



# Siddha Yoga

Swami Venkatesananda



Yoga means self-knowledge, which means self-transcendence, therefore one must arrive at the point when the unreality of the 'I' or the ego-sense is made real. That self-transcendence is called meditation. That self-knowledge is called salvation, 'moksha' - never mind what words are used, they all imply the same thing; and this is true of any form of yoga, but especially of Siddha Yoga, the yoga of perfection where the perfection is directly experienced. Where this perfection is sought to be experienced directly, the ego is no use, on the contrary, it is a hindrance. It cannot be the work of the ego, therefore there is need for the awakening of that which is beyond the ego.

What does one do? How do I jump onto my own shoulders? Have you ever tried it? You know what standing on your shoulders means, you know what standing on your arms means, but so far no one has achieved the extremely simple feat of standing on his own shoulders. One needs someone else. Who is going to help us realise the unreality of the personality, of the ego-sense; who is going to enable us to overcome the self, transcend the self? Never mind what it looks like, that is the guru.

Nowadays we are entertained by numerous slogans and mottos concerning the sacred guru-disciple relationship. We hear of someone's adventure "Hunting for the Guru", and we witness "humble adoration of the Guru". We hear of good gurus, bad gurus, perfect gurus and supreme gurus, being appointed and nominated by crowds that float like dry leaves in a dust storm. Since it is considered that the guru is important and valuable in our lives, we wish to evaluate the one we may be able to find. With our own warped judgment, we judge him. If he satisfies our needs we appoint him as our guru; but if he says or does something which is unacceptable to us, we dismiss him and turn against him. The question never seems to occur to us: "Who am I to recognise; leave alone judge a guru? Am I a qualified disciple, mature enough to recognise a guru if I saw one? What am I looking for? Someone to pamper to my whims and fancies, my own hopes and aspirations - in other words: to boost my ego and my lust for power and pleasure?"

Who is a guru? There are numerous definitions from which each one of us naturally chooses what suits one's school of thought, standpoint or need. The greatest common factor in all these definitions is that the guru is the one who dispels the darkness of your ignorance, clears your doubts and helps you overcome your spiritual obstacles. There is an obvious implication here which has unfortunately been overlooked. Only a disciple can know when this has happened. If this has not happened, then the disciple has not found the guru. But then it may be that the other obvious implication in the same definition has been over-looked. If I am the disciple, I must ask myself: "Do I realise that I am ignorant? Do I recognise my own doubts? Do I admit that there are obstacles which I cannot overcome? Am I sincerely seeking to end all these, even if I have to give up all that I cherish for it? Am I a true disciple?"

That is the crux of the whole problem. If you are equipped with the spirit of discipleship, the best part of which is sincerity, it is that spirit alone that will enable you to seek the light wherever it may shine, without pride and prejudice, without judging or condemning, and that spirit will not allow you to rest until the guru, the light, is found; until the darkness of ignorance is dispelled, the doubts cleared and all the spiritual obstacles are crossed. Hence, it may be quite pertinent to say that discipleship is the guru.

I hope you will never fall into the trap of the theologians, whether they are oriental or occidental; they go on endlessly analysing, dividing everything, telling you that God is somewhere up there, whereas the aim of yoga is to synthesize - to bring together. If you study Indian philosophy, you study a fantastic skyscraper of about two to three hundred floors; in this floor dwells the body, the next floor is the prana, the next the mind, the next floor is supramental consciousness, the next floor is guru, the next something else: a fantastic skyscraper!

That which enables me to get beyond me, that is the guru. If the 'me' is a shadow, the only thing that will remove or destroy the shadow is light. Nothing else will, try what you may! You cannot frighten your shadow by wielding a big stick! You cannot hit it. Nothing is of any use here except light, and that light is the guru. There is a beautiful expression in the Guru Gita: "Isvara Guru Atma".

"Isvara, Guru, Atma" - the three are one! Three words are used to denote the same substance, the same principle. What are those three words? "Isvara" - God, "Guru" - Guru, "Atma" - the Self, the inner intelligence. This God, Guru or Self is not to be confused with the concept of a form; but this "Guru", this "God" and this "Self", the substance, principle and reality denoted by these three words, is omnipresent and indivisible like space.

There are some who declare: "And therefore ... ' The expression is a menace - when you try to apply spiritual principles, you are using cosmetics. Spiritual principles must grow within you and manifest within you. Therefore do not use "and therefore". God, Guru and Self are omnipresent and indivisible like space. It does not mean "and therefore we do not accept any named form". Space is indivisible, and yet that very indivisible, omnipresent space appears to us as the shrine. If there seems to be a contradiction, it is only because you are blind and you are grasping this truth with the mind, which is not indivisible. The mind is the divider and since it is fond of dividing, it is unable to see, unable to realise, unable to experience the indivisible. That which is indivisible appears to be divided. "That which is undivided in the indivisible, exists as if divided". That which is formless, appears in front of us, as if it has a form. The guru has no form, but that guru appears in front to you as if he

had a form. Why? Otherwise you cannot see him! It is only through the supreme Grace of God that his representative comes to us in human form. Otherwise it is not necessary at all. The guru's form is for our convenience - a concession to our stupidity, I cannot see the formless being, so the formless puts on a form.

