

Monday Morning Reading

The Sat-Guru

by Dr.T.N.Krishnaswami

“From darkness lead me to light,” says the Upanishad. The Guru is one who is competent to do this; and such a one was Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Guru is the dispeller of ignorance and awakener of understanding. Throughout the ages India has produced such.

The Sat-Guru, who is Divine Consciousness in human form, is the one guide to Enlightenment, the only bridge from the mental concepts in which the disciple is enclosed to spiritual consciousness. Said Sri Shankara: “Even though you possess learning and all gifts and endowments, it will not avail you unless your mind is protected by the Guru and absorbed in him.” And again, in Vivekachudamani, he says: “There are three things that are rare and acquired due to the Grace of God: a human birth, thirst for Liberation and the protective care of the Guru.”

Were it not for this manifestation of absolute Reality or pure Consciousness (which are the same) in human form, spiritual knowledge would be lost to the world. The Guru, who is a knower of Brahman, is equated in the Upanishads with Brahman Himself. Though living as a man in our midst, he is conscious of his Divine Identity. Were there none such as he, the doctrine of the Self would remain a mere theoretical concept for the discussion of philosophers. The mind of man has to be shown the way. For this, the pure Consciousness embodied in the Guru mingles with the same Consciousness awakened by him in the disciple. The Guru is ever ready to help and uplift those who appeal to him. To disregard such help would be folly. It is vanity and pride to suppose that one’s own unaided efforts will suffice. To accept a Guru does not mean accepting the guidance of another man, but of pure Consciousness, shining through a human psychosomatic instrument.

Spiritual tradition has always accepted the need for initiation and guidance by a Master. “What is commonly called ‘self-reliance’ is only ego-reliance,” the Maharshi said. And again: “God, Guru and Self are the same.” Only he in whom this Divine Consciousness is awakened can lead us beyond the range of human perception. There are various ways in which the Guru can initiate and guide the disciple, but that he should do so has always been held necessary. Those who attack this tradition are really only attacking their own false conception of it.

The Guru has already trodden the path and can show it to the seeker. Even if he has arrived spontaneously at the goal, as did Bhagavan, he can still see and indicate the approaches to it. He may even transmit direct experience to the disciple as Sri Ramakrishna did for Vivekananda. However, this can never be stabilised so long as the disciple’s vasanas or inherent tendencies remain, since they drag him away again to the illusory world of sense-perception. There is no wisdom that can be given to all alike, says the Gita: “This wisdom must not be given to one who has no tapas, is not a devotee and is not in earnest.” This does not mean that the Guru holds guidance or Realization back from anyone. The Maharshi once said that if the Guru could simply give Realization there would not be even a cow left unrealized. Most people do not want spiritual knowledge, and it cannot be given to those who do not try to awaken it in themselves. It cannot be grasped by reason. Therefore, the Guru will not respond to those who question him or try to argue with him out of mere academic curiosity: “This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning.”

A Guru is only for those who seek contact with him for the sake of spiritual understanding, because this means seeking contact with the Truth in one’s own heart through him. One who lives at a distance

and approaches him in this way may receive guidance, while one who lives near him may not know how to ask. “The real Guru is in the heart,” the Maharshi said. And “The task of the outer Guru is only to turn you inward to the Guru in your heart.” We are told that the Divine dwells in the innermost recess of the heart, but how many of us are competent to look inward and realize it? The power of the Guru in helping one to do so is far more important than any mere verbal explanation he may give, for the latter touches only the mental understanding. The Maharshi said, “A silent Guru is very potent. His work goes on inwardly where it is not apparent to the disciple.” And he gave assurance that “As the disciple dives inwards in search of the Self, the Guru will do his part.” But can this not be done without the intervention of an outer Guru? The Maharshi admitted that it can, but he added that there are very few who are so close to Enlightenment that they can dispense with the need for an outer Guru. This is because it is not a case of something new to be discovered but of the removal of obstructions to realization of the ever-existing Self. And since these obstructions are more emotional than theoretical, rooted in the desires rather than the intellect, outer aid is usually necessary to destroy them. “Sadhana is for the removal of ignorance, which is ingrained wrong ideas. It is not for acquiring the Self, because the Self is always there, but for becoming aware of it.”^[1]

Even though the disciple believes that Consciousness is One, he accepts the duality of Guru-disciple relationship in order to transcend it. He serves the outer Guru in order to realize the inner. “The disciple must work inwardly, but the Guru can work both inwardly and outwardly,” the Maharshi explained.

