

CHAPTER XV
HELPERS IN THE SPIRITUAL PATH

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I. GURU

Conception of the Guru

687. Who is whose **Guru** (spiritual guide and teacher)? God alone is the guide and **Guru** of the universe.
688. He who considers his **Guru** to be merely human, what good can he derive from his prayers and devotions? We should not consider our **Guru** to be a mere man. Before the disciple sees the Deity, he sees the **Guru** in the first vision of Divine illumination. And it is the **Guru** who afterwards shows the Deity, being himself mysteriously transformed into the form of the Deity. Then the disciple sees the **Guru** and the Deity as one and the same. Whatever boon the disciple asks, the deified **Guru** gives him all, yea, the **Guru** even takes him to the highest bliss of **Nirvana** (the state of extinction of individuality in God). Or, the disciple may choose to remain in a dualistic state of consciousness, maintaining the relation of the worshipper and the worshipped. Whatever he asks, his **Guru** vouchsafes him.

689. The human **Guru** whispers the 'sacred formula (**Mantra**) in the ear; the Divine **Guru** breathes the spirit into the soul.

690. The **Guru** is a mediator. He brings man and God together, even as a matchmaker brings together the lover and the beloved.

691. A **Guru** is like the mighty **Ganges**. Men throw all filth and refuse into the **Ganges**, but the holiness of that river is not diminished thereby. So is the **Guru** above all petty insult and censure.

692. There are three classes of religious teachers as there are three classes of doctors. There is one class of doctors who, when they are called in, look at the patient, feel his pulse, prescribe the necessary medicines, and ask him to take them. If the patient declines to do so, they go away without troubling themselves further about the matter. This is the lowest class of doctors. In the same way, there are some religious teachers who do not care much whether the disciples attach any value to their teachings and act up to them or not. Doctors of the second type not only ask the patient to take their medicine but go further. They expostulate with him in case he shows any reluctance to take it. In the same way those religious teachers who leave no stone unturned to make other people walk in the ways of righteousness" devotion and truth by means of gentle persuasion, can be said to belong to the next higher class. The third and the highest kind of doctors would proceed to use force with the patient in case their expostulation failed. They would go to the length of putting their knee on the chest of the patient and forcing the medicine down his throat. Similarly, there are some religious teachers who would use force, if necessary, with their disciples with a view to making them walk in the path of the Lord. These' belong to the highest class.

Necessity of having a Guru

693. What is the necessity of calling a particular man our **Guru** instead of calling everyone who teaches us something by that designation? When going to a strange country, one must abide by the directions of the guide who knows the way. Taking the advice of many would lead to utter confusion. So in trying to reach God one must implicitly follow the advice of one single **Guru** who knows the way to God.

694. At a game of chess the on-lookers can tell what the correct move is, better than the players themselves. Men of the world think that they are very clever, but they are attached to the things of the world-money, honours, sense-pleasures, etc. As they are actually engaged in the play, it is hard for them to hit upon the right move. Holy men who have given up the world are not attached to worldly objects. They are like the on-lookers at a game of chess. They see things in their true light and can judge better than the men of the world. Hence, in living the holy life, one must put faith only in the words of those who meditate upon God and who have realised Him. If you seek legal advice, will you not consult lawyers who are in the profession? Surely you will not take the advice of the man in the street.

695. If you are in right earnest to learn the mysteries of God, He will send you the **Sadguru**, the right teacher. You need not trouble yourself about finding out a **Guru**.

696. He who can himself approach God with sincerity, earnest prayer and deep longing, needs no **Guru**. But such deep yearning of the soul is very rare; hence the necessity of a **Guru**. The **Guru** is only one but Upagurus (subsidiary teachers) may be many. He is an Upaguru from whom anything whatsoever is

learned. The Great [Avadhuta](#) (an ascetic of a high order mentioned in the [Bhagavata](#)) had twenty-four such Upagurus.

