In recent times, all over the world, there has been a great deal of interest in spirituality and spiritual experiences. In this modern day and age, people are beginning to understand that something surely exists beyond the realm of modern scientific understanding. Life is here and now and every moment is to be experienced.

There are certain requirements that must be met on a day to day basis; we must have food, we must sleep and we have to work; these are the actual necessities of life that cannot be avoided.

In the human body, the senses interact and try to understand life on a three-dimensional level. **Scientists try to bring everything concerning life into the reach of our senses.** They want to prove that if God exists He should be seen, and if He cannot be seen He is not there. This is their limit; they have fixed the boundaries within which they will search for answers and they are not prepared to look further, to consider that something may exist beyond the limit of their experience.

However, sooner or later they must realise that even though their limit has been defined, there is **something that does not conform, it goes beyond.** Most experiences are subjective and cannot be repeated or multiplied, so they will never be the same for everybody. you can take the example of different couples who are happy with their relationships. They all experience happiness, but in very different ways. One man gets angry easily, the other is very cool; one wife is stronger, one husband is stronger; one couple has children, the other has no children; one is rich, one is poor; one woman is very beautiful, one is not beautiful.

Many things are subjective, particularly the idea of beauty. A stranger may look at a woman and say that she is not beautiful, while her husband will say that she is the most beautiful woman in the world. A person may say that he is very happy and quietly enjoying his life, but then someone else will look at him and say that he doesn't seem to be happy.

One person enjoys driving an old car, while somebody else is only happy with the latest model of car that has just come on the market.

It is important to understand this concept because there is also **subjectivity in spiritual experiences.** There isn't a scientifically identifiable common factor that can be repeated everywhere. First of all, the **experience of God is subjective** and it is different for everybody. In Indian mythology, there are many stories describing instances where God appeared in front of
a person, but only that person could see Him and the others could not. You need to have a certain potential to see God and to be prepared for the experience otherwise you will not realise His presence.

So, if God appears in the room, it is a very subjective phenomenon which one person may experience while others may not. But just because they cannot see God, it doesn't mean that He doesn't exist. The experience of God cannot be repeated or multiplied for everybody, and it would really be a big achievement if science would accept this. So far modern science has insisted that unless something can be objectively tested and proven, it is non-scientific and it is not real. But slowly now people are beginning to accept that there is something which is beyond the limit of science and that it is a subjective experience.

Once I had visited a very well known Saint who performed many miracles. I asked him why he did it, for what purpose. He said that it was to make people believe in God. In one way it is true that if you have some subjective experience you believe energy, there is something beyond. Maybe that instance can start changing your life; that is ultimately the real result. Just performing a miracle is not enough; materialising a ring or some ash doesn't give a result in itself. It doesn't change anything or solve any of the problems in the world. Will the person who sees the miracles really change and believe in God, or will he only believe in the Saint’s miraculous powers?

Change is the real miracle, and how problems are solved is more important than the tools or the instruments by which they are solved. A real spiritual experience must change something within you so that you can solve problems easily. The point is that you have to be prepared for such an experience; your personality and your brain must be ready to conceive and to retain it.

Unless you are prepared for this subjective experience, it will just be a brief moment that will not bring about real change. For example, if a person appears to you in a vision, at first you will be totally overwhelmed and wonder how this miracle could happen. But how long will this experience remain? After some time you will start doubting that was it an illusion, just some emotional experience, and not really a miracle at all. You will be unable to retain this experience because you were not prepared for it.

The brain has to be properly cultured and the mind, the chitta, the intellect must have the faculty to accept a spiritual experience. Unless this system is working properly the experience will immediately deteriorate. You will draw conclusions that are very limited because your life is limited. You should realise that God is everywhere, not just in a particular temple, and He can be seen in every natural wonder and miraculous event. Therefore we say that God is.