One should approach the Awakened and listen to his teaching, then dwell on it as a guide to sadhana. When instruction comes from a Guru it carries power. Out of the relationship of Guru and disciple realization is born, as the fire of knowledge from the former is kindled in the heart of the latter.

The Upanishad says that the knower of Brahman is Brahman Himself. This is an indication that if we are unable to meditate on the formless Brahman we should meditate on a knower of Brahman. He teaches right doctrine, but it is very different from the same doctrine learned from a book. He himself is the living teaching. His presence inspires and strengthens us. His teaching has the authority of experience. It does not matter if the disciplines prescribed by the Masters vary or even if their doctrines differ on the mental plane; the essence of their teaching is the same, just as the milk from cows of different colours is all white.

“The spirit of the disciple is moribund owing to forgetfulness of his true nature. The Guru revives him by removing his supposed identity with body and mind.” The mind is apt to deny the existence of the Self because the Self is not an object of the senses. It can never be the object of knowledge but is itself the sole knower. Therefore, a search for it by the mind can never succeed. “Logical explanations have no finality. Why look outward and explain phenomena? One should learn to attend to the knower of the phenomena.” The knower of the phenomena is Reality. It just is; it is not affected by discussions or logical conclusions. It is the Grace of the Guru that enables us to realize our identity with this Reality. Since it is the Reality, it is not something to be acquired in the future; it just is, now, eternally.

So long as the disciple lives in duality and seeks to transcend it, he feels oppressed by burdens and hindered by obstacles. These are in fact mere manifestations of the tendencies in his own mind that hold him back from Enlightenment and make him cling to the duality he seeks to escape from. To such a one the Guru appears as the bearer of burdens and remover of obstructions: the destroyer of ignorance and giver of Liberation. But effort must be made by the disciple to remove the obstructions. And although it is true to say that the Guru is the giver of Liberation it is also true to say that the disciple must earn it by making himself fit to receive it.

The Guru does not add to the ideas or theories with which the mind of the disciple is already cluttered. Rather he induces cessation of thought. “The mind creates the world and life and obscures the Self. Becoming obscures Being.” It often happened that someone came to the Maharshi with a whole list

of questions that he had drawn up and, sitting before him, found not so much that the answers came as that the questions faded out and ceased to be important.

Life has plunged us into a state that can be called sleep — spiritual sleep. All our life activities are done in this sleep. The Guru is the Awakened; he does not become involved in this sleep but helps us to awaken from it. You encounter life through a thing called ‘yourself’, that is through a fictitious apparatus for living. It is this which takes charge of body and senses, thinks through your mind, talks through your mouth, uses your name and mistakes itself for you. But just as it mistakes itself for you, so it mistakes the Guru for another separate self outside of you; and that is its fatal error and also your salvation, for the Guru, having freed himself from the clutches of this fiend, can free you from it and lead you to the experience of the One Self.

Thereby he gives a new meaning to the word ‘I’. Before meeting him, you attributed it to this pseudo-self, but ‘I’ or ‘Aham’ is the name of Being, of God. He alone can call Himself ‘I’. You only can insofar as you are One with Him. Individual human life goes on like a dream. In a dream you mistake the dream-self for ‘I’. Similarly, in this life you mistake the fictitious pseudo-self for ‘I’. The Guru helps you to awaken from this illusion. “To keep the I-thought alert is the only upadesa (teaching).” He teaches you to abide in and as the Self while apparently living in the world. “One should not lose consciousness of this ‘I’ under any circumstances. This is the remedy for all the ills of life.” “The ‘I’ springs up from the centre of our being and our only concern should be with this ‘I’.”

The true Self is qualityless and therefore beyond description or even knowledge. It is thought that obscures it. “Give up thoughts. You need not give up anything else. The body and the comforts of life are no hindrance to realization. The loss of the body is not Enlightenment, it is death. The loss of the ego-sense, the I-concept, is what is required.” The very presence of the Guru calms down the waves of the mind and brings it to that condition of stillness in which it is simply aware.

