

Nine

Guru Worship

Sri Sai Baba's beneficent work especially on the vast scale that is seen more and more now was and is exercised through various means, Sai worship being one of the most important of these means. That worship was mostly *Guru* worship, his *marga* being *Guru marga*. Hence *Guru* worship must form an important feature of the Sai movement. A full study of the *marga* here is out of the question. But to understand Sai Baba's life, *guru-sishya* relations and nature have to be studied, and Sai Baba's life and *lilas* throw a flood of light on the full significance and value of *Guru marga*. That term picked up from *Guru Gita* is clothed with power and glory from Baba's life.

The story of the life of such a great saint like Sai Baba must include references to *Gurus* and *Guru* worship, for it is by their grace that saints achieve perfection which they naturally endeavour to impart to others. By reason of Sri Sai Baba's ability to conceal his real nature and the working of his mind and body obviously in pursuance of the directions of *sastras* and *Gurus* that eminence must be concealed, for example, the saint must be unfathomable and undiscerned like the ocean and the python⁷⁷, moving about like a dullard, idiot, or devil, his acting as a *Sadguru* and a *Samartha Sadguru* was unknown to the thousands that met him in life or heard of him thereafter. It is only by revelation of devotees' experiences that people now mostly realise that he was a *Samartha Sadguru* and had various grades of devotees and *sishyas*.

His biography is the practical illustration of what *Guru* and *Sishya* mean and of the principles that govern their conduct and mutual relation, Hence a preliminary discourse on these subjects is needed, though it cannot exhaust either the general subject or its application to Sai Baba, his *Gurus* and *sishyas*. The *marga* that Baba followed has puzzled many. Many asked and ask whether he was a *Yogi* or a *Jnani* or a *Bhakta* or followed any *marga* peculiarly his own.

Several thought and think that Baba cannot be classed under any of the divisions applying to saints and *sadhus*. As a result of study, aided by His own grace, one sees at last that he was an adept of all the *margas*, though his chief *marga*, was *Bhakti marga*, the special form of it that it described as *Guru Marga* in the *Guru Gita*, and that *Jnana* and *siddhis* including *yoga siddhis* came in the wake of his *Guru bhakti*. These will be made clearer as we advance in the study of Sri Sai's Life and of his relation to devotees. At present in this chapter we shall state just a few preliminary matters relating to *Guru* and *Guru* worship.

Definition : *Guru* may be defined as one who imparts information or gives training to another. Any school teacher or moral teacher or the one who teaches the way to salvation or *mukti* or even teaches *mantras* for various religious or secular purposes, high or low, can be called a *Guru*.

Derivation : The word *Guru* is a Sanskrit word and a number of derivations are found especially in *Guru Gita*, which is a part of the *Skanda Purana*. 'Gu' generally means '*Guna*' and therefore means 'darkness'. 'Ru' denotes the action of destruction just as fire destroys or removal. So *Guru* means the dispeller of darkness or ignorance.

Gu karascha Andhakarastu

Ru karah tannirodhakrit

Andhakara Vinasitwat

Guru riti Abhidhiyate.⁷⁸

Another derivation says that *Guru* is one who takes you from the *Gunas* to That beyond the *Gunas* that is, Brahman⁷⁹.

Arabic and Persian : It is always better especially when dealing with Sai Baba whose teachings are unique and cosmopolitan to give the word *Guru* its equivalents in Arabic and Persian, as used by Sufis, *Murshad* is the Sufi equivalent which Baba himself used. For example Baba said "My *Murshad* has taken me away from this body which is but my house'. This means his *Guru* had destroyed his identification of self with the body *Dehatma buddhi* and made him realise that He the *Atma* is not the body just as the fire which burns the fuel is

different from the fuel, and the seer is not the seen⁸¹. The Sufi equivalent for *Sishya* is *Talib* and *shakir*.

Everywhere in the world we find, the usual practise is to have *Gurus*.

Purpose for a *Guru* : A *Guru* being a teacher, the question as to what he teaches or what help he gives or is expected to give, is the essential question.

Classes of *Gurus* : There are various classes according to what is taught or given, for example *Siksha* or *Diksha*, secular or religious subject, sex of *guru*, methods adopted, whether *guru* is visible or invisible.

