

Guru Purnima Message 2011



The acceptance of the essentiality of a Teacher or a Master or Guru is a universal concept in all human civilizations and at all points of time. This concept holds good for most of the aspects of human civilization like education, research, music, dance etc., i.e. anything and everything linked with the education of a human being from birth till death. Such Teachers can be of a formal or an informal nature. For example, Lord Dattatreya, the Mahayogi and Siddha proclaimed that he had 24 Gurus from whom he gained knowledge. The 24 Gurus in his case were not necessarily human beings but some living and non-living entities like bees, elephant, moon, fish, python, fire, etc. However by projecting these various entities as his Guru, Lord Dattatreya has tried to impart a valuable message to the world. This message is so deep and universal that it cuts across all religions and all cultures. If one analyses his statements one finds that Lord Dattatreya has laid more emphasis on the learning capabilities of a student than on the teaching capabilities of a Teacher or Guru.

Let us examine for example about a bee being a teacher of a human being. No one can say that in the ladder of evolution, a bee is more evolved than a human being so as to be able to teach him. Why bee alone, if all the species on the earth are put together, they cannot match the intelligence of a single human being. In the instant case, the student's (Shri Dattatreya) mental faculties were so evolved and his thirst for knowledge was so focused that even from a less developed species like a bee or an element like fire, he could pick up important learning points of life. This obviously underscores the importance of the student in the learning process more than that of the teacher. If the student or shishya has the passion to learn, the patience to pursue knowledge and the right attitude towards the Master he can learn even from a distance. The story of Eklavya, in Mahabharata, is a unique example of a student who had truly and devotionally accepted Dronacharya as his Master. He could not be accepted by the Master as a disciple due to the existing social/caste divide. But Eklavya was undaunted in his spirit to learn with the right attitude towards his Master. So he created a Murti (Symbolic representation) of his Guru Dronacharya, placed it in a certain place in the jungle and started worshipping in earnest faith. From that place he used to observe the training imparted by Guru Dronacharya to the Pandavas in Archery with full concentration. Such was his potentiality that soon he excelled in the art and science of archery and became even better than the Pandavas. Such again, was his faith in his Guru that later when his Master Dronacharya wanted the thumb of his right hand as Dakshina, Eklavya did so happily knowing fully well that without the right thumb he would not be able to practice Archery for the rest of his life.

In Indian Hindu mythology, we find these two magnificent personalities excelling in their roles as shishyas (students). Some are of the view that in the field of knowledge both the Teacher and student are equally important, but then knowledge is meant for whom? It is meant for the one who does not have it and who has a need for it. The Teachers (Masters) already have what the student needs. The attitude of the one who needs the knowledge is most important and so the student should know the best way to extract the knowledge from the teacher.

Therefore in order to gain any knowledge, more so when it is about spiritual knowledge, the student needs to have the right aptitude, sensitivity, strong determination and an intrinsic faith in the Master. This vital but pious tradition of Guru Shishya or Master Pupil relationship is continuing in the spiritual tradition of India since long.

Shri C.B. Satpathy, New Delhi