

# Aurobindo and the Cult of Guru (Gurubad)

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**Abstract:** Acharya or Great Master is very close to our heart. He lives in our inner self. He leads us from darkness to light. We feel the touch of love and life in him at first glance. The question regarding the necessity and unquestionable regard for a teacher may arise in the modern age. It is doubtful whether it is possible for one to obey his instruction blindly nowadays. In reality, Gurubad becomes a debatable issue nowadays for many reasons. My experience as a teacher for a considerable period of time makes me feel that such a controversy is baseless. Hence I have tried to project my view in this context in my discussion with the assistance of Aurobindo's view about Gurubad. The system of Gurubad was established in our country in ancient time. It is stated in Upanishad that one who is wise, visionary and devoted to Brahma and can explain the occult knowledge of universe is Acharya or a teacher in real sense of the term. He creates a divine aura around. A disciple should go to him with a sense of regard and humility. No disciple can acquire wisdom without an intimacy between himself and his master. For this reason, one can acquire the spiritual knowledge only with the help of Acharya or religious guide. Hence the necessity of unquestionable regard for a teacher is required even in the new millennium.

**Keyword:** Gurubad, wise, visionary, devoted to Brahma, Acharya, Upanishad.

## Intrduction:

In ancient time, those who went to Gurukul to receive education were called Brahmachari. The other name of Veda is Brahma. The study of the Vedas is called Brahmacharya. So Brahmacharis studied Vedas. It is mandatory for Brahmacharis to conserve the seed. According to Manu, "Abipluta brahmacharya grihasthāśramam ābasita" . (Manu,3/2)". 1

We find in the Mahabharata "Jñānaṁ,śaurya,mahaḥ sarbaṁ brahmacharya pratiṣṭhita."2 It is said in Atharvaveda"Brahmacharyēra kaṇyā yubāni bindatē patimā."3 The question Is why a Brhmachari is called "Chhaatra". The word "Chhaatra" is derived from "Chhatra". A disciple did not use Chhatra or umbrella in ancient time. Actually the word "Chhaatra" suggests the meaning that a disciple used to dwell under the umbrella protection of the teacher in Gurukul. Many scholars interpret the word in a different way. According to them, disciples used to cover up the faults of Guru or teacher. In this context, it is said in Shabdakalpadrum"Chātraṁ gurōrdōṣaṇām ābaraṇaṁ. Taṅ śīlam asya iti chātra:. (Śabdakalpadruma) "4

Therefore, the other name of Brahmachari is Chhaatra. At that time a disciple had to live in the house of his Guru or teacher.

“Uṣṭibādyaṃ gurau dbija”. 5

So Vidyarthi or student is also known as “Antyabasi”.

"Vēdam anūcya ācāryaḥ antēbāsīnam anuśāsti.(Taittirīya). 6

Ācāryakulāt vēdamadhatya yathābidhānam.(Chāndōgya 8/15/1). 7

Śiṣya antēbāsī ō guru tāra ācārya.

"Ācāryāt haiba bidyā bīditā sādhiṣṭham prāpaṣyati. (Chāndōgya 4/9/3). 8

The disciple who was a knowledge-seeker went to his Guru with a sense of humility. At that time the teacher instructed his disciple to pay something with a sense of respect and humility. It was not desirable for a student to give or pay something to his teacher with disrespect. Guru did not make any difference between his own son and his disciple. The disciple treated his teacher as his father. The teacher was called Acharyadeb. In Prasna Upanisad, it has been stated that the disciple prayed to his teacher or Guru that he was his father who showed him the way out of darkness. In this way, the “Susrusu” disciple received education. “Susrusa” means inquisitive. The disciple did not remain passive. He went on asking questions and expressing his doubt. The Guru or teacher cleared the doubt of his disciple. It is said in Matsyapurān “জিজ্ঞাসা নাস্তি নাস্তিক্যম”।

The sincere question of a disciple leads him from atheism to theism. It is stated in Kathopanisad :

“Saha nābabatu, saha nau bhunaktu,saha bīryam karabābahai,  
tējarsbī nābadhītamastu, mā bidbiṣābahai.”(Kathōpaniṣada.) 9

It can be explained In the following manner: “O Brahmadeb, save me and my Guru, nourish us, make us enable to conserve seeds, strengthen us with knowledge and prevent us from being envious and getting involved in quarrel.

