

Radha Bhava of Sri Ramakrishna

—SEJAL K MANDAVIA

In the beautiful atmosphere of Sridham Vrindavan, inside one of the *nikunjas* (garden), Sri Radha and Sri Krishna were sitting and talking. Suddenly, Sri Krishna told Sri Radha, “Radhe, wear my clothes and be Krishna and give me your clothes and I will be Radha.” Both of them exchanged their clothes. Then he asked her to take his *bansuri* (flute) to complete the garb. At that time, Sri Radha said to Krishna, “It is not easy to become Radha by merely wearing my clothes. My body is burning day and night in your remembrance (doing constant *japa* of your name) and do you know, if you put a blade of grass on my body, it will burn and disappear in the fire of separation from you (*virahagni*). If you live by inculcating my *bhava* (a state of mind, emotion), then only you can understand my condition.” At that moment itself, Krishna decided to take human birth with the *bhava* of Sri Radha and incarnated as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. This Radha-bhava is also called *mahabhava* (condition of mind in its highest state of awareness) in our scriptures. Let us go into a little detail on how to reach this state of *mahabhava*.

Prior to reaching that highest state of *mahabhava*, the aspirant has to pass through seven stages:

Rati: Is the state when the mind of the aspirant is pure and there is no desire of worldly enjoyment. With the absence of lust, there arises a pure love towards the *Ishta* that is called *rati*. It holds an element of attachment in it. In this state the *Ishta* is everything to the aspirant.

Sneha: When this love (*rati*) gets

intensified, the *chitta* (mindset) becomes very soft (as liquid); just as when we put ghee (clarified butter) into a lamp, the flame increases and goes upwards, in the same manner love for the *Ishta* intensifies in the heart of the *sadhaka* (devotee) who then becomes restless to have the vision of God, of the *Ishta*. This is called *sneha*.

Maan: As the aspirant moves forward, in the sublimation of love, he or she experiences sweetness in the *chitta* that is called *maan* and the aspirant develops intense affection and attachment towards his chosen deity. There is also an element of pride and tenseness about this emotion. The example here is of Yashoda, whose overwhelming motherly love for Krishna had the element of pride mixed with intense love which made her feel that without her no one else would take care of her Krishna. An intense feeling of ‘belonging’ develops in this state.

Pranaya: This *maan* develops a sense of oneness with the *Ishta*. There is unity of body, mind, and intellect with the *Ishta*. There is the legendary incident of Sri Krishna’s *rasleela* with the *gopis* (cowherd girls of Vrindavan). When Krishna disappeared suddenly, and all the *gopis* were restless at not seeing him, in the overflow of emotion, they felt an intense oneness with him. They were not different from Sri Krishna in that state, and they started blurting out, “I have killed Kaliya the snake, I have lifted the Govardhan mountain...”

Raaga: When the aspirant develops intense yearning and restlessness to get the vision of the ‘Ishta’. He or she starts feeling

a sense of 'happiness' in the misery and separation also. This state is called '*raaga*'.

Anuraaga : An aspirant sees new forms of the 'Ishta' which permeate with a new freshness, sweetness and are more attractive through every moment of his life from which he derives bliss; this state is called *anuraaga*.

Bhava: In human life the greatest misery or agony is that of facing death. Here, in the state of *bhava*, an aspirant feels no fear of even death; misery, unhappiness and difficult situation do not touch him. At all times he feels happiness. Not only this, but he is not conscious of his body also. Every moment he is anxious to see God, thus, culmination of *anuraaga* is *bhava*.

Mahabhava: When *bhava* gets intensified, it results in *mahabhava*, which is the most exalted, sweetest and purest state of mind. Only an incarnation of God can reach this state. Sri Radha remained constantly in this state only, that is why the *mahabhava* is called Radhabhava.