Relation between [Guru](#) and Disciple

697. The fabled pearl-oyster leaves its bed at the bottom of the sea and comes up to the surface to catch rainwater when the star Svati is in the ascendant. It floats about on the surface of the sea with its shell wide open until it succeeds in catching a drop' of the marvellous Svati rain. Then it dives down to the sea-bed and there rests until it has succeeded in fashioning a beautiful pearl out of that raindrop. Similarly, there are some true and eager aspirants who travel from place to place in search of the [Mantra](#), the saving word, from a godly and perfect preceptor ([Sadguru](#)) which can open for them the gate of eternal bliss; and if in his diligent search a man is fortunate enough to meet such a [Guru](#) and get from him the much-longed-for [Mantra](#) that has the power to break all fetters, he leaves society at once and retires into the deep recesses of his own heart and strives there till he has succeeded in gaining eternal peace.

698. Do not fear if such a teacher (*i.e.*, spiritually enlightened [Guru](#)) does not seem to be learned and well up in scriptures and other books. Do not fear because he is not book-learned. No, he will never be found wanting in the wisdom of life. He has a never-failing supply of Divine wisdom - (of truths directly revealed and superior to all knowledge contained in books.

699. A man was disputing about the character of his [Guru](#) when the [Master](#) said, "Why are you wasting your time in this futile discussion? Take the pearl and throw away the oyster-shell. Meditate on the [Mantra](#) given to you by the [Guru](#) and leave out of consideration the human frailties of the teacher."

700. Listen not to anyone censuring your [Guru](#). The [Guru](#) is greater than your father and mother. Would you keep quiet when your father and mother are insulted in your very presence? Fight, if necessary, and maintain the honour of your [Guru](#).

701. The disciple should never criticise his [Guru](#). He must implicitly obey whatever the [Guru](#) says. A certain couplet in Bengali says: "Though my [Guru](#) may visit the tavern, still my [Guru](#) is holy Rai [Nityananda](#); and though my [Guru](#) may visit the unholy haunts of drunkards and sinners, still to me he is my own pure and faultless [Guru](#)."

702. Where the devotion is genuine, even the most ordinary things make the [devotee](#) remember God and lose himself in Him. Have you not heard how Lord [Chaitanya](#) was merged in [Samadhi](#) at the thought, "This is the earth of which drums are made"? Once, while passing through a village, [Sri Chaitanya](#) came to know that the inhabitants of that village earned their living by making drums. At once he exclaimed, "This is the earth of which drums are made," and immediately lost all external consciousness. For he thought that out of that earth drums were made which' were used in congregational music and that the music again, was in praise of God who is the Soul of our souls and the Beauty of beauties. In this way a train of ideas flashed upon him, and he was at once engrossed in God. Likewise, when a man has true devotion to his [Guru](#), he is certainly reminded of him by the sight of his relatives. Not only that. Even if he meets people from the [Guru's](#) village his thoughts are at once directed to the [Guru](#) himself. He prostrates before those people constantly, sprinkles the dust of their feet over his body, feeds them sumptuously and renders all other kinds of service to them. At this stage the disciple fails to see any defect in his [Guru](#). Now only can he say, "Even if my [Guru](#) frequents taverns, he is the Lord, the Eternal Bliss, all the same." As a human being a [Guru](#) cannot be a repository of virtues alone and be free from any defect whatsoever. The disciple, on account of his devotion, no longer sees the [Guru](#) as man but as God Himself, just as one sees everything yellow, because of a jaundiced eye. His devotion then reveals to the [devotee](#) that God alone is everything; it is He that has become the [master](#), the father and the mother, man and beast, the animate and the inanimate.

II

DIVINE INCARNATION

What is a Divine Incarnation?

703. An [Avatara](#) (Incarnation) is a human messenger of God. He is like a viceroy of a mighty monarch. As the king sends the viceroy when there is any disturbance in some far-off province in order to quell it, so whenever there is waning of religion in any part of the world, God sends there His [Avatara](#) to guard virtue and to foster its growth.

704. Think not that Rama and [Sita](#), [Krishna](#) and [Radha](#), are mere allegories and not historical personages, or that the scriptures are true only in their inner or esoteric meaning. Nay, those personages were human beings of flesh and blood just as you are; but because they were divinities, their lives can be interpreted both historically and allegorically. The Avatars are to [Brahman](#) what waves are to the ocean.

705. The [Avatara](#) is always one and the same. Having plunged into the ocean of life, the one God rises up at one point and is known as [Krishna](#), and when after another plunge, He rises up at another point. He is known a Christ.

706. On the tree of Sachchidananda (Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss) there hang innumerable bunches of Ramas, Krishnas, Buddhas, Christs, etc. Out of these, one or two now and then come down into this world and produce mighty changes and revolutions.

