

GURU SUTRA

THE GURU WHO WON'T KEEP SPIRITUAL SECRETS



HINGORI

Guru Sutra

The Guru Who Won't Keep Spiritual Secrets

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**by Hingori
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SURESH PRABHU

MINISTER OF PARLIAMENT



“In a world where humanity plays **second fiddle to capitalism**, the Hingori Sutras invoke fresh perspectives and provide a barometer to gauge one’s **journey through life’s adventures**. The best thing about such books which constantly churn the mind is that they **help you clarify concepts**. The one insight from the Hingori Sutras that I try to imbibe in my everyday life is to **serve selflessly because I understand** that in service to others lies my evolution as a human being.”

(Suresh Prabhu)



GURUDEV

The Spiritual Icon

The subject of this book is *Guruism*. Many of the concepts are based on the philosophy and teachings of Gurudev. His story is unique in the annals of history and such a human torch has not yet been recorded even in the scriptures.

Gurudev was brought up amidst humble surroundings in the village of Haryana, near Hoshiarpur, Punjab.

Since childhood he showed a keenness for worship, often lighting *diyas* (oil-lamps) at dargahs in and around his village. Gurudev was often found meditating near his home at the temple of Sitladevi (a feminine deity). The temple served as a meeting place for him and one of his spiritual advisors, Sitaramji of Dasua, who taught him various *siddhis* (spiritual accomplishments).

On graduating from high school, Gurudev moved to Delhi and took up odd jobs including selling toffees and pens. Few years later, he joined the soil survey department of the Ministry of Agriculture. He shared a 12-square-metre room with two of his friends and the small room became their residence until his marriage.

All through life, his spiritual pursuits continued, unabated, through which he gained certain powers and *siddhis*. He was then asked by his spiritual mentor, Buddhe Baba, to discharge all eight *siddhis* he had acquired, at Har Ki Pauri, on the banks of the Ganges in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. Gurudev did so and walked out of the river bereft of all the power he had earned over the years. Ironically, the loss of these *siddhis* spelt his manifestation as the *Mahaguru* (accomplished guru).

Furthermore, he was instructed to help and heal people, inspiring them towards spiritual pursuit. He was also entrusted with the unfinished task of reconnecting with his disciples, who had taken birth to be a part of his spiritual journey, and help them evolve to greater spiritual heights.

For about 15 years, Gurudev, the *Mahaguru*, had the odds stacked against him. The angle of difficulty with which he lived his life was certainly acute. He did not take favours and obligations, including consuming salt or cereal paid for by anyone. He sustained himself with the salary he earned from a low-paying government job. He ran a *sthan* (centre for help and healing) from his home, and simultaneously opened many others in the homes of his disciples. Despite being spiritually advanced, he maintained a low profile and never commercialised his activities.

His saint manufacturing factory worked overtime remoulding ordinary men into spiritual giants. Gurudev initiated hundreds of disciples and bestowed upon them the power, to heal and the ability to pass it on further. Dedicated to, and obsessed with what this great guru taught, we stumbled and fumbled, but carried on the banner of his tutelage.

His conversations were hard-hitting, even though laced with humour. He used wit to train and mould us. We would laugh at each other's expense, though it did get uncomfortable when the darts were aimed at one of us. In this demolition lay the construction of who we became! We learnt the art of training others through wit and wisdom.

I consider myself extremely blessed to be a part of Gurudev's story.

Reading about him and understanding his philosophy can connect you to your inner self and put you on the ladder of self-evolution.

Gurudev is the inspiration for this book.

The Mahaguru extraordinaire! OM

The Author

Hingori is a teacher of spiritualism who started around 40 years ago as a student of Gurudev—a spiritual master who had tapped into the unlimited potential of his spirit mind, could travel out-of-body at will, heal people, read thoughts, predict future events and help humans, spirits and other life forms.

Hingori's books chronicle his personal journey of transformation and are filled with real-life experiences and spiritual insights.

Living like the guy next door, engaged in his duties as a businessman and householder, he is an example of how spiritual progress is achievable by every common person. He cannot see a greater mission for himself than being available to help those who want to evolve.

Born and brought up in Mumbai, Hingori works in the service industry, travelling frequently across various parts of the country. His interests lie in sharing his spiritual knowledge with those who have the desire to acquire it. He believes in simplicity being the underlying tone of spirituality.

He shies away from self-glorification since he believes it is more detrimental than beneficial to the efforts of any spiritualist, whose prime focus is sharing spiritual realisations. Therefore, he has taken the selfish route of staying anonymous. Besides, as he says, "My thermometer shows that the climate under the pedestal is cooler than under the limelight."

Author's Note

An Ode To Femininity

Gurudev made us pay serious attention to the significance of the feminine gender, as he believed that women are manifestations of *Shakti* (feminine principle of energy). Without *Shakti*, spiritual evolution is incomplete.

In fact, during a certain period of the year, we are to mentally touch our wives' or partners' feet and accord them a place of seniority. Guru Nanak Dev, Gurudev, Ramakrishna, Ram, Krishna and each of us, draw our strength from *Shakti*. Many disciples who were given *seva* at our *sthan*, owed this to their spiritually advanced wives. Gurudev mentioned that the left side of the body is the side of *Shakti* and the manifestation of the *trishul* on the left palm is handier in spiritual service than the manifestation of *Om* on the right palm.

Sankhya philosophy, which is considered very sound in principles, believes in the concept of *purush* and *prakriti*. The former being the passive observer, and the latter, the dynamic energy which leads to the existence of all things and all forms of movement, the active principle. Therefore, all action, physical or mental, is a part of *prakriti* or femininity. Even other forms of ancient Indian scriptures dwell on the concept of *Shiv* and *Shakti*. Interestingly, the left side of *Shiv* is also the manifestation of *Shakti* and this has led to my belief that god is power and power is femininity!



He who knows not and knows not that he knows not; he is a fool.

Shun him.

He who knows not and knows that he knows not; he is teachable.

Teach him.

He who knows and knows not that he knows; he is asleep.

Wake him.

He who knows and knows that he knows; he is wise.

Follow him.

–Arabian Proverb

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Introduction

A Mahaguru is not judged by the number of shishyas devoted to him, but by the number of gurus created by him.

This book has been written by someone who has played the roles of both, disciple and guru.

However, being a by-product of the mind of a guru, and not that of a disciple, this book may seem unflowery and unpoetic. It serves as a template for those who want to traverse the path from admirer to guru, and may pave the way for a serious spiritual aspirant. Those with a deep-rooted religious fervour may not find the content in sync with their beliefs.

This is an attempt to share 40 years of experience and exposure, in simple language and clarity of thought. The idea is to express and not impress. If I have been guilty of repetition, it is not because of spiritual Alzheimer's but because it re-emphasises the points I am trying to make.

I fervently hope and pray this book brings a paradigm shift in your life and inspires you to graduate from fundamental concepts to higher levels. The graduation is not a flick-of-a-wand transformation, but a slow metamorphosis, like that of a caterpillar into a butterfly, emerging into its own splendour.

The reference to the caterpillar and butterfly is literal in my personal story and possibly the story of most of my spiritual associates who, like me, were non-starters in the initial years of their lives.

Not knowing how to even spell the word 'spiritualism', mine was an experience of sailing from semi-debauchery to a divinity I had not aspired for. I laughed at and ridiculed the 'spiritually inclined'. But the tables turned, as they had to, and the joke was on me. Astrologically speaking, I bought a ticket to Venus but inexplicably, crash-landed on Jupiter (the ruling planet of gurus). Most of my co-passengers thought this a temporary halt. The joke was on them too. We all became Jovians (people from the planet Jupiter), though not by choice or chance. Jupiter was our home intended. We just did not know it then.

Being misfits worked to our advantage. We learned to play gurus, not in robes, but in jeans and shirts. We neither looked spiritual, nor walked or talked spiritual. Unsurprisingly, family and friends scoffed at us, since it was difficult for them to accept us in our evolving avatars. "Why did *he* do this?" was the question on their minds. Our backgrounds were not exactly spiritually relevant either. Some of my *guru bhais* (spiritual associates) were bankers, government servants, and salaried employees, while others were traders and businessmen. Some even bus drivers!

For many of us, our journey on the spiritual train started at Gurudev's station. He shattered our delusions and steered us onto the path of self-realisation. To most of us, discovering ourselves was an epiphany. We certainly never expected the metamorphosis he inspired in us. We were too naive to recognise the master sculptor then. There were not many like him in our time.

Not only did Gurudev inspire, but he cajoled and coerced us into the world of spiritualism. There were no textbooks, no scriptures, no theory. It was hands-on training, a veritable spiritual internship. The operative word was *seva* (service). Every aspect of *seva* was looked upon by the *sevadaars* (one who serves other beings) as an opportunity to serve with humility. Aspects of *seva* ranged from arranging shoes at the shoe-stand to offering tea and *khichdi* (a rice and lentil dish) to thousands of visitors at the *sthans* on a *bada guruvar* (the Thursday following a new moon).

The *sthans* multiplied in the homes of Gurudev's disciples across the country and abroad. Some of us were initiated into the task of healing. People came in search of cures for ailments of the mind, body and spirit, and other downers of destiny. Most found relief, some partially and some fully.

Noah's Ark I knew not, but Gurudev's Ark I have been on.

He taught us to navigate a ship he set sail to, and made us competent to launch other ships.

Even though Gurudev left his body on 28 July 1991, the show goes on. The singular objective continues to be *seva*. Neither money nor gifts are accepted from people who visit the *sthans*. But, they are welcome to offer flowers and good wishes.

Gurudev was a spiritual master beyond comprehension. I benefited from his tutelage and therefore, feel the need to take it forward by sharing his ideology and insights to illuminate those fortunate enough to stumble upon this book.

Welcome to Gurudev's world of *Guruism*. The flavour is unique. Perhaps you will like it.



*He lights the divine flame
that you nurture with devotion.
In time, your every atom knows
you're not a wave but the eternal ocean.*

The Guru Decoded

*He who created this body, this house of clay,
Has locked it
And to the guru has entrusted the key.
Without the guru the treasure within
Is never gained,
Even though you may try to gain it
In endless ways.*

—Guru Arjan Dass

Who is a Guru?

Although commonly used across the globe to denote 'teacher', the word 'guru' implies far more than just that.

In the spiritual context, a guru is the dispeller of *avidya* (ignorance) and unweaver of *maya* (perceived reality). *Avidya* suggests the lack of true knowledge or knowledge as it should be, not necessarily as is normally perceived. *Maya* is the perception of a false and delusionary reality, since our biological senses limit our assessment of the absolute reality to an approximate five percent!

A guru also concentrates on concepts like life, death, and the afterlife. He looks at you not as what you are, but as you will and ought to be. He changes the conditioning of several lifetimes and helps exhaust your *samskars* (conditioning of previous lifetimes). He teaches the theory and practice of karma, and the concept of being *karma mukt* (free of all karma—good and bad).

There is an imminent need, especially in the present times, for every being to realise that at the core (*jivaatma*) they are the consciousness supreme. The guidance by a *siddh guru* is singularly directed towards the fulfilment of this need. Whether he appears as healer, sage, prophet or guide, his role is to

catalyse the unmasking of the divinity within us by displacing our ignorance with light.

A guru leads his disciple upwards on the ladder of evolution, to the disciple's maximum capacity, by using a combination of spiritual theory and practice.

Who is Not Necessarily a Spiritual Guru?

A person well-versed in spiritual texts like the Bible, Koran, Gita and other scriptures, is not necessarily a guru.

A person who has long, grey hair, sports a glorious beard, has a disarming smile, wears saffron robes and acts the part, may not be a guru.

A demagogue who gives discourses on spiritual subjects and wins over people's hearts with his oration, is more an orator than a guru.

A person who can perform arduous *asanas* and can sit in meditation for several hours, cannot necessarily be called a guru.

The concept of a guru is far more exalted and profound, because he is a role model in almost every aspect of a disciple's life. He takes on the disciple's karmic debt and leads him out of it, to whatever extent possible, not just in one life, but possibly over future lives as well. It is imperative for the guru to ensure the disciple's spiritual transformation. This responsibility is far greater than that of the guru playing the role of a mother or performing the duty of a father.

In principle, a guru is not a person but a concept that embodies infinite wisdom and universal knowledge. Thus, in a guru-disciple relationship, the disciple emulates not the person he refers to as his guru, but his *gunas* (qualities). There are several examples in history where a guru has inspired disciples without being physically present.

The inspiration of the guru, which may start during this lifetime, may even continue after the guru's demise. I am someone who is continuously inspired by Gurudev's words and philosophy. As are many of his other disciples, who live their lives as though they are being continuously watched and guided by him, like Krishanmohanji from Durgapur.

Many pretenders to the title of 'guru' seek not the responsibility, but, like bees to honey, are lured by material and social gains. They love the grandeur of sitting at podiums, the euphoria of being worshipped, and the attention and significance they receive. People like these tarnish the ancient and sacred institution of *Guruism*.

The following quote by Swami Rama is an effort to caution people from being exploited by gurus unqualified for the title. Although he seems to have stretched himself to an extreme view, harsher than warranted, I have included his perspective for it represents a distinct viewpoint.

"Guru is not the goal. Anyone who establishes himself as a guru to be worshipped is not a guru. Guru is like a boat for crossing the river. It is important to have a good boat and it is very dangerous to have a boat that is leaking. The boat brings you across the river. When the river is crossed, the boat is no longer necessary. You don't hang onto the boat after completing the journey, and you certainly don't worship the boat."

The Need for a Guru

Before I wrote this book, I asked myself a relevant question, "With all the technology, information and spiritual content being so easily available in every language, do people still need a guru?"

Thinking about my life without Gurudev made me realise that my life would have been an empty shell. A gold-plated shell perhaps, but empty it would still be. He gave meaning to my life and more significantly, he gave meaning to my impending death.

Many of the youngsters I mentor realise that the value of life is all about the quality of death. Not the method of dying per se, but the quality of life after death and the status of the spirit thereafter. What they have achieved in terms of self-reflection and realisation, is far beyond success in the physical realm.

I now consider myself one of the wealthiest men on earth and hope my disciples either do, or will one day consider themselves likewise. I have seen them evolve, being a link in their evolutionary process, just as Gurudev was a link in the nurturing of many great souls whom he introduced to themselves.

In his early years, before the power of the *Mahaguru* awakened in him, Gurudev had a spiritual advisor by the name of Sitaramji of Dasua, whom he often consulted. Sitaramji of Dasua had a guru called Sitaramji of Banaras. Eventually, Gurudev had a mentor he addressed as Buddhhe Baba. His identity is shrouded in mystery. He was thought to be a manifestation of *Shiv* and visualised as a man in a white turban and grey beard. Few have seen him in form. Renu (Gurudev's daughter) and Puranji (one of Gurudev's senior disciples who saw him in his dreams) are two of the few. On deeper contemplation, I conjecture that he called his own *jivaatma* that. He would sometimes respond to intensely profound questions saying that he would consult with Buddhhe Baba before giving an answer. Gurudev referred to Buddhhe Baba as an omnipresent part of his life and ours.

Adi Shankaracharya, despite being one of the greatest spiritual whiz kids in history and a master of philosophy, was aware he needed a guru to evolve. Since he was born enlightened, he knew who his guru would be, but had to search for him and woo him for *diksha* (initiation). Get it he did, and then went on to become the saviour of Hinduism and one of the greatest philosophers known to mankind.

Similarly, without Ramakrishna Paramahansa, there would be no Vivekananda and without Totapuri, Ramakrishna would be nothing more than a *sadhu* (ascetic) in a trance.

Yogananda Parmahansa, the author of *The Autobiography of a Yogi*, was the spiritual creation of his guru, Yukteshwar Giri, who in turn was the creation of his guru, Lahiri Mahasaya, who in turn was the creation of his guru, Mahaavatar Babaji.

Spiritual gurus have been pivots in the lives of most spiritual greats. Ram, who is worshipped as a god in India, though brilliant even in his early years, needed the counsel and guidance of Guru Vashisht to evolve, lead a life of non-duality and serve as an iconic king. His rule is still considered exemplary and the phrase, '*Ram Rajya*' or the 'Rule of Ram' was coined after him.

Krishna, admired and worshipped by millions, needed to go to Guru Sandipani Muni for fine-tuning.

The Buddha had many gurus who allied in various ways to create the infrastructure needed for his final emancipation.

There was a spiritually volcanic period of sorts, between the 8th and 3rd century BC, called the Axial Age. It was a period when a number of sages, prophets, teachers and gurus like Confucius, Lao-Tse, Buddha, Zarathustra, Mahavir, Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, to name a few, had a profound influence on future philosophies and religions.

History clearly reveals that almost no spiritual evolution has ever been possible without the teachings of a guru.

Do I still think there is relevance in having a guru? The answer is yes. Provided he is relevant to your destiny. You have to be born lucky to get connected to a guru and a *siddh guru* at that. Many people who are in search of a guru and do not find one relevant to their nature, fast on Thursdays as a form of sacrifice and reverence to the planet of Guru (Jupiter). Often, the process involves a hit-and-miss until the right person is found. Fasting on Thursdays is a method of channelising the process of getting a guru using the power of intent rather than looking for one through media reports. Some people who came to the *sthan* by word of mouth, reference or recommendation, had been fasting for several months or years before they arrived.

It is said that the guru finds his disciple and not the other way around. However, this may not apply to devotees and admirers. Furthermore, destiny is another key factor at play. Unless destined, neither would a guru be a guru, nor a disciple, a disciple!

A Guru and His Gunas

Spiritually, the level of consciousness, be it of a guru, disciple, devotee, follower or admirer, determines the depth of qualifications needed for the role being performed and the path being followed.

Consciousness has three *gunas* and the amalgam of these *gunas* defines the qualities of a guru:

(1) Tamasic: The quality of inertia, imbalance, violence, negativity and decadence. These qualities are generally associated with lower levels of consciousness.

Tamasic gurus offer *bali* (sacrifices) and instigate or even teach their disciples negative *tantra vidya* (black magic), including casting spells and spiritually harming people by blocking their good luck and fortune. Since the services of *tamasic* gurus can be bought, they teach their disciples to do the same, considering it an opportunity to make money. If the disciple is loyal and dedicated, he will imbibe these qualities, become *tamasic* in nature and emulate his guru.

Tantra vidya is a double-edged sword. While some practitioners use it to harm people, others use it to cure diseases and solve issues with the help of spirits. Indian villages are dotted with practitioners who *jhaad phook* (dust away) diseases by using lemons, coconuts and other such materials by placing them at road crossings, (which inherently collect energy due to frictional losses of people's aura crossing each other). Such paraphernalia hold the negative energy of a diseased person that gets transferred to a spiritually weak person passing by.

(2) Rajasic: The quality of dynamism, ambition, passion, egoism, individualism, outward projection and perpetual greed. The *rajasic* qualities of grit and perseverance and being able to rise socially by endorsing oneself can be effective tools to use for personal gains. The art of manipulating, impressing and benefiting from others is also considered *rajasic*. *Rajasic* people are achievers and highly motivated, self-disciplined, and have the ability to ward off negative energies.

Rajasic gurus teach their disciples *rajasic* qualities such as the art of warfare and self-protection, reading of scriptures and epics, politics and kingship, governance and management, philanthropy and recitation of mantras of *rajasic* deities (like Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, for example), yoga, rituals, ornamental style of worship, and where required, the technique of performing havan (petitioning celestial powers using the medium of fire) and animal sacrifice.

Gurus with such qualities are more demonstrative and are easily prone to pomp and show. Expecting to be treated with respect, they are happy to receive favours, live life king-size and get wealthy by way of donations (including being weighed in gold in some outrageous cases). Some of these alleged gurus build palatial *ashrams* where one may even have to pay for the air one breathes, in a manner of speaking. Often, these nouveau riche spiritualists run out of their positive karmic balance and either suffer bad luck in this life or write a cheque of sorrow to themselves, encashable in the future.

(3) Sattvic: The quality of minimalism and contentment, balance and harmony, giving and sharing, caring and benefiting others. Such people are non-controversial and prefer being back-benchers, away from the limelight. They do not indulge in conflict and for them, acceptance is a virtue. Theirs is a path of non-violence and hence, they do not advocate wars, physical or spiritual.

Sattvic gurus teach their disciples to unlearn almost everything, and practice detachment or *vairagya* (dispassion) as one of the key learnings. They explain the concept of *maya* and teach ways to live beyond it. Controlling the senses and going beyond the mind and intellect is the mission of the *sattvic* traveller. The objective however, is *mukti* (a lower form of spiritual freedom) or *moksh* (a higher form of spiritual freedom).

Golden Principle: It is not about 'getting what you want' but 'wanting what you get'.

The Guna Mix

A combination of all three qualities exists in every being, including the guru. A *siddh guru* is one who utilises the *gunas* of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*, balancing them for the benefit of his disciples.

One of the essential learnings in spiritual life is to know how to protect oneself from negative vibrations generated by spirits, entities in non-physical form and other energies. Negative vibrations are often attracted inadvertently by people who pass through road crossings where such energies have been discharged. They can also be directed through planetary effects, unseen

forces, powerful people, curses of ancestors or those performing black magic.

Spiritual evolution is the goal of *sattva*. All spiritualists need *sattvic* qualities to balance their growth and advancement. As they advance, their *guna* mix changes and evolves. The percentage of *sattva* increases, until very little and only that which is useful is left of *rajas* and *tamas*.

Krishna displayed all three qualities in varying degrees, in several circumstances. The orchestration of the epic, The Mahabharat, showcased his *rajasic* qualities. To change the cultural ethos of the people of that age, he needed to manipulate the Battle of Kurukshetra and sacrifice thousands to set the stage for the betterment of future generations. Great spiritual leaders like Guru Gobind Singh, while fighting for the rights of the innocent, displayed *rajasic* qualities. Prophet Muhammad had to call upon his *rajasic* qualities and, through conflict, set right the decadence of the era in which he lived. These leaders called upon their *rajasic* qualities to achieve *sattvic* goals.

Many spiritual teachers like the *aghoris* have a dominance of *tamas* in their *guna* mix and use *tantric* learnings to evolve to higher levels. Some sects of Buddhism use *tantric* methods for self-evolution, as do practitioners of Shamanism, South American sorcery and African tribal rituals.

At this point, I would like to clarify an almost universally misunderstood (and feared) concept—*tantra*. *Tantra* is a spiritual science that helps aspirants attain the use of spiritual powers by indulging in various practices. Power is inherently neither negative nor positive. It is the use or misuse of power which categorises it as such. Thus, even the much maligned *tantric* power can be used for good.

In fact, many *tantric* rituals are used for self-protection, relieving physical pain and curing ailments. Unfortunately, the word has been badly tainted due to the negative use of its powers by certain practitioners.

When a guru looks for a disciple, he examines his *guna* mix. He assesses how much he can alter the mix, and whether he can lead the disciple from mainly *tamas* and *rajas* to predominantly *sattva*.

The Guru Introduces You to You

Most people know themselves at a superficial level.

Nobody can introduce you to yourself better than your guru. A *siddh guru* who has the intuitive knowledge to recognise you beyond your physical self, knows you at the three distinct levels of the body, mind, and spirit, whereas you only know what you perceive of yourself. Or worse, what you believe others perceive of you. By introducing you to you, he introduces you to your destiny and *gunas*, helping you to accept yourself on an as-is-where-is basis. He makes you understand and engage in self-acceptance and self-respect.

Your evaluation of yourself is mainly physical and limited to the memory of this life. As you cannot know the sequence of the multiple lives of your spirit body, you cannot judge the core that led to your conditioning or destiny. Your guru however, understands your chemistry and potency and can intuitively see your future potential. When I told Gurudev I felt like a fool as I knew nothing about spiritualism and had barely read the subject, he scoffed and said, he knew how much *gyan* I really had.

By showing you your worth, your guru makes you look at yourself in totality, and it is this that helps you to understand your being. Only when a disciple understands the totality of who and what he is, can he play music to the words '*Tat Twam Asi*' or 'That Thou Art' which means, at the core, you are a part of the consciousness supreme.

Golden Principle: In the final analysis, the guru introduces the disciple to the disciple's inner being, and within that being lies the ultimate guru.

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.

—Aristotle

The Gurukul System

Since time immemorial, gurus have played a pivotal role in the lives of spiritual aspirants. Then, in India, the ancient *guru-shishya parampara* was revered and flourished under the *gurukul* system (school for spiritualism).

Disciples followed a wide range of subjects to advance spiritually.

1. Scriptures

For several millennia, the process of studying the scriptures was a structured one. People who were thought capable of studying spiritualism were admitted to a *gurukul*, where education was divided into theory, practice and mentorship. Scriptures were to be understood and memorised so that they could rest within the subconscious and be recollected during *tark-vitark* (spiritual debates). Memorising them enabled the student to apply them in his life's journey.

2. Mantra Vidya

At *gurukuls*, students were taught higher-order mantras that were specifically created by sages of ancient India. Mantras generate sound vibrations that add to the aura or energy levels of those who recite them. The mantras of the Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jain and other faiths, also fall into this category. However, mantras can be used positively as well as negatively. Positively, they can be used to heal, defend against spiritual attacks and strengthen one's aura. They also form a telepathic connection between the seeker and the collective power of the deity or concept to which they are attributed. If the mantra is attributed to planets, it will connect to their rays as well. For example, the guru mantra will connect to the power and concept of guru, including the rays of Jupiter. If the mantras are attributed to a deceased saint, they will home in to his energy field, which exists in an ethereal dimension. Negatively, mantra recitation can be used to harm and hurt others.

Golden Principle: The multiplicity of mantra recitation enables one to connect to the relevant power at the macrocosmic level and awaken the representation of that power in the microcosmic self. Thereby connecting the outer and inner sources of the same power within one's self.

Mantras would be used in specific circumstances and were to be recited while sitting in a specific *asana* or seat. For example, the Gayatri Mantra was best recited while seated on a *kusha* grass mat or deerskin. The more advanced version of the mantra, known as the Mahagayatri Mantra, was to be recited while immersed in water. The Mahamritunjay Mantra was chanted while seated on a particular animal skin or a *kusha* grass mat, while the Chamunda Mantra was best recited in a forest or while seated on a deerskin. Other mantras were more effectively chanted in cowsheds, during eclipses, and so on. Several such permutations and combinations are usable in *mantra vidya* (the science of mantras).

The intent of such technicalities is to ensure that the energy vibrations of the mantra are optimally absorbed by the human body and little is dissipated into the atmosphere. A part of the dissipation adds to the aura or energy of the location. Some of it would be absorbed by the *asana* or seat. It is for this reason that *asanas* are bad conductors of electricity that neither absorb nor discharge it quickly. As it is not possible to perform all the suggested *asanas* on animal skins, we use blankets, pure cotton sheets or cotton mattresses, instead. In his formative years, Gurudev would wrap himself in a blanket or sheet while sitting to recite his mantras.

Gurudev advised us to try and keep a fixed time for recitation of mantras. This helped the body clock to be subconsciously prepared for this practice. Just like the body clock initiates the secretions to digest food at regular meal times, so also, being preconditioned, the body is more conducive to the practice of the mantra and is programmed to concentrate at that time.

Besides *mantra vidya*, students in *gurukuls* were taught meditation techniques and yogic postures that could help them evolve physically and spiritually. They were taught mind control techniques since the teachers knew that without controlling the mind, the pupils would not be able to focus on spiritual practices.

People in ancient times used mind control for various purposes. They used their energies to propel weapons, lift and move objects and so forth. I have witnessed this in a vision, in the early hours of the morning, in a separate reality. The Lakshman Rekha from the *Ramayan* is a famous example of the use of energy directed by the power of the mind. Even today, some of us have

learnt how to create a *keel* (a circle of spiritual protection), using energy that cannot be penetrated easily by spirits or negative forces.

As time passed, human beings slowly, but steadily, lost their ability to mobilise spiritual energy. In our day and age, even very powerful mantras work only at the level of the aura and do not have the same effect they once did. We cannot move objects or materialise things with the help of mantras like our ancestors could. Could it be a change in the axis or gravitational pull of the earth, or is there some other scientific phenomena that has made mind over matter virtually theoretical rather than practical? Currently there is no answer to this question, but I am sure it will be unravelled in time.

3. Mentorship

Once the knowledge of the scriptures was imparted and the students of the *gurukul* were trained for years in mantra, *tantra* and yoga, they were sent to a senior spiritual mentor who could examine their grasp of the subject and the quantum of learning. He would fill the gaps in their knowledge and test them on their attitudes and *gunas*. Thereafter, he would take them under his tutelage and allow them to observe his daily chores, his solution-finding skills and ways of dealing with people.

The mentor taught higher levels of *tantra*, *yantra* (occult mystical diagrams) and mantras to his advanced pupils, along with several types of meditation, including techniques for *samadhi* (highest level of consciousness). He continually observed their attitudes and helped refine them. He fine-tuned their understanding of philosophy and deeper subjects like duality and *maya*. He taught them the elements of *brahmavidya* (incomprehensible knowledge of the universe) or higher spiritual concepts that led to overcoming delusion. He taught them to earn, harness and use spiritual energy.

To assess the strength of his teachings, the mentor would often test his students to observe positive changes and shortcomings. Those who did well in their tests and in overall studentship were promoted. They were given special attention, sometimes even chosen to be the successors or disciples of the mentor at the institution.