Those who saw the Maharshi sitting in samadhi were moved and awed by it. He radiated peace as the sun radiates light. His imperturbable composure impressed some, his lively explanations others, his grace and compassion yet others; some enjoyed his conversation and some his tremendous silence. Thousands flocked for a sight of Him. People felt that here was God incarnate walking on earth. He assured us when leaving the body that he was not going away. “People say that I am going away, but where can I go? I am here.” Being universal, there was no going from here to there for him. Having realized that he was not this body, there was no return to any other body. He has assured us that “he who is ready for Divine Knowledge will be led to it.”

1. While speaking thus of the need for an outer Guru, it is to be remembered that the Maharshi himself still acts as Guru even without a human body (EDITOR)

Once You Experience the Self, You Are Held by It by N.N.Rajan

I have had opportunities to talk to Bhagavan and one of them I mention here. One day I went to see Gurumurtham and the garden near it. These two places are well known to those who have read his biography. It was in this garden that Bhagavan's uncle recognized him as his nephew Venkataraman, who had left his home some three years earlier. After visiting the two places, I returned to the Asramam and told Bhagavan that the place now was more or less an open ground and was not a garden as described by Narasimhaswamy in his book Self Realization. Bhagavan immediately began to describe

how the garden had been then and proceeded further to describe his life during his sojourn there. He said that he was taking shelter in a lamb pen where it was hardly high enough for him to sit erect. If he wanted to stretch his body on the floor, most of it would be out in the open. He wore only a kroupina and had no covering over the rest of his body. If it rained, he remained on the wet and sodden ground where sometimes water stood a couple of inches deep! He did not feel any inconvenience because he had no 'body sense' to worry him. He felt that sunrise and sunset came in quick succession. Time and space did not exist for him! He then tried to describe the state of his awareness of the Self and his awareness of the body and things material. To him, the sun of absolute Reality made the phenomenal world disappear and he was immersed in that light which dissolves diversity into the One without a second!

It is not possible to express exactly the thrill felt by all of us who were listening to him. We all felt transported into that condition for which we are striving. There was a deep silence in the hall for some time and everyone present felt peace and happiness. It occurred to me then that Bhagavan, while narrating any incident of his life, was taking the opportunity to teach us, and I told him that when he spoke we felt as if it were easy to experience the Self and as if we had glimpses of it. We asked him exactly how one has to proceed to be in that state of continuous awareness which he had described. Bhagavan, with his sparkling eyes, looked at me benevolently, raised his hands and said:

"It is the easiest thing to obtain. The Self is always in you, around you and everywhere. It is the substratum and the support of everything. You are experiencing the Self and enjoying it every moment of your life. You are not aware of it because your mind is on things material and thus gets externalized through your senses. Hence, you are unable to know it. Turn your mind away from material things which are the cause of desires, and the moment you withdraw your mind from them you become aware of the Self. Once you experience the Self, you are held by it, and you become 'That' which is the One without a second."

When he finished his words I again felt as I had felt on the first day I met him. that Bhagavan is a big powerhouse and his power or grace overwhelms us, whatever our ideas may be, and leads us into the channel flowing into the Self. It became clear to me that we can have the knowledge of the Self if only we take the path on which a realized person or guru directs us.

In conclusion I wish to say that one should constantly meditate that one is not the body or the mind. Unless the mind is in contact with the senses, we cannot get any report from our ears, eyes, etc. We must therefore still the mind by disconnecting it from the senses and thus get beyond them to experience the Self. What we learn from sense perception is only relative knowledge. Knowledge of the Self can be learnt only by sitting at the feet of one who has realized it; what others tell you is mere talk. Bhagavan Ramana is one of those Masters who has realized the Self and like all other Masters who preceded him, he helps us proceed rapidly to attain Self-knowledge.

Activity, Help Not Hindrance

by Viswanatha Swami

The earnest aspirant is endowed with onepointedness of mind. But others, whose minds are restless on account of their attachment to the outer world, are asked to practise certain simple spiritual disciplines in order to acquire the concentration of mind which is an indispensable step towards ultimate spiritual attainment.

The urge to be active is strong in man; it is extremely difficult to renounce action altogether and dedicate oneself entirely to spiritual sadhana, whatever be the mode of sadhana.