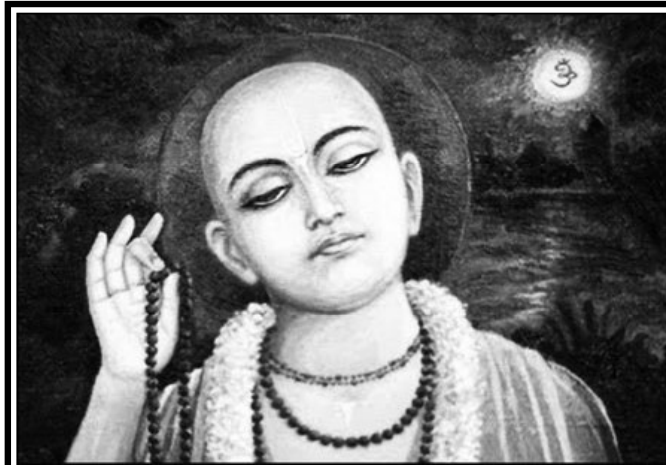
Incarnations Experience the Mahabhava

Sri Krishna took two incarnations to demonstrate the glory of *mahabhava*-- Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri

Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Chaitanya's childhood name was Nimai. His father died when he was a little child. His brother, Vishvarupa, renounced the world and became a sannyasin. Nimai lived with his mother Shachi Devi. As he was an incarnation of Sri Krishna with the *mahabhava* of Sri Radha, he looked



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

divinely beautiful and sweet. At a very young age he studied the scriptures, got married, and was soon teaching the scriptures, after his own deep study of them. Once he went to Gaya for *pitratarpan* (offering

water to the ancestors), there he met his Guru (spiritual teacher), who initiated him with the "Krishna Mantra". As he started repeating that mantra, his love for Krishna intensified and he reached the state of *mahabhava*. All the time, in a state of ecstasy, he was uttering the words, "O Lord! O Krishna! O Beloved! I am coming soon to meet you", speaking thus he would fall unconscious. Later, he wanted to go to Vrindavan but people reminded him of his mother Shachi waiting for him at home, and with great difficulty brought him back to Nadia.

But after returning to Nadia, he could

no longer carry on with his profession of teaching as he was doing earlier. As soon as he would start to teach, he would slip into a trance uttering the words, “O Krishna! My beloved! Where are you?” And he would lose outer consciousness.

Finally, begging pardon of his students, he said to them, “I want to teach you in the same manner as I was doing previously, but as soon as I start, I see that a small black boy comes and starts playing his flute, and I lose outer awareness. So, I am now unable to teach you.” Consequently he renounced the world, leaving behind his mother and wife Vishnupriya. Whenever he saw water, he was reminded of the River Yamuna; when he saw any tree, he was reminded of the groves of Krishna. Perpetually in Radhabhava, he was continuously panting in the fire of separation from his beloved Lord. Even the limbs of his body appeared to be paralyzed by his *bhava*.

Sri Ramakrishna

The same *mahabhava* manifested in the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa also. When he was very young, he considered himself to be Sri Radha and yearned for Krishna, singing devotional songs and crying, unnoticed by others. When he came to Dakshineswar, he did *sadhana* (spiritual practices) with different moods (*bhavas*) like *shanta bhava* (attitude of peace), *vatsalya bhava* (attitude of looking upon God as one's child), *dasya bhava* (looking upon oneself as the servant of God), *sakhya bhava* (friend of God) etc. He had a strong desire to do *sadhana* of *madhura bhava* (that of a paramour and beloved). He dressed himself as a woman and remained in the company of women.

The women of Mathur babu's home felt that Sri Ramakrishna was really a woman. When in the early morning, he went to pluck flowers in the garden, Mathur babu and Hriday remarked that Sri Ramakrishna would put forward his left leg first as women do. Bhairavi Brahmani also stated that when she saw Sri Ramakrishna plucking flowers, she felt as if Radharani was plucking the flowers!

During the *sadhana* of this *bhava*, Sri Ramakrishna made garlands for Radha-Krishna himself, just as the *gopis* of Vrindavan did; just as they worshipped Devi Katyayani to attain Sri Krishna as their husband, Sri Ramakrishna also prayed to Mother Kali in the same manner. In this way, the days were passing in the *sadhana* and once he heard that without the grace of Sri Radha, attaining the vision of Krishna was impossible, he started worshipping Sri Radha and at last had a vision of her, who got merged in Sri Ramakrishna himself.

Thereafter, Sri Ramakrishna remained in this *Radhabhava* with the overflow of love (*prema*), day and night, panting as Sri Radha did in her separation from Krishna. At this time Bhairavi Brahmani arrived at Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna told her, “Mother, people call me mad.” Brahmani replied, “My child, people become mad after money, some after woman, you are mad after God.” Thus, as Sri Ramakrishna's *sadhana* continued, *madhurabhava* turned into *mahabhava*.