Once a Saint visited Atmasantulana Village and I showed him the temple. At first he wasn’t interested when he came in and saw the Aumkar altar, but when he came nearer and saw the statue of Lord Shri Krishna, he immediately bowed down, as if God is only in Krishna. Afterwards he said that I should visit their great Krishna temple for a totally different experience. His perspective was so limited that he was only able to see God in Lord Shri Krishna in his temple and nowhere else. He may have been a very important person in his religious order, but actually his capacity was very small.
As long as the brain, the intellect and the capacities are selfish and limited, it will never be possible to see God in all things. You may be able to experience some miracle, or to have some special experience in meditation, but it will just be a brief occurrence and it will not change your perspective. The more you try to restrict God to a limited experience, the smaller your capacity. The ocean is vast, but if you are only concerned with the water in your own small bowl, you will never be able to perceive the immensity of the ocean. God may be so great and an entirely different entity, but what is the use if you try to conceive Him in your own small capacity?

First of all, the world is experienced by the senses; the eyes, the tongue and so on perceive the whole world of light and shadow, earth and water, space and movement, everything. If you want to learn how to interact with this world you need a teacher. But if you want to expand your capacities and experience the world beyond the senses, you need a Master. The Master helps you to increase your abilities so that you can conceive your subjective experiences and God in a different way: so that you can see the ocean beyond your own small bowl of water.

In Sanskrit there are different words for teacher and Master. Shiksha means the one who teaches disciplines and logic for living a worldly life. Guru is the one who teaches religion and Master arts like music, dance and other branches that give a limited spiritual experience. Sadguru is the one who takes you beyond and prepares you to conceive an unlimited experience or God.

Religion is mostly concerned with teaching: how to behave, whom to marry, what to eat, and so on. This is also subjective to some extent because many disciplines depend on the culture and climate. For example, the spiritual ideas about food in Kashmir, Chennai and so on are different, so the Guru will advise you about different ways of fasting. The Guru tells you how to live properly in this world, how the social system should work and what should be the moral standard.

This is all in a limited concept because religious morality is different everywhere. One religion will say that it is a sin to eat non-vegetarian food, while another will say that you can eat the meat of some animals if they are killed in a certain way. Such moral values are common guidelines that are given to people in general. Just as scientists have carried out experiments and published the results for the general public, so Gurus have carried out research in the spiritual field and distributed the results for benefit of society.

The Guru is a person, like a religious monk, who tries to teach you how life should be and who uplifts you so that ultimately you can realise that there is something beyond. But it is not enough just to realise what is beyond; you have to interact, you have to be there and experience it for yourself. It should be a total experience, not dependent on your limited perspective, and you should have the capacity to keep that experience forever. The one who guides you in this direction is the Sadguru.

In English, the word ‘Master’ is used for both Guru and Sadguru. There is another word in Sanskrit: shiksha, meaning teacher. If you have a music teacher, he can slowly become your Guru because music is a Master art. A Master art means that there is some possibility of transcendence, of experiencing something that is not common and defined. If there is a
concert performed by a great Maestro, a Master musician, some members of the audience may have a unique experience. Others may say that the concert was awful and that it was a total waste of time. So, the transcendental experience is not common for everybody.

While performing, the musician also goes beyond his limits and gets lost in himself, he loses all sense of space and time and enters into a different experience for a moment. Since such experiences deal which some energy that takes you beyond your limits, beyond the normal limit of science, there is a Guru for music, dance, or any Master art.

In India, we believe that there is a Master / disciple relationship in music because we are not only working on the material level. It is not just a question of teaching technical expertise, like how to perfectly reproduce a certain rhythm or pattern of notes. In Indian music, the musician doesn’t just repeat an existing composition; he develops the mood of the raga in the present tense, giving a slight variation to the patterns that he has been taught, trying to give a different experience. Therefore there is nothing to write down in Indian music. you cannot go to a teacher and write down all the ragas and notes, and then think that you can become a singer. Maybe by studying the theory of music you can become a music teacher or a critic. but you will not become a musician.

In order to become a musician you have to stay with a Master and culture yourself, you have to imbibe certain experiences and try to develop them in your life. Therefore there is a Guru / disciple relationship and not a teacher / student relationship. However, the music teacher is not a Sadguru because his teaching is restricted to one dimension. The transcendental experience is limited to a particular moment, for example while singing a particular raga or composition. It is the same with any of the Master arts. Therefore the Sadguru is necessary to take you beyond these limits and teach you the greatest art of all: the art of living.