The mentorship program, besides helping students expand their mind and improve their *gunas*, also focused on gaining self-control and practicing self-

discipline. Another part of the curriculum was waking up at specific times, fasting for hours or days, and performing certain designated duties. Service to others, be they humans, animals or plants, helped the students shed some karmic baggage.

Gurukuls to this day believe in teaching their students the concept of *seva*. Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Zoroastrianism also show an obvious inclination towards service. The Parsi trusts in India are stellar examples of how a small community can, through the practice of social work and charity, achieve a lot for their community and others.

The *gurukul* system is followed by many cults and religions. In Gurudev's world, the system had to be reinvented due to limitations of funds. Our homes became our *ashrams* and a cabinet on the wall became our temple. Being householders, we had no formal attire or uniforms, and could blend in. Our methods were casual but the results were not.



***Unfettered devotion is how
spiritual journeys begin.
They culminate with the realisation
of the divinity within.***

Admirer to Disciple

On his journey towards spiritual advancement, a disciple goes through various stages of evolution, from *shraddha* (devotion) to *bhakti* (worship). The final stage however, is not of worshipping the guru, but instead, worshipping the guru within. Therefore, even though the journey may start with devotion, it ends with acceptance and self-worship.

There is an enormous difference between devotion and acceptance. While devotion is a matter of heightened emotion, acceptance is a more centred approach, without emotion as its power source.

Stages of Evolution

Stage 1: Admirer

It is not necessary that every admirer of a guru will become his follower, devotee or disciple.

An admirer is a person who appreciates certain qualities in another. One does not have to be a guru to be admired. So long as admiration remains inspirational, it leads to self-improvement. Since energy flows to and from where attention goes, what you consistently admire, you attract towards yourself. This is how the human magnet attracts attributes and qualities from other sources.

In Stage 1, a guru is highly recommended by someone trustworthy. Initially, an admirer will examine the guru by analysing his demeanour and actions. He is susceptible to other people's opinions of the guru and even discusses him with others. Once convinced that the person he has accepted as his guru matches up to his expectations, the admirer, reassured, ends his search.

People sometimes pick a celebrity from the world of *Guruism* and consider them their guru. This usually is a one-way street, where the admirer has only remotely seen or heard the preacher on television or some other media. The preacher is oblivious to the existence of such an admirer. There are incidents in history, of admirers having gained from such a hypothetical relationship,

but my experience has taught me that the subject is far more intense and needs personal indulgence. A relationship of interaction far outweighs a remote one.

If lucky, the admirer will find a mentor tutoring him one-on-one, instead of attending a distance learning program.

Feeling grateful for having found a genuine guru, the admirer anticipates the numerous benefits he would gain on his spiritual journey. At this stage, he enjoys hearing stories about the man he has chosen as his preceptor; be they about his acts, miracles or spiritual capabilities. The reflected glory of the guru acquires a higher market cap!

A guru will do all he can to motivate his admirers towards his philosophy and lifestyle. He will devote time and indulge them by pointing out the pros and cons of spiritual life, teaching them several practices and inspiring them to delve deeper into the subject. He selects those that need to be advanced to the next stage—the follower. Many admirers are content being admirers and have a limited spiritual appetite.

Stage 2: Follower

When you consistently admire someone, choose to emulate their qualities and become like them, you are a follower. The follower of a guru constantly observes and analyses his words, deeds and actions, which he then tries to emulate.

In Stage 2, the follower looks at all the positives of the guru and stores every conversation in a designated mental folder. He cherishes every moment he spends with him and tries to emulate him. If the guru appreciates him, the follower is happy. If the guru reprimands him, he is sad and depressed. It is virtually like a child's relationship with his teacher. The emotions oscillate like a pendulum. Spiritual maturity has yet to surface.

Initially, many people are attracted to the *sthans* because they realise these are pure spiritual sanctuaries with no commercial agenda. While many will want to delve deeper into the subject, they will have to overcome the distractions and obstacles of their shaky faith.

An interesting case comes to mind of an architect who flies to Mumbai from Delhi, only to discuss and seek clarity on the concepts she has read in the *Hingori Sutras*. I find it obligatory to spend time answering her queries. What I find inspiring is, despite being successful in her career, she wants to progress beyond a mundane existence. She does not lack spiritual potency but progressing to the stage of devotee will need more than being mystified by the subject. She will have to stand at the threshold of faith and take the plunge.

Stage 3: Devotee

Sustained admiration for the guru leads to devotion and once the follower develops a connection with his guru that is vested in faith, he is transformed into a devotee. When a devotee starts worshipping his guru, his faith in the philosophical system within which his guru operates, is unshakable. At that juncture, he is just a few steps away from complete surrender to the will of his guru.

People often sing hymns in praise of their spiritual masters to describe them metaphorically. Worship is usually theatrical and always associated with devotion and emotion.

At this stage, a devotee worships his guru with overwhelming emotions. Every time he thinks about him, his throat gets heavy and eyes wet. Immersed in the thoughts of his guru, he bows at his feet, both mentally and physically. He recites mantras and prayers before the image of his guru, seeks his blessings, requests favours and talks to the image as if it were omnipresent. Often, he gets answers from the image (which may come from his own inner mind) and qualifies that as a two-way communication with his guru.

During my devotee phase, I burned *dhoop* (incense), lit *diyas* and offered flowers to Gurudev's photograph placed in a small temple in my house. It was my sanctum sanctorum and gave me peace and satisfaction. This personalised temple became an important part of my existence and I would often head towards it either to offer gratitude when something positive transpired or ask for help when the issue appeared negative. I would talk to the temple as if it were an extension of my higher self. Believe it or not, I

would get responses that were hard to explain and difficult to analyse. Consequently, I thought devotion to my guru was of a high order.

Pooja and Vipin, both of whom are closely connected to me spiritually, have also seen divine signs in their home temple. On several occasions, they have spotted an Om in the flame of the *diya*. During her meditative moments, Pooja has seen Gurudev's head move in his photograph.

Devraj has received answers on several occasions from Gurudev's photograph in his home temple. His inexplicable conversation with Gurudev during Mahashivratri is a fitting example of devotion.

On the day of Mahashivratri, Devraj and a few *sevadaars* were instructed to make *jal* (water energised with mantras). Devraj recalls, "Guruji asked us to join in this procedure so we could contribute our energies for the benefit of others. But my curious mind wondered how we could consume the *jal*, which we were making with a selfless intent for others. Persistently questioning Guruji yielded no answer.

The trouble was the question would crop up in my mind in the middle of the night and hinder my sleep. Also, I was not feeling too well at the time, and hence, felt the need to consume the *jal*. And each time I did, the unanswered question pained me more.

One day, I figured the only way to get an answer from my guru was to appeal to his guru, Gurudev.

On being troubled by the question, I would message Guruji seeking an answer and simultaneously appeal to Gurudev's photograph in my home temple. This continued for a fortnight or so.

Frustrated, but determined to get an answer, I texted my guru one night. Receiving no reply, I pleaded with Gurudev for an answer. To my utter surprise, I got one! Gurudev said, 'Son, why are you worried when you do not even have the *jal* with you?'

I was shocked. I had been consuming the *jal* regularly. Rushing to the shelf where it was kept, I found it missing.

I woke my wife and asked her if she had seen the bottle. Dazed she replied, 'Are you referring to the bottle of dirty water? I drained it in the sink!' I

laughed and asked her to go back to sleep.

It is impossible my wife would have intentionally done what she did, especially since she knew what the bottle contained. Something had prompted her to do so without realising it. What it was, I will never know. But one thing was clear, I sincerely believe Gurudev wanted to get a message across."

Days later, Devraj mentioned this to his guru who finally explained the significance, "Of course *jal* is important. The energy it possesses can help in countless situations, so there is no harm in consuming the collective energy. However, our ultimate goal should be to evolve to a level where every drop of water we consume becomes *jal* in our body."

For many of us, the tiny miracles in our home temples ensured that our growing devotion to Gurudev knew no bounds.

Stage 4: Disciple

Stage 4 is a difficult one. I did not know such a stage existed. Once the guru accepts the devotee's surrender and a homogeneous link is created between them, a devotee evolves into a disciple. It is not when he considers himself one but only when his guru accepts him as such. Until then, he must await his turn. While for some this wait can extend across lifetimes, for others, destiny allows a fast-track, provided the being is preconditioned and has the requisite *gunas* (qualities).

Complete surrender to the guru means surrender of the ego, body, mind and spirit.

A discerning disciple who identifies with his guru, understands and accepts the guru's training methods. He is acutely observant of himself and can function as a trainee and trainer at the same time. With such acceptance and surrender comes desirelessness. A disciple undertakes the tasks allotted to him by his guru as duties that must be performed. His mind becomes quiet and more attuned to his spiritual body than his physical one.

The disciple is inseparable from his guru because he realises the guru and he are the same, being part of the same consciousness supreme, except at

distinct stages in their spiritual journeys. He accepts his guru and himself on an as-is-where-is basis.

A personal example from the formative years of my spiritual training may help clarify this. One night, I awoke on hearing a voice coming from close to my ear. It asked me if I worshipped my guru because he was powerful or because many admired him. I replied, I worshipped my guru because of who he was and all he had done for me. The voice persisted and wanted to know if I would accept him even if he was not as great as I thought, or if he was not honest enough and deceived people into believing in him and his powers. What if he just had some *tantric* powers, which were enough to impress, and had managed to impress me as well? Would I still accept him?

Confused, I did not know the answer. I knew my guru was a great man, and that was a given. Having contemplated these questions, the eventual answer was not one that was contrived, but heartfelt. I would accept him as my guru irrespective of how great he was. Even if he were not completely honest with me, I would surrender to him and accept him on an as-is-where-is basis.

Yes! On an as-is-where-is basis; that was the golden principle. I would accept Gurudev as my guru unconditionally. I believed my fate had assigned me to Gurudev and I would do nothing to change that even if I could.

It was clearly the voice of my own spirit communicating with me and not an external source. When the conviction of this realisation dawned, my relationship with Gurudev changed from physical to metaphysical. The next morning, I realised the emotion in my relationship with my guru and my home temple had receded. I started accepting and worshipping both in a matter-of-fact manner. I began relating to my guru as a being who had existed since eternity, and would continue to exist, even when his 5 feet 8 inch physical frame passed on.

Prior to this experience, every time I went to Gurgaon to meet Gurudev, I would be desperate to be around him. I would use every trick in the book to get into his room, take his blessings and delay my departure. Anything to be in his presence, to spend time with him, listen to his words, watch his expressions, his movements and observe his body language. The fact that his consciousness extended beyond his physical manifestation and could, at will,

merge with mine, or for that matter, any other life form, caused a change in my thinking and behaviour. I was no longer desperate to be in his presence. I was happy to offer my salutations to him at his door, even without him knowing I was there. I stopped being a devotee and instead, acknowledged the omnipresent status of his being.

Gurudev used to often leave his body on astral travels. So years later, when I was informed of Gurudev's death, I laughed, realising that this was another one of his disappearing acts; perhaps a comparatively longer or permanent one.

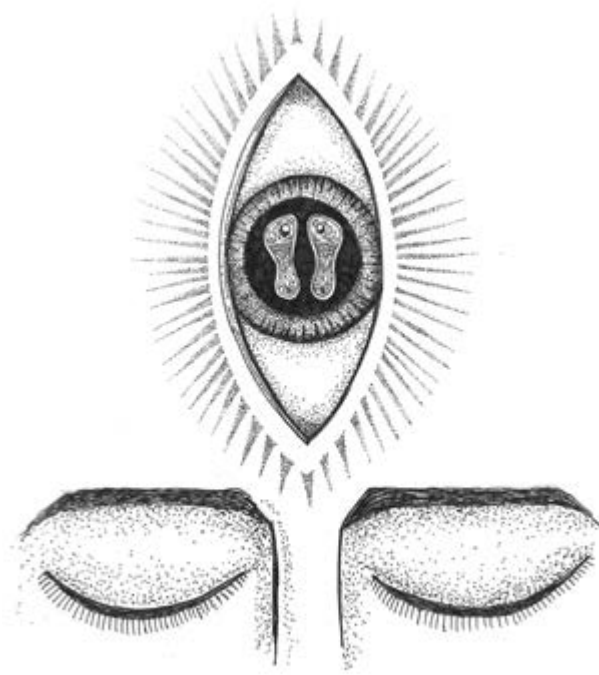
Unemotional reverence for your guru is *sattvic* and one step prior to the ultimate relationship, which is finding no difference between oneself and the guru.

Stage 4 is not comparable to any other.

At all stages, continue to assess your relationship with your guru. And then, let it evolve, as it does, when it does.

*One moment spent
In the company of saints
Is far better
Than praying for a hundred years.*

-Rumi



*We are blind with seeing eyes,
believing we're what we are not.
He lifts the veils of untruths
and frees us from the rot.*

Disciple: Lesser or Greater

There is a distinguishable difference in the stages of evolution of a disciple from when he first visits his guru, to when he evolves into being one. Most disciples come as novices, not having had experiences like spiritual dreams or uncommon visions.

Most people first visit a guru, not to take *diksha*, but to seek answers on material or financial issues and cures for physical or mental ailments. For a layman to believe that a human being can have the power to cure another by purely willing it, is farfetched. However, since desperate times call for desperate measures, they are willing to go the distance. Some are led by curiosity, while others are interested in the scriptures or spiritual discourses. Still others come to learn meditation. If impressed, they hang around and become followers. When people visit a guru, they are mostly looking for quick fixes.

When I first visited Gurudev in 1977, it was only because I had rheumatoid arthritis and was told he could cure me. A year earlier, a terminally ill acquaintance had visited Gurudev and was healed miraculously. Waiting in queue to meet Gurudev, I was told the gentleman ahead of me would throw up on consuming solids, and this had been his state for the last six months. Gurudev made him have *aloo parathas* (Indian potato tortillas), and not only did he stop throwing up, but was cured, all in the matter of half-an-hour! The gentleman and his family were overjoyed.

On our first meeting, Gurudev deliberately cured only 95% of my pain. I was delighted, but had no intention of ever meeting him again. For me, this was a one-time transaction.

He cures.

I get cured.

He does not charge a dime.

Thanks a lot.

And that was that!

But destiny had a different plan.

I felt spiritualism was meant for nerds and in my opinion, I certainly was not one! I thought gurus were escape artists, running away from reality and worshipping a set of gods who did not exist. I pitied them and was happy people donated for their upkeep, like they did for the preservation of animals. A foolish thought, but that is how I felt at the time. I saw myself as a cool guy who had a lot going for him. I had immense self-confidence and felt that most people appeared to be suffering from an inferiority complex. I almost pitied everyone! (Fortunately, there were no awards for arrogance, else I would have won a few.) However, destiny had a completely different life in store for me from the one I wanted to lead. And so, after five years, when my rheumatoid arthritis recurred, I returned to Gurudev. This time round, I got into the loop.

During my second innings with Gurudev, I developed faith and recognised his greatness. How did this man have all the makings of greatness I did not even know existed? How easy it was for him to cure people and let his blessings manifest! By now I did not, even for a moment, doubt his spiritual prowess and the incredibly powerful energies he controlled. What seemed incomprehensible was how dwarfed I felt in his presence. I finally realised it was not others, but me, who had the inferiority complex. I was in denial of my spiritual reality, engaging in commercial activities and material gratification, assuming I was on the right track. It was embarrassing to realise who the real escape artist was.

I felt like the proverbial village idiot. And yet, Gurudev looked at me from a perpetuity standpoint and not from where I was at that specific cross-section of time and space. He told Mrs. Jolly, one of his devotees, I would go places someday. He said, "This boy will be able to attract many people towards our subject." Thankfully, the boy did not hear that until 30 years later, for he may have never believed it then.

It was Gurudev's aim to make his disciples progress beyond him. He said to one of them, "I can only see from the level of my eyes but I will carry you on my shoulders so you can see from much higher." When I told him how illiterate I was about spiritualism, he smiled and said, "You are a guru. You are my son. Gurus create gurus."

At this point, I am tempted to request you, the reader, to take stock of what you hold as your self-opinion. Personally, the distance I believe I have travelled over the last few decades, from dummkopf to divine, is not a real distance. It is merely the fulfilment of a process that was to happen. I made a judgement about myself at a different cross-section of time, and observed myself as a point on the line rather than the line itself. This is the mistake many of you may make too. And so, not being able to see yourself as the line, which extends not only across your past and present but also into the future, you might evaluate yourself too lowly. May I recommend that you have more faith in the rest of the line?

Spiritual giants such as Jesus Christ, Sage Valmiki, King Vishwamitra, The Buddha etc, could possibly have seen themselves in a poor light before evolving spiritually.

A siddh guru can judge a seed and foresee the potential tree.

In the *Bible*, Jesus told his apostle, Peter, "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." (*Gospel of John 18:13-27*) This meant that Jesus knew how the future would unfold. He knew how Peter would deny him, even as he knew that someday Peter would evolve and ably deliver his teachings to many others, being one of the rocks on which his church would eventually be built.

A siddh guru will always examine the potency of a disciple; the potency as it exists, and its potential to evolve. When Rajeev was brought to me as an alcoholic, I saw in him the saint he would be in the future. When Vipin's father complained to me about his son not being commercially inclined, I knew he would serve many people in the future and earn his father's goodwill.

Disciples Can Evolve Beyond Their Guru

Many students have gone beyond their teachers, be it in the field of education, music, dance, sport or art. In school, our teachers seemed like giants whose level we thought we could never reach, and yet we did. In some cases, went beyond.

There have been cases in the history of *Guruism* where the disciple, having evolved beyond his guru, has helped in the evolution of his guru.

The Buddha studied spiritualism from multiple teachers. Much later, his first teacher from his father's kingdom, Alara Kalama, became his student.

Guru Gorakshanath, Adi Shankaracharya and Ramakrishna Paramahansa are exemplary disciples who have evolved to perceivably higher levels than their teachers. The evolution of a disciple to a higher status is definitely a compliment to the guru who went beyond himself. It shows the generosity of the teacher and the fact that he did not think competitively, only gracefully!

Spiritual Hierarchy

It is not easy to assess spiritual people. They come in all avatars and from all walks of life. There is no standard procedure to follow. A man on the street may be more spiritually advanced than one in saffron. Looks and style, knowledge of scriptures and oratory abilities, do not necessarily a spiritualist make. There are other attitudes and practices, coupled with destiny and intent, that make an individual rise on the spiritual ladder.

A disciple may far exceed his peers and reach a higher stage of evolution in a shorter time span. This is not only because he may be more focused or enthusiastic, but also because in his previous lives he may have already reached a particular stage of evolution. Moreover, if he took birth at a particular *mahurat* (auspicious time), he would be able to advance much higher and carry the baton a good distance.

This is evident in the case of several Buddhist monks who take rebirth to spiritually evolve further. Somehow, the Buddhists get signs about the reincarnation of a dead Lama, whom they bring back as a toddler to nurture at the monastery. Meera, a dedicated devotee of a Buddhist order, shared a story about Thuksey Rinpoche, currently, a 30-year-old Buddhist monk running a school in Leh. This school was started by him in his last life, wherein he had a disciple called Gyalwang Dhukpa. After Thuksey Rinpoche's death and reincarnation, he was mentored by Gyalwang Dhukpa in this life.

Strangely the disciple is a disciple of his own disciple of the past!

Fabulous mind twister, isn't it? To shock you further, would you find it easy to believe that even the courts have transferred the school land to Thuksey Rinpoche, accepting the fact that he is the reincarnation of his former self, and therefore, the former landowner!

Generally, the hierarchy that exists in many spiritual orders is based purely on chronological grounds and not on spiritual ones. However, just because a person met his guru on a particular date, does not mean he is spiritually more advanced than someone who might meet his guru later. A younger person, with the right spiritual antecedents, might easily be more advanced than a person with more spiritual experience in this life. Chronological seniority makes sense in the armed forces but not in the spiritual world. The age of a spirit is never measured by the age of the flesh!

Golden Principle: In spiritualism, one should compete only with oneself and not with others.

The above concept was shared with me by Dr. Shankar Narayan, so often, that it has become a part of my psyche. He practices what he preaches. Even though he was Gurudev's senior at work, he would bow at his feet, regardless of how others reacted. Gurudev had asked his first disciple, Malhotraji, to give the doctor his first mantra. Though Dr. Shankar Narayan was older than the man giving the mantra, and senior in office, he still bowed and touched his feet and showed respect when it came to their spiritual relationship.

I have seen many religious orders suffer from the 'hierarchy malady'. Therefore, the right man does not always get the right job and often, the most spiritual person of that order does not get the lead because he joined later, or is comparatively younger. Thus, the spiritual order is forced to suffer the leadership of a less worthy person.

Pity, isn't it?

Even Jesus said, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (*Mathew 20:16*). For spiritual organisations to succeed and inspire many, they need to ensure leadership by capability and not chronology.

A disciple's success is measured not by his seniority but by the amalgam of his qualities.



***"Let no man in this world live in delusion.
Without a Guru, none can cross over to the other shore."***

–Guru Nanak Dev

Journey Towards Disciplehood

In my formative years as a spiritualist, I had no aspirations to become a guru and it was certainly not on my agenda. However, Gurudev had a different plan, but how was I to know that!

Before I first visited Gurudev, I was in pursuit of a fake PhD (on any subject), just so I could address myself as 'Doctor'. I also aspired to become the Consul General of some godforsaken country, just for style. Showing off came to me like swimming does to a fish. I loved every ounce of attention I got. I was a non-vegetarian and not only did I drink alcohol, I also made liqueurs at home. Moreover, I was an atheist and mocked the gods and goddesses. My grandmother was pious and had multiple spiritual teachers. It pleased me to argue with her about them. When in a good mood, I would argue with the spiritual teachers as well. Are these the attributes a spiritual master would expect from a prospective disciple? Was I unqualified to be a disciple?

Perhaps, this does not warrant an answer!

Yet, here was a guru who took a small test, after which he predicted I would get more than I imagined. And I did.

What were the qualifications he must have looked for in his disciples? Surely, there were some.

Let us examine the case of Surenderji, an alcoholic with no spiritual inclination whatsoever. Although he had no desire to meet Gurudev, his older brother would often request Gurudev to visit their home to rectify Surenderji's attitude. Gurudev obliged on a few occasions. Surenderji, unlike everyone else, would casually greet Gurudev and head directly towards his room. One day, Gurudev knocked on his door and said he wanted to discuss an urgent matter. Upon the door opening, Gurudev said, "Son, I do not want you to carry out the murder you have planned. Since you are not going to succeed, you will become miserable and that would not be good for you." Surenderji fell at Gurudev's feet, shocked and bewildered. How could

Gurudev have known of his well-rehearsed plan to murder when he had not mentioned it to anyone?

Surenderji went on to become one of Gurudev's most loved disciples. He grew highly spiritual, but stayed humble. During an engaging conversation, he talked me into giving up alcohol and non-vegetarian food. I could sense from his aura that he was no ordinary mortal, even though he behaved like one.

Gurudev taught me how to choose disciples and the first rule is to choose those who do not want to be chosen. I find religious, or for that matter, even spiritually pre-conditioned people, have a lot already embossed on their minds. It takes a long time to erase their preconceived notions of spiritualism. I prefer someone like Darius who loves rugby and club nights and yet, I see a saint in him. I knew with a little nurturing, this plant could grow well and share its fruits with many. People like Vipran barely look spiritual and when they speak, even that vanishes. And yet, I felt behind his rough exterior, there was a very old soul with many achievements, wanting to reconnect with its own past. By now, such disciples have each participated in the healing of at least a few thousand people.

Gurudev's disciples were an assortment of various shapes and sizes. Merely a handful came from religious backgrounds, while most others had colourful and checkered pasts.

Most of us came to Gurudev on some pretext or the other. None had the qualifications of being admitted to even an *ashram*. Yet, he not only handpicked us, but also tutored us to become spiritualists to reach the standards he set.

The Disciple's Qualities

A *siddh guru* will always know the strength of a potential disciple's spirit. He will also try to sense the connection between the person's destiny and his spiritual growth.

A guru looks for certain qualities in his disciple, many of which were noticeable in Gurudev's disciples.

1. Sense of Awareness

You can always look into a person's eyes to see how receptive he is when in the company of his guru. Is he trying to absorb what is being said? Does he understand it or not? Does he have the desire to learn and is willing to focus on the subject?

The power of observation comes handy when the disciple begins to observe himself. At some point he will have to learn to observe his thoughts, reactions and feelings. Only then will he be able to make a self-assessment, which can later lead to self-improvement. Awareness also helps in self-protection, as a spiritual person should be aware of any negative energies trying to attack either him, or someone closely connected. If there is a connivance of certain powers to lure the spiritualist into some kind of temptation, awareness will help foil those plans.

Moreover, the magnetic pull of a spiritualist's lower *chakras*, keeps his consciousness hovering at a lower level, leading to the indulgence in baser instincts, thereby being temptation of the senses. Awareness of this aspect not only safeguards a spiritualist against such pitfalls but also helps to push him to higher levels.

2. Flexibility and Non-dogmatism

Human beings have preconceived notions about almost everything. Our past experiences and impressions ensure that we react in predictable ways to various circumstances. The guru may want to alter these reactions. He may want us to react differently from how we think we should. That change requires flexibility, and if the disciple has it, he is easier to tutor.

To overcome dogmatism is another task altogether. Most religions make people compartmentalise their minds about spiritual growth. How to pray and how many times, which direction to face while praying, what clothes to wear, what religious slogans to use, and what religious accessories to carry. Stringent rules can give rise to dogmas.

A *siddh guru* makes a disciple unlearn this and more, taking him to greater heights, unfazed by dogmatism or religious rules and regulations.

A *siddh guru* takes his disciple to an understanding beyond duality. If a disciple does not have flexibility, then not only he, but also his mentor, is handicapped in his desire to help the disciple evolve.

3. Sense of Sacrifice

A good disciple needs to have the ability to make sacrifices on various counts. He must be willing to sacrifice his comfort for his guru and others. There cannot be service without sacrifice and practice. It could be practices such as fasting and urging the body to go beyond itself, and sacrifices of time, money, opportunity and physical effort. To acquire certain spiritual skills, one may need to sacrifice certain pleasures. To overcome anger, one may need to control one's emotions, bear insults, be nice to people one dislikes, and so forth. Accepting the dislikable, is a sacrifice in itself.

A sense of sacrifice is a must for someone who aspires to spiritually evolve.

4. Sheer Guts

Safety and spiritualism do not always go together. Sometimes, there are unseen dangers one must surmount. Often, external forces, like spirits, affect people. Though less powerful than human beings, they may take advantage of being invisible, (hence difficult to sense) and cause trouble. Spiritual service includes safeguarding people against such external forces and negative energies transmittable through practices like black magic.

The curing of certain diseases and emancipating people from negative energies requires the healer to be brave enough to take those risks, since his aura may absorb some of those negative energies. The healer may also have to deal with small-time deities and energies linked to religious institutions like churches, temples and so on, that can harm people for spiritually egoistic reasons.

I have been attacked by spiritual energies on several occasions. While in Venice on a holiday with my wife, she insisted we visit a church. Walking across the church, I felt an invisible power push me with such force that I fell back several feet. Strangely, I was not injured.

Often, a disciple lacking courage may quit the spiritual path.

5. Initiative

It is easy to learn to philosophise and script a profound speech. While philosophy does sound impressive, it takes initiative and intent to put that philosophy into practice.

When Dr Vachhani initially came to me, I would refuse to meet him. He would wait for me outside my office and get hold of me when I was either entering or exiting the building. This he would do every day. He wanted to know more about spiritual subjects. A time came when I could almost sense him waiting outside. I could not help but admire the man's initiative, and for that reason, at most times, I would oblige. It has been a three decade long journey with him and gradually, but steadily, the sessions on spiritual chats changed to practice. Today, when he finds it difficult to cure his patients with allopathy, he sends them to the *sthan* for treatment, and sometimes, just wills them to improve.

Most gurus are not looking for yes-men. They would prefer disciples who have the capacity to grasp, understand, and act on their intuitions, rather than be governed by dogmatic rules and regulations.

It is initiative that makes a person go beyond expected levels of attainment.

6. Obedience

Disobedience and obedience are the snakes and ladders in the game of *Guruism*.

Gurudev had different rules for different people. There were restrictions given to certain disciples that were not given to others, thereby leaving most of us in a state of confusion and discussion. He told me not to consume salt and cereals at anybody's home including other *sthans*. Adhering to this instruction, I decided not to eat at the homes of my biological mother, my in-laws and my sisters. Most other disciples did not have these restrictions. I realised that he had a reason for making me follow this practice of abstinence. Having understood the significance, I have applied the same rule to many whom I mentor.

Tonyji shared a story with Darius in which Gurudev had asked him to start a *sthan* in Kashmir three decades ago. For reasons best known to him, he had declined. Today his *sthan* is where his boots are! A missed opportunity of a lifetime.

In a parallel story, I was one of the *sevadaars* in the main *sthan* in my city. Gurudev asked me to start a *sthan* in my own house. I felt awkward about

starting a *sthan* of my own, wanting to avoid the attention. I humbly requested him to allow me



*By blowing the trumpet to satiate pride,
by allowing the littleness to grow tall,
by befriending the chicanery of self-importance & praise,
you've set the soul up for a mighty fall.*

to continue to do *seva* at the main *sthan*. Being a spiritual bowler, he bowled another googly! And masterminded the circumstances that led to my forced sabbatical for three long years. Three years later when he repeated his request, I jumped at it with alacrity.