Guru Gita⁸² classifies *Gurus* under seven heads calling them:

Suchaka is the ordinary school master who gives secular teachings - the three 'R's and arts.

Vachaka is one who imparts ethical teachings, *dharma sastra*,

Bhodaka is one who teaches *mantras* for various purposes - secular or other, and stops with that.

Nishiddha is one who teaches *mantras* and other methods for achieving lower purposes just as *marana*, *vasikarana*, *sthambana* and *akarshana*. These are almost invariably used to achieve low earthly objects and are hindrances to one's achievement of the spiritual goal. It is a danger for one to get under a *Nishiddha Guru*.

Vihita is one who teaches *Virakti* or detachment, that is frees one from attachment to earthly things and prepares one for achieving one's spiritual welfare. *Vairagya* or dispassion is the *sine qua non* for progress just as its opposite, namely, extreme attachment to *kamini* and *kanchana*, is a powerful barrier to all progress.

Karana instructs the *sisya* as to the import of the *Mahavakyas* the axioms or axles of the Upanishads. After securing thorough *vairagya* one is ready to get at least an intellectual grasp and then a realisation of the grand basis of all *mukti*. *Mukti* is the realisation of the real nature of oneself and of *Atma*, that is *Paramatma*; and the *mahavakyas* embody that truth. Thus the teacher of this basis of salvation is the cause, *Karana* for salvation and therefore the *Karana Guru*.

Parama Guru, The last and the greatest of all, who enables the *sisya* to thoroughly absorb the truth of the *Mahavakyas* and to realize for himself the *Mahavakyas* and thus escape *samsara* or rebirth, is the *Parama Guru*. He is also called the *Moksha Guru*. Others are mere *Gurus*.

The Kula Moolavatara Kalpa Sutra Teeka Gata Kulagama mentions six classes of *Gurus* in regular gradation. They are;

Preraka one who just starts the pupil

Suchaka one who indicates and carries further

Vachaka one who regularly teaches and coaches

Darsaka one who points out the way and goal to the pupil.

Sikshaka one who regularly teaches and guides the pupil fully. These five are preparations to go to the 6th.

Bodhaka one who is also called the *Karana Guru*, who thoroughly illumines the pupil and prepares him for *Brahma Jnana* and *Moksha*.

There are *Gurus* who are seen and others unseen; and there are *Gurus* who merely impart teachings and do not care for results, that is, they are those who do not undertake any responsibility for the *sishtyas*. There are others who give definite undertakings and carry out the same at all costs and if necessary life after life proceeding to seek the *sisya* in subsequent lives for the purpose. The best instance of such a *Guru* is Sri Sai Baba who undertook liability for H.S. Dixit, N.G. Chandorkar, Bandra Master T and M.B. Rege and others.

Another classification is based on the powers and methods of the *Guru*. The *Guru* who teaches something secular or religious is merely called *Guru*. He who teaches about God or Sat is called *Sadguru*. He who uses all his *siddhis* and superior powers to carry the *sisya* right up to the goal is called *Samartha Sadguru*. Ramdas, Guru of Shivaji, and Sai Baba belong to the class of *Samartha Sadgurus*. *Paramaguru* is a *Samartha Sadguru* who looks after the entire welfare secular and spiritual of his disciple.

Diksha Guru who formally initiates the pupil and invests him with *mantra*, power,

Siksha Guru, that is the usual *Guru* who teaches or trains a pupil.

Male Gurus usually prescribed in all *Sastras* for pupils to attain *Moksha*.

Female Gurus specially referred to in *Tantra* works to give *mantra* and training to pupils who aim at *siddhis*, The *Sastras* generally dissuade persons anxious to attain *Moksha* from resort to female *Gurus*. In the case of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Bhairavi Lady *guru* trained him in *tantras*. After that came the *Nanga Avadhuta Guru* who initiated him into concentration on *Nirguna Brahman*. Similarly in the case of Sri P.R. Avaste, a lady *guru* initiated him into *Mantra* that is Siva Panchakshari permutations and combinations *japa*, which would result in seeing various god forms and produce various powers. Later he came to Baba. *Kula Gurus* - hereditary. *Other Gurus*.

Prefer the *Kula Guru* to begin with. But if no benefit, then go to a competent *Guru*⁸². Baba was not the *Kula guru* of Nana Chandorkar, but his *rinanubanda Guru* and in a sense the *Guru* of his Destiny.

