



## *Guru Is Your Gateway to Eternity*

*Guru Purnima Message by Swami Jyotirmayananda*

**T**HE FESTIVITY of Guru Purnima hal-  
lows the tradition of the Guru-disciple  
relationship, and celebrates God as the Guru of  
Gurus—the inner prompter in every heart. To de-  
velop an awareness of God’s Presence and His dy-  
namic Grace requires an artistic understanding—a  
knowledge that is not academic. One cannot learn  
in a university how to be aware of the Divine Pres-  
ence, how to explore the inner recesses of one’s  
heart, how to climb the heights of wisdom and  
spiritual awareness, how to attain Liberation from  
the cycles of birth and death, how to discover the  
Treasure of treasures, the Power of all powers, the  
Light of all lights. Only through such discovery  
can one become supremely joyous.

But then, how can one succeed in that mys-  
tic journey? The answer to that “how” lies in the  
hands of one’s Guru, or spiritual preceptor. It is  
often difficult for westerners to understand why,  
in the Vedic tradition, Gurus are accorded even

more honor than traditional symbols of religion,  
such as temples, churches and pilgrimage cen-  
ters. “Why,” many ask “should such prominence  
be given to a mortal man?”

**I**N VEDIC CULTURE, young students are  
always reminded of the following great  
teachings from the Upanishads: “*Matri devo  
bhava*”—“Let your mother be God”; “*Pitri devo  
bhava*”—“Let your father be God”; “*Acharya  
devo bhava*”—“Let your Guru be worshiped as  
God.” These served to propel the youths towards  
the lofty realization that the entire creation is  
God: “*Sarvam Brahmamayam jagat.*”

**O**NE BEGINS to discover God in the  
person to whom your heart is most  
easily drawn: your own mother. You see her  
tenderness, warmth, good feeling for you. You  
marvel at her ability to forgive you in spite of  
your defects. Then you begin to recognize God

in your father. Ordinarily, one's father is not as tender as one's mother. His love expresses itself more firmly because it is usually up to him to do the disciplining. But you love him all the same because he is your father, and thus you begin to recognize God in him, too.

As you evolve further, you are directed towards a Guru. You discover that there is a vast dimension of the unknown that awaits your exploration, and a Guru becomes the key to your doing this. Thus, you begin to love your Guru and serve him. In that love for him, you find a greater fulfillment of the love that you felt for your mother and father and other relatives. Through Guru, you develop Divine Love, and in that experience the entire world becomes God. Guru thus guides you beyond all relationships, beyond the cycles of birth and death, to the goal of Liberation. This is the subtle meaning behind the Guru-disciple relationship.

**T**HIS TRADITION does not in any way imply body or ego worship. Most people in the West enjoy having their picture taken, and think it is appropriate for entertainers to be adored by the public. However, they cannot accept the idea of a spiritual personage being worshiped and adored. But such a notion is not right. When a child comes to adore the feet of its mother, the mother does not gaze upon her face in the mirror and say, "How wonderful it is that my child comes to adore me." Rather, she understands that it is the Self within her that the child is invoking; so it is from that point of view that the mother blesses the child.

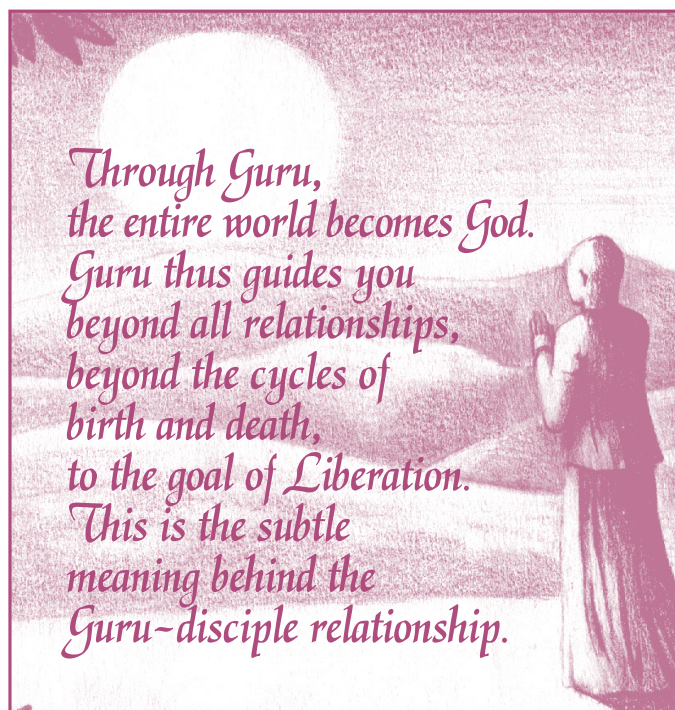
In all forms of genuine spiritual adoration, the ego is not involved, but rather is out-stepped. Thus, when you adore a Guru you do not adore his body, personality or ego; you are using his personality as a gateway to Eternity. This is most important to understand, for neither the disciple nor the Guru should think that it is the Guru's external form that is being adored. The form is only a passing phenomenon, an illusion. Through the form you try to grasp the presence of the Divine.