Sri Ramakrishna was panting in the agony of separation; there was a burning sensation in the whole body, all the joints of the body got loosened, as if they were separated from the body. Sometimes blood oozed out from every pore of his body because of the extreme anguish due to the

separation from Sri Krishna. Sometimes all the organs stopped functioning and the body became stiff like a corpse. Sometimes he started crying with the body numbed and no longer in his control. He called out in despair, "Hey, Krishna, O my beloved! Where are you?" Tears flowed from the eyes of the people witnessing the scene. Bhairavi saw all these signs and concluded that these were the characteristics of the climax of pure love, called *mahabhava*.

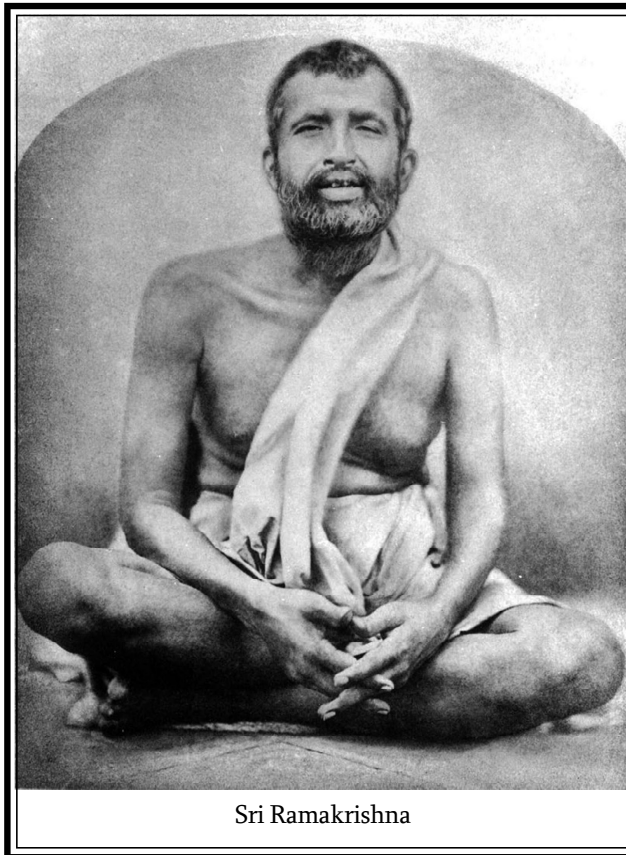
Sri Radha remained in this *bhava* continuously, which is possible only to an incarnation of God. Common people cannot remain at this level as they cannot bear such intense emotion. The Brahmani told Mathur babu that Sri

Ramakrishna was certainly an incarnation of God himself, as all the signs seen in him were as described in the scriptures. It was indeed *mahabhava* and *Radhabhava*. At first Mathur babu was not ready to believe, so Bhairavi held a meeting on a grand scale of all the savants of the scriptures, including Pandit Vaishnavcharan and Gauri Pandit among others. Bhairavi Brahmani churned their thoughts and the

debate went on for a long time. During such meetings and discussions, Sri Ramakrishna was also present, looking at all of them like a child and enjoying the debate. Ultimately, all the intellectuals and scriptural authorities came to a consensus that as per the scriptures, the

amalgamation of the nineteen *bhavas* is called *mahabhava*, which is possible only in the lives of incarnations. Thus, they irrevocably proved that Sri Ramakrishna was an incarnation of God.

After this event Sri Ramakrishna again started remaining in the state of *mahabhava*. Once, for three days and three nights he remained in that



Sri Ramakrishna

state; on the fourth day Bhairavi made him bathe but as soon as she touched him, her hands got burnt! Thakur's entire body was burning with the fire of separation from Sri Krishna. Bhairavi brought a thick shawl, took hold of Sri Ramakrishna with it, and made him bathe. If clay was smeared on his body, it instantly dried up like powder.

Mahabhava means the absence of body consciousness. The *sadhaka* is in a

state of Pure Consciousness and the body becomes effulgent (*chinmaya*). Such a person dances and weeps, sometimes the entire body trembles, the hair stands on end, the joints get separated, and the body burns. All nineteen divine characteristics manifest together at the same time. Such *mahabhava* is called *Radhabhava*. Sri Radha remained in this state all the time.

