

March 2009

Guru Mantra

**Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru devo Maheshwara,
Guru sakshat, param Brahma, tasmai shri guravay namah -Guru Stotram**

Our creation is that guru (Brahma-the force of creation); the duration of our lives is that guru (Vishnu-the force of preservation); our trials, tribulations, illnesses, calamities and the death of the body is that guru (devo Maheshwara-the force of destruction or transformation). There is a guru nearby (Guru Sakshat) and a guru that is beyond the beyond (param Brahma). I make my offering (tasmai) to the beautiful (shri) remover of my darkness, my ignorance (Guru); it is to you I bow and lay down my life (namah).

Guru is the remover of darkness: Gu means darkness, and Ru means remover. Darkness refers to what obscures the light of awareness. Guru is the enlightenment principal that aids one in the realization of the true Self, the whole Self, the holy Self. The guru removes avidya, or ignorance, which is a case of mistaken identity. It is when you think you are your personality, mistaking your body/mind container for who you are and ignore who you really are. It is when you feel separate from the whole.

By reciting this mantra with a sincere heart, you will see that the power that enlightens is all around you at all times. The mantra asks for the ability to see the guru in all names and forms, and even to acknowledge, love and serve the guru who you cannot see, who is beyond all visible forms. The guru is your own self, the inner guiding light.

Your own birth, the creation principle, holds within it the potential for enlightenment. This would include your parents, your day and the place of your birth and all the circumstances surrounding your birth. Many people find it difficult to recognize the guru in their parents. Many of us spend a lot of time complaining about the bodies we have been given by our parents and blame our parents for the difficulties in our lives.

The situation we are living in right now at this time is where guru Vishnu manifests. If we could see our present circumstances - - who we work with, who we live with, who our friends are -- as embodying the guru principle, we might stop perceiving them as in the way of our happiness and begin to realize that they might be providing us with the way for our enlightenment to unfold.

The most difficult circumstances to accept in a positive way are the calamities, the injuries and illnesses that befall us physically or mentally. Guru devo Maheshwara manifests as the big challenges in our lives, which actually provide us with the greatest opportunities for clearing away avidya and embracing all that happens to us as a gift from God. Destruction always opens the door for transformation.

To see the guru in the teacher who is right in front of you, giving you the teachings of enlightenment, may be very difficult for us due to preconceived idealistic notions about what a guru is suppose to look like. This prejudice may disable us from seeing past the outer form or personality of the teacher.

To acknowledge that the guru is beyond name and form, beyond what we could imagine with the limited vision of the thinking mind, is to begin to open to the mystery of cosmic awareness.

The most potent prayer is the last line of the mantra in which we ask to have the good sense to be humble enough not to miss our chance to recognize the guru when they do appear. Only if we can let go of our self-cherishing, our pride, our need to be recognized and our yearning to be given credit for the things we do, can we ever hope to encounter the guru, that which brings enlightenment to our soul.

-- Sharon Gannon