## *Transforming Rains of Scriptural Grace*

Guru Purnima always falls on a full Moon night. From that night commences the rainy season in India in all its seriousness. *Sanyasis* who normally wander from place to place throughout the year settle down during the rainy season and perform intensive service to humanity by teaching *Prasthanas Traya* (the threefold pillars of Vedanta philosophy): the Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras.

Outside the rain may pour, the lightnings flash and the clouds rumble. But inside the cozy confines of some dwelling, disciples sit before the Sage, absorbed in the dynamic teachings being presented to them in such a thrilling manner.

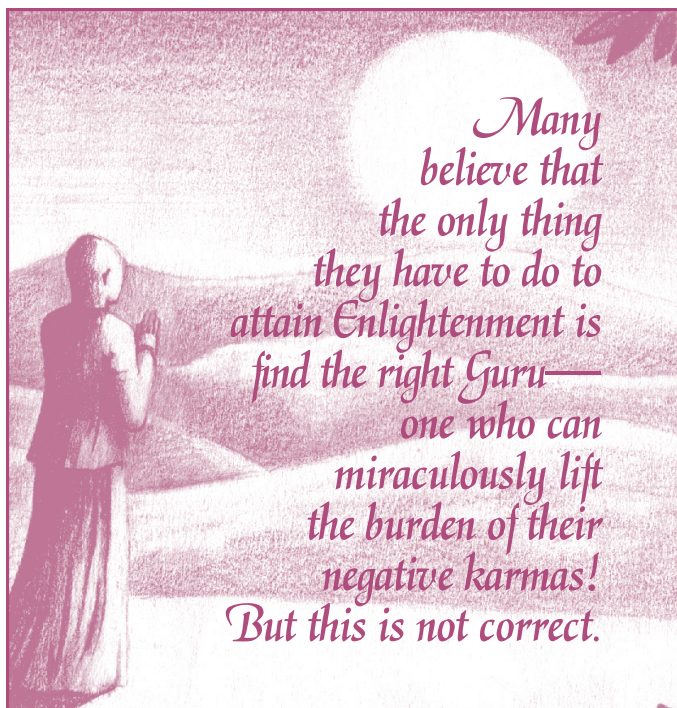
To understand the excitement of this, recall a similar experience you might have had during childhood. Perhaps as a child on cold, rainy days you would come running into the house, feel the warmth radiating everywhere, and then ask one of your parents or grandparents to tell you a story. Remember how engrossed you were in that story, how it thrilled you.



Reflecting on this, you must realize that spiritually, until Liberation is attained, everyone is always a child wandering in a forest of confusion. You do not know where to turn, because everywhere you see the heavy clouds of karmas constantly pouring down rain. You realize that the world is full of turmoil, but that there is a key that will open the treasure chest of peace, harmony, and joy—a key that will terminate all karmas. With that realization, you are inevitably drawn to spiritual teachers and the transforming power of the scriptures they share with aspirants in *satsanga*.

## *How to Receive Guru's Grace*

Many people believe that the only thing they have to do to attain Enlightenment is find the right Guru, one who can miraculously lift the burden of their negative karmas! But this is a wrong understanding. The only thing one has to do is continue purifying their mind through a sustained project of self-improvement. When one is ready, the most inspiring and effective Guru will manifest in their life.



Therefore, do not let the question, “Where should I find my Guru?” stop you from moving forward on the spiritual path. Begin in any way that you can to meditate, pray, read the scriptures, and elevate your mind by studying the stories of Sages and Saints. Learn the art of Karma Yoga or selfless service, cultivate Divine virtues, relax your ego and learn to enjoy the feeling of Divine Presence. These sublime practices should become an absorbing part of your life as you patiently seek to discover the Guru who can most effectively guide you onward to Liberation.

