

The Shreyas Art of Living

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Namaste. Last month, we touched upon how Dharma, as prescribed by the Vedas, can lead its practitioner to spiritual enlightenment. Detachment from material desires of the body and ego-based desires of the mind automatically sets one on the path of higher awareness. This higher awareness creates a self-sustaining and blissful individual. A society made up of individuals like this can only bring joy to all in the everyday life and peace in our world that is self-sustaining.

One can practice *Dharma* as we saw in the previous article. As an individual that is still the best prescribed method. That is a prescription for *Shreyas*. But, there is a way to make that effort purer and more efficient. You see, if we are to remove our addiction to material and ego driven desires, we need to recognize them first. To do this, one needs a guide, who is not only an expert on the Vedic teachings but is also an un-biased authority and can lead others on the path of their *Dharma*. This is the role of the '*Guru*,' the teacher. In this article, we will take a look at what part the '*Guru*' plays in guiding the individual to their higher state of spiritual awareness.

Removal of the material attachments can be learned by reading about it and learning the *Dharmic* practices. The removal of our ego, however, requires an extra step. You see, the only part of ourselves that we are unaware of is, in-fact, our ego. And guess what - others who come in contact with us can experience it directly and see it very clearly. So, as such, we may want to give up our ego but are completely blind to it. We need a reliable mirror to help us see it, accept it and renovate it. Mind you, the mirror we use for this purpose must be as free of blemishes as possible. You wouldn't want to be getting ready for a party with your best dress and the latest hairstyle looking at a cracked mirror full of dust and dirt, would you? You would want a clean and shiny mirror that reflects your true appearance accurately. Our egos need such a mirror too if we are to get an accurate picture. Since only others can see our ego, we must rely on another person to give us that feedback. Keeping in mind that most people are as ego-based and ego-biased as we are, we have to find someone who has gone beyond the day to day life processes, someone who has perfected their own mirror sufficiently to be a reflecting device for others' egos. And that is the role of the *Guru*. A *Guru*, as a pure mirror, without blemish or bias, is a perfect reflecting tool for your ego. The *Guru* can help you see your ego and work at dissolving it.

The word *Guru* translates from sanskrit as follows. The root '*Gu*' means 'to make disappear' and '*Ru*' means 'shadows.' Hence, *Guru* refers to the remover of shadows from our life. The shadows are the parts of our life that are veiled under darkness. As such, they prevent us from reaching our state of higher awareness and keep us locked into a life of material and ego-based awareness only. Vedas emphasize the role of 'light' in removing 'darkness' from our life. A *Guru* has the traditionally designated role in accomplishing this. His job is to bring light to his students (*Shishya*).

So exactly how does a *Guru* bring 'light' to his students? He (or she) can do this by bringing enlightenment in the form of 'knowledge.' A *Guru* guides us on our journey going ever closer to the Veda, which are the highest form of knowledge about life.

A *Guru* does not merely complete a 'course' in Vedas to become a

Guru. He is designated as a *Guru* by his own *Guru*. By transmitting 'knowledge' exactly, this chain of *Guru-Shishya* lineage maintains the purity of the 'knowledge.' It minimizes personal bias from tampering with the Vedic knowledge. Nowadays, when we think of knowing, we usually mean having it in our memory. That is not 'knowledge' in the Vedic sense, as that memory can fade or be modified over time and with the passing of events. To really know something is to have it incorporated into your sense of being. Much like some aspects of our own life that we know because we have incorporated them into our life. Ask yourself this. When was the last time you woke up from sleep and needed to ask someone if you were a male or a female? It just will not happen. That is knowledge that is incorporated in you; you don't have to make an effort to remember it. The *Guru* acquires his Vedic knowledge from his *Guru* and passes it on to his *Shishya*.

Even the *Shishya* is chosen for his/her keen desire to learn. This is seen in some of the teacher-student relationship in the modern world. When a teacher is passionate about teaching, they will naturally be drawn to a student who shows an equal passion for learning. This is when the transmission of knowledge happens best and most purely. A *Shishya* seeks a *Guru* who has such passion and finds automatic spiritual connection when he meets such a person. The *Guru* is on the quest to find a *Shishya* who has a pure passion for learning and is, likewise, automatically drawn to such a being. This type of bonding seems to have become a rare event in today's society. Student-*Guru* relationships have become a means to an end. Even then the world creates opportunities for the truly inspired seekers of purity and knowledge.

So where does a true seeker find such a *Guru*. Most of them are probably sitting in the Himalayas, and we are far from reaching them in this lifetime. How can a common mortal with the passion to seek Vedic knowledge find a *Guru*? Google does not have the answer to that search.

Many *Shishya* who seek a *Guru* but have none at present rely on reading about such *Gurus* who have lived in the past. Lifestyles of many a saint from our history are living examples of Vedic lifestyles. Starting by doing what they did gives one the understanding about why the saints did so. Furthermore, it brings awareness about how the '*maya*' of the material and ego-based world prevents us from escaping to the spiritual bliss. Other devoted students read their writings, and yet others, simply meditate upon a *Guru* they respect and continue to align their mind in a *Dharmic* direction.

Whatever your choice, if you have the passion and are aware of your path to a more blissful life full of inner joy, seek out your *Guru* and become committed. A new life awaits you. *namaste*.