Was Baba a *siksha Guru* to any? For example, to N.G. Chandorkar and Balakram Manker? Yes It seems so.

Gurus for all round training and teaching for example, Venkusa.

Gurus for some push or help, for example, Sai Baba to Narayan Asram.

Gurus for some *mantra*, *tantra*, special *vidya*, *yogabhyasa*, and *asana*.

Gurus for *Vydeeki* profession and *Vedic* study.

Gurus for secular purposes only. for *tantra*

for spiritual purposes only. and *mantra*

for both. and

for *Moksha*.

Gurus for Inward working *Dakshinamurthi* method and Baba's.

Gurus for Oral teaching mainly. *Gurus* for Both.

Diksha is a special process for removing evil taints and investments of pupil with powers and *siddhis*⁸³. Kinds of *Dikshas* are :

Chakshushi by mere glance, *Sparsa* by touching the head, *Vacha* by words blessing, *Manasi* mentally blessing. *Sastri* by teaching *sastras*,

Yoga that is *Gurus* entering into the pupil inwardly.

Howtri Kriyavati performing homas with fire,

Howtri Jnanavati doing the *homa* mentally, to bless the pupil.

Derivation, *Diiyate Vimalam Jnanam Kshiyate Karma vasana tena diks heti prokta. Di-giving jnana, Ksha* eradicating taints.

Need for a *Guru*. The question whether *Guru* is needed is often times debated by people with great warmth, some holding that there is need and others holding that there is no need. These debates are usually infructuous and they excite and result in loss of peace. A good example is Hemadpant alias Anna Saheb Dabolkar's case on his first visit to Shirdi⁸⁴. He hotly contested for one hour or so and, contended that a *Guru* was an unnecessary fetter and quoted the Gita, in his support. Bala Saheb Bhate took the opposite view and maintained that destiny was supreme and that a *Guru* was had by all. The discussion made Anna Dabolkar less fit to approach the great *Guru* Sai Baba by reason of restlessness. But Baba by graciously revealing his *Antarjnana* of all that passed during the discussion made Anna Dabolkar feel humble and contrite, and he felt that Baba was a wondrous Supreme Power before whom he and his weak powers should bend and give up his "reason" and supposed independence. And thus he became the *sishya* of Baba by the latter's grace and found that destiny had fixed him up, though his reasoning might indicate independence was his proper course. The *Sastras*, for example, Srimad Bhagavata, Bhagavata Gita, Guru Gita, Katha, Mundaka, Taittiriya, Maha *Narayanopanishad* say clearly that without a *Guru Brahmanjnana* and *Moksha* cannot be attained.

The need is questioned as a rule by persons not yet fit to be *sishyas*, that is those without humility, reverence, patience, receptivity and other virtues, or the proper attitude towards great saints. They must be advised to have *Satsang*. That is they must move with *bhaktas* and fit themselves for further progress. When they are fairly fit, they will get their *Gurus*. It is not the truth that *sishyas* always go out to find the *Guru*. The reverse is often true. There are many noble souls waiting to be approached by persons who want to become *sishyas* and have the proper attitude and training.

Scanta Mahanto Nivasanti Santah

Vasantavat Loka Hitam Charantah

Teernah Swayam Bhima Bhavarnavam janan

Ahetuna Anyan Api Tarayantah⁸⁵

This means, There are great souls who have attained perfect peace and who are working to benefit and bless the world like the spring season. Though they have themselves crossed the terrible ocean of *samsara*, they are ferrying others across without any reward or recompense or motive. *Amayantu Brahma Charinah*⁸⁶, this means, Let students come. Sai Baba himself sent for N.G. Chandorkar expressly and drew hundreds or thousands to himself inwardly and unnoticed by them. Baba says⁸⁷, 'No one comes to me except by my drawing. I draw people unto me under various pretexts such as the worldly objects they want, When a boy ties a bird's foot with one end of a string and pulls the other end, can the bird refuse to come?'. This drawing is mostly due to *rinanubandha*. that is prenatal ties and obligations. This is termed by Bala Saheb Bhate, the irresistible pull of destiny. The need for a *Guru* is patent especially in worldly affairs. People do not expect the children to learn the three,'R's, drawing, etcetera without a teacher. If this is so in the patent material world, how much more essential is the need in the subtle spiritual field? Generally one's spiritual progress and the stages one has to go through, and the way of mastering problems that arise there are often dealt with in books on religion. These books will not suffice to enable one to tackle this subject effectively. Religious literature is a vast forest, through which one cannot pick one's way. Guru Gita says, *Scastrajalam*. It is "*Bahu Kanataka Avrutam*",