Before you can recognize a qualified spiritual preceptor and receive the highest teachings, the receptacle of your mind must be well purified. Therefore, do not think that you must first find a Guru, and then you will begin your spiritual practices. If this is your plan, mental purification will be placed on hold, and the problem of not having a Guru will continue for a long, long time.

Let me tell you a little story to help you understand this point:

Once an eager aspirant went to a noted Guru and said, “O Guru, I am not interested in anything in this world; I just want Enlightenment. Since you are enlightened, can’t you make me enlightened, too?”

The Guru replied, “Well, if you stay in the *ashram* for a period of time, practice spiritual disciplines, and perform your duties well, by and by I will impart the teachings to you.”

But this answer didn’t suit the aspirant. “Doesn’t Enlightenment make you all powerful? If you are enlightened, you should be able to give it to me right away. By your hesitation you are showing me that you are not really enlightened.”

“I shall explain everything to you in depth, my son, but first I must have *bhiksha* (receive food from you) at your place. Invite me to your house so that I can have more contact with you.”

The aspirant thought that this was wonderful, so he said, “O Guru, you do me a great honor.

Come to my house next Sunday, and I shall have everything ready for you then.”

So the disciple prepared the best of dishes on the appointed day and the Guru arrived, carrying his own begging bowl, according to the ancient tradition. However, on this day, the Guru had prepared his bowl in a special way: he had besmeared it with dirt and muck, instead of having it fresh and clean.

With a twinkle in his eye, the Guru then placed the bowl before the disciple and said, “Now, give me some of that special food that you have prepared.”

The disciple peered into the begging bowl and said, “O Guru, I can’t put my food in that; it’s filthy. I’ve worked hard preparing these delicious dishes. I couldn’t allow you to eat them out of that nasty bowl. Here, let me wash it first, then I’ll serve you.”

The Guru said, “I am too hungry to wait. Don’t bother washing it. Just give it to me right now.”

The disciple shook his head; “No Swamiji, I can’t do that.”

The Guru then smiled and said, “If you are reluctant to put ordinary food in a dirty vessel, then how can I give you the eternal pudding of Self-realization in a vessel, such as your mind, that is not clean? My son, your mind is going to have to be purified first; it cannot absorb spiritual knowledge the way it is now. Allow me, then, to use the scrub-brush of Karma Yoga, the water of devotion, and a little detergent of meditation to give your mind an initial cleaning. And then when it is pure enough, I’ll resort to the highest process of Jnana or wisdom to cleanse it to a beautiful luster. Then, my son, I will eagerly pour the nectar of immortality into that vessel!”

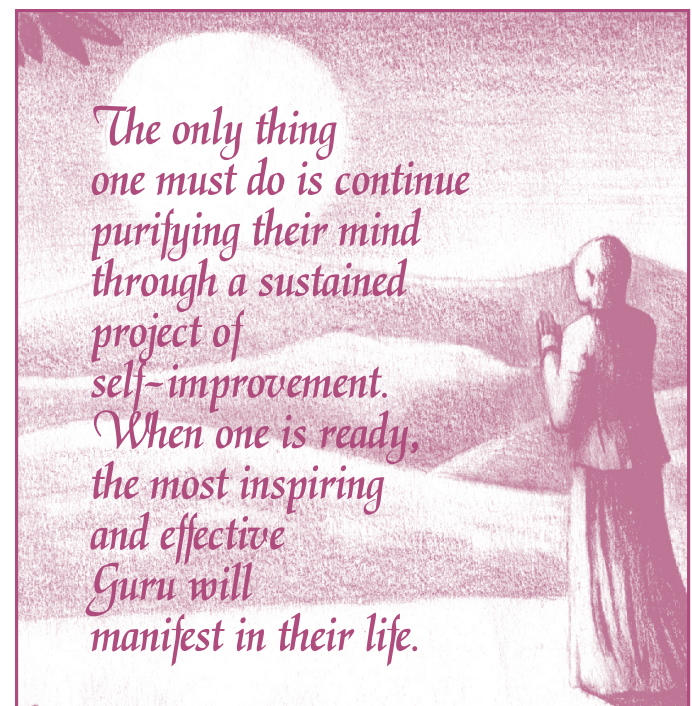
## *The Omnipresence of Guru*

Do not become foolishly limited to one personality in the name of Guru. If you have re-

