

Samskāras,[†] Beloved Masters, and Jyotiṣācāryas

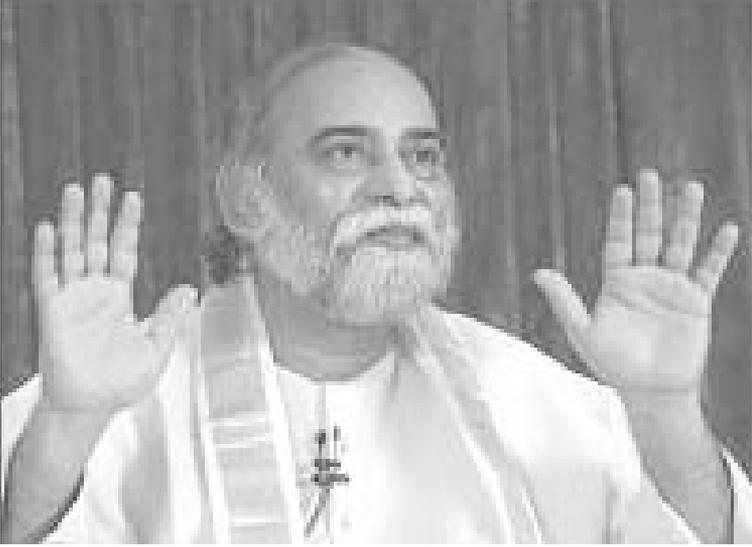
1. Sources of Blessings – Four Beloved Masters

One does not become a disciple by conversion, or by accident. There is usually an ancient link, maintained through many lives and flowering as love and trust, without which, there is no discipleship....You do not become a disciple by choice, it is more a matter of destiny than self-will. (qtd. in I Am That 460)

Frankly speaking, I've found it well-nigh impossible to present my astrological Pilgrimage to *Mokṣa* without touching upon, at least in brief outline, *how I received the blessings for an intense devotional yearning for Mokṣa* on account of my deep involvement with my four beloved Spiritual Masters: *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* in the first instance, and *Śrī J. Krishnamurti* in the second. *Śrī Śrī Bhagavān* belongs to

[†]*Samskāras* are latent-impressions that are etched strongly in the feeling nature and in the subconsciousness and which manifest in life as *uncontrollable urges and inclinations*. The origin of such impressions invariably goes back to some traumatic or pleasant childhood incident in this life or even to some hidden past-life impressions.

the present generation, while Śrī J. Krishnamurti belonged to the previous one.



The Beloved Master Śrī Śrī Bhagavān

Two other selfless Masters also captivated my heart in commensurate measure and both belonged to the previous generation. However, they were consummate *advaitic* Masters: Śrī Ramaṇa Maḥarṣi from Tiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu, South India; and Śrī Nisargadatta Maharaj from Mumbai. Thus, four was certainly the number of Masters that I can count and identify. This is easy, because they came into my life one after the other, each coming being different from the other, and they seem to be fulfilling a certain complex *karmic* pattern.

The deeper significance behind the coming of so many Spiritual Masters need not hold our attention at this stage; we may recognize that by their successive coming, many narrow and insular domestic walls in my philosophical and

religious outlook have had to be pulled down. This took me, not dramatically and abruptly but gradually, in stages, *into wider areas of the spiritual life, thereby making it increasingly difficult for me to hold on to zealously guarded philosophical views, which were every now and then being created and held by a narrowly circumscribed 'me and the mine'.*

2. Devotional Yearning – Blessing or Impediment?

This is an appropriate juncture to touch upon the paradoxical nature of my devotional yearning for *Mokṣa*. While giving me the conviction that this has been an indisputable blessing, strangely, it also seems to have become an important impediment, contributing to the very denial of *Mokṣa*. This is not a spiritual dilemma that is unique to me in any way, for all seekers who knowingly or unknowingly are thrown on the path of self-unfoldment and self-fulfilment by the force of their destiny are bound to succumb to this paradoxical dilemma: *while one appears to be rising and approaching the spiritual goal of Mokṣa, alas, one may only be slipping and falling away from that very 'destination' – for want of a better word.*

In fact all my four beloved Masters have been unanimous in their admonition that as *Mokṣa* is not certainly 'a thing attainable' by a seeking self, on account of the self itself being an illusion; it must only be approached indirectly, through the denial and negation of the self rather than through its pampering and subtle aggrandizement, especially in the spiritual spheres of *Dharma* and *Mokṣa*. This pampering and perpetuation of the self is what we know only too well in the spheres of *Artha* and *Kāma*, having become helplessly habituated and addicted to these pleasing processes. By the force of habit, when the self moves into the sphere of *Mokṣa*, it commits that self-same fatal mistake of looking for that aggrandizement, which has been its second nature in the mundane spheres of *Artha* and *Kāma*. This is the one and only dilemma in which all seekers, including the author, are

helplessly trapped! It is only our Masters' grace that liberates us from this universal quandary.

3. 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*.