Bhava aranya pravishtasya

Ding moha bhranta chetasah

Yena sandarscitah panthah

*Tasmai Sri gurave namah*⁸⁸.

This means, Salutation to the Sri Guru who shows the path to one who has got deep into the forest of *Samsara* and lost all knowledge of even the cardinal directions and got confused". It also adds that the *Guru* alone can help one to go through this forest of the spiritual field. On one occasion this point was raised by Baba apparently accidentally⁸⁹. Baba was referring to the fact that he

himself was a *Guru* who could guide those who came to Shirdi or to his feet to make spiritual progress. On the general question about the necessity for a *Guru*, Baba mentions⁹⁰ the discussion between himself and three other fellow students who were reading *pothi*, *parayana puran*, and discussing how to get realisation.

Baba himself described how he met his *Guru*. Once myself and three others were studying our *pothi*, *puran* and other works and discussed how we were to get realisation.

One said we should depend on ourselves and not on a *Guru*. For Gita says, *uddharet-Atmana*, Raise your self by the self.

The first *sadhaka* here is like the Devil quoting scripture. In quoting Gita⁹¹, he wrests a verse out of its context and misapplies it. The Gita⁹², emphasises the need for a *Guru* to get realisation, and these are ignored and the wrested verse is treated as cancelling the other express reference to the need for a *Guru*. The *Sadhaka* ignores the all important fact that the Gita *upadesa* is given to Arjuna only after he got disgusted with his life situation and he made *Prapatti* and *Saranagati*⁹³.

The second and third *sadhakas* quote the need of qualifications or requisites for *Brahmajnana* as per *Vivekachudamani* correctly. But this is mere reproduction by bookworms. How to get self-control and release from doubts? How to actually feel that the thing our animal, uncorrected nature draws us to is transient and how to overcome our desire for it and feel a revulsion to it! There lies the rub. Books do not solve. Surrender to a loving *Guru* and love towards that *Guru* alone can solve these problems. Baba the fourth *sadhaka* was practical and noted that Surrender and Love to *Guru* were the only solutions.

A second said The main thing is to make the mind self-controlled, free from thoughts and doubts. It is we who are in every thing every where.

A third, The form that is in phenomena is ever changing. The formless is unchanging. So we must always be making *Vichara*, that is distinguishing between *Nitya*, unchanging and *Anitya*, changing.

The fourth disliked bookish knowledge. He said Let us do our prescribed duty, and surrender our body, speech and life to a *Guru*, who is all pervading. Faith in him is the thing needed.

As we rambled through the forest, we met a *Vanajari* one that works in the forest who asked us "where are you going in this heat into the forest?" We gave no direct reply. He kindly warned us from getting into the trackless woods and that to needlessly. He bade us share his food. We disdained his advice and marched on.

But in that vast and dense wood we lost our way. That man met us again and said that by relying on our own cleverness, we had got into a wrong way and that a guiding finger was needed to show the way. "Do not despise offers of food. Such offers are auspicious signs of success in one's endeavour" he said, and he again invited us to take food with him. Again we declined it and went away. I soon felt hungry and I went and accepted a bit of bread and ate it and drank some water.

The *Guru* then said, "What was your dispute?" and I told him all our talk. The others left him and did not care for him. But I reverently bowed to him. Then he took me to a well, tied up my legs with a rope, and suspended me, head downwards, from a tree by the side of the well. My head was about three feet off the water, which I could not reach. And the *guru* left me there and went away, God knows, where. He returned after 4 or 5 hours and asked me how I fared. "In great bliss was my time passed" I answered. The *Guru*, mighty pleased with me, drew me near him, passed his palm over my head and body and spoke to me tender words dripping with love, and he put me into his school where I entirely forgot my father and mother and all attachments and desires. I loved to gaze at him. If he were not there to see, I would not like to have eyes at all. I did not wish to go back. I forgot all other things but the *Guru*. My life was concentrated in my sight in him. That was the object of my meditation. In silence, I bowed. Meaning, Realisation flashed upon me, of itself without effort or study purely by his grace. *Guru's* grace is our only *sadhana*. *Jnana* comes as experience or in its wake.