Both obedience and loyalty to a guru are qualities a good disciple must have. You may have your own opinion, but it is only by placing your bets on your guru's opinion that you gain a winning edge. You form opinions based on your experience of this physical life and the conditioning you carry with you, whereas your guru bases his opinions on his knowledge of your past, present and future lives. He also knows how to get you through the troughs and crests, not only of your destiny, but also of your attitudes and beliefs.

7. Loyalty

Loyalty to the guru and his mission is a critical component for acceptance by any spiritual master. Loyalty is a two-way street. Though, in my personal experience, it is the most significant qualification, it is only one of the criteria of evaluation amongst others. For example, coupled with maturity and discretion, it is a winning combination. A loyal but foolish disciple has often been a liability to the institution.

Obstacles to Being a Disciple

A disciple may have the intent and enthusiasm to follow the path but there are certain attitudes that can hinder his progress.

1. Desire for Self-importance

Almost everyone wants to be known or considered important in some way or another (the bigger the better!). The desire to feel significant leads people to seek attention. Avoiding such attitudes helps an aspirant walk the spiritual path with greater ease.

2. Spiritual Vanity

Spiritual vanity impedes a person's spiritual progress making him egoistic, thereby defeating the purpose of attainment.

I shudder at the thought of being a victim to spiritual vanity, which I have noticed in many people.

Trying to impress others with spiritualism, being dramatic in your presentation of spiritual discourses, wearing the so-called 'right garb', practicing a popular media approach to be perceived as spiritually significant, are some of the ways in which people practice spiritual vanity.

Maharishi Patanjali, in his famous work, *The Yoga Sutras*, describes *asmita* or the *klesha* of 'I-ness'. *Klesha* is a state of mind that clouds the intellect and becomes an impediment to spiritual progress. Spiritual vanity keeps you fixated on your physical self and does not let you identify with your inner being.

Your spiritual journey is supposed to reach the destination of 'I am That' (the consciousness supreme). But, the 'I-ness' gets a person stuck at 'I am X socially, or Y commercially, or Z status-wise', howsoever he decides to label himself. Between 'I am' and 'I am that', the difference is one word in print and a trillion in invisible ink. Do reflect!

3. Spiritual greed

We often carry our ambitions from the material world to the spiritual one.

Even in our spiritual journey, we have cravings and desires to accumulate more merit, do more *seva*, visit more places of worship and advance further than our peers. I have personally noticed several people in whom the greed to acquire spiritual prowess is just as strong as the greed among materialistic people to acquire property and cars. People on the spiritual path often compete on trivial things such as time spent meditating, practicing more mantras, being approached by a larger number of followers online and offline, etc.

But is this kind of greed helpful?

Is it self-propelling?

Years of conditioning has made us believe, the more we get, the better off we are. Though the subject of spiritualism is meant to teach us contentment, minimalism and detachment, many spiritual aspirants feel the quicker they can get to the top, the more productive and benefited they would be. The relevant questions are, 'top of what?' and 'quicker than whom?'. Greed has no role to play in the process of spiritual living and evolution.

A priest, bishop, or cardinal, manipulating his way to become a Pope, is greedy. A spiritual leader hoarding wealth, is similarly placed. It is wise to remember that spiritual greed is counterproductive and slows spiritual progress.

I would not label an old person's aspiration to do more virtuous deeds and better his karma as an act of desperation, because he realises he has not done much to repay his karmic debts and wants to do more.

If I were to put it simply, selfishness is greed while sacrifice is service. Various religions speak about instilling generosity rather than greed. Serve till it hurts! The desire to do as much for as many, is not greed. It is *seva*

In a car rally, he who finishes first may win the trophy, but he who finishes later may have meandered through numerous hills and valleys before reaching the finish line, thereby having a far more enriching experience than the winner.

4. Envy

The rationale for envy is simple. I do not have what the other person has, or I do not feel as fortunate as another. Someone else's happiness makes me sad because that happiness could have been mine, but is not. I am sure most of you reading this are familiar with this limitation, as it may have infected you at some point or another.

Most disciples want to be numero-uno, praised, rewarded, noticed, preferred! Spiritual envy at a conscious level makes the unconscious mind of a disciple look down upon itself. It erodes self-worth and makes the climb to self-realisation slower.

Competitiveness is a definite downer for people on the spiritual path. And yet, I see so much more of it than I would like to. Ask yourself this—would you as a guru respect a self-centred disciple or one who promotes others before himself? Kapill, who runs a *sthan* in Lonavala, Maharashtra, gained my respect in this manner and unwittingly superseded many of his peers who came before him, but did not have this quality.

5. Anger

Anger is a destructive form of behaviour and especially so on the spiritual path. It not only burns the aura, thereby depleting a spiritualist's energy, but also adds to his negative karma, instilling in him a sense of failure at an unconscious level.

The worst impact of a spiritualist's anger is its capacity to hurt the person it is directed towards. *Shraaps* (curses), in ancient days, were often delivered in moments of anger, without thought or deliberation. Not only did they harm the recipient, but also hurt the giver by reducing his spiritual energy, thereby creating guilt and reducing self-worth.

A disciple must recognise anger as self-defeating, damaging both sides.

Durvasa, Vishvamitra and Parshuram are some spiritual greats reputed for their anger. I would be happy to interview them for this book, across the barriers of time and space, convinced they would all advise against it. Jesus, Guru Vashisht, The Buddha and Gurudev are some of those who would join me in a vote for peace.

6. Emotional attachments

Most gurus realise and understand the hindrance caused to their disciples by emotional attachments.

Showing emotional attachment is not harmful but feeling it certainly is! The path of spiritualism can be precarious. If you have the power to heal, you might use it for the benefit of family and friends without being discretionary. You may do it out of emotional attachment. The power you use would itself consider you unworthy of wielding it. I have seen many disciples canvas the cases of their family members and ask for the guru's grace on their behalf. They often try to fast-track the queue to meet the guru, and even arrange special meetings.

They try to leverage their relationship with the guru, hoping he would give them special attention. They do not realise this makes them fall in his eyes instead.

Attachments can often hinder a disciple's duty. He may sacrifice the service meant for a patient to fulfil a commitment or an obligation to a friend or family.

I recall an episode during which a younger disciple of Gurudev left his unconscious daughter (who had fallen off the stairs) to attend to a cancer patient. When he eventually took his daughter to meet Gurudev, she was cured instantly.

Golden Principle: Service to others before self, is the path to spiritual progress.

A famous quote from Lao Tzu's, *Tao Te Ching*, would be relevant in this context:

"If you realize that all things change, there is nothing you will try to hold on to."

It is important for a guru to teach his disciples the meaning of role-play so that they can perform their duties without attachment. In the eyes of others it would look like emotional affection because they would not know it is merely role-play.

It takes a long time, and a great deal of experience, for a disciple to learn that the relationships we foster, are only as real as our perception.

When people we consider close die, we are stupefied with grief. We forget all that we have learnt about destiny and karma. All we do is wonder why it happened to us.

I saw my son's spirit a year before he was born. His spirit was that of an old man, and hence, I find it hard to mollycoddle him and see him as who he is in physical form. I can clearly see the role-play that is required of me but I find it difficult to play it convincingly.

Behaviour induced by emotional attachments can retard a disciple's progress. Therefore, we must be wary of being trapped by our emotions. The only way to attain emotional neutrality, is to convincingly play the role of being emotional, without actually being so.

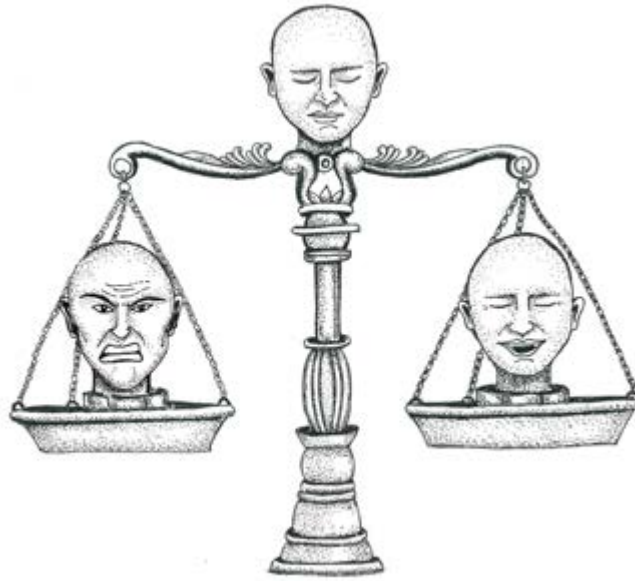
Judging Oneself

One must not judge oneself on chronology or status. Growth is a process, and therefore, dynamic. A mango tree looks drab without its fruit. Fruit follows

flowering, which happens when the tree is fully established and not during its growing years.

Thus, if you are a spiritual practitioner and unable to keep up with the requirements of your guru or yourself, do not feel dejected. Continue to improve and score better with practice and resolve. Spiritual people are continually tried and tested. It is never a stage-by-stage program. You can score well in some 11th grade subjects, but under-perform in 8th grade subjects. However, what is important is that all your refinements should come together by the end of your life, for that is the day of reckoning.

Over the years, many devotees have complained to me about their inability to evaluate their spiritual progress. Most felt they had not evolved enough because they had fewer experiences than their associates. They had neither seen any visions nor had any motivating dreams like the others. Sometimes, they felt I shared a lot more time with others. The list of concerns was long but spiritually unimportant.



*The scales will tip one way or another.
The storm will surge and the tide will ebb.
Harsh self-judgement is a trap.
Steer clear of its treacherous web.*

Even on attainment of some of the world's greatest mantras, I have not completely succeeded in controlling my sense of taste. I still indulge in ice-creams, chocolates, Sindhi curry and many such culinary temptations. Though I turn a blind eye to this, my weighing machine does not! I have learnt to accept my self on an as-is-where-is basis.

Even failure has an expiry date!

I do not feel smaller than any other spiritualist of my time, nor do I feel greater than those whom I teach.

Recently, Vinti had a strange experience. In the early hours of the morning, she saw her husband Nakul's spirit leave his physical body and pass through the window. Confused, it took her a couple of seconds to realise she was not dreaming but wide awake. She stared at the spirit form as it moved from the bed towards the window and saw the uncanny similarity between the spirit and physical form of her husband. Bewildered, she stared at Nakul's body lying by her side, peacefully asleep. Literally speaking, while the vision may have ended her sleep, it was also an awakening!

Nakul has been involved with the *sthan* for several years and has done a lot of *seva*, but as he did not create a great impression initially, people did not notice his metamorphosis.

If his wife had not been awake, Nakul would not have discovered his ability to travel astrally, which I am certain will be a source of inspiration to him. He may not yet be able to do this at will and Superman may still have a monopoly on flying, but out-of-body experiences are among the few ways in which people can consciously assess their spiritual progress.

Discovering your ability to perform supernatural acts like healing, or other such shows of power, is a way of self-assessment.

Mishraji, who had not spoken more than 20 sentences to me in 20 years, was asked by me to start a *sthan* in Gopigunj (a hamlet between Varanasi and Allahabad in central India). Mostly attired in traditional clothes and unable to converse in English, Mishraji is a humble, retired bus driver, unfamiliar with social graces. Yet, I authorised him to start a *sthan*. Did he think himself capable? He was certainly not one of the leaders of the pack. But this was obviously his destiny. I was merely a collaborator in fulfilling it.

Judging one's progress is virtually impossible.

What would you judge?

Your experiences?

The ability to perform supernatural acts?

Knowledge of scriptures?

Practice of meditation?

Recognition by others?

Spiritual designations?

None of the above criteria is a perfect measure of spiritual advancement.

Unlike Karl Marx, the father of communism, who believed in equality at a physical, economic and social level, I am a spiritual communist who believes in *aatmic* equality. If you have been able to feel that, then you have gone quite far in my esteem.

In Gurudev's assessment, if you have amply served other life forms, you have bagged a winning hand in the game of life.

So, judge yourself, not in comparison to others, nor in comparison to your past or present self, but with the self on the eve of your departure. (At the risk of sounding repetitive, may I remind you that you almost always evaluate yourself and others at a point on a line. That line is virtually infinite and ends only when the universe dissolves or a person attains *moksh*.)

The evolution of The Buddha was a series of points on a line; from householder to mentor to the enlightened. He was born a great saint. In tutelage, he was a dedicated student. In his younger days he was a prince incomparable. And yet, he had to relearn all he had accomplished in earlier lives. One person, different status, different times! Today, he is recognised as one of the greatest icons on the subject of enlightenment.

The Buddha's last words to his disciples included, "The teachings I have given you, I gained by following the path myself. You should follow the teachings and conform to their spirit on every occasion. If you neglect them, it means you have never really met me. It means that you are far from me even though you are actually with me, but if you accept and practice my teachings then you are very close to me, even though you are far away. It is

the nature of all formed things to dissolve. Strive with diligence. The true Buddha is not a human body: it is Enlightenment."

This was The Buddha's way of getting his disciples to judge themselves based on self enquiry; to assess if they were devoted to his teachings and if they followed them.



"Whatever kind of seed is sown in a field, prepared in due season, a plant of that same kind, marked with the peculiar qualities of the seed, springs up in it."

-Guru Nanak Dev

Guru-Disciple Relationship

The guru-disciple relationship is an amalgam of multiple roles, and each calls for a certain degree of protocol.

Guru-disciple relationships are meant to be formal, and hence a distance should be maintained between the teacher and the taught. It is imperative for gurus to keep their disciples in check. Allowed too much familiarity, the disciples could take advantage, become too casual, and take instructions lightly.

As a guru, Gurudev had perfected the art of role-playing multiple relationships, including those of a father, mother, friend, and spiritual teacher.

When we interacted with him as our guru, Gurudev was very formal and did not encourage loose talk. His mood was serious, and our conversations with him were deeply spiritual and profound. He seemed like someone else, far more intense and overwhelming. It was almost frightening to be in his presence. His words were like quotes from the *Vedas*. Not that he actually quoted from them, but every word he spoke was worth etching in stone.

On the other hand, if we behaved with him as if he was our father, he was entertainment personified. He would pull our legs, be amused and chuckle when we pulled his. It was tough to walk out of his room and miss out on the fun. He would often watch cricket matches with us on television, cheering and hooting for the players. Amusingly, he always cheered both teams, never choosing one over the other. As sports purists, we found that hard to accept. But all said and done, as a father, you could not find better.

My wife often complained to Gurudev of my inattentiveness, lack of involvement with the family, zoning out at social gatherings, getting bored at parties and boring others with non-participation. Being a new disciple, I was overzealous and my enthusiasm was possibly hard for her to bear. Although she was not fully right, she was not entirely wrong either. He would listen to her patiently, like a mother would her daughter, call me to join the conversation and let me have it! I did find a defect in his role-play though. If she were his daughter, would he reprimand his son-in-law? The man used

convenience to his advantage. In cases where I needed to be straightened out, I was a disciple!

Subbhash Sabbarwal, Gurudev's classmate from school, treated him mostly like a friend. Subbhash could walk into Gurudev's room as he pleased. We envied him. However, I was not willing to trade my relationship of a *shishya* with that of a friend. Subbhashji could not benefit from the fact that his friend was one of the greatest gurus of all time. His friendship came at the cost of his tutorship. Not a great bargain, this!

Personally, I would not have given up the role of a disciple for any other. Sometimes, I felt he got a bit bored of me because I would invariably stick to playing a single role. However, in time, I learnt to play multiple roles.

The Disciple's Conduct

I learnt four rules of conduct that merit being adhered to in a guru-disciple relationship.

Firstly, never look directly into your guru's eyes. I was taught to look at his feet first and then raise my eyes gradually to look at him in his entirety. The feet of the human body are metaphorically the south pole, and correspondingly, the head its north pole. Thus, by looking from the feet to the head, you avoid clashing with the energies of your guru, or for that matter, of any powerful person or idol (in a place of worship). It is critical to do so, to best avoid an unwitting clash of two energies.

Secondly, never disobey or refuse your guru, regardless of whether his words are couched as a command, request or mere recommendation. This was a tough one because Gurudev would often test us by trapping us into saying 'no'.

I remember he called me into his room and asked if I would accompany him on a trip to Europe and the US. I felt trapped. If I agreed, I would come across as an opportunist, and if I said no, it would look like I was refusing my guru. Our conversation lasted over 45 minutes, since he asked me the same question in multiple ways. I did not know the correct answer, so I stood my ground, saying, "I will do whatever you say and whatever you want." Unfortunately, the discussion became stressful as both of us stood firm. As

the result was inconclusive, he appeared in my dream and asked me to join him on the trip. I saw myself responding saying that my destiny would not allow this to take place. He snubbed me and said, "If not you, let it be someone else."

Ultimately, I missed my trip to the West. There were many such instances with my *guru bhais* as well. The lesson was clear. Never say 'no' to your guru! A statutory warning: these principles apply only to relationships with *siddh gurus*.

Golden Principle: Never say no to a guru, for you know not what he knows about you that you know not about yourself.

Thirdly, always be conscious of your thoughts. I realised that if a thought was unworthy of my guru or his teachings, then I should self-correct (for more on thoughts, read *Aatma Sutra– Unveiling of the Soul*). Gurudev would read thoughts and respond. If he was displeased by your thought, he would make no bones about it and embarrass you through sarcasm.

I remember an incident while taking photographs in his room. I wanted some exclusive photographs of him. He read my thought and asked me to photograph him with each person in the room. At the time, being financially strained, I thought it might be expensive to finish the entire roll of film and have it developed. Before I knew it, he took my camera, finished the roll in close to three minutes, and then handed it to someone else to have it developed. He had a strange look in his eyes and I knew I was done for! I went up to him and begged him to let me get the roll developed instead. He laughed. I felt miserable. The lesson was learnt.

Fourthly, always sit to the left of your guru, never to his right. This is a matter of spiritual protocol. Sitting on the left of your guru gives you the role of *Shakti*, thereby making you his instrument. Doing the opposite is irreverent. Though you may not always be able to observe this rule, you should be conscious of it.

Most sects have evolved their own methods to regulate a disciple's behaviour with the spiritual master.

Buddhist monks usually walk out of their guru's chambers in reverse, as they believe it is disrespectful to show their backs to the guru. I see the sense in

this, though it is not one of our practices. They also hold a cloth between their teeth while talking to their guru, as they do not want their saliva to fall on him.

In Sufism and Islam, a *mureed* (disciple) must pledge *bayah* (allegiance) and surrender to his *murshid* (spiritual teacher). By taking *bayah*, the *mureed* guards himself against arrogance and pride, the two attributes that can prove to be impediments to his spiritual progress.

While the disciple needs to be aware of his conduct, it is also expected of the guru to behave in an exemplary manner as a role model. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. When some Buddhist abbots walk out of their monasteries, they are dressed in ceremonial finery, with an umbrella held over their heads and Tibetan music playing. I find that ceremony often outdoes relevance. I do not wish to be critical, but it baffles me when spiritual gurus are made to sit on thrones and crowned to look like wannabe kings. I guess this is a quality of *rajasic* worship and has its own symbolism, meant for beginners on the subject. Most advanced gurus do not believe in impressing others, but in humility, simplicity and minimalism.

Lastly, never compromise your guru.

This is a slightly difficult point to grasp.

Circumstances may lead a disciple to manipulate a particular situation by leveraging his guru's reputation.

Once, travelling with Gurudev and a few others, we were stopped at a checkpoint. Since the driver of our vehicle did not hold a valid license, we felt we would get into trouble with the police. Instinctively, one of the younger disciples told the authorities that Gurudev was with us. On hearing this, they let us go. This disappointed Gurudev, as he felt that by leveraging his name, a favour had been secured from the police. He said, "Son, never sell out your guru." Words I will never forget!

On a separate note, noticing a flaw in the workings of your guru's institution and not attempting to acknowledge or remedy it, is nothing short of compromising your guru. People often discuss shortcomings of the institution or its inmates, but lack the initiative of escalating the information to the guru.

This may keep them in everyone's good books but at the cost of the reputation of both, the guru, and the institution.

There are several instances where followers have earned money by leveraging their guru's credibility and popularity. Profit from such ventures, if retained and not disclosed, is tantamount to selling out the guru.

The behaviour of a guru should be inspirational while a disciple's should be accepting and receptive.

At a physical level, the guru and disciple are both prone to imperfections and defects, but at a spiritual level, it is necessary for them to create a union that goes beyond a single lifetime. Neither the guru, nor the disciple, must judge each other by the quirks of their physical personas.

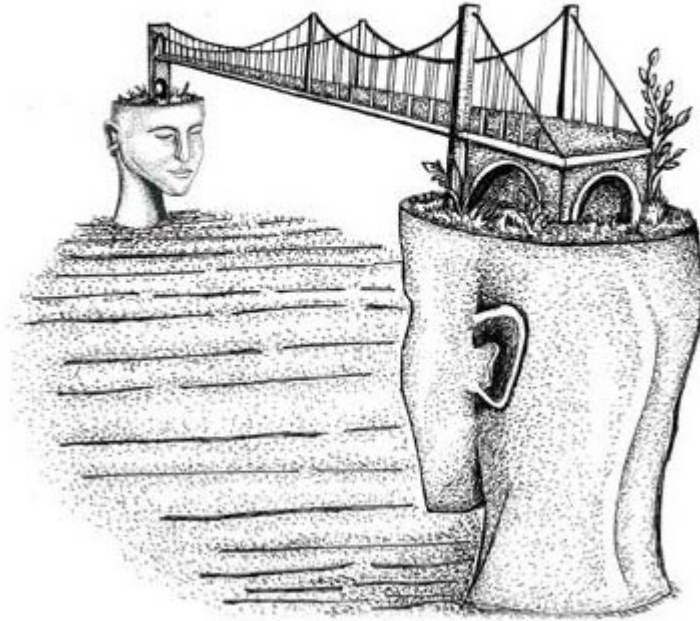
Facets of Faith

A disciple's faith binds the guru to him.

Faith, an obligation to the guru, does yield magical results. In a manner unsaid, the guru feels the disciple has crossed many boundaries to develop faith in him and the subject, and hence, needs to offer all he can as a mentor. The mission of the guru is to make the disciple succeed despite all odds, and it is during this process that a stronger and deeper connection develops between him and his disciple.

Faith being intangible in nature, connects the disciple, not only to the physical being of the guru, but also to his inner core. Being thus aware, the guru must take his relationship with the disciple to a spiritual level and in the bargain, often forgive his physical trespasses and shortcomings. Although spiritually advanced, the disciple may be unaware of his spiritual status at a conscious level.

During the process of spiritual learning, the disciple comes across several concepts he finds difficult to understand or believe since they neither make logical sense, nor connect to his experience in any manner. However, faith in his guru helps him surmount the obstacle of non-belief.



*Exit the land of delusion
where falsehood lives like a king.
Let the bridge of faith take you places
where your caged soul can take wing.*

Golden Principle: Sometimes, blind faith in a *siddh guru* can help one see better over time.

Gurudev always told me I had a lot of *gyan* (inner knowledge). In my awareness, I knew nothing about spiritualism. Not having a religious background, I assumed I was most ill-informed on the subject. I did not even know the names of Indian gods and goddesses or titles of Indian scriptures. So I did not understand what he meant. Was he merely motivating me?

However, I remembered a lesson one of my *guru bhais* had taught me, which was to believe Gurudev blindly, and so I did. I am unsure how, but knowledge and concepts did gradually percolate and become clear. I now find it easy to believe the unbelievable.

For me, faith worked like a wonder drug.

Faith may take a while to develop due to the complexity of the mind, but it reveals many aspects about spiritualism, making progress far easier.

Faith enables a disciple's spirit and physical being to develop a separate relationship with his guru's spirit and physical being. In fact, it reaches even deeper, to the level of the guru's *jivaatma* or individualised consciousness supreme.

The disciple's spirit realises that the guru's spirit, being more advanced, can oscillate at all the levels of consciousness, and hence, be more beneficial to the disciple's spiritual advancement. Hence, it starts depending on its guru's spirit at multiple levels, for advice, guidance and direction, which of course, comes in the language of a PhD rather than in the garble of grade V. This is how faith continues to assure the disciple of supreme guidance and spiritual gains.

Because the disciple's faith is unquestionable, all arguments and doubts within his mind get set aside and he follows a singular diktat—that of his guru's mind. This is the magic of faith!

Testing Faith

A disciple surrendering to his guru does not automatically establish a two-way relationship. It is in fact, only a one-sided appeal that awaits acceptance

from the guru.

The guru will test the strength of the disciple's faith at various stages and on various counts. He will sometimes even misguide him and not fulfil the commitment expected by the disciple, just to ascertain whether the faith is genuine or subject to certain criteria. If he finds the faith to be genuine or even partially genuine, he will try to improve the disciple's capability. If he cannot succeed, he will not accept the relationship.

Golden Principle: Unshakeable faith in your guru steers him to an obligatory stance, binding him to your evolution. Therein lies a winning formula!

Even after Gurudev had given us mantras and spent time and effort in training us, he would occasionally create difficult situations for us to evaluate our reactions.

Gurudev wanted to purchase a 250 square yard property adjacent to his *sthan*. However, every disciple he sent to negotiate the deal, returned without closing it. Eventually, he asked one of my *guru bhais* and me, to strike a bargain. Despite being a novice at negotiations, I went to the owner's house, determined not to return without concluding the transaction.

What happened next was exactly what happened to the other disciples. The owners raised the price on sensing my zeal. I asked them to get into the shoes of a buyer to decide the best price they would pay for the property. I pulled out a bundle of notes and placed it on the table as an advance, if they were willing to sell. They asked for more than I had been told to offer. I decided to go against the advice, handed over the advance and shook hands on the deal.

I knew I was in big trouble, as Gurudev would be annoyed with the poorly negotiated deal. On the contrary, Gurudev was most amused. He mentioned that he did not expect me to succeed but was glad I did. The new property was to be an extension to his own, and would allow many more people to be served. Gurudev also explained that the other disciples had failed to close the deal because they tried to bargain for low prices, notwithstanding the relevance of the property for the *sthan*.

I feared I had failed but was pleasantly surprised I had not. I passed the test because I went off the beaten track. He would test almost all his disciples and his tests were virtually impossible to pass.

Faith Needs to be Exclusive to One Guru

Many people consider themselves to be disciples of a spiritual master but they also regard and revere other spiritual teachers and seek their guidance as well. Due to this lack of exclusivity, such a relationship does not have a 100% transmission of faith from the disciple to the guru, and therefore, in reciprocation, the disciple does not receive a 100% commitment from the guru.

When a person reveres two gurus, there is a tendency for each master to step back and allow the other to take over. Thus, the disciple suffers a lack of commitment from either of them. Of course, I refer here to *siddh gurus* and not those addressed as such.

Bear in mind that following a guru is not a fad. Some misguided people meet many spiritualists and consider several of them as their gurus. In my experience, a spiritual teacher will never take the disciple of another spiritual teacher under his wing, unless so requested. People often go knocking on various doors thinking they might get multiple benefits. I do not believe it is a rule that generally applies, although I cannot deny that in certain exceptional cases, like that of The Buddha, this did happen.

Some spiritual gurus willingly send their disciples for training to other gurus. For example, Ravi Trehan was sent by Gurudev to the Yogananda Mission for training in Dhyana Yoga. Similarly, many people find their way to our *sthans* after being guided by visions of Shirdi Sai Baba and Muktananda, among others.

During my visit to Canada, I noticed some devotees of the *sthan* in Toronto had photographs of multiple spiritual seers and saints in their homes. I could clearly sense why many impediments in their personal lives were not being resolved. I told them to practice devotion to just one and remove the photographs of the rest. I do believe that an exclusive spiritual alliance, of total commitment from both sides with one guru, would be far more beneficial than a diluted relationship with multiple gurus, where none would come forward to take responsibility.

The Other Side of Faith

Let us examine how the story unfolds if a disciple's faith in his guru is shaken. In such a case, the guru will continue to serve the disciple, though not obligated. Herein lies the difference— the guru will not take it as his responsibility to lead the disciple from place M to place Y, but will help as best he can, leaving the rest to the disciple's destiny. As a result, the relationship between them changes from guru and disciple to that of a spiritually accomplished person and seeker.

Golden Principle: Faith is the bridge that helps you cross over from your physical path to your spiritual future.

...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

—Hebrews 11:1 King James Version (KJV)



***"The greatness of a man's power is
in the measure of his surrender."***

-William Booth

Surrender

Surrender to the guru is a prerequisite for a fruitful guru-disciple relationship. Since the disciple's relationship with his guru is at the level of consciousness (physical, mental, spiritual), he must learn to surrender all three to the guru.

Surrender, in a general sense, could mean giving up, abdicating or acknowledging defeat, and hence, is often viewed negatively. A guru equips his disciple to think differently. Through teachings, display of spiritual power, experiences, dreams and visions, he enables his disciple to analyse concepts such as the afterlife, non-duality and *maya*. Accepting these concepts requires the disciple to surrender his misconceptions and realise that he must first unlearn before relearning. There is much to eradicate, undo and cleanse, before rewriting and redoing. Surrender, in the spiritual context, implies the flexibility to re-examine one's attitude, philosophy, lifestyle and thereby accept changes.