The space in which we are seated existed before this structure was erected; but you and I would rather live in enclosed space - as a concession to human weakness the roof is put up, and walls are erected. That space exists as the same space as before. We are unable to see the formless, and so the formless appears to us, to our eyes as form. The omnipresent appears to us as a limited personality, because that which sees in us is limited, Our vision is limited to a certain spectrum; beyond that we cannot see. So this divine light which is indicated by these three words - Isvara, Guru, Atma - the Light of God itself appears to us as the Guru with form. Then this Guru begins to talk - if he didn't talk we wouldn't understand; that is the problem again.

There is an interesting story in the Guru Gita: Brahma the Creator had four sons, all born of his own mind, that is pure intelligence, the Creator's own thought forms. They were called the Sanat Kumaaras. Obviously they were as old as creation, probably a few years older. After the creation of the world, the knowledge of the scriptures was handed down, and these four old men studied all the books in the world, acquiring all possible knowledge; but one thing could not be gained from books - peace of mind, They began to wonder: we seem to know everything and still there is no peace of mind. The mind is restless. What has gone wrong? What do you do when you have studied all kinds of things, philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, nuclear physics ... when you have studied all that, and you have no peace of mind, what do you do? Instead of dropping the junk you are carrying, you add more to it. Do what you like, you are still restless. That is what they discovered. They found out that, despite all this knowledge they had acquired, none of it gave peace of mind. Wisely they abandoned study and went in search of someone who could answer this question: "My mind is restless, and I have no means knowing why. Although they saw many different people, nothing worked, doubts remained and the mind was still restless.

While they were still wandering - these people who were older than creation - they came upon a radiant young man, almost a boy, sitting practically naked under a tree. Wisdom is not often associated with young persons, but they were irresistably drawn. He did not talk to them. They sat down at his feet and looked up to him. Then he lifted his hand in a gesture of wisdom, "Give up all the three and then you will discover there exists one alone." Words, words - dangerous words! Are there three plus one? No! When the three are dropped, you will find one alone exists. Words - dangerous words. The

moment you use words you are trapped in some kind of conceptualisation, and the truth is not a concept.

There under the banyan tree sits a radiant young guru at whose feet four aged sages are seated. The guru's discourse is silence but it is powerful enough to dispel the doubts of the disciples. That is the teaching - it is non-verbal; it does not preclude the use of words, but it must be clearly understood that if words are used, it is only because we are deaf to silence.

Once a young man went to a guru and asked, "Sir, what is the Self?". Silence. Three times he asked and each time there was silence. As the young man turned to go, the old man called him. The young man said, "I thought you were cross with me. The guru replied, "No, I answered your question. Three times you asked, three times I answered, and the answer was peace. Wordless peace. Wordless silence is the nature of the self. That is what I told you, but you are deaf, not I" The message of silence can only be understood by one who has an other type of hearing. If I do not have it, what do I do? What does the guru do? Poor thing! You must sympathise with these gurus sometimes.

The guru is formless, but since we have no eyes to see the formless, he appears in form. The guru can transmit his teaching non-verbally; but since I am deaf to non-verbal transmission, he speaks. That is the whole point. How do I listen to the guru so that the truth that he transmits may become clear?

First there must be a certain discipline. This discipline is not something which is acquired, or imposed upon us by an external agency, or, mark this very carefully, by a superior desire. If I impose all sorts of disciplines upon myself, "I will become a vegetarian, I will eat only one meal a day, I will wear few clothes", and so on, it is because I have a higher desire. If the ego, the mind, has a motivation, it must lead to frustration. Can this discipline arise by some other means? Discipline is study. The word discipline also means "study". Probably we have had a few experiences in our own lives when we ambitiously, and with tremendous exertion, gained something we desired which very soon proved to be our undoing. Why is it so? Knowing that everything we need has been provided for, why does the mind crave for something else? When you begin to study this, discipline takes place, and therefore discipline is really direct studying of the mind, of the structure of the mind, of the structure of desire.

The mind is an obstacle only to the extent that it throws up ambitions and desires. When does one entertain ambitions or hopes and desires? When there is still some doubt or some hope that I may be able to work out the problem of my life in some other way. So I must have more or less tried out all of those things, and then come to the end of my own resources" Afterwards the mind is not an obstacle at all.

I must get back to this old hollow stage. I have done everything I can, God, there is no hope in this world. There is nothing but confusion, doubt, torment. When I reach the end of my tether, it is then that, utterly helpless, I will go to the guru and stand absolutely deaf, mute and blind. I have tried everything else, it is hopeless. So I come to the guru and till that stage is reached verbal communication may be necessary.

