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A NOTE ON THE GURU CULT

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From times immemorial the *Guru* or the Spiritual teacher has been given the highest place of honour in India and elsewhere. The Hindu scriptures go to the length of saying that the *Guru* is *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Maheswara*, nay, even the *Param Brahman*—the Supreme Spirit Itself. Most people, however, forget that this has been said from the spiritual angle, and never from the physical point of view.

The trouble with most spiritual seekers is that they identify themselves with their bodies and personalities, and become devoted to a male or a female deity, and remain stuck there. And if they have a spiritual teacher, they cling to the form and personality of the teacher also. This is nothing but materialism, though given a spiritual colour. However useful it may be in the beginning, this spiritual materialism must be transcended; but how to do it is the question.

As one advances in the spiritual path, one must come to realise that the worshipper is a soul, and the deity that is worshipped is none other than the *Paramatma* Itself. The soul is, as it were, a part of the *Paramatma*—the Infinite Spirit, and the *Guru* also, in his true nature, is a divine manifestation through whom flows the divine grace, knowledge, love and bliss. The task before us is how to realise this truth that the *devotee*, the *Ishta Devata*, and the *Guru* are in reality manifestations of the same Transcendent Spirit.

Before beginning our meditation, let us first consider the body as the temple. We may now enter this temple through the gateway of the heart and find that our heart is filled with the light and consciousness of the *Jivatma* which is a part of the *Paramatma*—the Infinite Light and Infinite Consciousness. Let us merge our body, mind and the whole world into this Infinite Reality, and imagine that we are like a little sphere of light and consciousness interpenetrated and permeated by the Infinite Light and Infinite Consciousness. Since this form of meditation is beyond the reach of the ordinary people, let us think that our soul puts on a pure mental body and a pure physical body, and the *Paramatma* takes the form of the *Guru* on one side, and of the *Ishta Devata* on the other. After saluting the *Guru*, we should merge his personality in

the *Ishta Devata*, and meditate on Him or Her, repeating the *Ishta Mantra*.

The first step is *Rupa Dhyana*—that is to meditate on the entire luminous blissful form of the deity. The next is *Guna Dhyana* — that is to meditate on the infinite good qualities of the deity like infinite purity, knowledge, devotion, love and bliss. The third and the last stage is *Swarupa Dhyana*—that is to meditate on the All-pervading Consciousness of which the Holy Personality as well as the *Guru* and the disciples are different manifestations. This infinite background should never be forgotten during the previous stages of meditation.

The spiritual seeker should always remember that the idolising of a human form and the blind worshipping of a human personality is a stumbling block in the spiritual progress, and is harmful both to the disciple and the *Guru*. A true teacher is a free soul, and would very much like to see that all his disciples stand on their own feet, realise their divine nature, and solve their individual problems, developing a cosmic outlook. If the disciples continue to cling to the *Guru's* personality and look up to him for help and guidance at every step, he feels the drag, and regrets his inability to make them attain that spiritual strength and freedom which he himself enjoys. He will rather have one free soul as his disciple than a multitude of them following him blindly.

It is for this reason that the wise spiritual teacher deprecates the idea of blind personal service which is very common in India. Most of the disciples forget that the following of the ideal and the living of the life is much more important than attending on the *Guru* in person.

We should so train ourselves that instead of depending too much on the outside teacher, we depend more and more on the Indwelling *Guru*, and reach a state of spiritual consciousness which we must be able to maintain, whether the *Guru* is alive in this world or has passed on, as Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna said, “from this room to that room”, meaning from the physical plane of consciousness to a subtler one.

This danger of falling into the rut of the *Guru Cult* we can avoid only by meditation in the aforesaid way on the basis of the Formless Infinite Spirit who is also Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Love and Infinite Bliss. Again when we return to the plane of personality, we

should stress more the spirit, and not the form. In order to avoid self-deception, it is good to meditate on the Infinite Spirit, merging all forms into It, and try to be established in the Supreme Consciousness through repeated practice. This helps not only the student, but also the teacher towards the realisation of perfect freedom and peace.