'One should surrender to one's guru', is a time-worn cliché and a much abused concept. By selling the idea of surrender, many professed spiritualists have exploited and enslaved their disciples, promising them upliftment. However, the misuse by a few does not denigrate, negate or disqualify the pristine concept of surrender.

So, what exactly is surrender, and how does it help the disciple along his path?

Surrender of Tann, Mann and Dhann

Surrender to the guru entails the renunciation of *tann* (body), *dhann* (wealth) and *mann* (the conscious mind of both, the body and the spirit).

Surrender of Tann

For the disciple to progress, he must surrender his physical time and effort to the diktats of his guru. Though this appears simple, it could be more complicated than bargained for. The guru may urge his disciple to follow a series of *kriyas* (practices). These include yoga, *pranayam*, fasting and

asanas for mantra recitation, besides visiting spiritual places or *seva*, that can be carried out physically.

My first-hand experiences bear testimony to this.

In 1977, when I first visited Gurudev, he partially cured me of rheumatoid arthritis and told me to follow a set of restrictions every Thursday. I took them lightly as I could not see the correlation between a set of practices and pain relief. A year later the arthritis recurred with such vengeance that I was forced to resort to acupuncture twice a day. Five years later, I sought Gurudev's help again and this time round he asked me to do *seva* at the Gurgaon *sthan* (which became my home for many months thereafter).

One day, he saw me doing *seva* despite being in agonising pain. He stared at me for a few seconds in a strange manner. The next morning, I was pain-free! The arthritis had disappeared and it has been 35 years since.

Using my body for *seva* was, and is, a perfect fit with Gurudev's philosophy.

I have seen many followers and devotees at the *sthan* reach dizzying heights of spiritualism by committing themselves to *seva*. Many of them have made themselves available to visit hospitals and patients at odd hours and multiple locations. This has been carrying on for years. They have all greyed in the process.

Ladies have committed themselves to working voluntarily, being the backbone in the management of the *sthan* for decades. They have cooked and cleaned, swept and swabbed relentlessly for years. This surrender of *tann* has rewarded them with gifts of spiritual progress and power.

Lal Saheb has been doing *seva* for more than two decades in Canada. He not only serves the *gaddi* by helping and healing, he also cooks the *prasad* (blessed food items) for all the visitors to the *sthan*. If it sounds like slavery, it is not. It is what he lives for. Surrender to the guru and his mission made a saint out of him and many others.

If I were to list the number of people who do *seva* at all of Gurudev's *sthans*, it would compile a directory. If I were to list the number of people worldwide, who invest their time and effort in philanthropy, it would turn out to be a series of directories. If it were possible to list those who do not

devote their time to such endeavours, we would have a database of 99% of the world's population. I write these lines with fingers crossed, hoping that several names will shift from the database to the directories.



*Owning things doesn't make you rich,
nor the heaps of coins you've put away.
All that you've amassed will turn to wealth,
when it's spent on enriching another's day.*

Decades ago, I became disenchanted with my family business. I realised that it was not my calling, but unfortunately, I was the only one who thought so. My wife thought it would jeopardise our future because it would bring me into conflict with my parents. My mother even visited Gurudev and complained about my attitude. After her visit, he instructed me to attend work for a few hours a day. When I voiced my objection and lack of interest, he reiterated that though I did not enjoy going to work, I should, even if that meant reading a novel in office. Since I had surrendered myself to him and chosen to never disobey him, I did exactly as asked. And that was the trap! Within a few days, I got so involved in what I was doing that I was working 14 hours a day! The business benefited from my efforts, thereby increasing profits.

Gurudev insisted and made sure I live the life of a householder, including earning my keep. Surrender to my guru's words has kept my life in balance.

Surrender of Dhann

Surrendering your wealth is no easy task because greed is hard to overcome. Greed may not always be at a personal level; it can also be the objections of your family or friends that restrain your intent to contribute towards spiritual pursuits.

In the early days of my induction into spiritualism, Gurudev suggested I travel from Mumbai to Gurgaon every month for *bada guruvar*. Being in a financial crunch at the time, this was an expensive proposition. To top that, Gurudev insisted I travel only by air and not train. While the train journey would have been comparatively longer, it would have been much cheaper. Perhaps his intention was to save my time (24 hours by train versus 2 hours by air) and capitalise it by investing it in *seva* at the *sthan*. Following his instructions took a lot from me. However, having realised the guru is always right and one must do as he instructs, I invariably did as told. He gifted me some of the divine symbols he possessed. The value of that is immeasurable. An earning for eternity. I felt foolish about my tight-fisted attitude.

On another occasion, I was at the Gurgaon *sthan* when Gurudev suggested my wife and I fly with him to Hyderabad to attend a wedding. All I had was INR 6,000 in cash, plastic money being uncommon at the time. Since

undertaking that journey would have cost far more than I could afford, I sent Gurudev a message requesting him to allow us to travel by train instead. I did not receive an answer from him all day but realised the next morning that my wallet was missing! I had learnt my lesson—to never question the decision of my guru or disobey him.

On approaching Gurudev to apologise and seek forgiveness, I saw a mischievous look in his eyes. He told me I should always do as asked and not analyse his instructions. In this instance, he established my place in his inner circle by giving me the importance of a co-passenger. Though a new kid on the block, he brought me at par with many of his older disciples. It was beyond me to understand these subtleties. A few days later, I found INR 6,000 in the pocket of my blazer at home, in Mumbai.

Lost in Gurgaon, found in Mumbai!

Gurudev lived in a 250-square-yard property in a middle-class sector of Gurgaon. He neither owned nor travelled in fancy cars, nor wore expensive clothing. His woollens were knit by his wife, who was a teacher in a government school. It was an honour to be allowed to contribute towards anything Gurudev asked of us. If he ever allowed us to spend any money at the *sthan*, and this was rare, it was always for the *seva* of others. There was expenditure on days when the public came to see him and a few chosen disciples and devotees were allowed to contribute. There were several marriage ceremonies he organised at his *sthan* and while these were simple affairs, he allowed some of us to contribute minimally towards the cost of the weddings.

Many affluent people would have been happy to contribute substantial amounts towards public welfare, or for that matter, even Gurudev's upkeep. But he refused to entertain them and sent them packing. For us, practicing the surrender of wealth to the guru was an easy task because not much was asked of us. On the contrary, we often had to plead to be allowed participation.

Even though a guru may not need a contribution from those connected to him, sometimes he has to allow people to participate in his good work. Roshni, a graphic designer, has contributed for years towards digitally spreading the

word of the *sthan*. She invests time and money required for these acts. And I find it difficult to say 'no' to her because I want her to be part of the *seva*.

Surrendering your wealth to your guru does not imply you support his luxurious lifestyle or whims and fancies, in case he has any! Buying him a Rolls Royce is not surrender of wealth, unless you have chosen a guru who prefers life's luxuries to simplicities. But then, most *siddh gurus* would shun that.

We have all heard stories of people who call themselves gurus, and in that garb, try to exploit their followers, devotees, and disciples of as much money and wealth as they possibly can. With this money, they build edifices or palatial abodes for themselves. Of course, some do spend a part of that money on charitable purposes and the welfare of the people who revere them.

Golden Principle: Money spent on oneself is a debt, while that spent on charity is *seva*.

One needs to discharge one's debt to humans, animals and plants but this cannot be repaid merely by delivering religious and spiritual lectures. Debts add to the negative karma of the taker and become a burden for his future evolution.

*It is for the disciple to offer himself
Body and soul as a sacrifice at the Guru's feet;
But the true Master will not touch
A single penny that is offered to him.
For my own self,
I would rather die than beg,
But I am not ashamed to accept offerings
For the welfare of others.*

-Kabir

Surrender of the Spiritual Self

The guru-disciple relationship can go beyond a single lifetime.

On my first meeting with Gurudev, I was astounded when he casually asked, "So, you've come?"

Who was he talking to? There was no one standing around me. I realised he was addressing me. I thought it was a strange greeting from someone I had neither met nor spoken to earlier. But I now realise how short-sighted I was.

During my formative years in spiritualism, I would visit the Gurgaon *sthan* every *bada guruvar* for *seva* and my name would be listed on the duty chart. However, every time I reported for *seva*, the person already on that duty would request me to let him continue through my shift as well. How was I to refuse such a request? Reluctantly, I would relent each time. It was frustrating to travel to Gurgaon from Mumbai by purchasing an air ticket I could ill afford, and then, not being able to fulfil the task I had been assigned. This was a hard one to swallow.

A few months later, Gurudev called me to his room and asked me how I liked doing the *seva* assigned to me. What could I possibly tell him? Eventually, I shared my sob story, while he looked on in amusement. He said, "Son, all I want you to do is be around, so I may use you for doing what I am doing, when I need to." At the time, what he said was a mind-twister. But I know now, that for him, the availability of our spirits, and the use of the energy that he bestowed upon us, was the requirement for *seva*. It did not matter to him what our bodies were doing, as long as they were relaxed and relatively empty of thought. He mentioned several times that when treating patients, he would meditate on us and use our energies to help others. I have not encountered anything like this in any scripture. This was nothing short of spiritual history in the making. I was lucky to have experienced it personally.



*Centuries of writings line the inner wall.
Records of impressions and memories all.
Purge them and cleanse them as he might,
to write new chapters to aid the spiritual flight.*

The disciple's spirit knows its best interests are served at the instance of the guru and not itself. The spirit realises the guru's aim is its evolution and enriching it with power. However, until such evolution and enrichment are realised, the disciple is entangled in material distractions and worldly achievements, like fancy cars, fabulous homes, prestigious jobs and titles, social status, etc. These play no role in the evolution of the spirit and are certainly not its idea of wealth. The disciple's spirit encourages him in guru worship and is more loyal to the spirit of the guru than himself. This is the control a guru usually has over his disciples. Moreover, the choices made for the disciple on the spiritual path are better made by a mind that is more evolved and at a higher level of consciousness—the guru's. Thus, surrender is the disciple's best option for self-advancement.

Gurudev often stated, "There are things that your mind will never be able to understand or analyse. Always remember to do whatever you are asked without questioning it."

Surrendering to a *siddh guru* is an honour, but to someone not genuine, a disaster!

Surrender of the Mind (Mann)

Surrender of the mind involves the mind of the physical as well as the spirit body. Both these minds work differently. For easy understanding, we can consider them as fragments of the same mind.

It is difficult to keep the mind in control and not allow distractions and confusion to take over. Even if we think we are far more competent than most, and have full confidence in our sense of logic and analysis, we need to be conscious of the fact that the guru knows a lot more on the subject of spiritualism. And thus, our queries and dissents are at best baby talk!

Our parents, teachers and friends have contributed towards what we have learnt through the years. That knowledge however, does not help us evolve spiritually. The knowledge required for spiritual elevation is radically different.

There are innumerable instances when Gurudev played with my mind and made me aware of differing perspectives. An exposure to a radically new way of looking at things. For example, his attitude towards women was

diametrically different from most men of his time. Where society at large looked at women as the weaker sex, here was a saint who taught me to revere femininity.

Gurudev's approach towards philanthropy was refreshing. He made us feel obliged about the fact that we could be of help to others. He opined that if people did not give us a chance to serve them, how could we do *seva*? Serving others was akin to serving ourselves since we all are a part of the same consciousness supreme, divided only by the multiple identities we possess.

It was not difficult, the talk.
But it was not easy, the walk!

He told me to celebrate criticism by distributing sweetmeats when criticised. Does that not sound bizarre? His fundamentals were crystal clear. By criticising someone you actually magnetise a part of their shortcomings, thereby reducing their failings. By criticising someone falsely, you become indebted to them for slander and would pay the price. How was a brat like me ever to know that? I figured, I needed to let him steer the wheel of my mind and bring it on track.

Mind-cleansing is not an easy process since it involves scraping off multiple layers of prior conditioning. For this, a guru stretches his disciple to his limit and sometimes even beyond.

The guru infuses in his disciple concepts like empathy with detachment, and of not being vengeful, arrogant, materialistic, over-attached, over-passionate, and a host of other such attitudes. He cannot procrastinate in doing so, because after the eraser has done its work, it is important for him to make the time to rewrite on the blank pages of the disciple's mind.

Time is always short when a *siddh guru* decides to take his disciple to far greater heights than merely teaching him the theory of spiritualism. For example, Gurudev had to teach his disciples the path of *Shakti*, bestow spiritual powers upon them to do his bidding, and make them physically and mentally capable to serve and heal. This was no mean task! If we were not able to surrender our minds to him, we would not be able to connect with his consciousness, thus rendering his efforts meaningless.

Only when there is synchronicity between the minds of the guru and the disciple, can there be intuitive communication between them. When I called Anjali, who was coordinating an event for this book, I suggested she include a few specific sentences in the script. As I spoke, she laughed and explained that those were the exact words she had already penned. Kapill and Ridhim, whom I have trained for several years, often call to inform me about their advice to patients, which, though outof-the-ordinary, are the exact thoughts I receive even before they mention them to me.

Golden Principle: The guru is always right.

Easy to say, difficult to follow!

The guru knows where and when the disciple needs to slow down or speed up, since he can foresee the bumps and bends ahead which the disciple cannot. From the very beginning, I was taught to always say 'yes' to Gurudev, irrespective of the consequences. In the years to follow, I almost always did so, and was enriched by that attitude, every time.

A beautiful line in the *Guru Gita* states, "Mantra mulam guru vakyam" (the root of mantra is the word of the guru), which means, whatever the guru speaks is a priceless mantra.

Training the Mind

In the first four years as a potential disciple, Gurudev's opening act was to destroy my mind, figuratively speaking. I lost complete faith in my style of thinking and my attitude towards everything. All I had ever learnt until then, seemed irrelevant. I did not know what to think, walked around confused, not knowing how to get a grip on my life. He had begun to use his eraser and the process of unlearning had started.

The first thing he taught me was, if I desired to conquer sorrow, I had to conquer happiness. For four long years, I practiced no laughter, no joy, no enjoyment at home, work or parties, and had no reaction to good news of any kind. It was almost like deadening emotions to attain boredom.

Though this state of boredom was challenging to achieve, it was one of equanimity of the mind. He had led me to a place of non-duality, or at least in that direction. Through this singular process, he had sown many seeds. As a

corollary, my passion turned into dispassion, leading to the reduction of several likes and attachments, as well as dislikes and aversions. Do not mistake this to be a story of despondency or loss. No. It is my story of slowly lifting the veil of *maya*, and being inducted into non-duality.

Over the years, and believe me it took many, I lost interest in some of the things I was once passionate about. To enjoy anything is to sit on the zenith of emotions that will balance itself by making one sit at the nadir another time. However, I realised I still had to work towards extinguishing the desire for the sense of touch and taste. While I agree Gurudev's process of making me unlearn was effective, I do believe I have not been able to give it all up yet. I accept that, and yet, am satisfied with the results.

He used several techniques to help centre us, like fasting, giving up alcohol and non-vegetarian food, not consuming *namak* (salt) and *ann* (cereals) paid for by others, to name a few. These restrictions helped us battle temptation and avoid obligations. The icing on the cake was his faith in us, which was hard to fathom. We never realised he knew us from before this lifetime, until the end of our present lives, and beyond. He knew what we were then, and what we would eventually become.

During my initial years at Gurgaon, Mohna, a rough and gruff devotee of Gurudev, would verbally bully me. Having lost all confidence in myself, I had become meek and nervous. Though Mohna's intentions were always to be helpful, he could not overcome his rude, crude and aggressive nature. Once, when Mohna was ordering me around, peppered with Punjabi cuss words as always, Gurudev sent for me. I entered his room. He touched me on the head and forbade me from being dominated by anyone again, since I had reached a stage where I needed to respect myself as much as I respected others. He asked me to never bow before any man or spiritual power, even if they were the deities themselves. He categorically said, I could be respectful and show humility, but never subservience. I sensed he meant I was ready to start a new journey but did not voice it. A new switch turned 'on' and my lack of confidence and meekness turned 'off'.

When I returned to the room, Mohna noticed a change in my body language. Instead of being dominated, I gave him a shot of counter-aggression he least expected. He has been in awe of me ever since.

The ego creates impediments in the process of complete surrender to the guru. Therefore, part of the mind-training must include taming the ego and making it permeable to the guru's influence. In complete surrender, the mind ceases to exist at an individual level and begins to exist only in relation to the guru. At this stage, the mind is connected to a higher consciousness and functions as its instrument.

Surrender to a guru is not a loss, but a gain, a gain of self-discipline, self-counselling and an understanding of reality in the true sense.

The Guru is Not a Crutch

Many use their guru as a crutch, and not a launch pad. It was disappointing to watch people ask Gurudev silly questions like, which car or television to buy. How could people waste the time of such an aware and conscious spirit on petty questions? I guess they knew no better. Often, people insist and plead for their gurus to visit their homes, attend social functions, inaugurate new business ventures, so on and so forth. It is necessary for us to understand that a guru is the remover of ignorance and the one who bestows internal knowledge. Therefore, one should depend on such a person for spiritual support and advancement rather than as a crutch.

"The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender."

—William Booth



"The Guru is the conveyance in which the spiritual influence is brought to you. Anyone can teach, but the spirit must be passed on by the Guru to the Shishya (disciple), and that will fructify."

-Swami Vivekananda

Diksha

Diksha is the commitment of acceptance given by a guru to his disciple. The guru works towards the disciple's enlightenment and spiritual attainment, holding himself responsible for his disciple's growth. By no means is this a casual relationship since before making such a commitment, both sides must find congruency in their connection.

The guru has assessed the ability of the disciple to surrender. He is about to make a long-term commitment that may extend beyond their present lifetime to multiple lives. However, if the disciple loses interest or gives up halfway, all efforts by the guru are a wash-away. Therefore, the guru ought to intuitively assess not only the disciple's current capability, but also his long-term potential, before accepting him. For a disciple getting *diksha*, this type of commitment from a guru is not an ordinary way forward, but an outstanding one. Unfortunately, if a disciple commits to a *non-siddh guru*, his spiritual journey becomes a wasted and misguided one. Tragically, this is more a subject of fate than free choice.

When I first met Gurudev it was for all the wrong reasons. I had no clue that one day this great master would give me *diksha*. Besides, I had no interest in spiritualism. I thought it was meant for the 'saffron-robed guys'. At the time, I neither understood religion nor spiritualism, nor the difference. I had the luxury of living the 'good life' and quite enjoyed it. If somebody had asked me then whether I would like to receive *diksha*, I would probably have doubled up with laughter! Since destiny had to fulfil itself, it obviously ignored my interpretation of *diksha* and my attitude towards it.

Gurudev did not believe in the demonstration of spiritualism. He felt people who were connected to him needed to blend in and not stand out. And that is exactly what he was all about. His way of giving *diksha* was so informal, you did not even realise you were part of his inner circle.

In most spiritual orders, *diksha* is given by a guru to his disciple ceremoniously and is usually accompanied by a mantra, also called *naam*.

In the monastic order, the monks shave their heads, change into robes and are given a new name by their guru. This custom is meant to signify the start of a new life and the end of an old one. With a new beginning, it is hoped and assumed, the monk will change his attitudes and aspirations, and give up his attachment to worldly desires and material pursuits. From then on the monk's life belongs to the institution that has chosen him, to which he must devote himself entirely. The reason he is meant to look different is so that he can be recognised by others as a spiritual being, but more importantly, he must recognise himself for having made the change.

There are no hard and fast rules for *diksha*. Different spiritual orders follow different systems.

Guru Nanak Dev did not believe in asceticism. He was a householder, just like Gurudev and the rest of us. We live normal lives. It is a misconception to think that a spiritual person leads a saintly existence in isolation. Gurudev gave *diksha* mostly to those who were householders. In fact, Gurudev emphasised that due to the myriad difficulties of being a householder (viz. earning a livelihood, performing social duties and being involved in commercial ventures), practicing spiritualism simultaneously, enabled quicker spiritual attainment.

I can vouch from experience that practicing spiritualism despite the obvious and attendant distractions of running a household, is indeed a significant achievement. The spiritual progress of a householder is more pronounced, due to the additional challenges associated with it. The element of *seva*, when added to the responsibility of a householder, fast tracks spiritual attainment. Most of Gurudev's disciples could become *siddh* in the Mahagayatri Mantra in three to four years, while others would take at least two or three decades for the attainment of the abridged version, which is the Gayatri Mantra.

Benefits of Diksha

A pertinent question here is whether the benefit of *diksha* is only limited to the disciple or does the guru benefit from it too?

You cannot be a teacher if you do not have students to teach.

The guru does benefit from *diksha*, and here is why. The greatest satisfaction for a *siddh guru* is the ability to multiply a tree (himself) into an orchard (a community of disciples). With this multiplication, his ability to serve others increases, enabling him to fulfil his mission faster. He can work for the greater good and reach far more places and people than he could alone.

Hence, great disciples do greater gurus make!

Spiritual masters of the likes of Guru Machindranath, Jesus Christ, Ramakrishna Parmahansa, Yukteshwar Giri, Guru Nanak Dev, to name a few, had highly evolved disciples who took forward their work with efficacy and zeal.

Today, Christianity is the largest religion due to the efforts of the disciples of Christ (and circumstances of course). Their successors and devotees struggled and made sacrifices, often giving up their lives, to spread the word of their master to all corners of the globe. Many of this order went to lands inhabited by uncivilised tribes and in the process of trying to spread Christianity, were martyred by the tribesmen who did not want to convert. This is an accomplishment of discipleship.

The same holds true for other faiths which followed the mentorship route.

Diksha Not Diksha

The system of *diksha* does not always work.

As a system, *diksha* is very easy to exploit, and there are those who get hoodwinked into following frivolous gurus. Though, I do believe, this too is a matter of destiny.

Gurus who are motivated by the lure of luxury and commerce, offer *diksha* to those who provide them with material comforts. There is no value in such *diksha* because these so-called gurus do not get bonded as long-term responsibilities, thus making the relationship a superficial and temporary one.

In ancient times, *diksha* and guru-disciple relationships were taken very seriously but today this has, to some extent, become a fad. It is my prayer the world recaptures the essence of such an evolutionary relationship.

When a genuine guru takes on a disciple, he takes on the responsibility of the disciple's enlightenment and evolution.

We take spiritual initiation when we become conscious of the divine within us, and thereby contact the divine without us.

—Dion Fortune



"The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."

–Steven Spielberg

Customised Guidance

Significance of the Guru in Physical Form

Physical presence of the guru is a luxury one cannot always bank on for an extended period of time. His teachings and philosophy will succeed him. As a tribute to the teacher, the disciple must implement a collection of his teachings and instructions. Using the power of self-discipline, self-counselling and resolve, it is mandatory for the disciple to overcome distractions and temptations. Sikhism, Christianity, and most other religions, follow this format. Ironically, while this format is easy to follow for an admirer, follower or devotee, it becomes increasingly difficult for a disciple to do so due to the extent to which the guru engages him, far deeper than any of the other categories. His physical presence is therefore invaluable.

Spiritual training in the physical presence of the guru, ensures an interaction where one learns not only through theory, but also from the teacher's responses, body language, instant corrections and so on. The guru often leads by example and it is a disciple's curriculum to perfect the prescribed practices, not just understand theory. There is a vast difference between attending a lecture in a classroom and reading scriptures online.

Discipleship needs continuous monitoring and interaction. Such training includes rewards and admonitions. However, the disciple should be cautious of making these rewards the centre of his spiritual aspiration.

The guru keeps testing his disciples, while equipping them with further knowledge. Followers, on the other hand, readily go along the path, following the broad parameters prescribed. They are satisfied with just fair results. It is the same with devotees, as both these categories are motivated by the written and spoken word on the subject. They are happy to implement these as best as they can—try some, win some, lose some! In the guru-disciple relationship, there is a need for a unique approach in the method of teaching each disciple. The guru has the freedom to change rules, customise them for each disciple, and even use backhand methods of tutoring. All this, however, is only possible if the guru is physically present in the life of the disciple.

Raising a Disciple

Guiding a disciple is akin to raising a child. The only difference is that *Guruism* requires more than just understanding the disciple. This, of course, makes the process of nurturing far more complicated. While the most significant aspect of this discipline is its practice, its most challenging aspect is motivating a disciple to progress spiritually.

The guru's analysis of the disciple is critical; he must recognise the disciple's flaws and shortcomings and understand what makes his mind tick. In a subtle way, the guru must take into consideration the disciple's destiny and planetary movements affecting him at different times. This is not necessarily practiced through astrological analysis but more through intuitive understanding.

The guru can sense how the journey of the disciple will unfold and intuitively knows the troughs and crests on his spiritual path. Being able to predict the speed of the disciple's spiritual advancement, he knows when to step on the accelerator. While many disciples have fast-tracked multiple stages of mentorship, there have been others who have spot-jogged and headed nowhere. The guru must keep his disciples from getting disenchanted or demotivated. Self-evaluation can be challenging for a disciple but the guru can smoothen that. Therefore, when an evolved disciple feels increasingly despondent about his evolution, it is the guru's job to convince him, through his experience, that he has indeed moved forward.

My wife once asked Gurudev for guidance as she was unable to develop the faith needed to follow the spiritual path. His answer to her was, "You have to walk into a dark tunnel and carry on treading relentlessly, even if you cannot see a light. This will continue, until somewhere in the far distance, you see a faint light. As you get closer, the light will seem to get brighter. The journey is long, dark and deep. It is a marathon you need to run and the pleasure can come only after the endeavour."

I have seen this philosophy at play in my life, and that of many of my spiritual associates.

Made to Measure

Years ago, I knew I was to go through a phase of spiritual stagnancy in the future. When it happened, it lasted a decade. By that time, Gurudev had

already passed on. Despite not being highly inspired during that phase, I refused to give up and continued to run the race (metaphorically speaking), though at a snail's pace. I was committed to doing *seva*, but neither meditated nor indulged in spiritual conversations. The desire or ambition for spiritual progress had also waned. Fortunately, I remembered what Gurudev once told me about how people should go with the flow when on the path of spiritual progress. He said, "If one moves too quickly, their train is bound to get stranded at some station and they will have to wait until it is time to move again. One will only reach their destination when they are meant to, and therefore, speed and enthusiasm are of no help. What helps is consistency of intention and the decision to walk continuously in that direction." Possibly, if Gurudev had been alive, my sabbatical from *Guruism* would have been shorter lived as he would have ensured I spent more time in training others, even as my own personal practice took a back

The guru must sometimes manipulate situations to provide a variable playing field for his disciples, all of whom have different capabilities and competencies. Unlike standard format education that feeds the same curriculum to all students, thereby producing a generation of mediocrity, a guru's teachings are more like a personalised and customised tuition.

Gurudev's disciples came from various social backgrounds. There were people from metropolitan cities as well as from villages and hamlets, especially from the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. Some were not affluent, but he invented ways to make them economically self-sufficient. Some were barely literate, and yet he chose them as disciples and gave them the power to help and heal.

A prime example is of Mamaji from Jalandhar, Punjab, who owned a *paan* (betel leaves prepared and used as a stimulant) shop and probably earned just enough to make two ends meet. And yet, Gurudev asked him to start a *sthan* in his modest home. Vedji, a staunch devotee of Gurudev and an affluent businessman, had large potato farms in Mamaji's neighbourhood. By assigning Vedji the task of running the *sthan* and Mamaji of doing *seva*, Gurudev created a collaboration that led to the successful management of that *sthan* for over two decades.

We learnt a new kind of spiritual administration from Gurudev— while one disciple could be devoted to administrative work and handling operations, another could occupy the *gaddi* (seat of the guru's power) and heal people. Some disciples would earn spiritual credits by cooking *prasad*, while others would manage the queue of patients, serving them tea and snacks. It was a collaboration of service that benefitted all disciples and made them spiritually richer.

The sum total of people who benefitted either directly from Gurudev's mentorship, or through his disciples (and continue to do so), is an unimaginable number.

Guru's Training Method

The guru's training method normally includes the following four segments:

Physical Discipline

Physical discipline in a spiritual seeker is a necessity. Fitness and flexibility help a disciple in meditation and *seva*. The guru may ask a follower to practice yoga, *pranayam* and meditation, as these are simple practices that do not require the expertise of a seasoned spiritual master. The guru may ask a disciple to fast on certain days and avoid foods and beverages of a particular kind. The disciple must be tuned into sacrificing his personal time and putting in some physical effort. Whether it is feeding people, managing the administration of the institution or healing people for hours on end, a disciple must have the physical ability to handle these functions.

Gurudev instructed us to fast on certain days, primarily to conquer the senses, which are downers on the spiritual path. Indulging excessively in the sense of taste may hinder one's *sadhana* (spiritual practice). Overeating could be a disturbance for meditation. By fasting, one gives the opportunity to the body to hasten digestion of food (especially cereals), which may have remained undigested as stock 'n' trade. Another intriguing reason was that by giving up food meant for our consumption, we gave ourselves the opportunity to mentally assign it forward to someone who probably needed it more, thus benefitting another, using the power of intent.

Eating food cooked in homes affected by negative energies could land one in a soup! These negative energies could have infected the food thereby infecting the consumer. Moreover, one could be karmically obligated by consuming food paid for by another, thus creating a debt and diluting the balance sheet of *karma yoga*.

The five senses, especially the sense of touch and hearing, have historically been a cause for failure for thousands of spiritual aspirants. Though Gurudev enjoyed listening to music, he did not allow it to become an obsession. 'Everything in balance' was his philosophy. Ever since I can remember, music has been therapeutic for me, but I have learnt to restrict it to my car.