ceived initiation from a particular teacher and now, for some reason, he is far away from you, it would be wrong to think that you cannot have another teacher or go to another  $x$ . Similarly, if your Guru has died, do not feel that you cannot turn to another Guru. If you think in this way, you have closed the door to your spiritual movement. The whole point of entering into a Guru-disciple relationship is to allow you to continuously evolve. A true Guru doesn’t expect you to treat him as you would others in a normal human relationship. Guru’s objective is to open doors for you, not to close them. So, at all times, continue to be nourished by any source that inspires and enlightens you. Your heart must always be open.

## *The Real Fire of Spiritual Teaching*

You learn the art are self-improvement by listening to the interpretations of the scriptures from a Guru who is enlightened. When you learn things in an academic way, the mind is rarely inspired. The academic way of teaching can be compared to looking at an array of flowers in a picture: you are drawn to them because they look

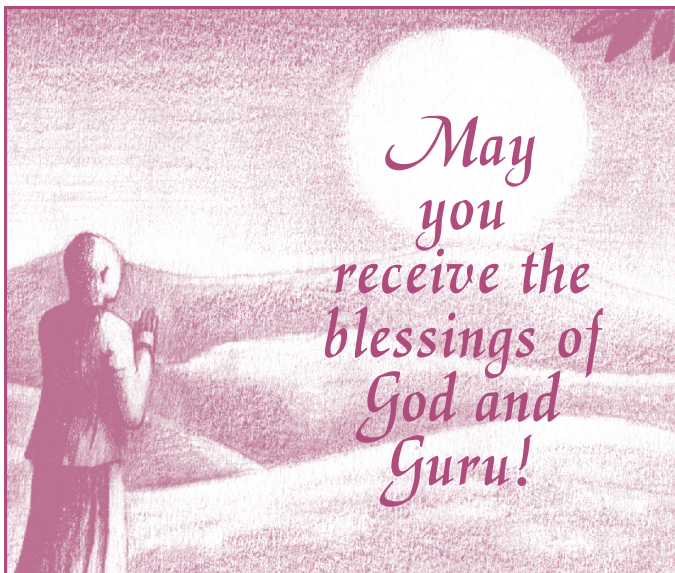


so wonderful, but there is no fragrance in those flowers at all. Or imagine that you are shivering from the cold and someone brings a painting of a big fireplace with a roaring fire and sets it down before you. It may be a wonderfully realistic rendering of a fire, but it cannot warm you at all.

On the other hand, you enjoy the transforming Grace of a real fire when you approach a Guru who is enlightened or who has practiced spiritual discipline for a long time, and for whom scriptural teaching is not merely a theory and God's Presence is not merely a hypothesis. It does not matter whether the fire is only a few sparks or a bonfire. Your aspiration can be kindled by either. Never doubt a fire no matter how little it is, for the kindling process does not depend on the quantity of fire, but on the quality.

So, let intense aspiration be kindled by the fire of any adorable Guru who is near you. That fire will ultimately lead you to God, the Absolute and Eternal Inspirer, the Guru of Gurus, the indweller of your heart. It is God Who assumes the role of Guru to draw you out of the confines of the ego, Who infuses within you the enthusiasm to pursue self-improvement leading to Self-realization.

In the majestic state of Enlightenment, the duality of Guru-disciple terminates. You discover your essential Oneness with God. You realize, "I am All that is! I am the Self! I am That am I!"



## FROM SWAMIJI'S KITCHEN

### Carrot Halva

- 1/2 pound carrots**
- 2 pints milk**
- 1 cup sugar or honey**
- 1 cup almond, powdered**
- Seeds from 4 cardamom pods**
- 2 tablespoons golden raisins**

**Boil the milk. Add the crushed cardamom seeds and stir. Wash, scrape, and finely grate the carrots. Add milk and cook over medium heat stirring occasionally. Continue cooking for 30 to 40 minutes. Add the almond powder, golden raisins, sugar and butter.**

**Continue stirring while cooking until the halva is like thick pudding. Spread in a buttered dish. You may decorate it with sliced almonds or pistachio nuts.**

**Halva can be served hot or cold, and can be stored for about a week in the refrigerator. Carrot halva is delicious and a powerful brain tonic.**