For this reason, the meticulous study of the instructions of ancient texts and analysis of the relationship between the Guru and his disciple should be made properly. According to Kathopanisad, Guru always provides superior wisdom and it is always acceptable as “Shreya”. Here Guru instructed his disciples to control passion instead of curbing it. He said, “Our senses are like horses which are inclined to worldly materials. Those senses need to be controlled like a skilled charioteer.” Similar idea is found In Brihadaranyak Upanishad and it is relevant even today. Here, Acharya Prajapati instructed his three disciples“Da,da,da iti dāmyata datta dayādhama iti” .10 It means one should control oneself, show sympathy to others and make charity. When there is lightening in the sky, the roaring of cloud reminds one of the instruction of Acharya. Besides it, there is also the following instruction in Upanishad: “Tadētaṭ ēbam śikṣēd damaṃ dānam dayāmiti”. (Bṛhadaranyaka,5/2/3.)” 11.

In Taitriya Upanishad, it is said that the real duty is essential. One should do it before doing other things. The real duty is concerned with the welfare of all. It causes welfare not only to one’s mind and body, but to people of all sections of society. For this reason, the instruction of the teacher at that time improved the standard of his disciple’s mind and heart. With the development of thought, a disciple could achieve a balance between his interest and benevolence. Everybody has the sense of self and others. Love

and affection edify the student's attitude and thought. Yajñabalk said to Maitry, " The mother sacrifices for her children and a lover makes sacrifice for his beloved. They do not hesitate to give their all." (Brhadaranyaka) 12

Finally, Is Upanishad instructs us to behave with others as their kinsmen. It is said there that one must make sacrifice along with one's enjoyment. One should share one's enjoyment as quoted in the following line:" Tyaktena bhunjitha". 13 The following line states the reason for doing so: "Magrdhah kasyasbid dhanam" 14 In other words, all are related to one another and so one should not steal away the objects of others. It is stated thus: One cannot steal the object of one's close relative. In this context, following lines of Rabindranath Tagore may be cited:

Bha'i tumi ye bha'iyera majhe prabhu, tadera pane taka'i na ye tabu, bha'iyera sathe bhaga kare mora dhana tomara mutha kena bhari ne.(Gitanjali, 92.) 15

In ancient, the teacher used to tell his disciple that happiness, sorrow, comfort and enjoyment do not belong to one person but all. It is desirable that everyone should be happy, healthy and benevolent. Guru instructed his disciple to look at the world with unbiased eyes. If one is calm and happy, one can understand oneself and it becomes easy for him to make sacrifice. Hence the Upanishad contains the following instruction of Guru: Sarbabai sukhinah santu sarbe santu nirmayah.

Sarbe bhadrani pasyanta ma kascit duhkhamapnuyat.(16)

It has been said by Sr Sri Anandamayee Ma in Kathamrita that Guru is required to learn religion. Guru or a teacher imparts identity and consciousness to his disciple. In order to get a real Guru, one has to make sincere effort. According to ma, only Guru can enlighten the dark niches of his disciple and enable him to gain power. Sri Aurobindo has said that Guru is the ocean of kindness and tries his utmost to fill the empty vessel of his disciple. So a student must depend on his teacher who shows him the right path. According to him, there exists a bond between the teacher and his student. Guru's wish for the welfare of his disciple creates this bond. (Pp.81-83.) 17 A student needs to free himself from the bond. Till then, bonding between Guru and his disciple remains intact. (P86)18

In the words of Anandamayee ma, admonition of Guru is like the cow-dung. The cow-dung goes waste if it is not used. When it is mixed with soil, it becomes the fertilizer which nourishes plants and enables it to breed flowers and fruit. Similarly, if the disciple endures the admonition of Guru, he will be benefited. The purpose of Guru is to direct the disciple's mind and senses towards the acquisition of knowledge. The disciple finds a comfortable seat in Guru's heart through his humble submission. The student will reach the goal if he is devoted to his task and respect for Guru. So it may be concluded that when one devotes oneself completely to something, one is bound to reach the goal and realize one's potential under all circumstances.(p126.).19

Sri Aurobindo has termed the relationship between Guru and disciple as Gurubad or Cult of Guru. According to him, the best among the disciples may not need Guru as he can realize the truth and light within himself. The average ones need the help of Guru to trace out the right path. Those disciples who are below average cannot do without Guru whose help they need for a long time. According to him, most of the truth-seekers belong

to the last category. He also classified Guru in three categories, namely the best, average and below average. He has termed the best one as Jagadguru or God. He has pointed out the philosophical basis of Gurubad. According to Sage Patanjali, God is the master or Guru of all. He is past all sufferings, hopes and danger. His School is always open for all. We are burdened with suffering, worldly activities, crisis and hopes. We go to Guru to get rid of them. According to Patanjali, Guru is associated somehow with Jagadguru or God. When a student understands it, he will value his relationship with Guru truly.