The same happened in the life of Sri Ramakrishna as he continuously remained in *Radhabhava* during this period of his *sadhana*. In 1864, Sri Ramakrishna had a vision of Sri Krishna. In 1868, he went on a pilgrimage to Vrindavan. There again he entered this *bhava* even as he visited every place of Vrindavan like the temple of Banke-Bihari, Nidhuvan, and the Govardhan mountain. At Nidhuvan he met a 60-year-old woman, Gangamai, who had performed immense austerities and remained in *samadhi*. The people of Vrindavan called her Lalita, a friend of Sri Radha. As soon as she saw Sri Thakur, she recognized him as the incarnation of Sri Radha, seeing all the characteristics of *mahabhava* in him. She called him Dulali (darling friend). Both of them became very close friends and Sri Ramakrishna was reluctant to return to Dakshineswar. But then he remembered his mother Chandramani Devi, and hence was ready to go back for her sake.

Swami Vivekananda, the direct and most devout disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was initially sceptical about the existence of Radha-Krishna and argued with Sri Thakur about it even after the latter explained to him the immensity of the *bhava* of Sri Radha. One night, Swamiji had a dream in which he saw Sri Ramakrishna telling him,

“Come, I shall show you Gopi Radha.” Swamiji followed Sri Thakur at some distance. Suddenly, Sri Ramakrishna looked back saying, “Where else will you go?” and then turned in person into the beautiful, calm, quiet and serene-looking Radha. This dream left a deep impression on Swamiji and despite being a member of the Brahmo Samaj, which believed only in the impersonal absolute of Brahman (Nirguna Brahman), he started adoring Sri Radha. He started singing *bhajans* on Sri Radha and Sri Krishna. Later, Sri Thakur told ‘M’ (Mahendranath Gupta, the chronicler of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*), “Now Narendra believes in Sri Radha and says if anyone wants to love ‘Satchidananda’ then he or she has to learn from Radha.”

The *mahabhava-Radhabhava* was fully manifested in Sri Ramakrishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and they are considered to be Sri Krishna’s incarnations in order to experience the *bhava* of Sri Radha. To conclude in Sri Ramakrishna’s words, “If an elephant enters into a small ditch of water, what could be the condition of that ditch? The same condition has happened to this body after *mahabhava*. I felt a current passing through my spinal cord. I was first shouting “I may die” and then, there was continuous bliss. Nineteen such moods were fully manifested all together here (showing his body) in one receptacle.” For common human beings, the entire life’s intense practice is required for attaining perfection in one such emotion. This shows the exalted state of the *avatar* or incarnation in all its glory. We pray to Sri Radha for her grace so that we can also have our *Ishta darshan*. ❀



Guru and Spiritual Life

SWAMI SHIVATATTVANANDA

Samarth Ramdas, a saint of Maharashtra, gave sermons to his own mind; similarly, Ramprasad, a famous devotee of Bengal also gave sermons to his mind. In one of his famous songs Ramprasad says, “O mind, you do not know how to cultivate land! You have been given the beautiful land of human life, if you cultivate it properly, you will grow the harvest of gold in it.” These words of Ramprasad are indeed very true. By the virtue of lots of good deeds we have attained this ‘land’ of human life, which is now a barren, infertile land, and a jungle of thorny bushes has grown in it; it has become a dwelling place of scorpions and snakes. But with the help of the path shown by the Guru, if you till the soil and cultivate the land with hard efforts, it will yield the treasure of peace and bliss and your life will be fulfilled.

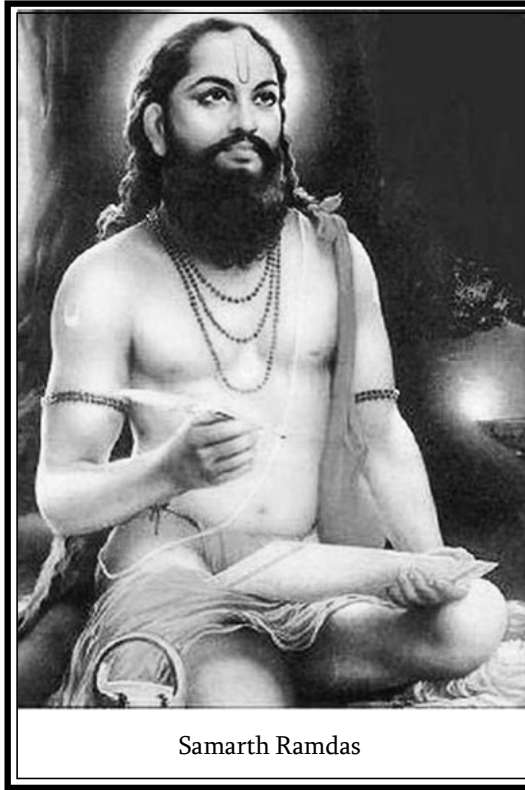
The knowledge of the Atman or God-realization alone is the ultimate aim of our life. We are all the pilgrims of this path of perfection. Every *jiva* (embodied soul) will at some time or other definitely attain