The above is a correct description of Baba's *Marga* which has been called *Guru Marga* in *Guru Gita*⁹⁴ *Guru Marga* may be defined as that form of *Bhakti Marga* in which faith in and devotion to the *Guru* is the only *Sadhana* for achieving every end including salvation, *Mukti* or *Brahmaikya*, *Satchidananda* conquest of *samsara*, and also all *yoga*, *siddhis* and temporal welfare.

Here Baba showed the applicability of the *Guru Gita*⁹⁵ to religious progress. The one who is acquainted with the 'ins' and 'outs' of the spiritual field, a forest, is a *Vanajari*. The fourth person, Baba, who realised that a guide was needed, and mere talk with bookish knowledge was no use at all to help one to realise God and himself. Above all, the question was not an intellectual one. It was a problem as to how a particular soul was to be raised to realisation, and that was essentially a matter of moulding the entire soul of the student or *sishtya*. What is wanted, therefore, is humility, receptivity, and a powerful desire to reach the goal with the aid of a *Guru*, and therefore, a readiness to adopt a *Guru* and surrender everything to the *Guru*, as Baba has said. Everything *Tan*, *Man*, *Dhan* that is, body, mind and possession. Baba sacrificed and surrendered at the feet of his *Guru* as a result of the intense love he bore to his *Guru*. The solution of the problem as to whether there is need for a *Guru* is already reached when the *sishtya* gets into the proper humility, receptivity, and longing attachment to the *Guru*, culminating in mutual love. Then realisation is reached. Realisation flashes upon the *sishtya* purely by *Guru's* grace as is repeatedly stressed also in *Guru Gita*⁹⁶, in *Jnaneswari* and other works. Baba wound up most appropriately by saying⁹⁰. The *Guru's* grace is our only *sadhana*. *Jnana* comes as experience or in the wake of *Guru's* grace. He alone succeeds who feels the *Guru* is the one thing needed. If *Sastraic* authority is needed on the question of the need for a *Guru* we have it from the *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, and *Itihasas*. *Acharya Devo Bhava*, is mentioned in *Taittiriya Upanishad*. The last verse in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* says,

Yasya Deve Para bhaktih
Yatha Deve Tatha Gurow
Tasya ete kathitah hi arthah

Prakascante Mahatmanah

This means, He who has intense faith in God and equally intense faith in the *Guru*, who is treated as God, to him these teaching of the *Upanishads* about God, flash out.

This is to be taken along with *Acharyavan Purushoveda*, which means, It is the man who has a *Guru* that can get knowledge or realisation.

Mundaka Upanishad⁹⁷ says,

Tad vijñānārtham sa gurum eva abhigachchet,
samitpanih scrotriam brahma nishtam.

This means, To get *Brahman*, Knowledge and realisation, one should go with fuel in hand to one versed in the *Vedas*, who has realised God.

The same idea is conveyed by *Srimad Bhagavata*⁹⁸

Madabhijñam gurum scantam upasita Madatmakam

that is, the *Sadhaka* must resort to a *Guru* devoted to God, who has realised God and is calm.

Maha Narayanopanishad also says the same. Authority is also quoted from the lives of *Avatars* and saints and their sayings. Such as, Kabir's maxim *Guruvina Kona Batave Vat* which means, If there is no *Guru*, who will show us the way ? will suffice. It is quite enough to refer to the fact that all great teachers and even *avatars* have had their *Gurus* including Rama and Krishna. Especially on the question as to whether realisation is possible without the help of a *Guru* the *sastras* are quite emphatic. The *Katha Upanishad* says *Ananyaprokte Gatih Atra nasti*, which means, In this matter of realisation unless some one else speaks it out, there is no way. *Guru Gita* 191 says :

Yadi api aditah Nigamah

Shadanga agamah Priye,

Adhyatamaadini sastrani,

Jnanam Nasti gurum Vina

that is, Studies do not suffice. Without a *guru*, there is no Realisation.