In the famous scripture called "Yoga Vasistha", the guru talks to Rama for nearly eighteen days, and this talking is mostly in circles. What is said in one chapter is contradicted in the next. "You want me to talk, I will keep talking to you, and to ensure that you do not get hung up on concepts, create one concept today and destroy it tomorrow." If the guru appears to be contradictory, that is exactly what he means to be. It is not by accident - it is meant to be. Puzzled, completely and totally puzzled, you stand there petrified. That is when Shaktipat happens.

Ramana Maharshi, one of the greatest contemporary sages of India, referred to the Shaktipat in his dialogues and said something extremely interesting. He said Shaktipat happens when you listen with your heart, not with your mind or your ears - when the mind or the intellect collapses into the heart, and the heart listens. How does one silence this mind, completely and totally, and let the heart begin to think? Is it possible for me to listen with the heart? That is what is called guru bhakti or devotion. Devotion is listening with your heart - the head is a totally useless thing here. Can the head be completely and totally silenced, and the listening take place with the heart? If that is possible, Shaktipat takes place: the mind is silenced. In order to be able to do that, one has already entered into a state of meditation. If the mind is silenced, then the intelligence of the guru can pull me out. The light can flood the darkness and make it disappear instantly. Tremendous, dynamic and intelligent devotion and surrender to the guru is necessary, realising that the guru is the light.

Sometimes the guru's actions may not be puzzling, but downright. "My God, why does he do that!" That's it! The thing that asks from within you "Why does he make me do that?", that is the ego. Can you get rid of that? No. Otherwise gurus are unnecessary. If you can overcome this resistance, you have got it. The guru is within you, and there is no difficulty in dealing with this living guru. Whatever he says you are going to say, "Okay, I'll do it." It is when you are able to say this, that you have really discovered the inner light, or he has discovered it for you. The inner light, the light is within you - "God, Guru and Self". All three are identical - the same.

Whatever he asks me to do is right. When you have that attitude, you have got it, the magic is done, and the ego is completely evaporated, like dehydrated water. What is dehydrated water? I don't know! That's it! That is the truth -

when the ego ceases to be the ego - when the mind ceases to be plagued by concepts, notions and ideas - what remains is the truth. Whatever enables the shadow of the ego to be completely destroyed, whether it is a human agency, or super-human agency, or sub-human agency - that is the guru. Only an agency outside the ego can dispel the shadow of the ego - it need not necessarily be outside the body. The guru can function within, but in life we find that even when we have a master who appears to us as a human personality, with whom we can talk, whom we can approach in times of doubt and difficulty, to obey even him we find very difficult.

Why so? Because the ego is so strong. It wants absolute obedience to itself. The ego is only interested in its own goals, and the goals that are created by the ego are false goals. I do not think it is difficult for us to examine our own lives to see that those things we aspire for as goals becomes soiled the moment we have got them. And the ego is capable of endlessly projecting more goals. Is there a person, a personality I capable of standing on his own shoulders, transcending this ego and stopping this ego from projecting its own goals? If there is, salutations to him. But if you are not one of them, better go to a guru who might suggest some way of this self-transcendence, and the self-transcendence is bound to be painful to the ego.

There are some stories in the Upanishads that should frighten most of us. Indra is supposed to be the King of Heaven, the chief of the angels. He once went to his own father for instruction as a disciple. But his father would not give instruction till Indra had done domestic service for him for 32 years. Till then he could not even ask a question. Now people go to a holy man, a saint, and send him a visiting card, wanting a personal interview. If he does not agree, what kind of man is he! He humbly served the guru, his own father, before asking one question, and when the answer to that question was not quite clear, he had to serve another 32 years before asking the next question. After three or four questions he got enlightenment, because then the mind was silent and the heart began to listen.

Another story is told of Shankaracharya. He had four disciples: three were good at learning, the fourth was a bit dull. One day, the fourth disciple had not arrived at class, and the three others were getting impatient. Shankaracharya said, "Let the other man also come. It The three disciples became increasingly restive, "How long shall we wait? He is dull in any case." The guru asked where he had gone. He had gone to wash the guru's clothes in the Ganges. Busy washing the clothes, he had forgotten the time. Mysteriously, when the disciple returned from the river, he was already singing highly inspiring songs. The other three disciples then saw that the knowledge they sought by studying, could be achieved by washing clothes"



The truth is not intellectual comprehension, but something beyond conceptualisation, and this can be revealed directly if your heart is pure, if your mind is clean, and if you are devoted. If the door is open, that is the importance of guru. The door must be open to receive the guru; guru bhakti, guru seva. In that total devotion to the inner light, the transmission takes place. The channel opens and through that the transmission takes place. That is Shaktipat. When that takes place, then you are enlightened. In that light you see God, Guru and Self - as One.