707. The Avatars are born with Divine powers and Divine qualities. They can go into, and stay in, any state of realisation from the highest to the lowest. In a king's palace a stranger can go only to the outer quarters, but the king's own child, the prince of the house, is free to go to every corner.

708. It is a thin ego that personages like the Incarnations possess. Through this ego God is always visible. For example, a man is standing on one side of a wall, on either side of which are boundless stretches of land. If there is an aperture in the wall, the whole of the other side is visible, and if this be big enough, one can pass through it as well. The ego of the Incarnations resembles that wall with the aperture. Even though the Incarnations be on this side of the wall, they can see the boundless extent of land on the other. The meaning of this is that though they have taken up bodies, they are always in a state of [Yoga](#), and can, if they like, enter into [Samadhi](#) on the other side of the big aperture. Again, if the aperture be big enough, they can come and go through it; that is to say, they can come down to a lower plane of consciousness even after [Samadhi](#).

Difficulty of recognising Divine Incarnations

709. A Divine Incarnation is hard to comprehend. It is the play of the Infinite on the finite.

710. When [Bhagavan Ramachandra](#) came into this world, only twelve sages recognised that He was an Incarnation of God. So when God incarnates in this world, only a few recognise His divine nature.

711. What is the reason that a prophet is not honoured by his own kinsmen? The kinsmen of a juggler do not crowd round him to see his performances, while strangers stand agape, looking at his surprising tricks.

712. The seeds of the Vajrabantula plant (euphorbia) do not fall at the root of the tree. They are carried by the wind far off, and take root at distant places. So the spirit of a prophet manifests itself at a distance from his native home, and he is appreciated there.

713. There is always a shadow under the lamp, while its light illumines the surrounding objects. -So men in the immediate proximity of a prophet do not understand him. Those who live far off are charmed by his spiritual glow and his extraordinary power.

714. The elephant has two sets of teeth, the tusks visible externally, and the grinders inside the mouth. Similarly God-men like [Sri Krishna](#) have an external manifestation and behave like common men in the view of all, while internally they rest in transcendental peace far beyond the pale of [Karma](#).

Incarnation as a Revelation of God

715. God is indeed infinite. But He is omnipotent. He may so ordain that His divinity as love may be manifest in flesh, and be among us as God Incarnate. Love streams to us from God Incarnate. Divine Incarnation is a fact. Of course, one cannot make this perfectly clear by means of words. It is a fact to be seen and realised by spiritual eyes. One must see God to be convinced of this. By analogy we can at best faintly apprehend the matter. Suppose one touches the horn of a cow, or her feet, or the tail, or the udder. Would not this be the same as touching the cow herself? For us, human beings, the chief thing about the cow is its milk, which comes from the udder. Well, the milk of Divine love streams for us from the Incarnations of God.

716. Who can know God fully? It is not given to us, nor is it required of us, to know Him fully. It is enough if we can see Him-feel that He is the only reality. Suppose a person comes to the holy river [Ganges](#) and touches the water. He would say, "I have been blessed with the vision and touch of the holy river from Gomukhi to [Gangasagar](#)-from its source to the estuary!"

717. Do you seek God? Then seek Him in man. His divinity is manifest more in man than in any other object. Look around for a man whose heart overflows with the love of God, a man who lives, moves and has his being in God-a man intoxicated with His love. In such a man God manifests Himself.

718. He is the Absolute, and again His is the [Lila](#) (relative existence conceived as a sport of the Divine). This [Lila](#) is of our kinds-[Isvara Lila](#), [Deva Lila](#), [Jagat Lila](#) and [Nara Lila](#)¹ In [Nara Lila](#) His incarnation becomes possible. Do you comprehend the nature of the [Nara Lila](#)? One may well say that it is like the gushing out of the water of a vast terrace in a big torrent through a wide channel. It is the power of that Absolute, the Sachchidananda, which flows out-becomes manifest - through a channel, as it were. All cannot truly recognise the Avatars. Only seven - Rishis Bharadwaja and the rest - could recognise [Sri Rama](#) as an [Avatara](#). God incarnates in the human form to teach man true Jnana and [Bhakti](#).

