

## **The Master Śrī Śrī Bhagavān**

Returning to the Masters, the coming of my first beloved Master, *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān*, was certainly 'God-given' and a continuation of spiritual association [*samskāra*] from past lives, as it all happened rather early in life — during my boyhood when I was still in high school. *This was the only Master with whom I was destined to have a profoundly philosophical and also a very dearly personal relationship.* I did not, of course, come upon my Master on account of my own discerning intelligence; rather, it was beloved mother who discovered his strong spiritual soul at first sight even though he was just about in high school at the time. *Without the least bit of exaggeration, I may say that his coming into my life was like powerful sunbeams instantaneously flooding a dingy house, the moment the windows are thrown open to the world on a chilly wintry morning.*

Each of my inimitable Masters had a very definitive teaching, and underlying that teaching, naturally, a concomitant approach to *Mokṣa* or freedom as well as to the spiritual life. And they certainly pointed to *Īśvara* [God] or *Parabrahma* [Godhead] in unique ways; this served to set apart the teachings of each Master from the others.

*The beloved Master Śrī Śrī Bhagavān was, in a strange way, directly responsible for my wandering beyond the precincts of his own philosophical domains, so that my coming face to face with the complementary teachings of my three other Masters became inevitable.* For many years, I was under the rather naive impression that four Masters indeed had to remain only four, and an inner compulsion did not even arise in me to search for a grand unification by somehow attempting to string together the four into the unitary wholeness of the one. We humans seem to be programmed by the supreme intelligence of *Īśvara* to always search for the one essence, in a world of bewildering plurality, diversity, and contradiction.

Through his compassion, my philosopher-friend and Spiritual Master *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* had decades ago initiated me,

firstly, into the soul-stirring depths of Hindu philosophy; secondly, into the *God-centred spiritual ethos of the Hindu civilization*; and most importantly and finally, into the waters of self-knowing.

This last terrain was uncharted and very much more difficult than the other two, for it called for *the introversion of consciousness* — a spiritual and *yogic* skill to which I was a perfect stranger at that time. I found this to be slippery ground, and ‘seeing’, which was the only *sādhana* [spiritual practice] my Master wanted me to do at that time, could never really come to pass until there was the *negation* of all the goals of ‘the me and the mine’, including the goal of ‘seeing’ itself. One particularly powerful *sūtra* of *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān*, sent to me in one of his letters, helped me secure the breakthrough insofar as *seeing* was concerned:

*To postpone is just another trick of the mind for its continued security;  
To postpone is the height of hypocrisy;  
To postpone is to be denied of freedom forever.*

In these words, *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* was pointing to our human tendency to postpone *seeing*, that is, looking inwardly at ourselves in the sense meant by my Master *Śrī J. Krishnamurti*. The Chinese philosopher Confucius had said somewhere that he had not come across a single individual in his life who was inward looking and therefore constantly learning! As human beings, we all have the weakness of being unable to look at our own ugliness and at the poverty in our hearts. *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān*, pained by this human condition, was giving an admonition and a wake-up call to me through that *sūtra*.

**Śaṅkara Bhagavadpādā’s devotional adoration of Śrī Śrī Ammā Bhagavān, appears as the concluding part of his book: Śrī Ramaṇa Maharṣi’s Mokṣa.**

In the early 1970s, my beloved Master *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* had sent me a letter from Coimbatore in which he had narrated his response to the spectacle of humanity hurrying along the road down below as he watched this strange movement of life with dispassionate eyes from an overlooking terrace parapet high above. In the letter, he had raised the unsettling but pertinent question:

*People are all busily hurrying past, but busy about what?*

I was to understand by this that humanity was in the feverish grip of some worldly madness, of always being caught up in the incessant process of doing and becoming, and that this was at the very root of their frenzied involvement in the world, with all the inevitable consequences of pleasure and pain.

The following concluding line of my Master's letter came to be etched on the impressionable tablet of my heart, even as an astrologer would engrave a *mantra* or *yantra* on a *kavach*, and has remained there as a memorable blessing all these decades without ever becoming tarnished:

*As I write this, the world comes up before me and I am filled with anxious tears.*

Deeply moved, even at this distant moment in time, by this musing which betokens the Master's unwavering and relentless concern for the world and its strange ways, and with a clear recognition that this beloved Master *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* is but a new manifestation of that eternal Self, in the form of an inimitable blessing *Avatār*, for bringing about the welfare of the world [*lokakalyāṇa*] in all the four spheres of life: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Mokṣa*; we now perform the auspicious waving of the lights [*maṅgalahāratī*] to him as well as to beloved *Śrī Śrī Amma*, true to the Hindu ethos, with our hearts joyfully chanting their *mūlamantra* as an expression of our devotional adoration and abiding gratitude for their Divine grace:

*Aum Sat-Cit-Ānanda Parabrahma Puruṣottama Paramātmā  
Śrī Bhagavatī sameta Śrī Bhagavate Namaḥ*

*Aum Sat-Cit-Ānanda Parabrahma Puruṣottama Paramātmā  
Śrī Bhagavatī sameta Śrī Bhagavate Namaḥ*

*Aum Sat-Cit-Ānanda Parabrahma Puruṣottama Paramātmā  
Śrī Bhagavatī sameta Śrī Bhagavate Namaḥ*

*Aum Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ*

Obeisance to:

*Sat-Cit-Ānanda Parabrahma* [the Godhead, *Śiva*],

Who is the unmanifest Source of all manifestations, and  
Whose Absolute Reality is Beingness — Awareness — Bliss  
[*Sat-Cit-Ānanda*];

Obeisance to:

Him in His aspect as the Supreme Spirit [*Puruṣottama*];

Obeisance to:

Him in His aspect as the Supreme Soul [*Paramātmā*],  
Who enlivens all embodied souls;

Obeisance to:

*Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* and *Śrī Śrī Amma*,

Who are the embodiments of the Supreme *Śiva-Śakti*.

May the blessings of *Śrī Śrī Amma-Bhagavān* always pervade  
our lives as Divine peace.

