



Gurudev Jayanti

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Who is Guru?

- गुरु = the remover of darkness/ignorance.
- In the tradition, there is no such thing as independent study.
- Guru is needed to decode the import of the Upaniṣadic mantra-s. For us to be able to explore the wealth of meaning these mantra-s contain, to plunge into the depth of the Knowledge of the Self and be lifted from saṃsāra, the Guru is the key.

Guru is a Gift from God

- **Rāmacaritamānasa – Uttara Kāṇḍa:**
Bhagavān Rāma in said that He provides 3 gifts –
 1. raft to cross saṃsāra (human body)
 2. favourable winds (God's grace),
 3. helmsman (ācārya to steer/guide us out of saṃsāra).
- Guru is a gift from God. Receive him with utmost reverence, humility and gratitude.
He is the key to mokṣa.

Guru Prasāda

- We not only need Īśvara anugraha (God's grace), we also need the grace of the Guru. For this reason, we worship the Guru.
- Power of Guru Prasād:
Rāmacaritamānasa: Kākabhuśuṇḍi in previous human form disregarded his Guru. Bhagavān Śiva cursed that he will live for many cycles of creation. The Guru then prayed to Bhagavān Śiva to forgive the śiṣya in the hymn we call **Rudrāṣṭakam**. Then Bhagavān Śiva turned curse into a boon that he will get to see the birth of Bhagavān Rāma in all cycles of creation.

Guru Bhakti

- For worshipping the Guru, we need some Guru Bhakti. Devotion for the Guru takes multiple forms:
 1. Guru Sevā = **pratidinam tat pādukā sevyatam = Everyday serve the sandals of the Guru** means not only catering to his physical needs. It means doing as he instructs, and in so doing our Sādhana Catuṣṭaya and Citta Śuddhi will continue to grow manifold.
 2. Guru Pādukā Pūjā means revering the Knowledge which he stands on, which he abides in, and learning to abide in that Knowledge ourselves.
 3. Guru Dakṣiṇa means sharing the Knowledge which he imparted.

Importance of surrender

- We approach the Guru with sacrificial twigs in hand. The dried pieces of wood signifies the dried up ahaṁkāra (from sādhana performed prior approaching the Guru).
- Surrender means to surrender ahaṁkāra. Through the means of jñānam, the Guru will negate whatever is left of ahaṁkāra.