Naayam Atma pravachano Labyah.

Na Medhaya Na Bahuna scrutena.

Yam eva esha vrūnute tena labhyah.

Tasya Esha Atma vivrūnute tanum swam.

This means, This *Atman*, that is, its realisation is not got by study or repetition of *Vedas* nor by keenness of intellect nor by much learning. It is he whom Realisation desires that gets it. To him it reveals its form. Of course this realisation which is personified comes as a matter of fact because there are methods through the grace or bodies of the *Gurus*. Even Vyasa, who taught his son Suka all the *Vedas*, sent him to *Guru* Janaka for confirmation. This King Janaka acted as his *Guru* and enabled him to perceive that what his *Guru* had taught and what the *Vedas* explained was the same as the actual realisation which Suka had in himself. Until and unless such a seal is set on one's realisation, that realisation is not complete. A story narrated frequently in this connection relates to Namdev".

Namdev was an ardent worshipper of Vittal and had frequent *sakshatkara* of Vittal and Vittal even spoke to him. So Namdev was under the impression that he had achieved complete God-realization and self-realisation, and that there was nothing further for him to achieve in the spiritual field. When he had such wrong notions in his head, he once visited an assembly of saints, and there Gora Kumbhar, another saint, wanted to test which of the saints present were ripe or *pucca* and which were unripe or *kaccha*. The *pucca* pot that is the fully baked pot, when struck with a mallet, produces highly musical sound different from the thud which alone is got by striking the mallet on an unbaked or ill-baked pot. Gora Kumbhar went round with his small mallet in hand and struck the head of one saint after another and said, *pucca, pucca*, that is, 'ripe, ripe'. When he came near Namdev, the latter got afraid and did not wish to face the mallet stroke, So he got up and went away. Then Gora Kumbhar said 'unripe, unripe', and 'kaccha kaccha'. The whole assembly held Namdev to be an unripe one, because he had no *Guru*. Then Namdev went up to Vittal and complained. Vittal said that he was really unripe, *kaccha*. Namdev thought that Vittal's *sakshatkara* to him was sufficient. But Vittal answered, 'No', and that he must go to a *Guru* before realising God in full, whereas at the time he was only realising God in Vittal and

not in other forms. He was not able to see every form as God. Then God Vittal told him to go to the *Guru Visoba Kesar*. Namdev challenged Vittal to appear in any form and said he would recognise him in any form. Vittal then appeared first in the form of a Harijan who was baking in a pot a buffalo, recently cut, and next his own child to the great horror of Namdev. Namdev not realising Vittal in that Harijan form came to Vittal and said that he had not kept his promise of coming to test him. Vittal said that he was the Harijan and Namdev was horrified and wanted another test. Next Namdev was told to sit under a tree near a well and go on with his worship, and then Vittal would appear. Instead of Vittal appearing, Namdev found that a *Mohammadan* riding on a horse came and trampled upon all his images and went with his horse to the pond for the horse to drink water. He was fiercely glaring at Namdev and left him. Namdev went on the second day to Vittal and complained to him that he had not come. Then Vittal said that the *Mohammadan* who broke his images was Vittal. 'Can you break images?' was the wondering query of Namdev. Vittal answered 'Yes' and in order to be able to realise God in all forms, he asked Namdev to go to Visoba Kesar. And when Namdev went to Kesar, he saw Kesar, an old man, placing his feet with shoes over a stone *lingam* that was worshipped. Namdev was aghast and entreated that old man to place his foot elsewhere than on the head of a *lingam* which people worshipped. When the old man requested Namdev himself to lift his emaciated legs and lift them up and leave them where there was no *lingam*, Namdev at once lifted up the old man's shod feet and placed them two or three feet off. There, right where he placed his feet a *lingam* shot up. Again when Namdev shifted those feet, to another place a *lingam* shot up. Namdev was greatly surprised, and then that teacher told him, 'You think my shoe is unworthy and that the *lingam* alone is God. It is to enable you to get over this prejudice and wrong notion, you are sent here'. After serving this Visoba Kesar for some time, Namdev went back, and then his *pucca* God realisation was proved by Vittal's test. Namdev sat at a dinner along with his caste men who were all full of *Achara*. When the leaves had been spread and covered with dishes, a dog ran up to Namdev's plate seizing and biting a *roti*, ran away. Every one cried out, polluted,