Over time, I learnt to ignore my sense of smell and gave up using colognes and perfumes. It took immense effort to give up the pleasures of sight and aesthetics. Ironically, my fondness for art and the art-related occupation I fostered, helped me tide over the sense of sight. As a result, I no longer need to be in scenic locales and am content with my lackluster environment.

Golden Principle: If you continue to sustain a crusade against your senses, it does not matter if the results are not a 100%. What matters is the intent and effort of this discipline.

Mental Tuning

In the view of most spiritualists, evolution is all about the mind. A spiritual seeker must ensure he controls his mind, and keeps it non-reactive. The five horses of doom that can pull a person down in the snakes and ladders game of self-evolution, are: *kama* (sensuality), *krodh* (anger or reactivity), *lobh* (greed), *moh* (attachment) and *ahamkaar* (ego or the sense of 'I-ness').

When 'I-ness' comes into play, it makes us feel as small as the identities we create for ourselves, which are far smaller than the expansiveness of identifying with the *aatma* (divinity).

The guru's aim is to ensure that his disciples and devotees master the science of meditation. Calmness and control are the absolutely essentials for a mind to meditate. The same goes for mantra practice. Thus, distractions that become obstacles to meditation and mantra practice, must be reined in.

Dealing with thoughts and being able to overcome them is one of the techniques the guru teaches his disciple, failing which, the disciple's mind is always running in circles. Since billions of neurons keep the mind perpetually active, equanimity is hard to achieve. As all activity of the mind uses energy, it is a necessary expenditure, but one that can and should be economised.

The process of spiritually healing someone requires immense focus, an undistracted mind and the ability to visualise the person in order to transmit energy to him effectively. Distractions can severely impede the healing process, especially in remote healing, where focus and energy are the crucial prerequisites.

Distractions of the mind are called *kleshas* and are the cause for most suffering. The *kleshas* of attraction, aversion, ego, ignorance and fear, are reactions of the mind to almost every situation.

Attractions and aversions induce us to react positively or negatively to most stimuli. Sometimes these lead to guilt, which makes us feel inferior and far removed from divinity.

Attachment to the family in which one is either born or bred, is also a *klesha*. In fact, attachment is a weakness that keeps you bound, not only during this life, but also in the afterlife. It does not allow your spirit to progress, as it is still trying to stay connected to its family and worldly desires. This applies to partially evolved spirits since the evolved ones easily move on, leaving behind their old roles and possessions as remnants of their identity histories.

Golden Principle: One must feel attached to none but connected to all.

Living in a world of make-believe, our limited perceptions are certainly amongst the causes of mental stress. Spiritual training has a lot to do with overcoming this *klesha* of *avidya* (ignorance).

Fears manifest not only due to current life situations, but also due to the stored conditioning or *samskars* from our previous lives. I am reminded of an incident that transpired with Gurudev in Amritsar, Punjab. He had a chosen location, under a tree, for his daily meditation. One day, while on his way there, he spotted a huge snake in his path. As his desire to meditate was greater than the threat of being bitten, he stepped across the snake to get to the

tree. Since many people fear snakes, I am unsure whether you or I could summon the courage Gurudev did. We will never truly know, unless faced with similar circumstances.

It is the guru's intention to make his disciple grow beyond his minuscule physical identity, mental existence and social status.

Spiritual practice must help redirect our minds to tap into the wisdom within our own internal cosmos.

One of the peaks a guru must help his disciple ascend, is that of self-worship. This is about worshipping yourself, not merely as a physical, astral or causal being, but the entire package. The *jivaatma* is not responsible for *karma* but is merely an observer. Worshipping it is like worshipping the ocean in a glass of water, but worshipping the ocean nevertheless. Ankit, whom I have taught the art of self-worship, said something that pleasantly surprised me. He mentioned that for worshipping himself, he avoids doing anything that could make him feel guilty. Otherwise, he is unable to see the divinity within himself.

Emotional Training

Emotional stability is an important criterion for spiritual apprenticeship. The guru needs to teach the disciple emotional equilibrium—the ability to balance at the fulcrum of the seesaw, rather than sit at either end. However, emotional stability is a state of neutrality that is almost impossible to achieve, since our attachments and other *kleshas* keep us from attaining it.

Emotional reactivity becomes a hindrance, not only to relationships but also to the attainment of self-love.

Weaknesses like anger, selfish love, the feelings of excitement and joy, dislikes, hatred and other such emotions, including complexes created by depression, need to be reduced to a bare minimum since they are downers to a spiritualist's, or for that matter, anyone's progress.

Adherence to the *Eightfold Path of Patanjali* suggested in the *Yoga Sutras*, can silence the fluctuations of the mind, leading to balanced emotions, enhancing the focus on one's inner self. This has been clarified in more detail under 'Queries Answered'.

Spiritual Training

A guru can take a disciple through various levels of accomplishments. However, mere proficiency in yoga, the ability to fast and serve others, are not by themselves sufficient. The magic ingredient a guru must ingrain in his disciple is spiritual awareness, the core of which is *gyan* or inner knowledge, often referred to as intuitive know

Few people are born with intuition as a functioning capability. Most attain it after intense meditation and mantra recitation. *Seva* and *bhakti* also add to the intuitive ability. Both, intuitive hearing and the capacity to foresee future events, are the results of intuitive attainment, referred to by yogis as the opening of the *Ajna Chakra* (the third eye). According to *tantric* philosophy, the rising of the *kundalini* (energy coiled at the base of the spine) to higher *chakras*, often leads to the development of intuitive ability.

I realised my third eye was in the process of opening, since I was experiencing visions of the future, and hearing an inner voice. I shared my experiences with Gurudev. Since he was not in favour of the opening of the third eye, he put his hand on my head and ran it down my spine. I sensed he was lowering my *kundalini*. I felt depressed. Why was he doing this to me? Answering my unspoken question, he said he did not want me to get stuck at the forehead *chakra*. He felt I might stagnate at the level of the third eye, enjoying my status as a psychic, telling people what the future had in store for them and, describing events before they transpired. Though it could have been a great advantage and an enjoyable one, it could have also become an impediment. The temptation of showing off could have been a threat to progress of the self.

I realise that in spiritual evolution, you should not get stuck at a particular level of attainment but transcend it.

An interesting example is that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa in his early years under the tutelage of his guru, Totapari. As a guru, Totapari realised Ramakrishna's potential of attaining enlightenment, if only he could disassociate from his intense devotion to the Goddess Kali. Ramakrishna would oscillate from the throes of ecstasy to the lows of depression, depending on his connection with Kali at that time. When conversations and

counselling did not work, Totapari told Ramakrishna that the next time he saw Kali, he would have to smash her with a sword and cut her into pieces.

When Ramakrishna inquired from where he could procure a sword, Totapari replied that he must create it from the same space he created Kali. However, Ramakrishna could not conjure a sword when he conjured Kali, thus his guru had to take matters into his own hands. At the next instance of Ramakrishna's trance, Totapari took a piece of broken glass and scratched his forehead with it. At that instant, Ramakrishna imagined a sword and with it, shredded the image of Kali.

Liberated from devotion and led into self-awareness, Ramakrishna later came to be known as Paramahansa (idiomatically meaning the enlightened one). Here is hoping you have not missed the moral of the story!

There is a lot to learn by observing your guru and also the way he conducts his spiritual practices. The example above showcases how a person moves away from emotions to reach a state of being emotionless, thus graduating from devotee to disciple.

One of the greatest curses of spiritual practice is delusion of the mind. When a guru takes his disciple to higher levels of learning, he needs to make him understand the play of *maya* and ensure that his disciple comprehends that this

world, in its multiple manifestations, is nothing more than a projection of the cosmic mind. Therefore, the disciple needs to understand the significance of destiny and the application of the laws of karma in everyday life, though both these fall within the play of *maya*.

For a spiritualist to know how to use spiritual power, he must understand what power is. His guru needs to teach him how to use that power effectively and not waste it on whimsical requirements, or misuse it to cause harm. After teaching his disciple the laws of karma, the guru needs to pave the way for the disciple to learn that he is above karma and free from it. He needs to understand that he is nothing more than an observer of his destiny, and therefore, not the doer of any deed.

Golden Principle: The guru must lead the disciple from passion to dispassion,

from attachment to detachment,
from discontentment to contentment,
from ignorance to knowledge.

Just four lines, but it could take more than four lifetimes to fulfil!

Obedience to a guru is the strength of discipleship.



*He weeds out ignorance.
He waters the wilting soul.
His grace is why the spirit knows,
it isn't a fractured shard,
but a complete whole.*

Guru Kripa, Dakshina and Awelna

Guru Kripa

Guru kripa means grace of the guru.

The *guru's kripa* enables a disciple to advance to higher levels of consciousness. Social graces, indulgences, or gifts provided by the guru, do not add up to *guru kripa*. Sometimes, a reprimanding sentence from the guru can mean more than a profusion of kind words. Thus, *guru kripa* may not always be sweet and sugarcoated but can be astringent, like a bitter pill that cures.

When my rheumatoid arthritis relapsed, I went to meet Gurudev for the second time. Awaiting my turn in the queue, Puranji asked me what I would ask for on meeting him. Unsure of what to ask for, considering I had come to get my arthritis cured, I grudgingly asked Puranji for advice. He suggested that I seek the *guru's kripa*. On meeting Gurudev, although I did not understand the true meaning of *guru kripa* at the time, I asked for exactly that.

On hearing me ask for *guru kripa*, Gurudev stopped the queue, took me to another room and insisted I ask for what I truly wanted. I stuck to my words, repeating them like a parrot. It turned into a battle of wits and a strange one at that. I simply failed to understand why he wanted me to ask him for a boon or favour. That was the only battle of wits I ever won with Gurudev, not because of any witticism, but because I was awed by the words *guru kripa*. At that moment, they sounded perfect, relevant and poetic. Eventually, Gurudev grinned and pretended to give up (he probably secretly wanted me to win). He patted me on the back and said, "You will get a lot more than you can imagine."

These were reassuring words but they left me wondering if I had been wise in my communication. The arthritis had partially handicapped me, forcing me to visit an acupuncturist, who could provide me minimal and brief respite. Yet, instead of a cure from this misery, I had asked for *guru kripa*, two words I did not understand. Was that a good deal? I was unimpressed, since

all I had managed to achieve was an exchange of verbal concepts. How smart could that be?

However, in retrospect, I can definitively and conclusively assert that I could never have made a better choice than repeating those two magic words, *guru kripa*. It is entirely because of Gurudev's grace that I count myself as one of the wealthiest men on earth (spiritually speaking), regardless of health, physical comfort or circumstances. I have been able to be of service, not only to human beings, animals and plants, but also to their spirits. I am a part of all these forms and they are a part of me. I do not believe either side has done the other any favours. Ours is a symbiotic existence.

A disciple from the Kolkata *sthan*, Karmakarji, shared an interesting incident of *guru kripa*. Karmakarji worked in a pharmaceutical company that often hosted cocktail parties for its clients, and it was obligatory for executives like him to attend those events. As he followed the restriction of not consuming alcohol on Thursdays, he was disappointed when the company hosted a cocktail party on a Thursday. Having broken the restriction, Karmakarji went to meet his guru, Dutta Babu, to seek forgiveness. Dutta Babu was a colleague of Gurudev's and one of his older disciples.

To his utter bewilderment, Dutta Babu told Karmakarji not to be disappointed, but instead, use the power of intent to ensure that no such event would be held by his company on a Thursday. A tall order that! Karmakarji willed it and to his amazement, his company never hosted a cocktail party on a Thursday while he worked there. A coincidence? Perhaps. But *guru kripa*? A distinct possibility.

A guru's grace on a person is not merely physical in nature but one that might be in continuity from previous lives, and may continue to exist till the guru can guide the disciple towards the attainment of *mukti* (freedom from the cycle of life and death).

Being well-behaved, courteous, graceful and generous may win you favours, but attaining *guru kripa* is a deeper concept that works at the level of multiple bodies. For a disciple to receive his guru's grace, he must be accepted by his guru's minds— the physical, mental and spiritual. The

reference here is to the different fragments of the mind used by the three bodies.

When a guru showers his disciple with grace, he does so in his own currency and by his own standards, which are far higher than the expectations of the disciple.

A guru's grace can also be noticed when he takes a disciple for granted, because only when a guru feels a sense of ownership does he take the liberty of being informal, treating his disciple as a part of himself.

Guru Dakshina

In ancient times, spiritual masters housed and looked after their disciples in their own homes or *ashrams*. When the training period was over, it was the norm for the disciple to offer a material token of gratitude to his guru. Referred to as *dakshina*, this tribute was usually a small sum of money meant for the guru's sustenance, and not extravagance. *Dakshina* was given to the guru to enable him to live comfortably and continue his work of mentoring others, rather than investing time in earning his keep.

Of course, every practice can be, and is, often abused. There are many spiritual gurus who charge money from those they mentor. Certain cults demand large donations turning the relationship commercial, wherein the guru becomes the bought!

Guru dakshina can be tangible, intangible or both. While it can be given to the guru in the form of material wealth, it can also be given in terms of immeasurable, intangible wealth such as carrying on the guru's *parampara* (tradition), spreading his words and deeds to countless others, as well as serving and helping people in the guru's name.

The disciples of Jesus, and even their disciples, practiced philanthropy in his name. They built churches, inspired people to follow and worship him, thereby converting Christianity into a religion with the largest following, to this day. Those who participated in this selflessly, practiced *guru dakshina*.

Much like the disciples of Jesus, there have been others who have spread the name and message of their gurus far and wide. Some have written multiple

books and scriptures on the philosophy propounded by their spiritual teachers. Others have built edifices as memorials. Buddhist monasteries and Sikh gurudwaras are examples of such edifices.

If you wish to repay the debt of your guru, here are a few suggestions:

- 1) You can feed, educate and pay for the health and well-being of people, attributing these deeds to your guru as an *arpan* (offering).
- 2) You can try to complete some of the work your guru left incomplete while in his physical form. It was Gurudev's intent to concentrate on *seva*, for only then could people be convinced about the presence of divinity, not just in theory, but also in their personal experience. Most of us at the *sthan* carry on that legacy and our efforts have led to the transformation of several regular people into spiritualists, who have seen, experienced, and tasted this sense of divinity first hand.

Throughout history, all saints, though made of flesh and blood, have performed superhuman feats. Similarly, Gurudev's disciples look like people-next-door but would qualify as saints; both in power and attitude.

- 3) You can spread the message of your guru's philosophy and teachings to people who do not know him, thereby acquainting them with him. This applies, irrespective of whether the guru is alive or not.

There are several examples of people whom we introduced to Gurudev and the various *sthans*. Most of them benefited and in that lay a satisfaction of doing what was right for all concerned.

- 4) If you lead people to your guru or his *samadhi* (final resting place) and they benefit from his inspiration, or if he manages to help them through healing or solving some of their problems, then you too are a part of the entire interaction and will be considered a beneficiary.

In one of my dreams, Riaz, a friend from college, requested me to ask for Gurudev's help on his behalf. To me, the dream was bizarre because Riaz certainly did not believe in spiritualism. Hence, I did not act on the dream. But since life is stranger than fiction, Riaz developed muscular sclerosis, and was almost fully paralysed and bedridden. I should have believed in his

appeal in my dream, but did not. Destiny had another story to tell. I fell short and missed an opportunity to let my guru help him.

On another occasion, a former Prime Minister appeared in my vision and asked me to save him. Just another dream I thought! I was amused at my arrogance even in the dream state. Naturally, I paid no heed and forgot about it until months later when he was assassinated. In fact, a *guru bhai* mentioned that he had the same vision at approximately the same time as I did!

Hoshang, who is a part of my spiritual family, had a dream, where a former US president was in some kind of trouble and asked for help from Hoshang's guru.

In the instances mentioned above, could we have helped these people by showering them with Gurudev's grace? The question may never be answered!

Guru Awelna

There is no specific translation for the phrase, *guru awelna*. Its meaning could range from not following the instructions of one's guru, to upsetting, insulting or hurting his sentiments, to being wrongful or deceitful. Although by nature gurus are very forgiving, *guru awelna* seldom goes unpunished. The person committing the act suffers a lot more than bargained for.

Punishment at the hands of the merciful! Does that make sense?

The inner consciousness of a person punishes its conscious part, to square off its *samskars* of extreme guilt, and nullify the dark impression of itself by inducing suffering. It is my belief that the spirit within does not easily forgive its outer self for having wronged the guru (the very icon of its ambitions).

During one of my visits to the soil survey camps where Gurudev spent 30-40% of his time working, Gurudev's cook, Nagesh, asked me for monetary help for his sister's wedding. Since he was short of funds, I gave him INR 11,000 and felt good that the money was going to someone who was in service of my guru. In giving him money, I had fulfilled a duty towards my guru. Or, so I thought.

A few weeks later, Gurudev asked me if I had given money to Nagesh. By then, I had been made aware that Nagesh was collecting money despite being

forbidden by Gurudev against doing so. Gurudev intended to fund a part of the wedding himself and had therefore forbidden him to collect money from others. When Gurudev was informed about my monetary contribution, he questioned Nagesh, who blatantly denied it. If I confessed, Nagesh would have been in big trouble. To safeguard him, I decided to lie. Gurudev quizzed me numerous times, and in diverse ways, but I lied every time.

Some days later, while on a morning run, I stepped into a small ditch and twisted my foot. Even though I was in agony, every time I went to meet Gurudev, I tried to mask my pain as I did not want to appear vulnerable. Three days later, still in agony, I sat in a corner of the *sthan*. On his way to work, Gurudev asked me to join him on his drive to office. Once again, he asked me if I had given any money to Nagesh. This time I confessed since I knew he was already aware of it. His words to me were, "You must never lie to your guru. Never!"

I could sense forgiveness in his eyes. He asked one of his older disciples to cure my sprain. Soon after, the pain vanished.

Satte's story is another example of *guru awelna*. When he came to Gurudev for treatment, he was paralysed hip downwards and confined to a wheelchair. After months of treatment, he could eventually walk and drive his car. He took permission from Gurudev to go home for a few days. He was told to return to the Gurgaon *sthan* on the day of the impending solar eclipse. But Satte got lazy and delayed his return. Unfortunately for him, the paralysis returned. He apologised and asked for mercy. In response, Gurudev made him stay in his *sthan* for years. But Satte never got back to normal. His family sent him to another healer who refused to treat him because he was already the devotee of a very powerful saint and the healer was unwilling to interfere. Gurudev always treated him affectionately but Satte never got cured.

Satte continues to be a great devotee of Gurudev and runs a jewelry store in Toronto. He shares his experiences of Gurudev with many people. Not only are the stories quite fascinating, but so is his way of narrating them!

Rajpalji is one of Gurudev's older disciples who was, and continues to be, obsessed with him. In the early years of discipleship, I believe Rajpalji did

something that could probably be termed as *guru awelna*. Like me, he too was punished.

One day, as he sat in the *sthan* singing songs (probably with the intention of impressing the visitors), Gurudev looked at him and said, "Alright son, let me see how you sing again." Within no time, Rajpalji's throat got sore and remained that way for over a year. During a visit to Shimla with Gurudev, he pleaded for a cure. Gurudev asked him to pick snow off the ground and eat it. Rajpalji did as told and instantly his throat was normal again.

Bade Jainsahib was among the first few disciples of Gurudev who could heal people over a telephone. His enthusiasm for spiritualism was unparalleled. The *Om* and *jyot* (flame) symbols were very prominent in his hand, which meant these powers had manifested in him aplenty. Because of his *bhakti*, Bade Jainsahib progressed faster than any other disciple and his achievements were quicker than those of others.

He once saw a six-foot tall being emerge from a small statue of Shankar (a physical form of *Shiv*) in his home temple, spreading light across the room. The being professed to be a manifestation of *Shiv*, saying he had come to bless him. It is believed that Bade Jainsahib ran out on the streets screaming, "I am *Shiv*! I am *Shiv*!"

Many such experiences had convinced Bade Jainsahib of his divinity and godliness. His wife was not a great believer and so, to convince her, he performed many miraculous feats. He would sometimes manifest the fragrance of perfumes for her, while at other times procure movie tickets even when they were sold out. Once, he even stopped the rain until she finished shopping. However, she drove a hard bargain and attributed these happenings to psychosomatic effects and coincidences.

I am informed that Bade Jainsahib committed an unforgivable act in a guru-disciple relationship by spiritually challenging his guru and threatening to destroy him. Sometimes, the speed of spiritual growth can itself become a handicap. Often, egos can go beyond control and that is probably what happened to him.

He could not contain his pride, nor could he hold all that spiritual power within him. This led him to partial insanity. He was not in his senses when he

threatened to visit Gurgaon to defeat Gurudev in a spiritual combat. That day, he lost control over his mind and was diagnosed as mentally imbalanced. His behaviour was that of a patient in a mental hospital, not conscious of what he was saying or doing. This is one of the worst cases of *guru awelna* I have ever known.

Months later, when he realised his mistake, Bade Jainsahib begged for Gurudev's forgiveness. Gurudev did forgive him and take him back under his tutelage, but Bade Jainsahib was never the same again. The glass was rejoined but the cracks were clearly visible. He realised that the thought of being all-powerful had taken over his once stable mind. Gurudev added another page to this story when he mentioned that Bade Jainsahib was manipulated by a very powerful force, which influenced him to act in this manner. I conjecture it was the same powerful being that had appeared out of the statue. However, *guru awelna* lay in the fact that he gave in to such an influence, and was attracted by it. The two of us became good friends and he won my respect. Many walks did we take together and much did I learn from him.

Although being all-powerful seems like an attainment, there is always a thin dividing line between using the attainment valuably, and being consumed by it. You are all-powerful, is in a deeper way identifying with the *aatma*, which is all powerful, as it is a part of the consciousness supreme. But believing so only because 'you' may have had a vision of a being who claimed to be a manifestation of *Shiv*, or because 'your' guru gave 'you' power to heal others, is crossing the line. Clearly it is delusionary to believe it is 'you' as an independent identity that has attained the power.

Identifying with the consciousness supreme is the highest level of attainment, as opposed to the identification with the physical or astral self. To understand these levels of consciousness and connectivity, one should learn to accept spiritual power with humility and grace, not allowing it to inflate one's ego.

Here, I find it necessary to emphasise the difference between *awelna* and disagreement. You can confess to your guru that you have a different way of looking at the subject at hand, thus taking his permission to hold a different

viewpoint. An advanced guru will accept that every disciple has an individual chemistry, and one may not be congruent to the other.



*He fills the disciple with wisdom
and sets his soul aglow,
so that one day the disciple can
re-ignite the flame in many more.*

Transmission of Power

Power, as referred to here, is the ability to do things uncommonly. In this chapter, we are talking about power that is attained by spiritual learnings and practices, which can be used to help the self and others. This power goes beyond what is commonly used for existence and sustenance.

There are many types of power a disciple can acquire through the grace of his guru.

The Power of Knowledge

A guru spends a major part of his life acquiring spiritual knowledge. He studies the scriptures and assimilates their lessons after much contemplation. Furthermore, his guru would have already ingrained in him the concepts left behind by the wise men of yore. When practiced, that knowledge gets converted into experience, and the disciple reaps the benefit of the knowledge distilled by his guru. Therefore, the transmission of the guru's power of knowledge is a big boon for the disciple. In rare cases like that of Gurudev's, the power of knowledge was intuitive. He knew things through the use of his third eye and communication with his inner being. I have, on various occasions, had a taste of this knowledge and I know how powerful it is.

Many a *siddh guru* can awaken the power of knowledge or intuition in his disciples by using his will power or spiritual energy.

Since Gurudev was neither inclined towards reading books or the scriptures, nor attending spiritual courses, he initially learnt what he did from his advisor, Sitaramji of Dasua. However, on the *Mahaguru* awakening in him, his answers came from Buddha Baba and several symbols of *Shiv* appeared on his palms. His intuition worked most of the time. He almost always read people's minds and knew things before they happened.

I vividly recall meeting a stranger, an evolved being, who randomly told me that I was fortunate to get pre-cooked bread and not have to bake my own. Though I had met him once prior to this incident, he seemed to know a lot

about me and seemingly, had come to test me (sometimes celestial beings appear to assess people on their spiritual progress, while making them aware of their shortcomings). I am not sure how I scored on the test, but he certainly left me spooked.

A few weeks prior to the incident, I had seen the same stranger on the street, as he navigated through the traffic to reach my car, to sell strawberries. While trying to sell me his produce, he mentioned he had been waiting to meet me since he saw me in his dream. It sounded bizarre. Why would a strawberry seller whom I had never encountered, see me in his dream? Anyway, as I bought the fruit and asked him to keep the change, he blessed me with immense wealth.

Gurudev did not teach us the power of knowledge in the manner most gurus do. In fact, he was against us reading religious or spiritual books. He felt we should work towards tapping into the knowledge that lay within our unconscious minds.

The Power of Spiritual Energy

Gurudev's concept of spiritualism was power-based, which is unique in this modern age. He had attained innumerable powers that manifested as symbols on his hands, feet and other parts of his body. He initiated the acquisition of these power symbols in his disciples, as he had the ability to share them. Along with the symbols came the utilisation of their power. The power of using the *trishul* (trident), a symbol on his hands that he shared, made a disciple far more capable than one who had simply read the scriptures several times.

Gurudev could give a potential disciple the power to heal, if he so desired, within a few seconds. Such a person would naturally be blessed with a matching destiny.

Most of us received spiritual energy from Gurudev purely through his willpower. There were no elaborate ceremonies or processes. His methods were unprecedented and unique. He made us practice mantras for years, prior to bestowing on us the gift of *Shakti*. Some like Santoshji, were recruited on the spur of the moment.

Santoshji was caught unaware when Gurudev asked him to do *seva* for people who were waiting in long queues at a campsite in Kathok, a one-horse town in Himachal Pradesh. Since he had no clue what to do, Gurudev asked him to distribute *jal* to the people and sprinkle some over their heads. He indicated that people would get well by this act, and amazingly, many did. I empathise with you, the reader, if you find this hard to swallow, but I want to present things as they were, and not dressed up to sound credible.

Another way in which Gurudev transferred energy to his disciples was by enriching them with his aura. This was done by giving them his worn clothes to wear. By doing so, his residual aura would mingle with that of the disciple's.

During an annual Mahashivratri event, Gurudev had given me his worn clothes, and I wore them for four days without bathing, so I would not lose even one percent of his aura.

Some others were asked to eat in his used plate, after he had finished his meal. His used plate would contain the aura transmitted by his eyes. These were techniques and practices no one had even heard about, much less seen. He, however, used these to great effect.

Another time, he did exactly the opposite and asked me for the belt I was wearing. I was embarrassed because it was somewhat worn-out. Not knowing what the significance behind his gesture was, I offered to rush to the market to buy him a new one. He chuckled, realising I had no clue what he meant, so he gently asked me to take off my belt and hand it over to him. He wore it the entire day.

Why would Gurudev want to wear my worn-out belt when he had several of his own that were in good condition? It took me some time to understand his intention. It was his way to allow our auras to mingle and get connected. It was his philosophy that his disciples and he were one. And he took many steps to make that happen. The successes and failures of his disciples became his own.

He would often treat patients on behalf of a particular disciple by visualising the disciple doing it. When he visited North America, he called to ask me whether he should give power to a potential disciple based there. I, for the

life of me, could not understand why he would ask me that. But that is how he multiplied himself from one to many, steadily nurturing the tree to become a grove, and eventually a forest.

He, the 'server', had all of us, the 'laptops', connected, and hence power became shareable. Naturally, he had access to all the power of every connected device. That is one of the foundations of his finally attaining omnipresence. I have been pleasantly surprised to have met many followers who got relief, not only at the *sthans*, but also by communicating with his photographs and statues, established at various locations.

Power by Attainment of Spiritual Practices

During *sadhana*, many gurus who have not fully evolved, look for the attainment of *siddhis*, which help them gain control over the power of certain mantras, *yantras* and *tantric* practices.

There are several types of *siddhis*. An advanced *siddhi* called *Khawaja Ki Siddhi* allows you to walk on water while others allow you to materialise objects and perform seemingly magical acts. Some *siddhis* enable you to cure certain diseases, while the very complicated ones can even help turn you into an animal for a desired time, or make you invisible! Minor ones can help you gain control over the energy of a plant. For example, the *siddhi* of the Dhatura plant (a poisonous wild plant that grows in India and Africa) can be used to cure people. Its seeds, when swallowed, (after being blessed by one who has accomplished this *siddhi*) reduce the effect of illnesses like asthma, or neutralise the effects of negative energy. The list is endless, but people who practice *tantric vidya* mostly attain these *siddhis*.

Gurudev considered *siddhis* to be *tamasic* in nature and therefore, we were never introduced to them. He wanted his disciples to adopt *sattvic* practices like *seva*, *tapasya* and *mantra vidya*.

Power by Attainment of Mantra Siddhis

Power attained through mantras is also called a *siddhi* (in this context, the word means fulfilment, but is different from those explained earlier). When a person has chanted a mantra in the prescribed manner with the requisite

number of recitations, the power of that mantra becomes his to utilise at will. Usually, at the culmination of a *mantra siddhi*, a *havan* (communication with celestial powers through the medium of fire) or *yagna* (sacrifice or offering) is performed. This has been the process for several millennia.