perfection. What we are now, is the result of the deeds and thoughts of our past lives and what we do and think in this life, accordingly our future life will be built. We ourselves shape our unknown and unseen future. So in this life we must do such *karmas* and think in such ways that we

evolve more and more, and finally reach the goal of perfection. In order to fulfil this aim, a guide or Guru is extremely essential. For every *sadhaka* a guide is most important for revealing the secrets of spiritual life and for clearly explaining, by his own experience, how to remove the obstacles in the path of *sadhana*. If for attaining various types of secular knowledge, a guide is essential, then it is all the more essential to have a guide for attaining

spiritual knowledge, which is much more subtle and most difficult to attain.

For secular knowledge, we have to use gross means, which are apart from us but for spiritual knowledge we have to use subtle instruments such as the mind,



Samarth Ramdas

Swami Shivatattvananda (1919-1991) was a senior monk of Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur. This article was originally written in Marathi and was published in the editorial of *Jeevan-Vikas* (October 1962), the monthly magazine of the Math.

intellect, and the internal organs. And that is why in the field of spiritual knowledge, a person who can successfully handle these spiritual means and who is well-experienced (that is, a Guru) is extremely essential. We may have studied much with our limited intellect and have put in tremendous efforts but whether we are proceeding in the correct direction or not, whether there is any lacuna in it and if it is there, how to remove it, we need a Guru to guide us through all this. Without the grace of the Guru, our efforts will not bear fruits.

Sant Jnaneshwar, the great saint of Maharashtra, compared the Guru with the pleasant season of spring. He said, "When fate is extremely favourable to us then all our enterprises become successful, in the same way when one attains the Guru's

grace, whatever one hears or reads, bears fruit. A gardener works hard throughout the year but when spring comes then only, he gets the fruits. In the same way whatever we read, all *shastras* we study, and all spiritual *sadhanas* we practise, only when the Guru showers his grace upon us, those *sadhanas* become our own." (*Jnaneshwari*, chapter 1) From this we come to know how essential a Guru is in spiritual life.

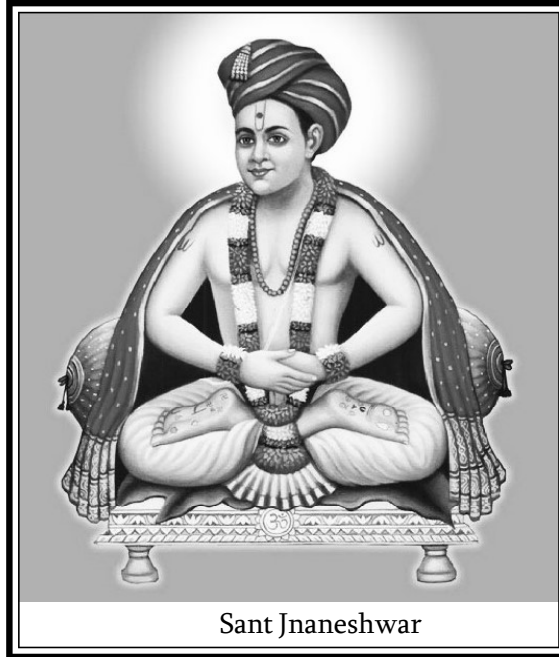
The Upanishads have also laid

great emphasis on the necessity of a Guru. When Shvetaketu asked his father, sage Aruni, "What is the means for realizing the Atman?" Sage Aruni replied, "*Acharyavan purusho veda*" (*Chandogya Upanishad*, 6-14-2). It means - the *sadhaka* who has attained the grace of the Guru, he alone can attain the knowledge of the Self. To make this fact more clear, sage Aruni gave the example of a person from the Gandhar state. He said, "My son, imagine that a

person's eyes have been tied up by thieves. The thieves somehow bring the person out of Gandhar and leave him in the dense forest. Then the person piteously shouts saying, 'The thieves have tied my eyes and have left me in the forest.' Hearing his shouting, a kind and compassionate person reaches him, opens his eyes and says to him,