With the blessing of

LORD SHRI DATTATREYA

(c) Shreeguru Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Village, balajitambe.com
God - Master - Disciple
Shreeguru Balaji Tambe, Atmasantulana Echo, August 2001

Part 2

There was a question, that how can we meet God? Basically, we cannot meet God because a meeting can only be between two people and God is oneness, there is no duality. When you realise that everything is one, then you are with God. So you can become God, but you cannot meet God, and becoming God means becoming oneself.

Everybody has a program inside, and even though it may not be running, the program is still there. It’s like every time you open the computer screen you can see the icon (the mark where you click to enter a certain program). The program exists even if you don’t know how to operate it or you don’t need to operate it. This program is actually the root of the inspiration in every person to become spiritual. Sometime you must open this program, but the problem is that some people have locked it totally and forgotten it.

The computer is a good example. When you look at it, you see the icon on the screen so you are reminded that the program exists, even if you don’t use it. When you start the computer, you forget about the program, you get lost playing some games and you keep on playing you never come back to the point of closing the computer and opening it again. But in normal life, spiritual objects, altars, Satsang programs, etc. are like icons to remind you of your inner program and to work on your inspiration.

In the same way, many people are lost in this world. And then what happens? Saint Adi Shankaracharya says that they are chasing after Maya, they are totally lost in illusion, and they don’t come back at all. They are so busy running after this illusion that they forget about the spiritual program inside, the inspiration to meet God, or become God, or to meet the Master or Sadguru.

Meditation or religious practises are like opening the computer again every day. You are at least reminded that there is become God and come back to your Self, your home, and you must try this sometime. This inspiration should be alive, but if it is lost then there is a problem.

The Sadguru is the one who teaches you how to open this program and how to operate it. The Guru - the teacher, is not enough because he only asks you not to run after illusion and teaches you how to manage life. The Sadguru tells you to come back, to see that there is a different desire in you, a different program, which is inspiring you to do something else and to finish this illusion. Then you have to start a different program all together, a different practice. Without a Sadguru, you will not be able to enter into this different program which is totally subjective.

When you have subjective experiences, only the Sadguru can help because he has access within you and for him there are no divisions. He has access to your Self, your inner person, the part of you that is somebody other that what you do. you may be a man, a husband, a doctor, or whatever, but beyond that there is something that we call the bigger Self. Now,
having this experience, having the capacity to reach there, you run this program and become one.

This is the **highest program and naturally all the programs below it are covered**. When you reach the terrace you have already travelled past the first floor, second floor and third floor to reach the highest point. So, to reach the terrace you have access through all the floors, but if you are on the first floor you may not have access to the terrace.

To that extent, the person who is aiming for spirituality already has the possibility to reach higher. It might be that he has completed his training for the art of normal living, or maybe he has accomplished some master art, or some meditation and religious practises. Now that he is on the terrace, the perspective is totally different.

When you are travelling to this point, then you see something, you feel something and it is the same experience. On the **first floor** there is a beautiful colour and some new decoration. Once you **reach the terrace**, you have already seen this beautiful decoration because you passed by it on the way. One person may speak about this experience by only reaching the first floor; another may speak about it after reaching the terrace.

**Is your perspective from the first floor or from the terrace?**

So, **spiritual advancement** cannot be determined by experiences, but spiritual advancement is always preceded by experiences. It is not a paradox - it is only a question of perspective. Two people may have seen the same light; one sees it because he is looking down from the upper floor and the other because he is there on the same floor.

It is very important to understand this difference if you want to experience God. **God is everything;** when you feel spacelessness or timelessness it is God, when you have an experience of something paranormal, beyond your senses, it is also God. But God is not an experience, **God is not to be met, God is to become.** And what will happen when you become God? Your behaviour will change, you will become quiet and you will be totally free from worry. Worry comes from dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction comes from duality.

When you **want something** it always creates some division and duality. If you are going to Mumbai and you want somebody to accompany you, you will have difficulties if you have to choose between two people. Who should come with you and who should be left behind? But if there is only one person, then there is no chance of disturbance. Immediately you can decide “Come on, let’s go to Mumbai just now”.