According to Sage Patanjali, A teacher or Guru helps his disciple to realize his true self. Sri Arovindo is of the view that he who awakens in us realization of ideals all the time is Guru. Guru directs us towards ultimate truth with the help of his message, power and attitude. He resembles God who lies within every creature and guides him on the right track. For this reason, one has to surrender oneself to the Great Master, God. Srimad Bhagwadgita contains certain instruction dealing with the ways for a disciple to acquire knowledge from his teacher. It is as follows. The knowledgeable persons give instruction to their pupils. Pupils must have devotion and a wish to do hard labour. In this way, a universal relationship between Guru and his disciple develops.

In the opinion of Arovindo, only when one surrenders everything to Jagadguru or Great Master, the power of Guru becomes active. He is the embodiment of Sadguru Brahma, ultimate wisdom and ecstasy. Like the sky, He is steady and directs every intellectual exercise in the world. The mediocre disciple seeks the support of Guru to develop within himself a sense of devotion. Hence Sri Arovindo has pointed out another aspect of Guru. A perfect teacher is disciplined, honest and strong. According to him, the message of a teacher imparts discipline. Sometimes we receive the message traditionally without being prepared for it and develop the ego of Guru within us. The conduct of Guru has much importance. Not only in message, Guru has to maintain discipline in his conduct and activity. So it is said that the knowledgeable person who understands the ultimate truth imparts to his disciple the joy of acquiring knowledge without stint. The teacher occupies the thought of his student and sharpens his intellect to express his power. Sri Arovindo has pointed out that inspiration and strength pass from Guru to his disciple. We find in Lord Buddha his compassion for humanity and hard effort to acquire the wisdom of Nirban for liberating mankind from ageing, disease and death. According to Arovindo Guru has never lost his importance. He goes on imparting his wisdom and strength to his disciple calmly for ages. A disciple can understand the importance of Guru only when he has close and cordial relationship with him. This is the true religion of Guru. Sri Arovindo has illustrated the duty of the teacher and his pupil in his book entitled *Karmayoga*.<sup>20</sup> According to him, the teacher is at the same time the guardian and friend of his disciple and he reveals his knowledge of ultimate reality. His conduct must reflect the divine truth. He is of the view that one who reflects the divine light through his wisdom is a teacher or Guru in true sense of the term.

**Explanation:**

In Gita, Lord Krishna is himself Guru. He has pointed out certain qualities which His disciple and devotee must possess. Elaborating his view, Lord Krishna has said: “He who does not envy anybody and is amicable, kind, egoless, indifferent to pleasure and

pain, and generous is His favourite disciple. The Sloka "Adesta Sarbabhutanam" explains that His disciple does not have enmity with anyone and he must be always friendly to all. He is kind and must be free from possessiveness. Lord Krishna's true disciple and devotee must have modesty and a feeling of being a slave to God. In a true disciple, self has turned selfless.

Hence a student must be generous and tolerant. He does not get excited and angry easily. Tolerance is a rare quality. Hatred and jealousy brings about destruction to a student. For this reason, he should be free from lust and greed. The teacher instructs a student that forgiveness is the quality of the brave and not of the coward. Forgiveness reveals the greatness of character. So the teacher wants his student to possess the quality of forgiveness. A teacher or Guru wants his student to have complacency, restraint and strong determination. He will never be impatient and disturb the world. One who is free from excessive joy, intolerance, fear and impatience is a true disciple. (Gita bhaktiyoga 14.)<sup>21</sup>

It has been said that Gandhiji possessed those qualities. Besides possessing those qualities, a disciple must be self-reliant, active, indifferent, steady and patient. It has been stated in Gita, a disciple must be efficient, industrious and indifferent to praise and criticism. (Gita bhaktiyoga16.)<sup>22</sup>. He also remains indifferent to heat and cold and pleasure and pain. He who is complacent, steady in mind and has great respect for his teacher is a student in true sense of the term.

If the teacher and his students take lesson from Gita, they can fulfill their task jointly with sincerity, devotion and efficiency. In that case, the ignorance, poverty and backwardness of society will be over. The world will witness the spiritual awakening in every corner. In this way, the intimate relationship between Guru or teacher and the student and their spiritual awakening through the spread of knowledge will certainly bring about physical, moral and spiritual development of the whole mankind.

### **Conclusion:**

Hence we need the blessings of Guru to acquire the knowledge of self and become self-reliant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So we have to keep in our mind even now the lessons regarding the relationship between the teacher and his pupil imparted through the ancient texts. We all wish to see everyone happy, healthy and benevolent. In ancient time, the teacher used to tell his student to adopt all-embracing vision of the world. If we acquire the knowledge of self quietly, we will learn to make sacrifice easily. So we need to have the knowledge of self and maintain discipline and good manners. We must have respect for our teacher who has the capacity to develop our talent properly. Finally, I pay homage to Arovindo, Gita and Upanisad for imparting relevant lesson of the cult of Guru or Gurubad in the modern age.

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