Thus, of all the paths available for an aspirant, Karma Marga is the most suited to the modern age. By Karma Marga we do not mean the rituals of the orthodox or social service as generally understood nowadays. By Karma Marga we mean the performance of one's svadharma as determined by one's environment and circumstances. Since action is inescapable, the choice left for one is to follow one's svadharma without undue attachment to the results.

What is this Karma Marga pursued merely as doing one's svadharma? It is simply working in an egoless spirit without identifying oneself with the doer. But such egolessness is impossible for the man of the world; he always identifies himself with the doer. Karma Marga then is the process of inner development which enables one to be active in the world and yet remain unattached to the credit or the results of the work. The sadhana consists in cultivating the attitude that it is not oneself that acts but a Power within. "Doership pertains to the individuality; but you are not a separate individual and so you are not the doer. "Man is moved by some mysterious power but he thinks he moves himself," says Sri Bhagavan. The same idea is conveyed in the Bhagavad Gita (XVIII, 61): "Mounted as on a machine in the heart of every being dwells the Lord whirling every being by His mysterious power."

The urge for action is strong in most men; action is their svabhava; it is impossible for them to renounce all activity. But the distinguishing characteristic of the karma yogi is that throughout his activity he feels intuitively that he is not the doer, but that the higher power works through him. He is thus merely an instrument of the higher power working for the welfare of all. His work, therefore, is really worship. He asks nothing for himself, seeks nothing, but yet is active. He realizes that he is only an actor playing his role in the drama of life, the Lila of the Supreme. He does not forget his real Being nor does he overplay his role to win fame or personal success. There is no room for desires in him because of his non-identification with a petty individuality. Such a detached life frees him from the prison of ignorance, though he may be active like others.

Is action, without expectation of results, itself enough? Detached action (nishkama karma) is the means to achieve inner purity and therefore one has to strive further in the quest for perfection. The question still persists: who is engaged in such nishkama karma? As long as there is a doer there is the need for the experience of pure non-dual Awareness. Hence the karma yogi too has to tread the path of knowledge ultimately. But Self-enquiry comes naturally to him. The perfect karma yogi is spontaneously drawn to the path of jnana (knowledge). The apparently contradictory paths of karma and jnana become complementary and inseparable from each other. The purity of mind brought about by selfless action points the way to jnana.

The identification of one's true Being with the body-bound ego is the root cause of all selfishness and suffering. Such wrong identification ends only with the dawning of wisdom through the enquiry: 'Who is bound?', 'Who am I?'. When, through uninterrupted experience of Being, the wrong notion of bondage (and liberation therefrom) is dispelled, the radiance of Pure Awareness alone remains. Sri Bhagavan has clarified for us the path of Self-enquiry starting from selfless action and culminating in the bliss of Pure Awareness.

Inner search for jnana together with such disinterested karma is the most practical way for most of us under the present modern conditions. Leading such a life is fully approved by Sri Bhagavan when he says: "Leave your outward life to prarabdha and make intense effort within for illumination." He has taught us that, while pursuing the path of Self-enquiry, we can carry on our occupation in life, without the least idea of 'I am doing this'. The idea 'I am the body' is the only ignorance and bondage. Performing our work with detachment and enquiring 'Who Am I?' at the same time is the safest course for release from bondage. To do one's work impersonally and to enquire intensely within 'Who am I?' is thus the essence of the teaching of all great Masters.

Bhagavan sums this up aptly: "A man need not give up his worldly duties; what he should give up is desiring things for himself." The ideal to be aimed at, therefore, is a life of selfless activity accompanied by uninterrupted awareness. The mind that operates without attachment to its own past or future can efficiently attend to any kind of work in a truly scientific manner. Such a mind is well protected from all ignorance and distraction as it is free from petty, personal desire.