As soon as there is only one, the dissatisfaction and disturbance is finished, and your life changes. So, when there is no duality, there is no disturbance. Therefore we say that spirituality is for a change in lifestyle, a change in perception and a change in behaviour; it is a chance to conceive something in a different form. The one who can guide you in this field is the Sadguru.
The Sadguru is the one who can help you to understand your experiences and to get a different perspective, to see things from the viewpoint of the terrace rather than the first floor. The Sadguru understands everything because he has already experienced it; now he has reached somewhere else, but once upon a time he has done everything. And then at some point he has crossed the barrier, he has transcended the normal existence to reach a totally different experience beyond.

Only the Sadguru can help you to overcome the limitations of your normal daily experiences, but to be ready to learn from the Sadguru, you should first be able to learn from a teacher or Guru. The teacher / student relationship is timebound and limited to a particular subject. In the time that is given to teaching, you should respect the teacher as one who is higher than you, because he knows something which you don't know. A certain discipline is expected and you should honour him and obey his orders for teaching. He will not tell you how to do the work; he will only say that you should bring your homework the next day. It is up to you to take responsibility and to complete it in time.

The Guru / disciple relationship is even more intense. You need to stay together since there is something beyond logic and beyond normal understanding. The Guru may order you to do something which is not logical, he may tell you something which you don't agree with or which you may not understand. But slowly, by living together, you learn to imbibe the essence of what he tells you and to follow his orders.

Maybe the Guru will tell you to do something that you really don't like, and you will resist and wonder "Why I should do this?" but there may be some other reason that is beyond your logical understanding. There is a different relationship, which is more intimate, but still it is time-bound to some extent. Maybe you will stay in the Master's house for seven years and for this time you are together with him and you learn with him in a particular field. For example, when you learn music it is not only something you can study by memorising or by taking notes like you learn geography or arithmetic. When this time is over, what remains is that you are his disciple, and you remember him and honour him as your Master.

Only the Sadguru / disciple relationship is not limited and time bound, it is not for a particular period in your life, and it is not even bound to one lifetime. This relationship is for the whole sum of this life, the next life, however many lives you are given, until it is finished. He wants you to experience something beyond the body. We hear stories that the Sadguru may ask the disciple to jump from a cliff and he obeys, but this is only to understand that the disciple has to learn to transcend body consciousness. If at all the disciple jumps, the Sadguru has the capacity to protect him from any injury or harm.

At some point you must forget the body so that you can experience a totally different field, and for this the Sadguru / disciple relationship is necessary.

This relationship requires the highest level of trust. Trust means that you have to accept everything, even if it is beyond logic and you don't understand; you just accept that it is. Therefore every religion says that God is not this, not that, God is. Without trust, you cannot realise this.
What you should give to the Sadguru is **complete trust, shraddha**, so that you can experience something beyond the limits of your normal perception. To the Guru, you should give **vishvas**, which means trust in a limited field, and you should practise whatever he teaches you. In the student / Teacher relationship you give **obedience, adnyapalan**, and for a limited time you learn and memorise whatever the teacher tells you.

So **shraddha**, total trust, is the highest aim. The **Sadguru** is not concerned with any particular religion; if you want to be together with the Sadguru you have to forget about being a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or whatever. A Sadguru doesn’t follow any religion and there is no division. **Lord Shri Dattatreya is not a religious God; he is a Sadguru.**

Throughout history, wherever there are spiritual practices, He is there as the **original Master**. In different cultures and in different times maybe He will have a different name; sometimes He is called God the Father, or Adinath, and spiritual seekers may call Him Dattatreya. He has different names, but He exists outside the religious sector as the origin, the Sadguru. Many times when a group of spiritual seekers becomes very big and the inspiration is diluted, it takes the form of a religion. But this religion is initially a group of spiritual aspirants who have transcended after sincerely practising religious disciplines.

So, the **teacher is for learning certain subjects for normal daily life**, the **Guru is for learning a particular religion or art of living**, and the **Sadguru is for experiencing something that is beyond religion**. With the Sadguru, there is no repetition and the purpose is not limited to the objective world. With the tool of shraddha, total trust, the Sadguru gives a complete experience to make you one with God.