

Becoming Like the Guru

It is in the Vedic tradition to equate the guru with God. And frequently that is not too difficult, because often the guru will make such an impression upon us that he seems more than human. To consider him to be divine becomes relatively easy for us. And this can be very beneficial because the whole purpose of the guru is to destroy our ego. Therefore, if we consider someone to be greater than ourselves, the ego has to bow down.

Gurudev wanted us to take that still further. Reverence is good, he would say, but obedience is better than reverence. The reason is that the ego has to sacrifice even more of its status to obey the guru than to bow down to him. Ultimately, obedience can become so fine tuned that the disciple not only obeys the instructions of the guru to the letter, but tries to anticipate what the guru would want him to do.

Thus, treating the guru as God can help us make very real spiritual progress. But in this world, what can be our greatest help at one stage may turn out to be a hindrance at another. Because while the guru can encourage us to treat him like God, his goal is for us to become like him. We assume that that can happen through our spiritual practices, but we have to understand them in a certain way. While continuing to give the guru our utmost reverence and obedience, we have to see the humanity of our guru. We have to see that even though we consider the guru to be God that he doesn't manifest omnipresence, omnipotence or omniscience. In fact, he can be quite human.

This is something that a disciple should come to terms with, because it can help him on the next stage of his *sādhana*. Instead of ignoring the human part of our guru, because it disturbs our idea of him being God, we should embrace his humanity. Once we do, we see that what is so great about him is not that he is some plaster God, but that he is a human being who has worked on himself until he realized not only his own divinity, but as Gurudev said, "I see nothing except God."

As long as we keep the guru in another category than we are, as long as we deny his very real humanity, it gives us an excuse for not being like him. But when we see that the only difference between us and the guru is

the amount of work that he has done on himself, then it takes our excuses away. It means that it is up to us.