It should be remembered that Sri Bhagavan's method is not a mere intellectual exercise, but a heuristic and holistic sadhana for self-integration and self-transcendence in which there can be no conflict between awareness and action. The only freedom we enjoy, and the only obligation enjoined on us is to turn the searchlight inward and learn to look within. Having once set out on this quest of self-improvement through Self-enquiry, one can no more miss one's way than a living plant firmly rooted in good soil in the open air can lose its rapport with sunlight. One's very means of livelihood, the actions that one is called upon to perform, duty to family and role in society, will undergo the requisite change, either through one's volition or by sheer force of circumstance. All things work together for good to them that love God, i.e., for those who have turned towards the Self. For turning to the universal Self is ceasing to be selfish, narrow, and personal. The more impersonal the worker, the more scientific and more efficient the work. If disinterestedness is an asset, surrender to the Lord, heightened awareness and empathy with one's fellow workers, add a new dimension to one's human relations.

The spiritual aspirant who is honest and heroic can, therefore, use even worldly work as a means of self-purification. This may even be easier than it is for an inmate of an ashram who fails to maintain the right attitude to activity, which can be a hindrance in the spiritual path.

There is a lurking fear in some people that their sadhana will be adversely affected by engaging in work or service. Even granting that sadhana becomes less intense if combined with work, can one honestly assert that one is engaged in sadhana all the time? Unfortunately, the truth is far from this. People who are not prepared to be active in constructive work mostly indulge in casual or loose talk, controversial discussion or even outright gossip. Their own notions of piety also drive them to undertake minor or major jobs for others. The results of such undertakings of individual responsibility are unpredictable. Thus the problem comes through the back door and has to be faced. It is far better and safer to do allotted tasks than indulge in erratic activity. Rare is the sadhaka who can carry on sadhana on a whole-time basis. And it is highly unlikely that such a person will refuse to do service when called upon to do so.

The human tendency that drives one to activity cannot be wished out of existence. This tendency can be sublimated by accepting work or service as a *vita* and recognized aspect of spiritual practice.

Work, particularly systematic work, has rich rewards. In the higher, spiritual sense, gradual purification results. Work in an impersonal and universal cause helps the erosion of the ego. The loss of individuality is easier here than in mundane activity where personal motives have wider and stronger play. The two types of activity are different. Work in the world without is a sadhana for the athletic spirit. Work in an ashram demands less of courage than humility.

Spiritual alertness and physical briskness go together. Spiritual laziness can lead to physical laziness and vice versa. Spiritually evolved persons prove the point conclusively. Sri Bhagavan was always an enthusiastic participant in the Ashram chores. He was the first to get up (from his apparent sleep) and attend to kitchen duties like cutting vegetables. He did this for many years. He had done on numerous occasions jobs like brick laying and book binding. There was no task which he deemed beneath him. Apart from this personal example there was also his unmistakable admiration for those who worked hard for the Ashram. His own Ashram on the Hill he named Skandashram, because one Kandaswami cleared the ground and prepared the site for it single handedly. For the dignity of useful labor there could be no higher testimony than the example of Sri Bhagavan.

This does not mean that ashrams should be converted into workhouses and their activities expanded in a mechanical manner. But one should not attempt to escape work that needs to be done; one should do one's share of it willingly. The kind and quantum of work done does not matter as much as the willingness and zeal one puts into it.

It should never be forgotten that awareness is our true Being and that action is only a ripple, a movement, a shadow in the ocean of awareness. We should not be in too great a hurry to become agents, we should for the most part be content to be patient. As Wordsworth says:

Action is transitory, a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle, this way or that,
'Tis done, and in the after vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed.

Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark and shares the nature of infinity. Whatever action we do, and none of us can altogether escape action, whether in the world or in an ashram, should be surrendered to the Lord, should not boost the ego and should thus help inner purification. In the words of Herbert:

Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

It is in this spirit that Appar, the saint who was ever busy tidying up our temples and their environs, sang of the covenant between him and Siva

It is His duty to sustain even this slave.
My duty is Only to serve and be content.

Reminders

by Prof. G. V. Subbaramayya

The author of the following article was sincere, moved with childlike familiarity with the Master, and experienced His grace in full measure. He has written about his experiences in the captivating book, Sri Ramana Reminiscences.

Let me recall some indications by Bhagavan that will help to keep the aspirant on the right path, safe from pitfalls. Such reminders are necessary lest, with the passage of time, the clarity of his teaching gets blurred.

The final aim and purpose of all sadhana — fasts, prayers, pilgrimages, penances, etc. — is, he reminded us, to annihilate the ego through perfect control of the mind and thereby to realize the true Self. This should be always borne in mind lest the aspirant get too attached to his technique and mistake it for the purpose when it is only the means. Any sadhana is only a road to reach the destination and never a residence.