polluted. Namdev alone lifted up a cup of ghee or butter from his leaf and ran after the dog saying 'Vittal, Vittal, if you are taking only dried bread, it will choke your throat. Take this *ghee* along with it'. People were laughing at the madness of a man who wanted to give extra feeding to a dog that polluted his plate and prevented his dinner. But the dog suddenly assumed the form of Vittal and told him, Now that you have served under a *Guru*, you are able to realise Me in a dog and other forms'. This is an excellent way of teaching the need for a *Guru* to have full realisation of God in all forms,.which, according to the Gita, is the only knowledge of God.

Why do we need a *Guru*. The object of seeking a *Guru* may be secular, temporal or spiritual. So far as secular matters are concerned, people take very great care to get appropriate *Gurus* to achieve the highest results. It is in spiritual matters that the issue is more often raised. People are apt to fancy that there is no clear reason to approach a religious *Guru*, especially when other considerations such as one's own pride, one's disinclination to part with goods as *dakshina* to the *Guru*, arise. But if one sufficiently clarifies the position in one's own mind as to what a *Guru* is needed for and what a *Guru* can do, a solution is easy or made easier. Now the main question being spiritual, one might note what there is as authority and next as precedent, and then finally come to one's own reasoning and try to decide the question. So far as the aim or object is concerned, aim with the highest spiritual benefit, that is, to be reaching God or realising God. But even for making out what the goal is, a *Guru's* help is very often needed. Our nature and tendencies due to *poorva karma* are mostly concealed and not realised or controlled. They are so confused as to make many people find it difficult to decide what it is that they want and what is really good for them to aim at. In such cases, even to clarify the issue and to make a man clearly see what is best, a *Guru's* aid is often useful, if not absolutely necessary. When some people realise that in the case of a certain set of *Gurus*, called *Samarthas*, every benefit is achieved including temporal, then the solution becomes easier. So, we shall first take up the question of authority. What is a *Guru* wanted for? Is it reaching God or God-realisation? Is that the highest? For

that the Upanishads in unmistakable terms refer to the necessity of a *Guru* *Ananyaprokte Gatih Atra nasti* is what the Katho Upanishad says. That is, Unless somebody else points it out to one, there is no other way of finding it. The realisation of Self or God is so very subtle a matter that no amount of trouble in various directions such as study and running up to meet people will alone suffice. Study, *Tirtha Yatra*, *Dana*, other *Punya* works, *Ishta* and *Poorti*, will not themselves show God, but will help one to a purer state of mind from which we can get the proper *Guru* and realisation of God. When he take up the authorities in the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, we notice that a *Guru* is able to achieve not only the above but everything else. Especially in Baba's *marga*, called the *Guru Marga*, the *Guru* provides everything, including food, safety, and protection, to the *sishtya*. That is the present counterpart of the ancient *Guru sishya* system for every study. In ancient times, all knowledge was one. All training was one. Any knowledge was called Veda, including Mathematics, Astronomy, Prose and Grammar. Therefore for any and every learning, teaching was the regular course. A boy went up for *Gurukulavasa*¹⁰⁰ that is to live with his *Guru* for 12 years as part of his household and rendered even menial services and was treated as a member of the family. He reaped a rich reward in having not only his food and clothing and shelter provided for him but also in the attention paid to every other item of his welfare. Consequently the *Guru* and his wife loved the pupil as their child and the pupil loved the *Guru* and revered his *Guru's* wife as his mother. The best illustration is found in some Tamil *puranas*. One Aruni was a pupil who went to live with his *Guru*. The *Guru* had a wet land which had to be looked after. The boy was told to go and see the *Guru's* land one day. The boy found that the water needed for irrigating the *Guru's* field in order to feed the standing crops was all running away on account of a breach in the clay ridge. He had no stones with which to fill up the breach, and thinking that the loss was too great, he put his own head and body in to the breach and, as a result, died. That *Aruni* is an excellent illustration of the extent to which the love between *Guru* and *Sishya* could go. So the *Guru Gita* says