719. A **Siddha** (an ordinary perfect man) is like an archaeologist who, by removing the superincumbent earth and dust, lays open an old well that has been covered up by disuse. The **Avatara** is like a great engineer who sinks a new well even in a place where there was no water before. Whereas the former can give salvation only to those men who have the waters of salvation near at hand, an **Avatara** saves him too whose heart is devoid of all love and is dry as a desert.

720. When the tidal wave comes, it inundates alike rivers, streams and land, and all the adjacent area presents one watery surface; but rain water merely flows away through the usual channel. When a Saviour appears, all are saved through His grace. But Siddhas can only save themselves with much pain and penance.

721. When a mighty log of wood floats down a stream, it carries on it hundreds of birds and does not sink. A reed floating down may sink with the weight of even a single crow. So when a Saviour appears, innumerable men find salvation by taking refuge in Him. The **Siddha** can only save himself with much toil and trouble.

722. As a large and powerful steamer moves swiftly over the water, towing rafts and barges in its wake, so when a Saviour comes, he easily carries thousands to the haven of safety across the ocean of **Maya**.

723. The locomotive engine not only moves on and reaches its destination but also takes with it a long train of wagons behind. So are our Saviours. They carry multitudes of men burdened with sin, to the presence of the Almighty.

724. In ordinary seasons water from wells can be drawn from great depths and with much difficulty; but when the country is flooded with water in the rainy season, water is obtained with ease everywhere. So, ordinarily God is attained with great difficulty through prayers and penances; but when the flood of Incarnation descends on earth, God is seen everywhere.

725. There was a place enclosed by a high wall, and men outside did not know what sort of a place it was. Once four persons made up their minds to scale the wall with the help of a ladder, and find out what was inside. As soon as the first man ascended to the top of the wall, he laughed out, "Ha! ha! ha!", and jumped into the enclosure. The second person also, as soon as he ascended the wall, laughed aloud and jumped in like the first; and so did the third. When the fourth and last man got upon the wall, he found stretched before him a large and beautiful garden with pleasant groves full of delicious fruits. Though strongly tempted to jump in and enjoy the scene, he resisted the temptation, and coming down the ladder, spoke of the glory of the garden to those outside it. **Brahman** is like that walled garden. Whoever sees Him forgets his own existence and ;rushes headlong to Him to be absorbed in His essence. Such are the holy men and the liberated saints. But the Saviours of humanity are those who see God, and being at the same time eager to share their happiness of Divine vision with others, refuse the opportunity of passing into **Nirvana** (state of extinction of individuality), and willingly undergo the troubles' of rebirth in the world in order to teach and lead struggling humanity to its goal.

726. In fireworks there is a type of flower-pot which sends off one kind of flower for a while, then another kind, and again still another, thus seeming to possess an infinite variety of flowers, as it were. Like unto this are the Avatars. Then there is another kind of flower-pot which, when lighted, burns a little and then goes off all at once. Similarly, ordinary Jivas, after long practice and devotional exercises, go into **Samadhi** and do not return.

727. Q. Why should God incarnate Himself in the human form?

A. To make manifest to man the perfection of Divinity. Through these manifestations man can talk with God and see His play. In the Incarnation, God fully enjoys, as it were, His own transcendent sweetness. In the saints, God manifests Himself only in part, like the honey in a flower. You suck the flower, and get a little honey. In the Incarnations, it is all 'honey', all sweetness and all blessedness.

728. Nothing is problematical to the Incarnation. He solves the most difficult and intricate problems of life as the simplest of things in the world, and his expositions are such as even a child can follow. He is the sun of Divine knowledge, whose light dispels the accumulated ignorance of ages.

729. Sometimes there appears) that unique composite light which may be' called the lunar-solar light, and to this may be compared the unique Incarnations like **Chaitanya Deva**, who are marked alike by **Bhakti** (Love) and **Jnana** (Knowledge). Their case is like the sun and the moon appearing in the firmament at one and the same time. The manifestation of **Jnana** and **Bhakti** in one and the same person is as unique an occurrence as the phenomenon referred to above.

730. The Lord takes the human body for the sake of those pure souls who love the Lord.

731. Those who come with the Avatars are either souls who are eternally free, or souls who are born for the last time. Absolute. He says "Not this," "Not this" and thus leaves out of account one unreal thing

after another until he gets to a point where all **Vichara** (discrimination) between the real and the unreal ceases, and **Brahman** is realised in **Samadhi**.