'Gandhar is in this direction, go in this direction, you will reach your place.' Then that man goes to the next town, then to the third town, and travelling in this way, he reaches Gandhar. In the same way, O! my son, the one who has been blessed by a kind and compassionate Guru finally gets the knowledge of the Atman."

The meaning of this illustration is, a person's good and bad *karmas* are the thieves. These thieves tie a cloth of delusion over the man's eyes and leave him



Sant Jnaneshwar

in the forest of body. The man is miserable and piteously cries out for help; and at this time, the kind and compassionate Guru reaches him. He showers his blessings on him, removes his delusion and gives him the direction towards his abode, that is shows the path to Self-realization.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* also tells us that to attain the knowledge of the Self, a *sadhaka* should humbly and respectfully go to his Guru, please him, and ask him questions about the immortal Atman and thus attain the knowledge of the Self.

“*Tad-vijnanartham sa gurumewabhigachhet samitpanih shrotriyam brahmishtham*” (*Mundaka Upanishad*, 1, 2, 12).

While writing the commentary on this *mantra* Sri Shankaracharya says,

“*Shastrajnopi swatantryena brahmjnananweshanam na kuryat*”- it means, “Even if a

sadhaka knows the scriptures, the *shastras*, he should never seek to attain *Brahmajnana* (the knowledge of Brahman) on his own.”

We must also try to understand the explanation and guidance given in our scriptures and by the *acharyas* regarding the *Guru-tatva* and *Guru-swarupa*, that is, the true nature of the Guru. The relation between the Guru and disciple is just like of a spiritual father and his son. In one sense, the Guru is superior even to one’s father. The father is instrumental in giving birth to our body whereas the Guru liberates us from the cycle of birth and

death and therefore the Guru is given a higher position than the father in our religion.

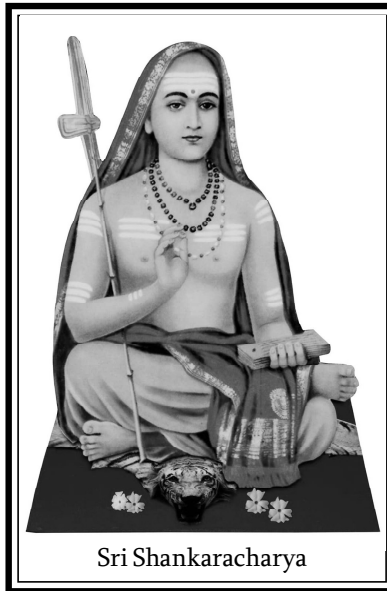
The divine power, which removes the entire impurity of ignorance in man who is bound by *maya*, is called *Guru-shakti*. And the physical form through which this power manifests is called the Guru in our *shastras*. This power, which removes the

ignorance of man is God’s power and so the instrument or the medium, that is, the Guru, through whom this power manifests should be revered as God itself, that is the advice of *shastras*. Just as fire and its power to burn are one, they cannot be separated, in the same way this divine power of God, and the Guru through whom this power manifests, are one and the same. Therefore we say, ‘*Gurusakshat parabrahma tasmai sri gurave namah*’ – “Guru is

the actual *Parabrahman* itself”, with this attitude and feeling, we must prostrate and pay our respect to the Guru.

Sadhakas who worship the Guru as actual God with devotion and feeling, gradually reach such a state that this divine power manifests in them, and removes all the doubts. It gives them original knowledge. In this way through proper devotion towards the Guru, the *sadhakas* finally attain the highest goal of life.