Sariram, Vasu, Vijnanam, Vasah, Karma, Gunanyasun

Gurvartham dharayet yastu Sa sishyah Netarahsmritah

that is, the true disciple's body, wealth, skill, action, merit and life are the *Guru's*. Exactly similar to this was the love of Sai Baba towards his *Guru*. The *Guru's* return of love in ancient days was equally strong. The *Guru* if a *Samartha* had every power, including the power to ward off death or revive the dead, and it was the *Guru's* duty to use his power to save his pupil from death. Rishabha says in Srimad Bhagavata,

Guruh na sasyat Svajano na sa syat

Pita na sasyat Janani na sa syat

Daivam na tatsyat svapatih na sa syat

Na mochayet yas Samupeta Mrutyum

This means, He is no *Guru*, nor a Kinsman, nor father, nor a mother, nor God, nor one's husband, who does not avert death when death is near. This was not a mere theory but was the actual fact of practical life due to the *Samartha's* greatness. In Baba's own case, his *Guru* Venkusa averted his death from a brickbat hurled at him by making the brickbat stand still in mid air. Baba himself averted death in the case of a good number of persons such as Nana Chandorkar, Santi Kirvandikar, S.B. Nachne, G.S., Khapharde, Balwant K. Nandaram. Baba expressly mentioned these¹⁰¹. Apart from death, there are numerous other important matters in one's life for example, success. Success very often counts so greatly that people desire success even at the cost of death. It was the *Guru's* function to help the proper *sishya* to success even in such cases. Referring to *puranas*, the best instance is that of *Sukra Acharya*, Bhrgu the great master of the *Mantra* science, helping his *sishya* King Bali to conquer all the three worlds and make *Indra* shake in his shoes and run up to his own.

Guru Brihaspathi. Brihaspathi told Indra,

Janami Maghavan scatroh Unnateh,

asya karanam Scishyaya upabritam,

tejo Bhrgubhih Brahma Vadibhih

This means, Indra, I know the reason for this success of your enemy. Bhrgu, the *Guru* of Bali, being a *Brahma Vadin*, that is a master of *mantras*, has

exercised his fullest knowledge and power on behalf of his *sishya* Bali, Therefore, one can see that for temporal purposes also, it would be excellent if one can get a *Guru* who has vast powers, that is, is a *Samartha Sadguru*. Let not people think that this power to provide material things is a mere bookish statement and not a reality. Sai Baba, a *Samartha*, has proved in a good number of cases several of which are recorded that he could provide everything and that he undertook to provide everything. Let us take the case of H.S Dixit. Baba told him, 'Why have you any anxiety? All care is mine'. Accordingly Dixit alike in the matter of health, wealth, and religious training, trusted entirely in Baba and left everything in his hands, not only during Baba's life time but even after Baba passed away. He found that he did not trust in a broken reed. On every occasion and in every matter Baba looked after him. In the matter of health, Baba told him, 'You are going to have fever. It is however going to last only a few days. Do not fear'. The pupil found the statement true and was happy. When he had to meet an enormously large claim at a time when his practice and his income were practically nil, Baba helped to find for him a sum of Rs.30,000 at the nick of the moment to pay his creditor. There are numerous instances, of Baba looking after the entire welfare of the *sishyas* and they remind us of Bhadrachala Ramadas and how his large debt of six lakhs of sovereigns to Tanisha Batcha, Ruler of Hyderabad was met. Now the above will suffice to show that a *Guru* is a distinct advantage if not a necessity, when he can provide everything. But as *Samarthas* are not as plentiful as blackberries, and one finds only ordinary *Guru's*, the question may still be considered to be dependent upon the nature of the *Guru* that one gets. But even taking ordinary *Gurus* into consideration, a person is likely to make a very good advance alike in temporal and spiritual matters if he has perfect faith even in an ordinary *Guru*. It is not so much the personality of the *Guru* that matters, as the extent of the *Sishya's* faith. Ekalavya's case is an instance in point. Ekalavya finding that Drona would not be his *Guru* made a clay image of the teacher, and with the aid of that clay image, by his own intense faith in it, learnt all the innermost secrets and essence of the art of archery. Baba told a lady that she could find great benefit by putting faith even in a potsherd¹⁰² and

that the most important thing is the faith of the *sishya* and not so much the merit of the *Guru*. Having said so much, we might next turn to the question of the qualifications of the *Guru* and *sishya*.