The practice of Self-enquiry is the direct method since it directly tackles the mind, but it does not exclude other practices, which may suit the particular aspirant owing to his samskaras or predispositions due to prarabdha or previous destiny. All sadhanas lead to the same goal.

When we speak of Self-realization, it is to be remembered that the Self is not some wonder that will drop down from the heavens before our gaze. It is not anything outside us or anything perceptible to the

mind or senses. It is the real Self or I that every one of us is in fact. Therefore, Self-realization is only being what we are. This comes about on transcending the dualities (good and bad) and triads (knowledge-knower-known), when the unreal accretions of the mind disperse.

Self-enquiry is not a catechism or a mental process of question and answer. The question 'Who am I?' is not intended to provoke an answer such as 'I am this' or 'I am that' but is only a means to still the mind. When a thought arises, one is not to pursue it but to ask oneself to whom it occurs. The answer is 'to me', and this provokes the further question, 'Who am I?'. With this the first thought disappears.

The mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts that incessantly arise. If the above process is repeated every time a thought arises all thoughts vanish and the mind dwells solely on the basic I-thought. With sufficient practice it gets rid of its thought content and becomes transformed into the real 'I' or true Self which shines continuously of its own accord. The aspirant's effort terminates in complete stilling of the mind. What follows is automatic like the sun's shining after the clouds have passed.

Since the real Self is the repository of all power, as of everything else, the aspirant, in his quest for the Self, may or may not acquire powers or siddhi. This is dependent on his prarabdha or self-made destiny. In a realized Man these occur unsought and manifest themselves naturally. For an aspirant to seek them or make use of them deliberately is harmful; it is likely to strengthen his ego and thereby hamper his spiritual progress. The right attitude for him is to remain indifferent whether they come or not and concentrate on Self-realization.

There is no contradiction between so-called 'worldly' life and spiritual practice. We can remain in society, practising any trade or profession, and at the same time remember all along what we really are. We should not identify ourselves with our body senses or mind but remember that we are the all-pervading Spirit.

Either we surrender to the Supreme Spirit, Self or God, by whatever name we may call It, or go on enquiring what we really are until we realize our identity with It. Not only are professional work and spiritual effort not contradictory but the latter helps to perfect the former and even makes it a means of self-purification, which is a prerequisite of Self-realization.

In conclusion, let us never forget the greatness and glory of Sri Bhagavan. At the age of seventeen He attained Self-realization by spontaneous effort, with no instruction and no outer Guru. The remainder of his life was only a leela or 'play' in which the Supreme manifested its Grace by radiating his Glory and diffusing Peace and Bliss around that 'Mighty Impersonality', as the poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya once called Bhagavan (when someone else had been called a 'mighty personality'). The term 'Bhagavan' is sometimes used as a honorific title for holy personages but Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is Bhagavan in the fullest sense of the word. Glory to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi!

Is Everything Predetermined?

by A.Devaraja Mudaliar

One summer afternoon I was sitting opposite Bhagavan with a fan in my hand in the Old Hall, and said to him: "I can understand that the outstanding events in a man's life, such as his country, nationality, family, career or profession, marriage, death, etc. are all predestined by his karma, but can it be that all the details of his life, down to the minutest, have already been determined? Now, for instance, I put this fan that is in my hand down on the floor here. Can it be that it was already decided that on such and such a day, at such and a such an hour, I shall move the fan like this and put it down here?"

Bhagavan replied, "Certainly." He continued: "Whatever this body is to do and whatever experiences it is to pass through was already decided when it came into existence."

Thereupon I naturally exclaimed: “What becomes then of man’s freedom and responsibility for his actions?”

Bhagavan explained: “The only freedom man has is to strive for and acquire the jnana which will enable him not to identify himself with the body. The body will go through the actions rendered inevitable by prarabdha (destiny based on the balance sheet of past lives) and a man is free either to identify himself with the body and be attached to the fruits of its actions, or to be detached from it and be a mere witness of its activities.”