We come to know how ideal *Guru-bhakti*, that is, devotion to the Guru, should be, from the life and teachings of Sri Jnaneshwar, the saint of Maharashtra



Sri Shankaracharya

who had an experience that his Guru, Sri Nivrittinath, was Consciousness personified, *Chitsurya*. He, the effulgent Sun of Consciousness, had removed the darkness of ignorance from Jnaneshwar's mind. In his opinion *Guru-bhakti* or worship to Guru comprises the worship of all Gods and Goddesses. If water is given to the roots of trees, it reaches all the branches, the leaves and the flowers; or if we bathe in an ocean, it is equal to bathing in all the holy rivers. *Guru-bhakti* is all-encompassing in the same manner.

The Guru imparts the knowledge of *Atmaswarupa* and grants salvation to the *shishya*. The Guru helps to 'kill' the 'I' of the disciple, removes the "me and mine-ness" and helps to attain Self-realization. In the highest state of the knowledge of the Atman, the Guru and the disciple become one. When a small piece of camphor touches the fire, its identity vanishes, and it becomes one with the fire, no separate name and form remain. By the touch of the Guru, the disciple can go beyond the limitations of names and forms. The Guru takes the disciple beyond name and form, to the Atman itself. In this state, while the Guru and the disciple may look to be different externally, from within they become one. The one-without-a-second reality appears in two forms in this state assuming the names of the *Guru* and the disciple. Getting this experience is the final culmination of *Guru-bhakti*.

The Guru can also gift or transmit his spiritual powers to the disciple. When the disciple becomes pure by his own *sadhana*, he becomes worthy to receive this power. To receive the spiritual power from Guru, the disciple has also to raise himself to a higher level. We find many such examples of *Shaktidaan* and *Shaktipat*, gifting and

transmitting the power. Lord Krishna gave divine sight to Arjuna and made him fit for the vision of the universal form (*Vishavrupa darshan*). Jesus Christ brought transformation in the life of Saul by giving him the spiritual insight.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna transmitted all his spiritual power to Swami Vivekananda and gave him the mission of the welfare of the world, which Swamiji fulfilled. The incident when Sri Ramakrishna gave all his powers to Swami Vivekananda is indeed worth remembering. A few days before his *mahasamadhi*, Sri Ramakrishna called Narendranath to his room. At that time, he was suffering from cancer of the throat and was staying at the Cossipore garden house near Kolkata. When Narendranath came to his room, Sri Ramakrishna asked him to sit for meditation. Within a short time, Narendra lost consciousness of the external world, and entered into deep meditation. In that state he had an experience that a kind of spiritual power was entering into his body. After some time when his meditation was over and he opened his eyes, he found that Sri Ramakrishna was sitting near him, and tears were rolling down from his eyes. Sri Ramakrishna looked at him and said, "Narendra, I have given away whatever I had to you and have become a *fakir* (beggar) in the real sense. These powers will be useful to you for your mission of preaching religion." Hearing this, that Sri Ramakrishna has gifted him all his powers, Narendranath was overwhelmed; there were tears in his eyes.

Swami Vivekananda had actually got this experience and so while talking about Sri Ramakrishna, he used to say, "It is no great matter to control external material power by some means and to perform

miracles. But I have never seen a greater miracle than the way that ‘mad brahmin’ would handle human minds like lumps of clay. He would pound those minds, beat them into shape, develop them and then with a mere touch, he would cast them into a new mould, with new thought.”

It was not only Swami Vivekananda who had the experience of the divine touch of Sri Ramakrishna, but even other disciples named younger Narendra, Tarak, and Tejchandra had the experience of the divine powerful touch of Sri Ramakrishna, which brought a revolutionary change into their lives.

The Guru has such a great power in him, that he turns his disciple around and makes him like himself. He generates the same power in his disciple which he himself has. This power to make the disciple just like himself is indeed very unique. Sri Ramakrishna used to say about himself, “Mother is showing me that a kind of power has arisen in this body (in his own body) that I need not even touch anybody. If I tell some disciple, ‘you touch him’ and if he touches, that is all. Only that much would kindle that man’s consciousness.” This fact has been stated by revered Sri Shankaracharya in the first *shloka* of his book, *Shatasloki* — In the three *lokas* we do not come across a thing, which can be compared to the Guru who gives knowledge. If we compare the Guru with the touchstone, we find that while a touchstone turns iron into gold, it cannot turn the iron into the touchstone itself. But if a disciple takes refuge in the guru, then the *sadguru* not only brings about a change in the disciple, but he also makes him like himself. Therefore, the Guru is unique, he cannot be compared with anything. Such is the glory of the Guru!