I have hypothetically divided *mantra siddhis* into three types. They are explained below in lay terms for easier understanding.

Tamasic Mantra Siddhi

Tamasic mantras are performed by people who practice negative *tantric vidya*. Spiritualists and magicians practising black magic, who demonstrate miracles by creating fire or materialising trivial objects out of thin air, are practitioners of this kind. These practitioners often use spirits to help them with their performances.

Once, a contractor hired at Gurudev's farm, cast a spell on an engine used for pumping water. The farm hands who did not know better, requested help from Chacha (Gurudev's younger brother, who used to manage the farm). As Chacha inspected the engine, the contractor challenged him to restart it.

Unfazed, Chacha energised some *jal* with mantras and sprinkled it on the engine. Two things happened instantly and simultaneously: the engine roared to life and the contractor fell at Chacha's feet, wriggling in pain, begging for mercy.

Chacha splashed the *jal* into the eyes of the contractor, easing his pain. He bowed in gratitude and promised to never use his *tantric* mantra again. I later discovered, he had attained the *siddhi* of making appliances malfunction. Why would anybody want to learn a black art like that?

Many *tamasic mantra siddhis* are practiced in graveyards so that the energy available there can be leveraged. There is a spiritual sect of men who call themselves *aghoris* (followers of the non-dual single form of *Shiv*). They resort to abnormal practices and feats, like reciting mantras while sitting on dead bodies they dig out of graves.

One of Gurudev's disciples had been an understudy of an *aghor* before coming to Gurudev. He told us, the *aghor* made him recite mantras while sitting on a dead body, even as it started levitating. The *aghor* had warned

him that if the dead body's head came to life and turned 180 degrees, he would chop off the body's head to protect him. After training him in the black arts for a short period, the *aghori* refused to take him on as his disciple, since he knew he was to get a much greater (and *sattvic*) guru than himself in time to come.

Augarh, the head of the *aghori* cult, though mischievous in demeanour, is a helper and protector of the worshippers of *Shiv* who know how to connect with him. I have profound respect for the deity and think of him as my brother (in a manner of speaking), since he is an unseen disciple of Gurudev.

He may not exactly fit the role of Luca Brasi in Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*, but he has certainly been an accomplice to Gurudev in twisting the tails of his disciples and testing them. In the case of Mr Bagga of Hamidpur, Augarh visited his radio shop, decades ago. With no intention of buying, he pestered Mr and Mrs Bagga and drove them up the wall. Finally, Mr Bagga lost it, and using the choicest Punjabi cuss words, asked Augarh to leave his shop.

When Mr Bagga arrived in Gurgaon, Gurudev greeted him with an onslaught of sarcasm, repeating each word from the conversation he had with the mystery shopper.

Another inscrutable incident with Augarh took place with Darius. As he was driving his car with his arm resting on an open window, a man appeared, seemingly from nowhere, drew a symbol on Darius' forearm and tauntingly said, "So, Mr Lawyer...!" Caught by surprise, Darius brushed off the imaginary symbol drawn on his hand as the mystery man laughed sarcastically. Darius was not in his court attire and could not figure out how this person could ever know that he was a lawyer!

On a couple of occasions, Augarh has come to my aid and I believe (even if it is conjecture) that whenever I call upon him mentally, he will oblige. He is depicted like Shankar, except that he has a fiercer looking face and carries the *trishul* in his left hand as opposed to Shankar's right.

Rajasic Mantra Siddhis

Rajasic siddhis are meant to benefit the aspirant or others for personal gains. During Diwali, many aspirants recite mantras for Laxmi, the deity of wealth. This is ritualised by appeasing the deity's image, cast in a silver coin. If done

correctly and sincerely, this *siddhi* provides *barkat*, which is the luck to make your buck last longer.

There are many such rituals for propitiating the deities or planets through *yagnas*, *rajasic* mantras and *yantras*, or a combination of all. But almost all *rajasic* aspiration is about wealth expansion and material attainment. These mantras are also used for self-protection in the battlefield. Like most mantras, these need to be recited with the requisite number of repetitions, to become usable.

Sattvic Mantra Siddhis

Attaining the higher or highest levels of power through the practice of mantras and intense meditation are included in this category. I say this more for the purpose of understanding than technical accuracy. The accomplishments of people who have meditated for years to attain the power of a symbol like the *trishul*, or the grace and boon of a *sattvic* deity, fall under this category.

Gurudev, Guru Nanak Dev, Kabir and Shirdi Sai Baba, attained the symbol of *Om* on their hands. In Gurudev's case, he passed it on to at least 100 of his disciples who further passed it on to several of their own. Many saints and evolved *yogis* (one who is proficient in yoga) have attained the power and symbol of the *trishul* with intense *sadhana*. Although these attainments are not the results of mantras alone, I have clubbed these concepts for easier understanding.



*It's not a gilded throne that seats the vain.
It's not for those consumed with seeking fame.
It belongs to the energy that selflessly serves,
man, animal and spirit in the revered guru's name.*

Gurudev attained many other *sattvic* symbols such as the *gyot*, *shivling* and *gileri*, forms and graphics of Ganpati, Nandi, etc. Sharmaji, one of Gurudev's disciples, received the *gyot* in full view of all the visitors at the first *sthan* in Mumbai. A flame entered from the window, traversed the entire room and lodged itself on his left hand, where it remained until the end of his life. Difficult to believe, but nonetheless true. This incident was witnessed by at least 40 people.

There are many *sattvic* mantras like the Gayatri, Mahagayatri, Mahamritunjay, Sanjivini, Mahaguru, etc., which when mastered, can become tools in the hands of the practitioner, to protect and serve others.

An insight Gurudev specifically ingrained in us was that power is not a tool to be used for the benefit of family and friends, or ever misused. However, the use of power for self-protection and sustenance is justifiable.

Gaddi—The Seat of Guru's Power

Just like the energy in a temple or other places of worship, amalgamates, collects and builds up over the years, developing a consciousness of its own, so does energy in the guru's house, and the place of his *sadhana* (or yours for that matter). During his lifetime, the guru has access to this stored energy and it works in tandem with his intent.

After the guru's death, most of the energy remains behind and continues to work in synchronisation with the succeeding guru, thus carrying forward the legacy of the deceased guru. Therefore, it is paramount to select an appropriate successor. Exceptions to this rule apply only if the incumbent is incompetent or works against the interest of the guru's institution. It is through the *gaddi* (the guru's seat of power) that the transference of energy takes place. This holds true in most cases of spiritual legacy.

Gurudev had not only created a *gaddi* at the *sthan* in Gurgaon, but also in numerous cities in India and abroad, so that his disciples could carry on the *seva*. I would like to clarify here, it was not the *gaddi* that was the custodian of his power, but because the disciple sat on it while doing *seva*, the guru's power manifested in him and the residual power accumulated in the seat, making it an energy source of its own. Just as it does in a temple or church.

During one of my long stays in his *sthan*, Gurudev insisted I sleep on his *gaddi* every night. I was honoured to do that, not realising the implications. I woke up one morning unable to move. Although I could see around the room, my eyes were shut. At another time, I could float a few inches within the framework of my body. I soon realised this was no ordinary bed. Another noteworthy experience I had while sleeping there was when I saw Mataji, Gurudev's wife, sitting on the floor breast-feeding a child. To my surprise, the child was me as an infant!

Sitting on the *gaddi* during *seva* at the Gurgaon *sthan*, Puranji, another of Gurudev's disciples, sometimes saw deities present in the room. During his lifetime, Gurudev must have blessed and healed over a million people, seated on the *gaddi* himself, or through his disciples.

Spiritual Envy and Attacks

Envy is a quality that can creep into the bloodstream, leading a spiritualist to often resort to malpractice by using power to attack those he envies. Black magicians can use mantras and other practices to lead people to bankruptcy and ill-health. I came across a young boy whose swimming trunks were stolen from a clubhouse in Mumbai, and used as a conduit to perform black magic, causing paralysis of his legs.

I remember an incident when Gurudev and I were in his room when he received a letter. On opening the letter, he asked me to leave the room. When he later summoned me, I saw the letter on his bed shredded and then reassembled. At first, I failed to understand why he would tear up a letter into pieces and then reassemble it. He explained that the letter contained a *yantra*, which was meant to take a life. In this case, his. I could see the form of the *yantra*, torn and reassembled. I was shocked! Why would someone want to take the life of a man who spent his entire life helping others and harming none? Gurudev then spoke to me about envy in the spiritual world, about how people were not willing to watch someone else attain what they could not.

The use of such deadly black magic was something I was not new to, considering I had been a victim of it several decades earlier, which was the

cause for my rheumatoid arthritis. The black magic was performed by a temple priest who used mantras negatively.

During my early years of *seva*, while sitting on the *gaddi*, I recall a man sitting in front of me, looking me in the eye and muttering a mantra. While I could not understand what he was trying to do or say, I felt energy being thrown at me. Immediately, I too started reciting a mantra. Soon, I heard an inner voice asking me to switch to the Mahagayatri Mantra while staring deeply into his eyes. As I did, the man's eyes instantly shut and tears gushed out. He then fell at my feet begging for mercy. I realised, I had unwittingly defeated him in a spiritual contest. Since it was based on the throw of spiritual energy from both sides (transmitted through the mantras used), it was definitely not just a friendly match! He swore to never play mischief again and begged me not to punish him. I wondered how someone could even imagine getting into the negative side of spiritualism. Gurudev always taught us the positive use of energy and warned us against wishing somebody ill, for if we did, we would pay the price!



*Envy bludgeons reason
at the sight of another on the rise.
Resentment thrives, swords are drawn,
to keep him from the prize.*

We can get attacked even in the dream state and must fight our way out of it by using mantras and spiritual weapons bestowed on us. It is not uncommon to hear accounts of people who feel immobilised in their sleep and cannot break free easily. Others find themselves being choked and getting free only upon waking.

The energy of a temple may feel insecure if a powerful spiritualist walks through its doors. The powers of smaller temples sometimes react negatively to spiritual people if they consider them to be a threat to the temple's popularity, influence and power.

When we opened a *sthan* on a hill station, I felt the atmosphere there was heavily laden with negativity. On inquiring if there was a temple nearby, I was informed that there was in fact a small but popular temple, a short distance away. I sent some senior disciples to offer sweetmeats at the temple to assure the deity that we came as friends and not enemies. They communicated to the deity that they would send people with offerings and the temple should not be an obstacle to our *seva*. Ever since, that *sthan* is full of positive energy.

In a more recent incident, I was attacked in my sleep by what I believe was the energy of the deity of an old, ramshackled temple in my neighbourhood. The deity who attacked me, appeared in the form of an outlandish creature with a whitish face, from a different time period. This strangely dressed creature was the most bizarre feminine form I have seen. (It was certainly not the spirit of a dead human being.) I could have easily visited the temple in my waking state and destroyed the energy equation there. But was I willing to stoop to the level of the deity? I decided to ignore the attack. I knew why the deity was hitting out. A few years earlier, we had started a temple in the same neighbourhood to further the path of *seva*. I guess the deity did not like the idea of another temple gaining significance through our efforts. Due to the training I had received in self-protection, I could withstand and overcome such attacks. I have trained *sevadaars* in the art of self-preservation.

Udhav, one of Gurudev's younger disciples, experienced a spiritual attack. He was at the *sthan* at Gurudev's house when a jeep rolled in with some *sadhus* (ascetics). They asked for Gurudev and demanded several kilograms of rice and tins of cooking oil for a feast they were planning for their clan.

On being informed that Gurudev was unavailable, they decided to wait until their demands were met. In defiance, their leader came and sat opposite Udhav and made piercing eye contact. Udhav stared back into his eyes, while mentally reciting the Mahagayatri Mantra. In the clash of egos, the gruff sadhu, unable to withstand the energy onslaught from Udhav, fainted, and his team beat a hasty retreat.

Misuse of Power

A British politician once said, "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely." While I do not disagree with the statement, I do believe corruption by power happens primarily due to a person's insecurities and lack of confidence. Of course, this is easier said than overcome, because wielding power over others makes one feel uniquely special and superior. It is because of power that one vies for significance, virtually a state of intoxication, which often leads to misuse. I confess, I had been unable to contain myself in the early years of spiritual life, and experimented with power a few times.

Years ago, it was raining heavily and my car suddenly broke down. I was reciting the Mahagayatri Mantra and wished for the rain to stop. It did, instantly. I was unsure if it was my imagination or just a coincidence. Anyhow, I felt guilty and willed the rain to start again, and surprisingly, it did. On second thought, I felt if it did not stop raining, water would get into the carburettor, making it difficult for me to restart the car. So, yet again, I willed the rain to stop, and stop it did. By then, I was sure this was the manifestation of the power of the mantra. I promised myself to never abuse power again.

Later that day, while driving back from the city to the suburbs, I noticed an acquaintance, the late Mazhar Khan, driving just ahead of me. I wished for him to stop. Instantly, his car tyre punctured, and the car came to an abrupt halt. I got the opportunity to meet him and we chatted by the kerbside. Why did I believe this was the power of the mantra? Well, because this had happened to me once earlier, in virtually the same circumstance, although in another city.

Gurudev had asked me to drive his office supervisor to Dehradun. I did as asked and recited the Mahagayatri Mantra while driving. I wondered if the mantra could puncture my car's tyre and so I willed it. A few seconds later, I had to bring my car to a screeching halt. I felt foolish because I had to change the tyre myself. I recognise that I had used the power Gurudev had vested in me in a counter productive way.

In another instance, a small-time politician tried to blackmail me about a property under negotiation with an association, where he was the secretary. Though I agreed to all the demands of the association, he refused to relent. As I did not want to get into a conflict, I decided to let him get the better of me. The next time we met, he had a fractured arm. Although, I had settled the matter with the association, he tried to coerce me into paying more money than the negotiated amount. This angered me and a negative wish emanated from my mind. When we met again a few weeks later, he had fractured his other arm. Could it be conjecture that my negative wish had made this happen?

The answer is yes, sure, it could have been, but the sheer coincidence of my wishing him ill and the results thereof, seemed to suggest more than just that. Yet again, I was unable to keep the power bestowed on me in check. Though I have not allowed these incidents to add to my guilt and get stored as *samskars*, I use them as instructional examples.

Another time, I came across a magician performing tricks by the kerbside in Gurgaon. As I stopped to watch, I heard him tell his audience that the cloth doll by his side would smoke a cigarette without any human intervention. I realised this was a *tantric* trick and suspected the magician was taking the help of a spirit to perform the act. A thought struck me: what if I encircled the doll mentally with a *keel*, and prevented the spirit from entering the circle? The spirit would fail to follow the magician's bidding and the doll would not perform. I encircled the doll mentally and sure enough, it did not smoke and the magician looked flustered. He tried repeatedly, but to no avail. Not wanting to ruin his show, I broke the *keel* and left. From the corner of my eye, I saw the doll smoking a cigarette.

Gurudev's first disciple, Malhotraji, experimented with power by misusing it, just as I did. He would often miss his train returning home late from work.

He discovered, by using the power he was granted, he could will the train to be delayed, and in fact, did so on several occasions. When Gurudev found out about this misuse of power, he was upset and reprimanded him.

On another occasion, Malhotraji inquired about the price of fruit from a vendor near his home. The vendor was rude and asked why he wanted to know the prices since he usually never bought any fruit. Angered by his rudeness, Malhotraji willed a bull standing close by to attack the fruit cart and overturn it. He succeeded, but this was a failure in Gurudev's eyes, who paid the vendor for his damaged goods and threatened to withdraw Malhotraji's power if he misused it again.

In the initial days, many of us have amateurishly used the power Gurudev vested in us. However, over the years, the foundation of Gurudev's teachings has provided us with checks and balances to prevent such misuse. His power must be respected above all else.

I would like to clarify that every person can direct his energy in any direction he pleases, but since most humans have just enough electromagnetic energy to sustain themselves, misusing it is barely possible.

Theft of Power

I would like to assume that a teacher does not teach his disciple to steal power. But since spiritual power can be stolen, I wanted to include it in this section.

Power exists everywhere and there are certain places where power gets accumulated, like busy crossroads, gymnasiums, forests, cowsheds, places of worship, and so on. There are many spiritualists who resort to stealing power by magnetising it from specific locations and people.

While I was explained the techniques of power theft by a rogue I met in my spiritual life, I soon understood that theft was the worst method of attaining power. It may be conjecture, but I have experienced that power attained this way does not give the receiver long-term benefits. It either depletes itself through wastage and misuse, or gets magnetised by someone with a stronger energy field.

"The most exquisite paradox... as soon as you give it all up, you can have it all.

As long as you want power, you can't have it. The minute you don't want power, you'll have more than you ever dreamed possible."

—Guru Ram Dass

Guru Vandana

The practice of revering and worshipping the guru is referred to as *guru vandana*.

Touching the Guru's Feet

What probably began thousands of years ago as a purely scientific gesture, has become an accepted form of showing respect, or at best, a spiritual norm, denoting the disciple's humility.

The spiritual reasons for touching a guru's feet are two-fold.

The guru's head and feet (just like all human beings) are the north and south poles of his body, respectively. Due to opposite polarity, both ends of a human body work like magnets. By meeting your guru face-to-face and eye-to-eye, the north pole of both bodies make contact and repel each other's energy.

On the other hand, when a disciple touches a guru's feet, his north pole makes contact with the guru's south pole, and there is magnetic attraction, resulting in an exchange of energy. When the guru is in a benevolent mood and offers his *ashirwad* (blessings), his energy is transmitted through his hands to the disciple's head. In almost all cases, this energy is positive and enriches the disciple's aura.

I have watched Gurudev blessing thousands of people, for hours on end, without respite. Due to a well-developed power of observation, I noticed every blessing was not the same, since both, his facial expressions, as well as his body language differed, depending on whom he was blessing. Sometimes, he would bless with both hands (I believe this was the most powerful blessing he would give), sometimes he would bless people with his left hand, while at other times, with his right, sometimes he would show a hint of emotion, and at other times, he was emotionless and expressionless.

I have been blessed by him several hundred times and have felt the strength of the blessings. A very memorable instance was when I saw a vision of getting hurt and bleeding in an accident. When I sought his permission soon

thereafter to go on a journey, he grudgingly gave me approval on my insistence. I remember, he blessed me with both hands quite dramatically. The accident did happen, but without the bleeding that I had foreseen in the vision.

Was my vision defective or his blessing effective?

As a representative of Gurudev, while doing *seva*, I can feel the blessings flowing. There are times I bless people so mechanically that I feel it is more an act that does not have the same intensity as at other times. Often, my reactions to people at a subconscious level are quite different from what they are at a conscious level. I am unable to control that. Sometimes, at a subconscious level, I feel a person must be allowed to suffer and nothing should be done to alter that status. At a conscious level, I feel bad for that person and would love to be of help, even pray for him, but my subconscious ignores these emotions and overrides my conscious feelings.

Hence, over the decades, I have learnt to be unemotional and let the subconscious self call the shots.

Strange, though, are the results. There could be a patient who I think (at a conscious level), may take a long time to recover with spiritual healing. But I am pleasantly surprised to see him heal quicker and better than expected. Over time, I have learnt to understand who the energy will decide to help, and to what extent. Consequently, when I offer my blessings to someone, I do not accompany it with an intention at a conscious level, because I know that my subconscious mind will program its intensity (as it is connected to the spiritual energy of Gurudev), and will act accordingly.

A *siddh guru* does not promote the custom of touching of feet because he realises that the same essence of divinity exists within both guru and disciple. Nothing more, nothing less! However, he allows this custom to continue, as it is a channel for the transmission of power from him to the disciple. On the other hand, many gurus do not allow touching of feet and only allow their followers to touch the pedestal on which they sit, afraid that their energy may get partially depleted through such rituals.

Presently, only a few gurus have the power to make their blessings work effectively, ensuring the flag of *Guruism* is flying high.

Unfortunately, this does not apply to some gurus, because when they amass wealth in the name of spiritualism, they incur a debt. This results in karmic imbalance. Such a guru's potency to bless others effectively, stands diluted.



*A symbolic offering of the ego,
so his grace can be the guide
that turns the shackled soul into a giant,
free of delusion, ignorance and pride.*

Meditation on the Guru

Just like bowing at a guru's feet is a 'connectivity-driver' between the auras of the guru and his disciple, so also is meditation on the guru. Whenever you meditate on something or someone, you are mentally connected, and there is a flow of energy to that object or person, thereby making him aware at a subconscious level.

A disciple meditating on the guru is always on the guru's mind, and he can sense the telepathic communication that flows from the disciple towards him. If the guru is happy with the disciple at his subconscious level, the vibrations that will flow back in reciprocation will be of benevolence and higher in magnitude. When the guru is not in physical existence, meditation is a strong one-way communication from disciple to guru. In such a case, if the guru is accomplished, he will be able to receive the messages and respond if he chooses to. In Gurudev's case, when several people in trouble have remembered him with intensity, they have found themselves miraculously saved from the situation.

Guru Purnima

Every year, mostly in the month of July, a day is ritually dedicated to the guru and is called Guru Purnima. On this day, disciples (as well as admirers, followers and devotees) thank their guru for his presence in their lives by worshipping him and displaying their gratitude.

The guru evaluates the progress of his disciples and assesses how to further their spiritual development, specifically by addressing their shortcomings.

While Gurudev was alive, people flocked in thousands to seek his blessings. For him, this day marked the celebration of a custom and he would allow us to offer him a set of nine clothes or accessories. Alternatively, he felt the custom was complete even if we wrote '9 clothes' on a yellow handkerchief and offered it to him. Each of us also offered him a coconut wrapped in a handkerchief, which he blessed and returned. In spiritual practices, the coconut usually symbolises the head, and offering a coconut to your guru implies the surrender of one's self.

Some disciples were allowed to wash Gurudev's feet and then drink the water, which was very potent since it contained his energy. This proved to be an elixir for many disciples as it raised their consciousness. It is recorded in ancient texts that a generous guru needs to have an excess of energy in order to allow this custom, since this ritual is tantamount to a sacrifice by the guru in favour of his chosen disciples.

Unfortunately, some gurus exploit the day of Guru Purnima by utilising it to accept money and expensive gifts from their disciples.

After Death Worship

When Gurudev died, I was a half-baked disciple who, despite practising *seva* for several years and learning a lot, still had a lot more to learn. I was not sure about my relationship with him, now that he was not in physical form. However, relying on my knowledge of his out-of-body experiences (OBEs), I was certain he would continue his mission of *seva* in spirit form.

I was proved right. It has been almost 30 years since Gurudev's death and not only does he continue to appear in the dreams and visions of many people, but also performs several acts and deeds in spirit form. These are part of his mission of guiding and helping.

(Read *Dream Sutra—Perceiving Hidden Realms* to know more about dreams, visions and OBEs.)

If you want to worship your guru after his demise, here are a few suggestions:

1. Do not give up the concept of surrender and continue to assign all your deeds and actions to him.
2. Continue to do *seva* in his name and stay connected to his power or spiritual energy and you will find that it works, as it did during his lifetime.

Many disciples get together and build a place of worship dedicated to their guru. Devotees of Sai Baba have created many temples (large and small) for him across the globe. The followers of Ramakrishna have built an institution which does charitable work in his name and in the name of some of his stellar disciples. The key here is not the splendour of the tribute to the guru,

but the intention of gratitude. Each of these places of worship and institutions have one common objective—to be of service to people as a means to carry forward the legacy of the guru.

The guru's seva must continue after his death. A disciple's homage lies in the success of this endeavour.



"The first lamp is the Guru, and the lamp that is lighted from it is the disciple. The second, in turn becomes the Guru, and so on."

–Swami Vivekananda

Maturity of a Guru

A guru, during his lifetime, matures with time and experience. Therefore, he must have empathy for his disciples during the various phases of their evolution as well.

A guru must not forget that his disciples will make mistakes, just like he probably did when he was in their shoes. They will succumb to failure despite their best efforts to stand tall. Surrendering is not easy and therefore, many or most disciples will stumble in their efforts to surrender their minds and physical time to their guru. An empathetic guru will help his disciples rise again and re-attempt the task at hand. He will refrain from making the disciples feel guilty or miserable or lose their self-worth. Instead, he will motivate them to rise above guilt and not harbour any misgivings about themselves.

I recall being asked by Gurudev to become a guru and start a *sthan* to encourage and train people on the spiritual path. I did so with a sense of duty, but as I reflect, I realise that many of the decisions I made initially as a guru, would have been different were I to make them today. Sometimes, I selected a disciple based on his obsession with spiritualism without correctly judging his qualities, attitudes and *gunas*. In a case or two, I realised much later that my selection had been wrong (I accept it was destined to be so), and while they did indeed have humane qualities, they lacked leadership traits necessary to become good disciples and, in the future, better gurus. I will continue to infuse the necessary qualities they lack and *inshallah* (by the grace of divinity), they may make it.

The starting point of destiny in this present birth, is the moment and place of birth. It is not exactly easy for the disciples to get a time frame of birth matching their guru's. The disciples would have no choice but to get a seat on the same train, unable to choose a class. While some would get a seat in the first class, some in second, others would have to be content in the lowest class, as long as it is on the same train. Parallely, in order to have physical proximity and matching lifetimes with their guru, they would have to opt for whatever is best available in terms of time and place, astrologically

addressed as *mahurat*. This *mahurat* would be an indicator of their qualities and destiny. Probably they would have to opt for a compromised *mahurat* which would neither befit their spiritual background, nor capabilities. Gruff speech, aggressive behaviour, ill-health, etc. exist because of the *mahurat* of the disciple's birth. Therefore, the guru must sense the inner being and inner qualities of his disciples and ignore some of their rough exterior ones.

Golden Principle: If you are dissatisfied with your physical disposition, do remember, what you received in exchange, may be a greater gift of greater relevance.

When a disciple becomes a guru, most of the qualities that made him a great disciple are also needed by him in his new avatar. However, it is a fact that every good actor does not a good director make. By that logic, a disciple must acquire several other qualities to transform from an able student to an able teacher. Let us examine a few.

Forgiveness

There is a difference in being forgiven for the mistakes you may have made, to being the forgiver.

Gurudev would notice faults in our attitudes and behaviour, and though he would reprimand and counsel us, he would not hold it against us. Every day was a new beginning with him and once the disciple had learnt his lesson, the fault was obliterated even from his personal file (if ever there was one!). His expressions of disapproval (feigned most of the time) were unnerving, leaving us in awe of him.

Gurudev had innumerable devotees, as well as hundreds of disciples and their downlines. Thus, for him, forgiveness was a wholesale business. Without forgiveness, he would have had to contend with an extensive list of people to fail, suspend and probably eliminate from his core group.

I made many mistakes when I was a disciple, and yet initially, when I found my disciples making the same mistakes, I did not find it easy to forgive them. I expected a lot more from them than I probably expected from myself at their stage. Unfair but true!

Nothing can sum this up more aptly than Shakespeare's timeless words from *Julius Caesar*,

***"Lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend."***

I was especially reprimanding towards disciples who took pride in the *seva* they were doing. Years ago, a *sevadaar* at the *sthan* started enjoying the idea of being a healer and having people bow to him. Since this irritated me, not only did I reprimand him in front of his *guru bhais* but also suspended him from the *gaddi* for a year. He bore the punishment sportingly and stood in queue every *bada guruvar* to pay his respects at the *sthan*. His *guru bhais*, who had earlier complained about him, started pleading his case for forgiveness. As he had won a popular vote, he was reinstated to do *seva*. If movie stars can have inflated egos due to their popularity, it is quite possible for a spiritualist to let his perceived godliness get to his head.

There were other disciples whom I termed as partial misfits since they let temptations become obstacles to their progress. Many of them would be spiritually stuck for years because I would wait for them to discover their faults and correct themselves. For example, Singh, another *sevadaar* at the *sthan*, kept asking me to help him give up his habit of drinking, but I did not. I felt he should find the corrective strength within himself to give it up, and until then, continue to err.

Although it took him a couple of years, Singh did manage to overcome the temptation of alcohol and has remained a teetotaller ever since. All those years that Singh worked on himself, I did not aid his progress.

Another fault I find difficult to forgive, is the habit of criticising others. Unlike politics, spiritualism should foster collaboration, and not criticism of each other. In spiritualism, bringing someone down impedes one's own progress.

For a disciple, accepting favours from visitors at the *sthans*, is unacceptable. As representatives of the *sthans*, we must be givers, not takers of benefits and favours. This was a key tenet of Gurudev's philosophy and was totally applied by me. In fact, I have always encouraged people connected with the *sthan* to help visitors secure jobs or sponsor their children's education, medical treatment, etc. Coordinating help for people is within acceptable limits.

Another quality that does not curry favour in spiritualism is competitiveness. It is useless for a disciple to posture himself as better than the rest, or as a leader of the pack. For me, such people are below acceptance level. I rue the day I accepted some such people as disciples, but have since ensured that I do not promote them until they overcome this attitude.

Over the years, at a conscious level, I have become more empathetic towards the erring disciples. At the subconscious level, I see some of them being punished and receiving setbacks. I realise the energy we have access to is a double-edged sword, and can sometimes hurt the hand that wields it. I have observed myself mature as a guru, just like I once saw myself mature as a disciple. Both were painful processes. I acknowledge, maturity comes with spiritual growth, as it rightfully should.

