

## **What is a Guru?**

[n. Sanskrit]: *one who teaches spiritual liberation from his or her own direct experience of realisation.*

Many people are well versed on spiritual principals and philosophy, and can teach your mind. A Guru also teaches important spiritual concepts, but they teach at a much deeper level. They are personally awakened – and can actually guide your soul to Enlightenment from this place of empowerment. Gurus come in many nationalities, styles and personalities. They exist in every age, in every culture. They are male and female, Eastern and Western. Some live quiet lives of prayer and meditation, while others have huge missions that span countless projects and involve thousands of people. What these Spiritual Olympians share is expansive consciousness along with a deep love and desire to serve humanity.

## **Do I need a Guru, and how do I know if I've found the one who's right for me?**

The simplest answer: your heart will tell you.

At the Harmony Centre we teach that we are all Divine; we are all one with God. Being a Guru or more spiritually developed doesn't make you any *more* divine than anyone else – it's about how fully that Divinity is being expressed and realised.

Once a soul's candle is 'lit' and they are awakened to become a big bright flame, it's easy for them to light another. That's what a Guru does, and that's what the Guru tradition is all about. Guru literally translates to 'that which removes darkness.'

For most of us growing up in Western countries, it's never *occurred* to us to seek a Guru. We read books, go along to talks or perhaps church or learn to meditate. We more or less assume we will need to figure it out for ourselves. Or we may believe that because the Divine is within us, it would be giving our power away to seek a teacher.

You are, of course, not required to have a Guru to develop spiritually. However, if you are blessed to find one, it will profoundly help to speed your development, enrich your life and will often be a lot of fun. Like raindrops making their way back to the ocean, it helps to find a good river with a strong current!

Ultimately, you will need to trust your heart. It will tell you when you've found your Guru. It may hit you like a lightning bolt or develop gradually from a gentle respect for the teacher into a deeper sense of love – but at some point, you'll

know. The saying that 'when the student is ready, the teacher will appear' has great truth. If you want to meet your Guru, ask the Divine and be open to the response. There are things we can try to describe with words, but can only truly be understood through direct experience. If you're curious, we encourage you to spend some time at the Harmony Centre or with another spiritual community to see for yourself.

### **What about being vulnerable?**

All great relationships create the context for us to be open and therefore vulnerable. That's how we grow, develop and connect more deeply to one another, and is part of why we incarnate in the first place. However, a true Guru-Disciple relationship is based on mutual love and respect, rather than manipulation and control. You can feel the difference right away if someone's in their ego, rather than coming from a place of expanded awareness and unconditional love. Like any great coach, a true Guru wants each student to fulfill his or her own unique potential. The Guru's job is to pull the Disciple up, and as the Disciple advances, she helps push the Guru to expand her own consciousness even further.

### **What happens now?**

Often, when we're new to the Harmony Centre we can feel a sense that everyone else is further along on this path than we are; they're all in the midst of this beautiful Divine relationship and we're not sure where to start!

Don't worry, that's perfectly normal. You are not being asked to 'fall in love' on the first date; there is no pressure or requirement from Shakti Durga or anyone else to feel a particular way. These things have a way of unfolding in their own perfect timing as we maintain an attitude of love and respect and stay tuned into the heart.

As a multi-faith spiritual community, we also teach that all Gurus are one, and we honour the Gurus and Masters of all traditions. There are many at the school with a deep love for many Gurus.

### **I'd like to bring a friend to the Harmony Centre, but I'm not sure how to explain the Guru tradition, or I'm worried it might freak them out a bit?**

At the Harmony Centre we offer many public meditations and Satsangs that are welcoming to newcomers and guests. The potency of the Guru relationship can be felt, and for most people in Western society this is an entirely new experience.

The best advice is not to worry too much about what to do should people start bowing and so forth. Usually by the time someone is at the Harmony Centre and having a direct experience of the energy, it is both positive and profound. There is no need to try to explain it all in advance.

If you find yourself being asked questions, try to think back to your own experience of first coming to the Harmony Centre and simply tell the story of your journey so far. You are Shanti Mission, and your experience can be a bridge for others.

### **What's the best thing to bring someone along to?**

Concerts are great places to bring friends, as are most Sunday Satsangs (where music is a strong component) and public events with Shakti Durga and the other senior disciples.

What draws people to the school, in the first place, is quite unique and personal. Friends might want to come along because they're interested in trying guided meditation, attending a seminar, experiencing sacred music or to have a healing.

What we've found is most people who come to the Harmony Centre, whether they know it or not, are not beginners on the path. We are a school for people who want to realise their full Divine potential, connect to a spiritual community, be part of something bigger than themselves and serve the world to the best of their ability with their own unique gifts. We are grateful for the ever-expanding community that exists at Shanti Mission and welcome people with open arms.