* then said that the wick was probably wet with water and asked him to dry it nicely in the open and then attempt to light the lamp. He did this and succeeded. Then the person ventured to mention his doubt and sought the answer from the *guru*. The surprised *guru* said that the appropriate answer was being given all the while. The visitor pleaded that he being an ignorant man was not able to understand the significance of the teaching and requested the *guru* to explain to him in clearer terms.

The *guru* said: In the vessel of your heart, there is the wick of your *jiva*. That wick has been immersed all these days in the water of your sensuous desires. Therefore, you are not able to light the lamp of wisdom. Pour out all the water of desires from the vessel of your heart, and fill it with *Namasmarana* of God. Take the wick of *jiva* and dry it in the sunshine of *vairagya*. Then you come back to me and you will certainly be able to light the lamp of wisdom. What is required is the process by which you take the wick of *jiva* and squeeze out of it all the water present in the form of your desires and then put into the heart the oil, devotion or *Namasmarana*. It will then be possible for you to light the lamp of wisdom. By doing so, you will see the *amar jyothi* or the lamp of wisdom.

When you go back to your places, you will be

able to see this *jyothi* or the lamp of wisdom which will enable you to help yourselves and others only if you practise what you have learnt here. If you get all these quotations by heart and only repeat the words, others will think that you have acquired something which is very hollow during your stay here.

One lazy *sanyasi*, who was an idler, once went to a village. He was very hungry and he saw a house and presuming that this family was very devoted, he thought that he would get food from them. He entered the house and asked for alms. The lady of the house saw him and said that she would feed him by giving him a full meal instead of just giving him some alms and asked him to go to the river that was flowing nearby and have a bath and come. In the meanwhile she said that she would keep the food ready. This idler said, “*Govindeti Sada Snanam*”, meaning that the utterance of the name of Govinda was as good as taking a bath. He said that he was thus ready for the meal. The lady was equally clever and she said, “*Ramanamamritam Sada Bhojanam*”, meaning that the utterance of the name of Rama was as good as eating a meal.