Patience

The wise sage Kabir, a master of words, echoes my sentiment on patience when he says,

***"Dheere dheere re mana, dheere sab kuch hoye
Mali seenche so ghara, ritu aaye phal hoye."***

Which means: Everything takes time and happens at its own pace. Even while the gardener may water the plant every day, the fruit only appears in the flowering season.



*You can't pace the journey.
You can't hasten the climb.
You have to accept that all that is to be
will happen in its own time.*

Gurudev's viewpoint on patience is echoed in Kabir's words. Gurudev advised us to accept our spiritual journey as it was, what it was, when it was, since only at the appointed time and in the manner it was meant to, would our spiritual process reach fruition.

During my formative years, I desired instantaneous gratification of my spiritual labour. If any of Gurudev's older disciples had some achievement, I felt the need to attain the same. My spiritual progress was speedy and I did get fabulous results within a brief period (seemingly so). But then came a phase of stagnation of 10 years, during which I continued to do *seva* but did not have the initiative to do much else, and felt disconnected from my disciples and spiritual friends. This was soon after Gurudev's demise. It took a lot to teach me patience.

As a guru, one needs to be patient and not expect his disciples to succeed before their destined time. Sometimes the disciples need to be punished, while at other times cajoled, motivated, and pushed to further their spiritual journey. Many gurus expect their disciples to follow instructions with precision, like engineers. Such a regimented life may work to some extent in the monastic or priestly orders, but certainly not among the householders who have many distractions in their day-to-day existence, including family, work and societal obligations. Amidst all this, finding time to be a good disciple is no meagre task!

Humility

Humility is difficult to practice, but a necessity on your spiritual journey. Being treated with reverence and subservience by numerous people, and yet not allowing it to affect you, is the essence of this humility. What I mean by spiritual humility, however, is not necessarily a manner of behaviour. I am not suggesting that a person needs to act mild-mannered or be soft-spoken to be accepted as spiritually humble. Humility is the way you feel within. It is the manner in which you accept others.

Do you see yourself as superior because people who are actually not lesser than you, consider you a master and treat you with demonstrated respect? Or do you treat people with empathy and look at them with gratitude for having given you a high pedestal? A pedestal that you do not crave, but cannot

avoid? These are questions a spiritualist needs to ask himself while evaluating self-humility.

When you go deeper into the meaning of humility, you realise that all beings and life forms have the same divinity at the core, just as you do. This includes people you respect, or do not, the people who respect you, or do not, and those you know and those you do not. True spiritual humility lies in this realisation.

A spiritual master knows that all beings are at various stages of evolution, and being earlier or later does not make one greater or lesser than the other. Having said that, billions of human beings are oblivious to this knowledge. Their ignorance drives them towards material and social aspirations, instead of exploring their own latent divinity.

The most significant sentence in the Indian scriptures is '*Aham Brahmasmi*' or 'I am Brahman' (I am the consciousness supreme). Believing you are a part of the consciousness supreme is neither spiritual vanity nor pride, but spiritual humility in its ultimate form—the realisation that all beings are themselves the consciousness supreme.

An episode from the life of Adi Shankarcharya brings home this point. While walking along the River Ganges, Adi Shankarcharya and his disciples came across a social outcast—a hunter, with a pack of four dogs. The disciples ordered the hunter to move out of the way so that their guru could pass. The hunter stood his ground and posed a question to Shankarcharya. He asked, "You preach that as per the *Vedas* the non-dual *brahman* (universe) is the only reality. If that were so, then how has the sense of difference overtaken you? There are hundreds of holy men indulging in philosophical talk, but not even a ray of knowledge has made its way into their hearts. You asked me to move aside and make way for you. To whom were your words addressed, learned Sir? To the body that comes from the same source and performs the same functions in the case of both, a brahmin and an outcast? Or, to the *aatma*, the witnessing consciousness, which too is the same in all; unaffected by anything that is of the body? How do such differences as, 'This is a brahmin, this is an outcast', arise in non-dual experience? So, how can you indulge in such false sentiments as, 'Being a brahmin, I am pure; and you,

dog-eater, must therefore give way for me', when the truth is that the one universal and inimitable spirit, itself bodiless, is shining alike in all bodies?"

When the outcast finished his argument, Shankarcharya spoke as follows, "All that you have said is true. You are indeed, one of the noblest of men. Your words of wisdom make me abandon the idea that you are an outcast. A person who sees the entire world as *aatma* only, whose mind is unshakeably established in that conviction, is worthy of worship, irrespective of who he is in worldly ways."

An extract from Adi Shankarcharya's poem *Nirvan Shaktam*, adds to this view :

I am not mind, nor intellect, nor ego, nor the reflections of inner self (*citt*).

I am not the five senses.

I am beyond that.

I am not the ether, nor the earth, nor the fire, nor the wind (the five elements).

I am indeed,

That eternal knowing and bliss, the auspicious (*Shiv*), love and pure consciousness.

I have seen gurus competing with the egos of their disciples. For instance, if a disciple makes a silly remark or says something disrespectful, it is imperative for the guru to pass it off then, and admonish him later. A guru must understand that for a disciple to come up to his level of realisation, the journey is a long and difficult one. There is a lot to bear, swallow and digest on the way. A guru must understand that till he himself has reached the level of *moksh* in this life or another, there will always be scope for further learning and evolution.

A guru and his disciples evolve together and I have been a witness to this in several cases, including my own. I feel grateful for what I have learnt from both, my disciples, and those who come seeking relief at the *sthan*.

Tactfulness

A guru needs to be tactful while leading his disciples on the path of spiritual attainment.

People often took Gurudev to be a simpleton since he behaved like one. He would ask questions innocently, pretending to not know the answers. And when some of his followers took the effort of providing him with answers, he would listen attentively, as if they were sharing pearls of wisdom.

The man was unbelievable!

Let me enumerate a few examples of his tactfulness.

When Gurudev was planning to construct a cowshed on his farm, every disciple visiting the farm was asked how much area should be earmarked for laying the roof on the cowshed. Most answered as if they were experts on the subject. Some said 10 feet, others 12 feet, and so on, each justifying their surmise with their own logic. Having heard so many suggestions, I was confident that I too could design a cowshed!

However, Gurudev kept up the charade. I was perplexed why he was inquiring from so many? Finally, the shed was ordered to be 22 feet. Oops! That was a new figure. He looked at me with a sly grin, indicating, while we should listen to all, we should ultimately make our own decisions. During this exercise, he was trying to observe the reaction of each disciple; how many acted all-knowing, and how many were humble enough to accept their own ignorance.

Another time, some money had been stolen from his wallet and he confided in me about it. Even though he mentioned the name of the thief, he was not ready to haul him for the misconduct. He passed it off saying that the miscreant would pay for it, as the benefit of his *seva* would be revoked.

Gurudev's tactfulness also helped him deal with negative energies and spirits. Dealing with such powers was not the job of a naive person. And so, I cast a vote for shrewdness, not cunningness. Although, I could write a book on his shrewdness, it would suffice to say, while people thought of Gurudev as *Bholenath* (the innocent one), I found him to be *Chaturmath* (the clever one).

At this point, I would like to make a distinction between a saint and a guru.

A saint does not need to be shrewd because he only has his own evolution to consider. Whereas, a guru needs to be shrewd because he must manage the

spiritual evolution of many people across generations.

I have been manipulated by Gurudev's mind many a time, although I have no way to prove it.

After Gurudev's demise, Malhotraji decided to resign as chief-trustee from the trust that was set up to carry on the guru's *seva*. Since he could play a positive role in building the spiritual institution, I did not think it was a good idea for him to quit. I spent hours trying to convince him to stay on board. On intense persuasion, he eventually relented, and I felt reassured.

The trust meeting was to take place on the terrace of the building where I was staying. I packed my bags and kept them on the stairway, hoping to make a quiet exit while the meeting was in session. I left to run some errands and on returning, noticed my luggage had been shifted to the centre, where the trustees and members were assembled for the meeting!

There was no way I could escape the meeting, unless I picked up my luggage in full view, and made a run for it. I knew the mastermind had something in store for me so I succumbed to my fate and stood at the back, wondering what to do. In a couple of minutes, I was wondering no more!

Malhotraji had resigned and his resignation had been accepted. Hold it, I thought! This was not what we had agreed to the previous night. I confronted him, telling him he had no right to resign because we needed him to manage the institution. The man had turned on his word and no one was doing anything about it. I knew it was time for me to act and understood why my luggage had been moved to the centre. Act I did, and theatrically so! I was being compelled to say what I did and act how I did. The sum of my histrionics was that Malhotraji was back in. No escape, no respite. My luggage was now accessible and I could sense how a master could use his disciple to achieve the ends he thinks necessary.

Collaboration

Some gurus are more than just islands, metaphorically speaking. They have formed spiritual alliances with many other spiritualists. For over 35 years, I have been an ardent supporter of spiritual collaboration.

I have learnt the value of collaborating with my *guru bhais*. Since all of them had access to the same power as I did, I realised that if we were to pool our energy resources, our spiritual strength would multiply and our *seva* would achieve more effective results.

Gurudev fostered many connections at a spiritual level. He told us that we had spiritual alliances with Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Devi Renuka and her son, Parshuram, Shirdi Sai Baba, Augarh, Baba Makhdoom, Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Gobind Singh, and so on. He told us that if we ever needed help, we could request them for it.

However, it is only fair to state, several other spiritual sects also believe people can benefit others more when they work in tandem and collaboration, since the energies are more effective in group dynamics. Mexican sorcerers believe that to advance spiritually, people should work together in groups of nine or eleven. Indian scriptures indicate that some gurus of ancient times had eleven disciples. And then there was Jesus!

I am a believer of spiritual collaboration and would recommend it not only to disciples of great gurus, but also to the gurus.

Role-play

A guru is the sum of multiple personalities. He must play different roles in dealing with his disciples, devotees and followers.

It is not easy to switch roles from guru to father or friend. Sometimes, a disciple needs to be mothered and that role must also be played by the guru, spiritually. Role-play, however painstaking or difficult, is part of the guru's curriculum.

Gurudev was a master of role-play with the ability to switch roles within a fraction of a second! We knew when he was playing father we could have a sense of entitlement and make requests. Casualness was acceptable. But when playing guru, he was formidable, and you certainly needed to mind your Ps and Qs. Our own role-play had to match his and that was no easy task!

Succession by Merit

Some sects of Hinduism, Christianity and other religions, talk about succession of the guru by only one disciple. Gurudev, however, was a guru to over a hundred disciples and their downlines.

A guru's successor or successors must have the qualities of a guru and be spiritually equipped to take the guru's institution to a higher level. I have tried to follow this recommendation ever since Gurudev shared this insight with me.

Often, people look for successors from within their own family. This is a view spiritualists do not subscribe to, since spiritualism is a merit-based institution, not a family-run business.

Unlike certain disciples, a guru's children may or may not have the appropriate qualities or planetary combinations to make them suitable inheritors of the guru's *gaddi*. While there have been children who have succeeded their parents in spiritual pursuits and accomplishments, the list is short indeed.

Ashwatthama, the son of Guru Dronacharya, had to play the role of a villain, despite being a great archer and the son of a guru, acknowledged as a master in the art of *rajasic* training.

Guru Nanak Dev did not pass on his spiritual legacy to any of his sons but to a third person, Bhai Lehna, who subsequently became Guru Angad Dev.

In the Radha Soami sect, Guru Charan Singh Ji was succeeded by his nephew, Gurinder Singh, and not his son Rana. Being polished and well-educated, he could easily have been trained to succeed, but Rana was not interested, and the seat went to the young nephew, a corporate executive at the time and an alumnus of the Lawrence School of Sanawar.

Gurudev was survived by his wife, who had been exposed to spiritualism for over two decades in a supportive role to her husband. When Gurudev passed on, I remember being slightly harsh with her, when most of the ladies sitting with her, including Gurudev's sisters, were shedding tears and wailing in sorrow. I urged her, "You cannot cry as this is a luxury the institution cannot afford. He has created a spiritual empire and the burden of running it will now fall upon your shoulders." She bought my appeal and ran the institution till her demise in 2014.

After Gurudev, we all treated Malhotraji as our senior, but not our guru. Many people addressed him as Chote Guruji or Junior Guruji. After Malhotraji, there is no particular person who will be considered the designated senior. In fact, Gurudev had subtly predicted that after his demise, we would all operate independently, yet in collaboration with one another.

Gurudev always said, "Hum ansh se chalte hain, vansh se nahin," literally meaning, "Succession should be by merit and not by birth."

Modesty of a Guru

It is usually taken for granted that a guru has achieved everything there is to achieve—a conjecture not necessarily true.

Since the guru also needs to constantly evolve, he may not have the solution to every problem or an answer to every question, irrespective of the high expectations his disciples may have of him.

An honest guru will not pretend to be all-knowing, but instead, will let his disciples know that he too has bridges to cross and sensory temptations to overcome, limited though they may be. Such honesty will level off the huge expectations from disciples and make their relationship more realistic.

Occasionally, a guru is deliberately asked unanswerable questions by a disruptive person wanting to prove him wrong. For a guru to keep his cool and ignore this provocation requires the control of his mind.

Disciples often argue or even err with their guru, because they have not fully learnt the tenets of *Guruism*. Not reprimanding, cursing or being angry with them, requires utmost empathy and self-control.

Some of Gurudev's misguided disciples would often argue with him, not accepting that he could not provide them with a solution for everything. Omniscient he was not, not in his physical form. However, many followers thought that just by praying to him all their problems would end. When he tried to explain to them that sometimes they needed to let their destinies play out, they would argue adamantly.

A guru too, must face and endure the downsides of his destiny. And, just like everyone else, this could include a combination of many factors, namely

financial inadequacies, family disputes, physical ailments and/or other sources of misfortune.

***Knowledge is proud that it knows so much;
wisdom is humble that it knows no more.***

–William Cowper

The Guru's Popularity or Vanity

The guru's success lies in teaching and training his disciples, encouraging them, and fulfilling their spiritual needs. For devotees and followers, he does not play the role of a guru, but that of a preacher.

While discharging their duties, some gurus get intoxicated by the adulation bestowed on them. Many in this field have sidetracked into gaining popularity and becoming household names or spiritual brands. If these brands get monetised, commercialisation seeps into the spiritual domain, turning the saint into a commodity. In some cases, there are no traces of the guru left, since they have become mere businessmen!

The importance people receive in the spiritual world once they have acclaimed themselves as accomplished, rightfully or wrongly, is often far more than they can digest. When they make appearances in flowing saffron robes, shaved heads and stylish head gear, they look nothing short of great and admirable *Marvel Comics'* heroes. Many of them are made to sit on thrones, ceremoniously garlanded, weighed in gold or other precious materials and have hymns sung in their honour.

Ha! All this in the quest for humility?

Amateur gurus, unable to accept, respect and revere themselves, would desire this sort of glory and self-aggrandisement. They would enjoy conducting and giving discourses at *satsangs*, (a spiritual discourse or sacred gathering), where thousands would bow to them in reverence! Even though this is a tempting aspiration, it is a self-defeating one! Not the giving of lectures, but the enjoying of reverence.

One can understand a film star wanting fame and adulation, a better brand image and huge crowds to promote his film, but for a saint, this is taking a 180° plunge southward!

Fame is a self-sustaining shortcoming. Most famous people feel awkward, incomplete and even insecure, without continuous recognition. Unfortunately, out goes the guru and in comes the star!

*What can the disciple do
Whose Guru is blind—
With the blind leading the blind,
Both will fall into the well.*

-Kabir

This is not criticism of well-known gurus, since many of them use fame productively by sharing knowledge via mass media, etc. Unfortunately, fame does bring in its wake the awkwardness of being recognised publicly. The natural corollary of this phenomenon is that a person begins to strive to sustain his created image.

'Me, the impressive' is a very difficult 'Me' to live with!

Gurudev taught us to stay low-key. To do what had to be done without gaining recognition. We can walk around in public places and not be recognised because we neither allow media exposure nor our photographs to be published. I have taken trouble to avoid recognition so that I do not have to bear the burden of fame.

It has been said that anonymity is one of the greatest blessings that destiny can bestow upon an evolved person.

Golden Principle: He who has the chance to fame but does not take it, will make it.

Gurudev used to meet 30,000 to 40,000 people every month at the *sthans* and yet, while on trips to other cities and locations where he was not known for the person he was, he could roam freely without being recognised. When a team of Japanese journalists visited the *sthan* in Gurgaon to interview the guru residing there, Gurudev met them, gave an evasive answer on the whereabouts of the guru, got into his car and drove off. The media personnel had no idea they were talking to the man they wanted to interview, since they had no clue what he looked like.

A *siddh guru* should want his disciples, or himself for that matter, to learn humility and the ability to identify, not only with other human beings, but also with all life forms. Else, would not the theory of oneness be a wasted one?

Shifting Gears: Disciple to Guru

Most times, a guru delegates to his disciples those tasks which are a part of his mission or work in progress.

As in any family, so also in a guru's family, the experienced seniors are expected to mentor the new kids on the block.

The disciples who can undertake this task effectively, (inspire their juniors, answer their questions, help them walk the path, counsel them on their infirmities, help solve some of their spiritual mysteries, etc.), are normally given more responsibilities. Such disciples, slowly but steadily, shift gears from being merely disciples to also being gurus-on-trial (although undesignated).

Then onwards, from being an intern who learns, such a disciple becomes an intern who teaches. This qualification marks him out as a guru-in-practice, although not a guru-nominate.

Gurudev often examined the new kids on the spiritual path and gave them *seva* depending on their capacity to serve. Certain *sevadaars* attracted people who then wanted to intern and learn from them. As collaborations and associations formed or grew, the *sevadaars* were treated with respect and as *de facto* gurus by those who became their admirers, followers or devotees.

In Gurudev's world, this was the way the transition from disciple to guru would happen. On the other hand, I have found that there is a technical gap between the *sevadaars* of our *sthan* and my visualisation of them as gurus in the future. What I find missing in some of them is their intense desire to share and help others grow. This handicap limits their growth to being stellar disciples, at the most. If I were to choose from my spiritual associates, I would prefer a stumbling guru than a sturdy disciple (in a manner of speaking).

A guru, or anybody who reaches a high level of attainment, must be watchful of the power of counterbalance, which can destroy a person's ascent to *guruhood*. Counterbalances include weakness for the opposite sex, greed for wealth, the hunger for self-projection, nepotism, inability to gracefully accept

power (here I am not referring to spiritual energy but to the power of influence over others).

A guru-in-making must be watchful of the counterbalances and tread the path with caution.



*I read the Vedas, I read the Qur'an,
I read to the point of utter exhaustion;
I bowed in prayer so much
My forehead became worn;
But God is not in pilgrimages,
Nor is he at Mecca-
Whoever found him,
Found him within, my friend.*

–Bulleh Shah

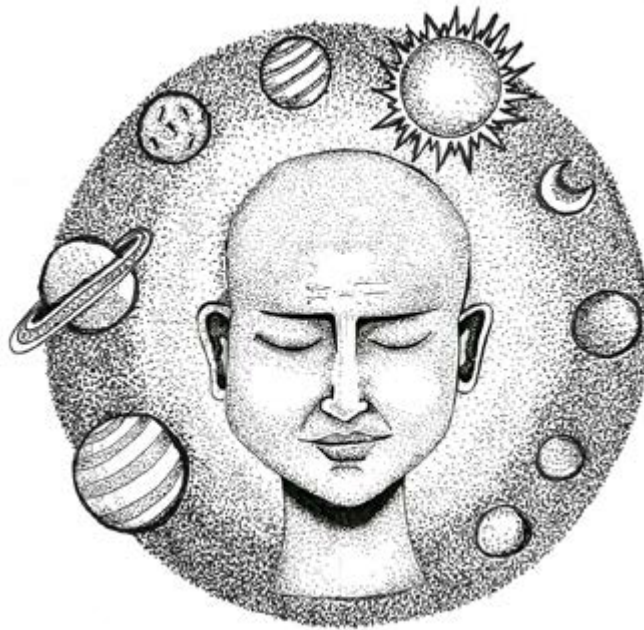
Guru by Destiny

The notion that people are born as gurus or are destined by birth to become gurus, is highly debated within the spiritual fraternity. Many believe gurus are made by guidance, meditation, and arduous spiritual training.

Gurudev often indicated that destiny was responsible for ensuring all his disciples were a part of his spiritual circle. Jesus stated similarly. To quote from the book, *Jesus The Christ* by James E. Talmage, "As a gift from God comes the testimony of Jesus into the heart of man. This principle was comprised in the Master's teachings at Capernaum, that none could come to him save such as the father would bring."

Personally, I have sought the expertise of a friend, also an experienced astrologer, on reading the horoscopes of many spiritualists. Our research indicated that most of them have, in their birth charts, a planetary combination that steers them towards spiritualism. In many cases, Jupiter was favourably inclined. This made me realise, one had to be lucky to be a good disciple, and luckier to evolve into a spiritual guru.

A few theophysicists suggest, a good disciple must never visualise himself as a guru. However, this kind of limited thinking stumps me. They have probably never read the story of the ugly duckling transforming into a swan. Is it not logical that most gurus were at first, disciples?



*The stars issued an astral edict
that I would one day find
a guru whose grace would help me
leave the darkness behind.*

I am certain that to become an accomplished spiritualist one must have favourable planetary alignments. In some cases, the planets of a person indicate a strong tendency towards *dharma*, while in other cases, the tendency is to defy religiousness and dogmatism, believing instead in the concept of the consciousness supreme. Both are tendencies of a spiritualist, but of two distinct types. For some spiritualists, charity and philanthropy are more important than gaining spiritual knowledge. When their birth charts are studied in conjunction with their personality traits, a singular commonality manifests itself—it is destiny that determines their time of birth and spiritual status. Bizarre but true.

(If you were to read the book, *Karma Sutra—Cracking the Karmic Code*, it would help you understand how the time of your birth and the fructification of your karmas are synchronised.)

This logic is fortified by the fact that one cannot become a spiritual master in a single lifetime. There must be a continuity of many lifetimes that leads to this incarnation. Therefore, to get a desired incarnation, a spiritualist must have a manipulated birth within the cross-framework of karma and time. It works more like a spiritual algorithm of sorts. Suffice to say that neither a guru, nor a disciple, can be mere coincidences. They are a part of continuity, born to a plan, with a coinciding destiny to support the strategy of this life.

Many people living today have found predictions about themselves in the writings of the *Brighu Samhita* (a collection of astrological predictions inscribed on leaves by Rishi Brighu, several millennia ago), considered amongst the great wonders of the world. A few years ago, some of Gurudev's disciples went to Saharanpur in northern India, to learn more about his life from this ancient treatise. The amazingly accurate readings suggested that Gurudev, the *divya aatma* (the enlightened being) was a *gann* (senior apprentice of Shankar with abilities to manifest *Shiv*) who took birth to complete a mission. And that after his death, he would return to his original abode and be omnipresent.

The question that pops up is: How could a saint who lived thousands of years ago, predict the future of a saint yet to exist several thousand years later?

The answer is destiny.

Rishi Brighu foresaw Gurudev's destiny far before his birth in this current life, and probably his prior lifetimes.

While Gurudev was alive, I had a vision in the early hours when I was half asleep, half awake, where I saw myself sitting at his feet while he lay on a suspended plank. There were others sitting around us and we seemed to be in another dimension. We could see a 100 or more spiritualists, in cream coloured robes, descending on earth in waves. I knew they were descending to collectively curate a mission, and would find opportunities to be born that would coincide with each other, so that they could then meet and continue with their purpose. I intuitively knew that they would spiritually inspire and help others grow out of their ignorance. This seems to coincide with Nostradamus' prediction of a 100-year New Golden Age, currently at play.

However, I suspect many of these celestial beings may not have found the perfect *mahurat* (time) to be born. The idea was to take birth in whatever circumstance to ensure collective growth and evolution. Hence, some of these beings may be unimpressive rather than profound. Despite this, they have the power and purpose to benefit others.

I have been acquainted with many great beings who had the potential to make it to great spiritual heights, but due to an inadvertent slip, missed the opportunity. I have known these spirits in human form and regard them as potential saints. One such being is a politician, who although dresses, talks and behaves like one, thinks like a saint. I am sure there are many such beings I do not know of, even though they may be part of a powerful celestial group.

At the moment of his birth, Guru Nanak Dev laughed instead of cried. Hardilal, the astrologer who made the baby's astrological chart, had exclaimed, "He will be a unique king, holding sway over vast dominions and will be adored by all sections of humanity. His name and fame will spread far beyond the confines of India, and his memory will be immortal." He then fell to the floor and worshipped the infant. Similarly, divine destinies were prophesied in the cases of Jesus, Mahavir, The Buddha, Krishna and Gurudev, to name a few.

"Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future; therefore, you can trust this indirect, oblique side of

yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more important it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey."

—John O'Donohue



You are a Guru when the distinction between yourself and others dissolves completely and even your tiniest efforts are directed towards the upliftment of physical and spirit life forms.

Imagine Yourself as a Deity or Guru

I have discovered that the best way to evaluate people, their situations and issues, is to put yourself in their shoes.

How would it feel to be worshipped if you were the 'Father who art in heaven' or god's voice (in the burning bush) that Moses heard on Mount Horeb, or the divinity that Guru Nanak Dev dealt with underwater, or Krishna, the divine exemplar of *The Mahabharat*?

As a deity, how would you like to be revered?

- Would you like people to visit your *ashrams* and offer flowers and sweets, money and jewels?
- Would you like people to sing hymns in your praise, perhaps the same one for 500 years? Would you like to hear the same prayer repeatedly recited by millions?
- Would you like loudspeakers outside your place of worship, blaring religious sermons in an out-of-tune, highly disturbing hoarse voice?
- Would you like to hear voices of adulation from your disciples?

Or

- Would you prefer that your disciples perform acts of kindness in order to please you or justify the inspiration they received from you?
- Would you like to see such people dedicate themselves to evolving their *gunas* and attitudes?
- Would you rather observe an effort towards living the philosophy you inspired in them?

A very significant question is: 'What would YOU really like?'

Do consider it.

I would welcome a disciple who is determined to succeed spiritually, underplays his reverence, while being sincere and loyal. I would prefer

someone who does not spend time trying to impress me, but follows instructions to further spiritual practices and *seva*.

Since people who pray with intense fervour seldom sit back and observe themselves, it is wise to sometimes switch sides and be the worshipped, only so that you can learn what to do and how to worship.

The Self is Guru

*"Guru gobind dou khade, kake lagoo paaye?
Balihari guru aapne, gobind diyo bataye"*

The wise sage Kabir, poses a pertinent question: If your guru and *gobind* (the self or spirit within) are standing together, whom would you defer to in respect? To whom would you bow in reverence?

He answers his own question by telling us that he will pay his respects to his guru first, since it is the guru who has helped him find himself (*gobind*).

Rising of a person's consciousness to the higher *chakras* brings forth the guru consciousness in him. However, since the consciousness of most people oscillates at lower levels, it is wiser to rely on the guidance of a being who has realised the higher levels of consciousness within himself.

Therefore, a guru is nothing but a mirror image of the self at a realised level of the consciousness.

His job is to raise a disciple's level of consciousness. Hence, the guru-disciple relationship is one of attaining congruence and equality at the point of realisation.

The point to note here is that the guru consciousness exists in everyone, waiting to be realised. The guru, having already attained that level, knows how to mentor another, to reach a similar level of realisation. Naturally, this involves following the practices as prescribed, and working towards that goal through *sadhana* and guidance. The paths to that end are varied, not rigid.

Kabir's personal view on the subject is expressed in the following quote:

*"Utamah Tatva Chintava,
Madhyma Shastra Chintava,
Adhama Mantra Tantra Chintava,
Adhmadhamaha Tirth Bhrantatmaha"*

The quote means, those with the highest spiritual status will be philosophic, the next will be scriptural, the third will be ritualistic but the lowest will be wanderers, going from one pilgrim centre to another. While this is his personal viewpoint, others of his stature have had similar and varied viewpoints.

Golden Principle: When a disciple has unfolded his own myth, realised the inner truth, and accepted the purpose of his cosmic role-play, he has met his guru within.

The Treasure Hunt

The goal of *Hingori Sutras*, as a series of books, is to help readers identify their purpose in life. Breaking timeless records or discovering a breakthrough beauty product is not the mission intended. One of the many journeys life may need you to undertake, is the realisation of the path to self-cleansing and *mukti*. Even in the spiritual domain, multiple purposes can beckon an aspirant or a traveller. For a priest, pundit or monk, the purpose is to evolve. For a guru, the purpose is to make others evolve!

Can books help?

Can listening to gurus on television help?

Can spiritual courses help?

Is meditation a key to this lock?

To these and several such questions, the answer is affirmative. Unfortunately, the one-on-one customised guidance from a *siddh guru*, still remains the most effective form of mentorship.

Very few are lucky to find a *siddh guru*. Most are not. With exceptions of course as birds of a feather discover each other. People do stumble upon a mentor with matching spiritual DNA. Often, it is a "Dhool mein luth" (hit or miss) experience.

Disappointment and disillusion on one side, strokes of luck on the other.

All said and done, throughout history, there have been many gurus, who have helped evolve disciples. If you have been successful in finding a guru who has been able to motivate you to climb the spiritual ladder, consider yourself a winner in life's treasure hunt. If not, don't fret. Tomorrow is another day. Till such time that you make the acquaintance of a befitting guru, keep doing *seva*. *Seva* for *seva*'s sake. It was Gurudev's most effective teaching tool, and did we travel leaps and bounds using this secret!