This may not be acceptable to many learned people or philosophers, but I am sure I have made no error in transmitting as above the gist of the conversation that took place between Bhagavan and me. Though this answer of Bhagavan may upset the apple-cart of our careful reasonings and conclusions, I am satisfied that what Bhagavan said must be the truth. I also recall in this connection the following lines that Bhagavan once quoted to me from Thayumanavar on another occasion: “This is not to be taught to all. Even if we tell them, it will only lead to endless discussion.”

It may be well to remind readers that Bhagavan has given his classic answer to the age-old question ‘Can free will conquer fate?’ as follows in his “Forty Verses”:

“Such questions worry only those who have not found the source of both free will and fate. Those who have found this source have left all such discussions behind.”

The usual reaction of Bhagavan to any such question would be to retort: “Who is it that has this fate or free will? Find that out and then this question will not arise.

How Maharshi Helps His Devotees THAT VOICE FROM THE HILL

The following is from the April 1950 article found in the Times of India. Louis Buss discovered it along with two other newspaper articles on the Maharshi in Enid Chadwick’s scrapbook in Walsingham, England. Enid was Major Chadwick’s younger sister who passed away in 1982. The two other articles from the Indian newspapers were authored by Major Chadwick. This one was anonymous, but by the style of writing and the circumstances in which it was found, there is little doubt that Major Chadwick wrote it also.

Infinite are the ways through which Sri Maharshi helped his devotees. A European sadhak below recounts a strange experience which befell him on the Hill of Arunachala.

Sri Bhagavan was unique, peerless. Why should I say ‘was’? He is unique, and he is peerless.

One gracious look, an understanding nod or a sympathetic word always meant oceans to the earnest seeker, to the aspiring pilgrim. Which sincere voyager has gone to him and returned empty? And which devout sadhaka has sought his guidance and not gotten it?

The intellectual quibbler might have been given the short shrift by him. The dry philosopher might have found in him a steel wall. The eternal doubter would have returned from him not any the better.

But those who have unreservedly surrendered themselves to a pursuit of Truth have never failed to find in him a great guide. And in what infinite ways has he helped the true sadhaks?

Sometimes the sought for guidance would come through an answer given to somebody's question. Sometimes it would be provided through a direct monosyllabic answer. And sometimes it would come through a subjective experience.

And if the hundreds of pilgrims on the path of spirituality who have sought and received guidance from Sri Bhagavan were to unfold their subjective experiences, the world will know how gracious, compassionate, benevolent and all-pervasive Sri Bhagavan has been and is.

But subjective experiences are intimate, and they are provided only for the personal spiritual advancement of the particular aspirant. It is, therefore, not usually considered necessary to take the world into confidence regarding the subjective experiences of sadhaks. But since I have been invited by the editor to write on how Sri Maharshi has been helping the aspirants, I venture to refer to just one experience of mine.

Once I was going on the eastern side of the Arunachala hill in full belief and confidence that I had unreservedly surrendered myself to Sri Bhagavan. Suddenly I saw a leper woman walking towards me. Her face was terribly disfigured by the disease. Her nose had been completely eaten away and in its place were found two holes. The fingers on her hands had all gone. She advanced towards me and extending the stumps of her hands and asked me to give her something to eat.

The sight of her disgusted me, frightened me. My whole frame shuddered with terror that she might touch me. Overcome by repulsion, I hastened to move away from her. Suddenly, I heard the voice of Sri Bhagavan coming clear and ringing from across the mountains. It said: "To surrender to me is to surrender to everyone, for the Self is in everyone." Hearing this I regained my poise and offered the leper woman the plantains that I had in my bag.

In a few minutes, I saw myself standing before not the disfigured leper woman but before a tall old man with white long hair and beard. The man looked like a rishi and was smiling. When the thought of prostrating before the rishi entered my mind, I saw before me the old leper woman again. I bowed happy at heart though somewhat confused in mind and then resumed my walk up the hill.

This experience taught me a new lesson and made me tread a new path. I have cited this as just one of the ways through which Sri Bhagavan teaches, guides and helps.

Infinite, indeed, are the ways through which he teaches the aspirant. Since what he has been providing before and what he will continue to provide hereafter is a subjective help to a subjective research, it may not and usually does not produce wondrous ripples on the objective surface. Sri Bhagavan is the one and real Guru. May his grace enfold our being.