Many times, a question arises in our mind as to how to recognize a Guru from whom we are supposed to gain knowledge? In this world there are so many people who wish to be venerated as a Guru. But who can attain the right and real *Gurupada* or the honourable status of a Guru? Our religious teachers and scriptures tell us that in order to attain the state of a real Guru, the following qualities are essential:

Shrotriyo avrijino akamhato yo brahmavittamah (*Vivekachudamani* by Sri Shankaracharya).

In this one line all the qualities of a Guru are described. The Guru is he who has known the ‘secret’ of the scriptures, who is sinless and pure, who has no selfish desire and to whom the real nature of the *Parabrahma* is revealed.

The first essential thing about the Guru is that he must know the real ‘secret’ of the science of religion. All the religious books of the world tell us that the knowledge of Self or realization of God alone is the ultimate goal of human life, and the secret of all religions lies in the attainment of this goal. It is of no use to have only verbal knowledge. The knowledge of grammar, linguistics, or the origin of words, is not real scriptural knowledge. Those who get entangled in this superficial knowledge, do not know the real secret of the *shastras*.

Those who have known the real secret of what is given in our scriptures, and those who have attained God or have progressed much on this path, and have reached nearer to the highest goal, such alone are fit to become a Guru. From the empirical point of view, they may not be scholars or pedants and yet have known the ‘secret’ of the *shastras*. We have seen that by taking refuge at the feet of such a

Guru, many people have been redeemed. That is why it is very essential for a Guru to know the 'secret' of the scriptures.

The *second* essential qualification of a Guru is that he must have a pure and sinless character. Swami Vivekananda used to say about a Guru, we must first see 'how' he is and then listen to 'what' he says. A Guru's behaviour and character should be very pure. To attain spiritual power and have the ability to give it to others, the person has to have a pure character. Therefore, we must first see the character of a Guru.

The *third* thing about a Guru is that he must be totally unselfish. He must never give out spiritual power for the sake of money, name, fame, position or any other selfish motive. Unselfish love for the grief-stricken, living beings, agonized by various kinds of miseries should be the inspiring force of his mission. If a supposed Guru does not have unselfish love and if he is increasing the numbers of disciples for the sake of money, name and fame then after some period the disciples who see through this, lose respect for him and turn away. That is why a Guru should have pure, unselfish love not only for the disciple, but towards everyone.

If all these characteristics are found in a Guru, then the disciple need not have any fear. If he surrenders totally with faith and devotion to such a Guru and follows his teachings, he will benefit immensely.

Some disciples have a feeling that if they get a Guru, they have no responsibility of their own at all. They have a notion that the Guru will do everything for them, they do not have to do anything! But this is their false notion. Following a Guru or surrendering means that the disciple is wanting to learn. But it does not mean becoming totally dependent. The disciple

has to practise and follow the *sadhana* as per the Guru's advice and make himself fit to attain higher spiritual experiences. Thus, the disciple must realize this responsibility. In fact when the disciple practises *sadhana* earnestly and whole-heartedly, then his higher and higher *sadhana* alone becomes the real *Guru-dakshina*.

A real Guru is pleased only by this kind of *dakshina* and thus the disciple attains the grace of Guru. Thus *Gurukripa* (guru's grace or blessings) also depends upon the disciple's *sadhana* or a disciple's *sadhana* alone invokes *Gurukripa*. Therefore, to practise *sadhana* as per the Guru's teachings is the first and foremost duty of a disciple.

In this context we must remember the following words of Sri Shankaracharya — "If the patient wants to get cured from his disease, he must take medicine by himself and he must carefully follow the restrictions. If the patient is attentive and regular, he gets cured from the disease. For the patient to get cured, others cannot take the medicine for him and follow the restrictions. The patient himself has to do all this." Likewise, in the field of spirituality the disciple himself has to practise *sadhana*. When the disciple puts in the efforts, he attains the grace of the Guru and by this grace he gets the strength and encouragement to walk further ahead on this path till he is finally fit to attain the goal. It is said, "We can get plenty of Gurus, but it is difficult to get even one real disciple who rightly knows his responsibility." This statement is indeed true. If there is the ideal combination of a devoted disciple who faithfully follows the Guru's teachings and a real Guru who adorns the *Gurupada*, then splendid spiritual growth culminating in the goal of perfection is the final outcome. ❀