The pages of this book are neither meant to hurt sentiments, nor expose those who have swayed from the tenets of *Guruism*. Even the luminescent moon is not spared its share of blemishes. Human greatness is subject to counterbalancing forces; therefore, perfection is not easily achievable.

We are committed to help you find practical solutions to navigate your spiritual path. If you have problems and do not know whom to turn to for guidance, we will certainly try to help. You can mail us at hingori@hingorisutras.com and we would be happy to respond, as we have, to hundreds of queries in the past. Sharing experiences and learnings enrich us. We are happy to share our enrichment, by leading you to serve other life forms.

If within you lies a guru, disciple, devotee or follower, then allow us to help you help yourself!

Queries Answered

This book, in its first draft, was previewed by a cross section of people, most of whom have a natural inclination for spiritual philosophy and an understanding of the age-old tradition of the guru-disciple relationship.

Having found merit in some of their questions, we decided to include them in this section.

You too are invited to interact with us at hingori@hingorisutras.com and if you have a query, it would be our privilege to clarify, as best we can.

Q: How can a spiritually weak person become stronger?

A spiritually weak person is he who has a minimum aura required for basic existence. At a mental level, such a person is mired in worldly illusions and ignorant of spiritual reality. He exhausts his karmas by living a life of luxury, pampering and glorifying himself. Unless this person can add to his positive karmas, he will remain spiritually weak.

Seva and *mantra vidya* are two ways I would recommend, for not only replenishing the aura, but also building a solid karmic balance sheet. Unless a person can use his life to become spiritually stronger, he cannot evolve and will die karmically poorer than when born.

Most people do not ponder on the afterlife, even though the period of existence between death and the next birth is often much longer than the average 60-80 years that one lives in a physical dimension.

While alive, if you aspire for a more comfortable afterlife and invest efforts towards increasing your karmic profits, you will become spiritually stronger.

Q. What is *aatmic gyan*?

Aatmic gyan is often reflected as intuitiveness and can be attained in various ways.

It is also the ability to connect the unconscious, subconscious and the conscious minds.

It could be a follow-through from a previous incarnation or the influence of planetary movements in this life. So when the appropriate period arrives, the

person would automatically get to a more advanced state in both, thought and foresight. Often, one's spirit tries to communicate with its physical body as intuition.

Though most experiences are destined, the flurry of thoughts, feelings and emotions, disturb the equanimity of the mind and hinder the tranquillity required to trigger intuitiveness.

Therefore, the practice of thoughtlessness and meditation can help a person acquire intuitive ability. However not more than 0.001% of people on this planet are intuitive.

Q. What are the several hurdles a disciple is likely to face during his spiritual journey?

Several chapters of this book enumerate the many hurdles that a disciple experiences during his spiritual journey. For ease of reference, I have summarised them here:

1. The moods of the guru, especially if he has a fiery temper.
2. Interference from the family of the guru and other established disciples.
3. Being held back by the institution due to hierarchy of disciples, chronological or otherwise.
4. Inability to shrug off the pull of one's senses on one's mind
5. Lethargy and lack of discipline.
6. Counterbalance by planetary movements.
7. Mixing social and spiritual life.
8. Spiritual vanity.
9. Extravagant lifestyle and constant pursuit for pleasure.
10. The necessity to work harder and longer to make both ends meet.
11. Poor health.

Most car companies advertise the mileage a car can offer based on controlled conditions. However, life does not come with a 'controlled-

conditions' guarantee, so it is vital to drive over potholes and other obstructions which are a part of one's destiny.

The obstructions and speed breakers that pop up in a disciple's journey, include some of those listed above. Very often, family members of the guru live with a sense of entitlement, which is by no means justifiable. Senior disciples treat junior disciples like parents treat children. They do not have the flexibility to accept that just as kids grow up and mature (often superseding their elders), so can the junior disciples.

The car in a spiritual aspirant's journey, has automatic brakes that keep slowing him down due to pitfalls like lethargy, temptations, de-stabilisation by the senses, planetary movements, etc. Often, spiritual harakiri is committed by the disciple when he expends positive karmas by living an extravagant social life.

Q. Many of us do not understand the deeper reason for *satsang* or for that matter, for disciples being together? Is it only for knowledge sharing or is there another purpose?

At *satsangs*, like-minded people come together to discuss spirituality, share experiences and search for solutions. This helps to frame their moods and sustain the spiritual momentum for a longer time.

The group dynamics at *satsangs* ensure that the energies of all involved work collectively towards a common intent or interest. This is best demonstrated when spiritually inclined people come together.

Like in the corporate world, if you keep the association of the corporate intellectuals, some of it will rub off on you. On the other hand, if you were to spend time with those who are not sincere about what they do, you too will acquire some of that insincerity of purpose.

So I would suggest that you carefully choose the people to mingle with and make sure that their aspirations and intentions match yours.

Q. When a guru misleads, and his disciples, on realising that, sever ties with him, is that also considered guru *awelna*?

Guru *awelna* may not apply to a guru who is not *siddh* or is a pretender to the title.

I believe that fooling people spiritually is itself an unforgivable act, and therefore, prone to punishment by destiny. Disconnecting with such a person would be considered freedom and not *awelna*.

Q. What happens if a person who has been coming to the *sthan* loses faith?

If a regular visitor to the *sthan*, or any spiritual institution loses faith, his connection weans and consequently, so does the influence of the *sthan* on his spiritual growth.

There have been examples of devotees losing faith and then regaining it, either months or years later. In such cases of lost and found, the spiritual growth of the devotees remains suspended during the phase of no-faith, even though they may continue to have spiritual experiences. While this is not a failure, in this phase spiritual growth plateaus, and there is limited or no evolution.

Q. What is the eight-fold path of Patanjali that you have mentioned in the book?

The great sage, Patanjali, used aphorisms or *sutras* to lay out a blueprint for achieving realisation of one's true nature and plugging in to the consciousness supreme.

His methods included modification of attitudes and behaviour, as well as the practice of *asanas* and meditation. The prescription offered by him was based on an eight-fold plan, which I have simplified for you to absorb in essence.

1. The practice of *yamas* (ethical restraints) for improving one's social conduct. These include nonviolence, not depriving anyone their due and not stealing from others, not eyeing someone's spouse, overcoming sensuality and freeing oneself from thoughts of lust or carnal desires.
2. Practicing a lifestyle of *niyamas* (discipline) by maintaining bodily and mental hygiene and directing one's energy towards philosophy. Focusing on positive thoughts and accepting life on an as-is-where-is basis helps in directing one's mental energies towards spiritual development.

3. Practice of certain *asanas* and healing *mudras* creates the auric colours that enhance the body's capability to hold energy and work as an electromagnet.
4. *Pranayam* helps in regulating one's *prana* or vital energy so that the energy within the body is evenly distributed, harmonising the functioning of the body, mind and the spirit.
5. Indulgence in the senses gets one rooted to lower *chakras* (energy centres) of the body. So, the practice of *pratyahara* or withdrawal of senses, ensures that the magnetic pull exerted by the senses is dulled and the *kundalini* (electromagnetic energy) is freed to move towards the higher *chakras*.
6. *Dharana* (concentration) is the sixth stage of the eight-fold path. Practicing concentration, either by focusing on one's breath, or a mental visual or symbol, hones the ability to stay steady and centred. Such focus directs one's energy to the subject of concentration.
7. *Dharana* leads to *Dhayana* or meditation. Whatever you concentrate on, you naturally attract towards yourself. *Dhyana* also leads to a sort of trance where a person's mind is focused without thoughts, distractions, opinions and other such mental *vrittis*.
8. *Samadhi* is the goal of the eight-fold path, since by following and perfecting each of the seven stages before this, one can connect with one's true self. Until that connection is achieved, yoga serves a limited purpose.

For those of you keen on reading the entire compilation of Patanjali's *Yogasutras*, I would recommend Christopher Isherwood's rendition of the same, as well as the compilation written by Dr. Karambelekar from Kaivalyadham, Lonavala.

Q. Even though you prescribe the path of spiritual evolution with the *grihasth ashram*, why do most *siddh gurus* practice celibacy?

Gurudev prescribed the *grihasth ashram* as the route to spiritual evolution. One must stay within one's families and perform the duties of a householder. Escaping from those is not the path we follow.

A *siddh guru* has evolved to a level where his realisation of the consciousness supreme is either achieved, or he is theoretically close to the concept of unification. Therefore, he is neither interested in coupling with another physical form, nor is he pliable to expending his energy for sexual pleasure. This is the viewpoint of a person who looks upon sex as a baser instinct. His view is somewhat valid only because sexual enjoyment keeps one's energy rooted to the lower *chakras*.

On the other hand, the householder perceives sex as a path to higher consciousness through the union of *Shiv* and *Shakti*. To him, marriage is an opportunity for realising in himself the role of *Shiv* or *purusha* and in his wife, the play of *Shakti* or *prakriti*. The dynamic energy of *prakriti* in the female and the manifestation of *Shiv* or *purusha* in the male partner, complement each other and offer completeness through sexual union. This may not happen at a level of physical consciousness, but it can, at levels deeper. Spiritually, this is interpreted as the rise of the *kundalini* beyond the heart or fourth *chakra*. However, since the sexual energy generated by the union is short and oscillatory, it gets wasted if the bodies of the two partners do not have the holding capacity to absorb it.

Another advantage of *grihasth ashram* is that it gives two beings the opportunity to give birth to other beings who can, if lucky, evolve to higher states of consciousness and work towards acquiring a higher positive karmic balance. For spirits to be born into the physical plane of existence, *grihasth ashram* is the only route.

Furthermore, the formation of a family leads to a *kul* or lineage, and gives all members of the same family the ability to share common genetic traits (conditioning) and partake in each other's karmas across both, ancestors and descendants. As a rite during the Hindu marriage ceremonies, a commitment is made by the husband that his wife will be entitled to 50% of the benefit accrued from his deeds.

For most Hindus, the continuity of a *kul* acquires a large significance and therefore, so does the existence of *grihasth ashram*.

Q. What is the difference between a guru and Mahaguru?

He who rears disciples is a *guru*. He who rears gurus is a *Mahaguru*.

Q. Would there be any merit in maintaining a log on spiritual progress?

In whatever role you play spiritually, self-improvement is an aspiration, a practice and a hope held by most people who eventually manage to evolve to unfathomable spiritual heights.

PS: If self-improvement is not on your mind, may be the gems of this book are not yet for you.

A 'spiritual report card' is a daily log of your activities and can be a self-improvement tool by which you track your spiritual growth. There is no template or formula that creates such a report card. It is simply an account of your spiritual development as you note it on an as-is-where-is basis.

The report card helps you determine the aspects you need to improve, as well as the attitudes and temptations you need to circumvent. It can also help you view yourself from a third person perspective, thereby making you an unemotional and objective observer of your own spiritual journey.

A shortcut to maintaining a spiritual report card is taking the Karma Quest™ at periodic intervals and following its prescriptive recommendations. Available as a free diagnostic tool on the *Hingori Sutras* website, you can find more information on it at the end of this book.

Q. You've suggested that an evolving disciple needs to learn how to be tuned-off at many stages of his journey and go through extended periods of boredom, using *tamas* to his advantage. Can you explain this?

Let's answer this question by exploring the attributes of *tamas* and boredom.

Tamas is inertia. It gets reflected as lethargy, sluggishness, lack of inclination and dullness of activity.

Boredom is an attitude of neither joy nor sorrow. It dulls the spikes of all feelings and thus acts as an equaliser of emotions. It prevents us from getting stuck in the over-analysis of any subject or obsession with any point of view. It also restrains us from being over-indulgent with likes/dislikes, attractions/distractions, activity/reactivity, etc.

Due to lack of understanding, people often mistake boredom as a sign of depression, not realising that an extended state of excitement is certainly not

an apt state of mind.

Our spirit tries to instil boredom to dull our focus on the outside or external environment. By being too focused on the external environment, we deplete our aura by wasting it on pleasure-seeking.

Hence, by being an emotion equaliser and aura conservation method, boredom is the foundation of an emptier mind.

Q. Why do devotees and disciples expect their faith to be rewarded?

Till such time as people have a sense of entitlement, they play roles of children and not disciples. Children or pets or employees can be accepted with a sense of entitlement because it is common nature and not superior nature. However, a disciple cannot fit into this category since he is an intern, being groomed to take on a more advanced role. Therefore, a disciple must look at faith, not as an input for reward but grace, that ensures he has attained deep faith in his guru. Till such time he continues to expect a reward, he remains a disciple-in-themaking.

Q. Is there any way by which I can assess the stage of my spiritual journey and how to evolve further?

I would recommend the Karma Quest™, which is the world's first spiritual IQ test that offers a personalised prescription for spiritual advancement.

The prescription categorises a person into one of four ascending levels, namely–Initiate, Inclined, Involved and Intense.

Each level comes packaged with unique advice based on its 3Ps formula of philosophy, practice and philanthropy, and includes guided suggestions for self-evolution.

The test is available for free only on www.hingorisutras.com

Q. What is the difference between most *siddh gurus* and those from Gurudev's lineage?

Different *siddh gurus* have different methods, therefore, distinction between most is in their teaching capabilities, healing abilities and service to life and spirit forms.

Siddh gurus from Gurudev's lineage teach by practice rather than theory. They have the ability to remotely heal people and give relief to transmigrating spirits. They are accessible on a one-on-one basis and operate from *sthans* started in their own homes. They do not accept favours, donations or fees for help rendered, thereby absolving themselves of obligations, to the maximum extent possible.

Most importantly, their purpose is to enable others to evolve, realising their guru within themselves.

Glossary

A

Aatma: the essence of an individual that is eternal, unchanging and indistinguishable from the rest of the universe. It can also be understood to be the consciousness supreme, either in its whole or as a divisible individual segment present in each being (in which case it is referred to as *jivaatma*).

Aatmic: adjective, relating to the *aatma*

Aghori: a person who belongs to the 'Aghora' sect. He is devoted to *Shiv* and seeks to rise above fear and duality. Normally, *aghoris* shun social interaction. Often people do not find it easy to accept the practices of the *aghoris*. Undoubtedly, these practices give the practitioners a lot of *tamasic* power.

Aham Brahmasmi: literally, it is translated to mean, 'I am Brahman', which implies that I am the consciousness supreme. *Aham Brahmasmi* is considered to be amongst the greatest concepts ever framed.

Ahamkaar: ego or the sense of 'I-ness'

Ajna Chakra: the sixth *chakra* of the human body. Also known as the guru *chakra* or third eye *chakra*.

Aloo Parathas: Indian potato tortillas

Anandamaya Kosha: like all the *koshas* or layers of consciousness, it is in this *kosha* that the sense of oneness, as opposed to a sense of separation from other beings, is truly realised. Within the *anandamaya kosha* lies the understanding that separation and ego are just an illusion, leading to a state of bliss.

Ann: cereal/food

Annamaya Kosha: the material part of creation and gross manifestation of energy as matter, in different strengths and qualities. The *annamaya kosha* is the first and most basic layer of one's self, holding the consciousness in a mental state of material realisation.

Arpan: offering

Asanas: yogic postures. Also seat for mantra practice.

Ashrams: community houses/religious retreats for spiritual practices and learning.

Ashirwad: blessing

Asmita: the second of the five *kleshas* or veils that keep us from seeing the true nature of one's self. In this respect, *asmita* is described as egoism, the illusion of the self as an individual identity rather than as part of the whole.

Augarh: the non-dual (without feminine *Shakti*) manifestation of *Shiv*

Avidya: ignorance

Awelna: to go against the wish of, or to offend a spiritual teacher.

B

Bada Guruvar: the chosen Thursday of a month when *seva* happens at a *sthan* started by Gurudev or his disciples.

Bali: offering in the form of sacrifice of either fruit, flowers or animals. These offerings are often made through the medium of fire, either by performing a *havan* or a *yagna*.

Barkat: the luck of making your wealth last longer.

Bayah: allegiance (in Sufism)

Bhakti: devotion, initially to a guru or celestial being and finally to oneself.

Bholenath: the innocent one; used mainly in reference to a manifestation of *Shiv*.

Brahman: universe (in manifestation)

Brahm Gyan/Brahmavidya: knowledge of the universe, beyond that comprehensible by the mind and the intellect.

Brighu Samhita: an ancient Indian astrological classic written by sage Brighu. It dates to the Vedic period and is a compilation of some 5,00,000 detailed horoscopes of people who have lived from then to now.

Bhram: delusion

C

Charan: feet, can also mean phase

Chaturmath: the clever one or someone too smart to fathom.

D

Dakshina/Guru Dakshina: an offering or gift, typically to a guru by a disciple

Dargah: the tomb of a Muslim saint

Devi: a feminine deity/goddess or an energy form, worshipped by Hindus for obtaining boons

Dhann: wealth

Dharana: concentration

Dhayana: meditation

Dhoop: incense stick

Diksha: initiation to discipleship

Diya: light or oil lamp

Doha: couplet

Divya Aatma: divine soul

F

Fakir: a name for any Muslim saint who is free from greed or possessiveness. Colloquially, it could refer to an ascetic who lives on alms received from benefactors.

G

Gaddi: seat of the guru's power

Gann: senior apprentice of Shankar with abilities to manifest *Shiv*.

Gati: speed

Gileri: the oval base resembling a vagina, symbolising the feminine principle of energy on which a *shivling* (symbolic representation of the male

principle of energy) rests.

Gobind: the spirit within oneself

Grihasth Ashram: the second of the four phases in an individual's life. It implies that one must live as a householder and dutifully engage with one's familial responsibilities.

Gunās: the three *gunas* (*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*) are the subtle energies through which our mind and deeper consciousness function. It is important to harmonise the interplay of these *gunas* within oneself.

Guru: a spiritual teacher

Guru bhais: spiritual associates

Gurudwaras: Sikh temples or a guru's *ashram*

Guru Kripa: the grace of a guru

Gurukul: school for spiritualism

Guru Vandana: the art of worshipping and revering the guru

Guru Awelna: Its meaning could range from upsetting, insulting or hurting the sentiments of your guru to being wrongful or deceitful to him. See *awelna*

H

Havan: celestial powers transmitted through the medium of fire.

I

Indriyas: points of exit from the body

J

Jal: colloquially used to refer to drinking water. Spiritually speaking, it refers to water energised by the use of mantras.

Jhaad Phook: a technique of *tantra* performed to 'dust away' any negative energy.

Ji: an honorific suffix used to denote respect; used in Hindi and other languages of the Indian subcontinent.

Jivaatma: the individualised form of the consciousness supreme

Jyot: flame of fire

K

Kaam: sensuality

Kaarna Sharir: causal body or the hard-disk of the spirit body.

Karma: A popular way of explaining karma is through the idea that every action has a reaction and no action can be disconnected from its result. Thus, it refers to the concept of cause and effect, whereby the actions of an individual create their own future. Positive actions (thoughts, words, feelings, deeds) create good karma while negative ones create bad karma, which leads to suffering.

Karm Mukh: denotes a stage at which you stop expecting the fruit of your karma; or a person who has reached a stage of non-doership.

Keel: circle of spiritual protection

Khichdi: an Indian dish made of rice and lentils

Klesha: a negative mental state that clouds the mind, causing suffering. It also refers to the obstacles that prevent a person from reaching a state of equanimity.

Koshas: the five layers of awareness that veil the *aatma*; transcending each layer is believed to bring the individual closer to bliss.

Kripa: grace

Kriya: a ritual or practice

Krodh: anger or reactivity

Kul: family lineage

Kundalini: it represents the energy that lies 'coiled' at the base of one's spine. Yoga poses, controlled breathing and meditation are supposed to provide a means to awaken the *kundalini* and channel it upward through the seven *chakras*. As it is channelled, this energy unblocks each *chakra*, and frees the practitioner to experience various levels of realisation. The *kundalini* can also rise by a person's evolved attitudes and practices including selfless service to life forms.

Kusha: grass or a type of grass used to sit on during meditation

L

Lobh: greed

M

Mahaguru: a *siddh guru* who has the power to transfer his teachings and energy to others and thereby create many powerful gurus. Literally, a guru of gurus.

Mahurat: an auspicious moment decided by the juxtaposition of the planets.

Mann: connotes both, the conscious and subconscious mind

Mantra: a word/set of words or sounds repeated to create a sound vibration that enhances the aura.

Mantra Vidya: Understanding the science of pra mantras and the ability to attain their power.

Maya: literally translated to mean, 'that which is not'. Hence, signifying the illusion of reality.

Moh: attachment to people and possessions

Moksh: disintegration of self into the whole, minus all identification of the self. *Moksh* is considered to be the greatest achievement possible by any being.

Mukti: freedom from the cycle of life and death for an extended period of time (thousand or several thousand years) but in an elevated dimension.

Muni: ascetic

Mureed: disciple (in Sufism)

Murshid: spiritual teacher (in Sufism)

N

Namak: salt

Niyamas: disciplines and habits for activating the inner strength and discipline required to progress on a spiritual journey.

P

Paan: a betel leaf and areca nut; a chewable stimulant

Paath: focused practice of mantras while lying down or sitting in a meditative pose. For Gurudev it meant out-of-body travel.

Parikrama: the circumambulation of a sacred place or being.

Parivaar: family

Prana: vital energy/breath

Prasad: an energised offering of food served to visitors at a religious or spiritual centre.

Pratyahara: withdrawing attention from sensory objects

R

Rajas: one of the three *gunas*. It is expressed via excitement and passion. In those with dominant *rajas*, the tendency to remain active is compulsive. Such a person may also lean towards greed and selfishness.

Rajasic: adjective, relating to *rajas*

Rajasic Mantra Siddhis: practices that lead to gaining access to and control of energies generated by certain mantras.

Ram Rajya: reign of King Ram which was near perfect

S

Sadhana: an intense discipline undertaken in pursuit of a spiritual goal.

Sadhus: Hindu holy men who practice asceticism

Samadhi: usually refers to the highest level of consciousness. Can also refer to the final resting place of a *siddh guru*.

Samskars: the impressions/engrams left on the subconscious mind by experiences from current and previous lifetimes.

Sattva: one of the three *gunas*. It connotes goodness and purity. It leads to minimalistic thinking, self purification and service to all.

Sattvic: adjective, relating to *sattva Satsang*: a gathering of spiritualists for the purpose of either discussing or practicing spiritualism.

Seva: service

Sevadaar: one who serves other beings

Shakti: electromagnetic force, contextually used to denote the feminine principle of energy

Shastras: books of specialised technical knowledge in any subject. This word is normally used in reference to ancient spiritual texts.

Shishya: a guru's disciple

Shraddha: belief in a higher life force

Shraap: curse that can be strengthened by the use of spiritual energy.

Siddh Guru: an accomplished guru who can harness spiritual power to help people.

Siddhi: a spiritual capability attained through rigorous and accomplished spiritual practices including yoga and meditation.

Sitladevi: a feminine deity worshipped by Hindus

Sthan: centre for help and healing

Suksham Sharir: subtle/spirit/astral body

T

Tantra: a set of physical and material practices that generate spiritual power. Could be used for the attainment of either positive or negative energies.

Tann: body

Tantra Vidya: knowledge of *tantra*

Tantric: a practitioner of *tantra*

Tamas: represents one of the three *gunas*. Those dominated by *tamas* are lazy, dull, ignorant, inactive and greedy. However, *tamas* also has its positive sides. Detachment and unemotional living are two such of those.

Tamasic: adjective, relating to *tamas*

Tamasic Mantra Siddhis: practices that lead to gaining access/control of energies represented by lower-order mantras.

Tapasya: an intense spiritual discipline, which leads to the 'burning up' of stored karmas thereby paving the way for self-purification.

Tark Vitark: spiritual debate

Trishul: a trident that represents the triple energies harnessed by *Shiv*.

V

Vairagya: a state of being detached to material pursuits. Letting go of ego, arrogance, aversion, etc. are associated with this state.

Vidya: a term used to describe intellectual or intuitive knowledge that can lead to spiritual enlightenment.

Vrittis: A mental activity or the state of existence of the mind. The five different states or *vrittis* are perception, delusion, sleep, imagination and dream.

Y

Yagna: a Sanskrit word that connotes 'sacrifice' or 'offering'. It usually refers to a Hindu ritual in which fire acts as a medium between humans and spiritual deities or energies.

Yamas: as per yogic philosophy, these are applied behaviours to rein in a person's senses and keep him righteous.

Yantra: an occult mystical diagram usually associated with a deity. It can be considered a spiritual graphic and sometimes, a two-dimensional rendering of a three-dimensional figure such as a temple.

Yogi: one who is proficient in yoga



HINGORI SUTRAS

The *Hingori Sutras* are a series of easy-to-read books that collectively distil the spiritual wisdom of the ancient Indian *siddh gurus*.

Written by someone who, within a span of a few years, transcended the journey from student to teacher of spiritualism, these books bridge the gap between ignorance and wisdom by demystifying spiritual concepts and practices. They could help you identify your path and hasten your footsteps.

Led by the mission of connecting people to their spiritual selves, the *Hingori Sutras* have a vision of leading hundreds into sainthood within the next 10 years. While to some, this may sound outlandish, we feel this is an achievable task because we have already seen 40% traction in results.

BOOKS

Karma Sutra | Aatma Sutra | Dream Sutra

WORLD'S FIRST SPIRITUAL IQ TEST

Karma Quest™

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KARMA SUTRA

- CRACKING THE KARMIC CODE



The greatest asset of India is neither the Taj Mahal nor the buzzing metropolis of Mumbai. For tens of thousands of years, India's greatest asset has been its philosophy and spiritualism. Tourists, or even people who live here, hardly take advantage of this wealth and benefit from it.

Karma Sutra is the Indian doctrine of karma. It explains the cause and effect of destiny and decodes the karmic laws that govern us. By mapping our karmic assets and liabilities, we can outline our karmic balance sheet and determine how to enhance it's P&L.

In the final analysis, *Karma Sutra* is a tool that may help you carve a better future in this lifetime and earn the karmic wealth that will command your ethereal status after death.

AATMA SUTRA -UNVEILING THE SOUL



Aatma Sutra is a deconstructed version of the world's most famous spiritual phrase, '*Tat Twam Asi*', which means 'You Are That'. In simpler words, 'You are as much a part of the consciousness supreme as any other being who lived or will live on this planet'.

This book helps in understanding the multiplicity of bodies that a human being carries from one life to another. It outlines the science of divinity within each individual and explains why most humans are not capable of identifying with this divinity.

The greatest challenge is to learn to accept yourself in spite of all the odds, negative thoughts, and pangs of guilt. Being a guide to self-acceptance on an 'as is where is' basis, this book elucidates the formula for attaining self-worth and self-love, and finally justifies the concept of self-reverence.

DREAM SUTRA -PERCEIVING HIDDEN REALMS



The mind of your spirit will always be beyond your grasp, until you learn to identify with the 'dreamer' within yourself. *Dream Sutra* chronicles the experiences of many who were helped, healed, guided and communicated with, in their dream state.

The unifying thread among these people was a common Guru—someone who could travel out-of-body at will, heal people and even provide insights into their future.

Even close to 30 years after his death, this *Mahaguru* still communicates and guides his devotees and disciples via their dreams. A fact they are accustomed to, but still in awe of.

Using first-hand accounts, *Dream Sutra* weaves a narrative with anecdotes and provides an explanation to less understood spiritual phenomena.

About Karma Quest™

The Karma Quest™ is the world's first spiritual IQ test that offers a personalised prescription for spiritual advancement.

The prescription categorises a person into one of four ascending levels: Initiate, Inclined, Involved and Intense.

Each level comes packaged with unique advice, based on its 3Ps formula of philosophy, practice and philanthropy, which includes guided suggestions for self-evolution.

This test is available in multiple languages including English, Hindi, Marathi, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish and German.

Log on to: www.hingorisutras.com to take the test for free and discover your spiritual IQ.



The guru's roles are many; he is the pilot propelling you to an evolved afterlife, the carpenter chiselling away your karmic imperfections and the architect of your spiritual blueprint.

GURU SUTRA

THE GURU WHO WON'T KEEP SPIRITUAL SECRETS

The relationship between a guru and his disciple is the most sacred alliance in this world. For the first time ever, a guru has given away the secrets governing a disciple's conduct, so that he can navigate the pitfalls in the Snakes and Ladders game of spiritual evolution. This book breaks myths and lays out the trajectory to channelising spiritual power.



“Everyone reading this book will be introduced to the ultimate truth of life and whether one agrees or disagrees, sooner or later, one will be motivated by the imprints this book leaves on our minds to either start, restart or move forward on one's true journey.”

- Nikeeta Mistry



“At first I started reading to give feedback but then got totally engrossed in reading and wanting to reach the end. The concepts are put forward very neutrally. An honest rendition of the authors journey and the personal examples that started flowing made it very gripping. Simply put beautiful essences. I have enjoyed it thoroughly. Reinforces the importance of letting go of ego, and importance of faith, surrender and humility.”

- Poonam Sareen



“Realising that divinity is in each one of us and everything around us is a profound thing, and this book makes one think whether our words, actions and deeds are actually aligned to this realisation.”

- Kanika Bhalla

If you have any spiritual queries or need any spiritual help, you can write to us at hingori@hingorisutras.com or send us a private message on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/hingorisutras>