

## GURU YOGA

### What is Guru Yoga?

Whichever path one may take in the pursuit of God/Self-realization, viz., Rajyoga, Kriyayoga, Bhaktiyoga – the ultimate goal of all is to be connected with one's Guru. The process of connecting with a Guru involves the practice of **Smaran** (remembering the Guru), **Manan-Chintan** (thinking about the Guru), **Sparshan** (the touch of the Guru) and **Nididhyasana** (deep meditation).

As one wakes up to a new day every morning, one must first chant Sri Guru's name and visualize His face and form and then strive to act in accordance with the Guru's teachings throughout the day. This being practiced regularly, activates the name of Sri Guru in one's mind which brings boundless joy. Such a seeker is sure to feel the presence of the Guru inside him and in all his actions and ultimately, Sri Guru's grace descends on such a seeker. Sri Guru gradually frees His disciple from the bondages of desire. When the mind is free from the shackles of worldly desires, the mind becomes pure and tranquil.

The Guru says, ***"To know Him is to know oneself and to know oneself is to know Him. Know thyself first. If I do not know myself, how do I know the others?"***

### Why does one need a Guru?

The real purpose of human birth is to acquire spiritual knowledge and realize God. For this, one needs a spiritual mentor or guide or a Guru who guides His followers in the right path and steers them towards enlightenment.

For the purpose of realizing the Absolute Truth or God, one needs to capitalize on or obtain the benefits of Sri Guru's **Darshan** (meeting the Guru), **Sparshan** (the touch of the Guru), **Smaran-Manan** (dwelling on the thoughts and sermons of the Guru) and **Nididhyasana** (deep meditation on the Guru).

***“Patience, Forgiveness, Sacrifice & Charity leads one to God”***, says the Guru.

To attain God, the practice of these fundamental virtues on a regular basis is essential. The Guru plays a pivotal role here. He helps his followers to practice these virtues and without Him, one cannot follow them on one’s own. Through continuous and diligent practice of these virtues, one can liberate oneself from the clutches of worldly cravings and bondage of attachment. What follows is endless joy and peace.

With Guru’s grace, the more the mind becomes Guru-centric, the freer one becomes from the bondages of desire. ***“The more one becomes absorbed in the thoughts of the Guru and His teachings, the greater is the intensity of the realization of the Truth and the conviction that the Guru resides in him alone inside his heart”***. Such a state of the seeker, brings immense joy to the Guru.

## *Stages of Guru Yoga*

According to the Guru, we must try to remain calm and unaffected under all circumstances. For example, when someone is rude to us and behaves harshly with us, we must not take it to heart and get disheartened. We have to think that the antagonist is also His creation. The Guru is actually acting through the antagonist to test my patience and forgiveness. We must not bear any ill-will or grudge against the antagonist. We must believe that the Guru is the actual Doer and He wants me to get seasoned to such adversities and rise above the natural tendencies of retaliation and hatred.

Guru Yoga means to be connected with the Guru in one's thought and actions. According to Guru Yoga, we must try to see the Guru in everyone. In serving and caring for the mankind, we are serving the Guru. This should be our mind-set. Apart from this, reminiscing and discussing the Guru's teachings, forms an essential part of Guru Yoga.

Guru Yoga or the connection with the Guru can be felt at different levels. Initially, in the observance of one's duties as a householder, whether it is through physical labour or financial aid to one's family or relatives, while one is engaged in serving for the welfare of them all, one feels that in serving them, he is serving his Guru. While one is still under the clutches of Maya or bondage, one feels that whatever one is doing, is for the wellbeing of mankind.

At the next level, with the passage of time, comes detachment from worldly pursuits. Truth dawns and one realizes the difference between the permanent and the impermanent, the transient and the intransient.

At an advanced stage the importance of the diversity of God's creation is understood, and, that the intricate network of events in his design is for a purpose and is meaningful, becomes crystal clear.

In the final stage a never-ending and relentless flow of all Divine thoughts overwhelms the mind of the seeker.

## *The method of Guru Yoga practice*

One has to meditate on the Guru between his two eye-brows. This has to be done even while walking. We have to think as though the Guru is sitting in the middle of our two eyebrows, i.e., in the Third-eye Chakra. We have to feel our oneness with the Guru. If we can think in this way, it will help us to refrain from thinking or uttering bad words.

Furthermore, one must think and believe that the Guru resides not only within me but within every life form. This way of thinking about the Guru residing in every living being connects you to the Guru Himself.

The Guru further elaborated on the method of Guru Yoga practice. Remembering the Guru at all times, His sermons, meditating on the form of the Guru and Him residing within me paves the path towards self-realization. One must try to put all his focus on the Guru residing within him and chant His holy name, continuously and silently. One must visit the Guru and seek his touch frequently. Further, the Guru stresses on the importance of chanting His name (**Joy Guru Sri Guru**) incessantly in one's mind and incorporate His teachings in the day-to-day activities.