

The Role of the Guru

FROM: ŚRĪ AMṚTĀNANDA NĀTHA SARASVATĪ. "GIFTS FROM THE GODDESS."

To make progress in the spiritual field, there must be a surrender of your ego to your personal guru. Ego means notions of "I" and "mine." You should surrender these to your guru. But what do these words mean in operation?

You normally have certain ideas about what is right and what is wrong. These ideas have been molded into you by your environment, and by the culture in which you took birth and grew up. And most often, these notions or values—so deeply embedded in your psyche—are based upon selfishness. They are values that promote your or your family's welfare but ignore the welfare of anything beyond that.

When you go to your guru, the instruction you usually get is that you must love even your enemy. You go to your guru, perhaps, with the idea of somehow getting revenge on your enemies—and here you are taught to love them. You go in search of riches—and you are taught to give them up. You wish to complicate your life—and you are taught to simplify it. You are told to welcome misery and happiness with equanimity, when you have an inbuilt bias against misery. Your tendency is to seek happiness—but when you actually get it, you feel you do not deserve it and so you reject it. You reject success. You are told not to feel shame or elation when someone scolds or praises you—but that is against your nature, too: you feel.

The trouble is always that you want your guru to tell you what you want to hear. And if the guru makes the mistake of telling you something that goes against your values, their fate as a guru is sealed in your mind. That's the end of the guru-disciple relationship, which could have flowered into a total identity with universality. When communications break down, the danger is the disciple going ahead on a path that he or she believes to be that of the guru but is not. If the guru's name is also used, the dangers compound.

When you go to a guru, you must put aside the doubting mind, and put into practice what is taught. It may—it will—go against your usual notions; but still, you must accept it. If the guru is confined to teaching you only what you want to know or already know, you will not grow.

You wish to be an angel. You believe that you are a devil. In fact, you are an angel. You are rejecting your true nature to yourself. It is the avowed purpose of all gurus to help you realize who you really are: that you are divine. Even in the lowliest thoughts and pollution, even in abject misery, in destruction, there is divinity if you look for it. The ability to look beyond what is obvious must be learned.

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Unfortunately, even when you do muster up a commitment to the teachings of your guru, your environment tends to resist. It feels that you are going against society's norms; it puts all kinds of obstacles in your way. But that is the training, the ordeal of fire that everyone must go through. Your conviction that what you are doing is in accordance with the teachings of your God and your guru will see you through this difficulty.

Your mind is a mirror. Everything you see, hear, taste, touch or smell is a reflection of yourself in the mirror of your mind. All that you experience is yourself. You experience this world. The world is your reflection. You are the world that you experience. That is your true nature—you are this world. But you draw an artificial boundary; you say and believe that “you” are within this boundary and that what is not within this boundary is not you. This causes attachment to the local, which is the cause of both happiness and misery.

It is your birthright to discover your true nature, to know that you are the one consciousness in which this world has taken birth; in which it is growing and into which it will be reabsorbed. The source, the mother of all, is consciousness. It matters little whether consciousness is the result of the organization of matter, or whether the organization of matter is the work of consciousness. Matter is one limit and consciousness is the other limit of one and the same entity. This is what is implied by the statement that the nature of God is sat-cit-ānanda, which means existence = consciousness = bliss.

I am aware, or I am conscious when I know something other than myself. I am existence when I do not know of any other being or thing. Pure existence is like an unconscious state. It does not know, does not recognize anything—either itself or another. It is the matter limit of God. The matter limit is my spread-out state—spread out over the whole cosmos, not being at any one place or time,

not knowing anything or any experience as other than myself anywhere, at any time.

The other limit is my localized state: limited in space, time and matter, knowing things or experiences other than myself. This experience flows through time and local spaces, aided by the locally magnifying senses of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. The sum total of these experiences is this world of experiences.

Localization and delocalization are the key concepts underlying the creation of this world, its growth and decay; nay, of time itself and the space in which it moves. Life as we ordinarily understand it is localization, limitation of your infinite being. Life is created by localized awareness, and when this awareness passes into delocalized, universal awareness—unlimited awareness—it becomes the other limit of pure existence.

When you experience anything, if you are aware that you are that experience, then you are a master who knows. For example, if you look at another person and realize that this person is yourself, you are a master. If you think that person is another being, then you are deluded.

How many masters are there? Since we understand the word master (or guru) to mean anyone who has realized the oneness of all, who has seen through this confusion and variety, there is only one master. And that is God.

