

SRI SARVESHWARI TIMES

AUGUST 2000

**Water cleanses grime,
light destroys darkness
and the darshan of a sage purifies the heart**

AUGHAR VANI, Avadhuta's Wisdom



Aghoreshwar
Baba Bhagwan Ramji

Guru is the guiding principle

Speaking on the occasion of Gurupurnima celebration at the Ashram in Sonoma, Baba Hariji addressed to the gathering with following words,

I would like to welcome you. I would really like to welcome you...home. For me, Guru Purnima is the most sacred and special day. Guru is the navigator of this journey that we are on. Guru shows the way to live our life. Guru is the guiding principle of my life. What is it in my life that I will never substitute with anything else? Guru.

I'm sure most of you know before I met Baba, my Guru, Aghoreshwar, I was living a very different kind of life. My guiding principles at the time, the map that I was holding, the destination that I had, were very different. After meeting Baba, my destination changed. The road that I was walking on changed. Baba is my Guru, but he pointed to the Guru that resides within me that was always there. So there are two Gurus, the Guru within and the Guru outside. The Guru outside in a person is the symbol of the Guru that resides within you.

Many times, I come across people who say: "I don't feel love. I can't trust myself. I fear myself." We all have these doubts. But we all have the Guru within us as well. It's not like you don't have it; we have it, but we just cannot put our hands on it.

When we meet someone in our life we feel we can trust or love, or we meet someone we feel love and acceptance coming from, something awakens in us, something opens. That's what happened to me when I met Baba. I said, "Yes, this person I accept. The way he lives his life is a good road to walk on." And he was able and open to help me walk the path that he had walked on.

Only that person can help you to walk on a particular path who has traveled there. You can look at a map, but it is very hard to know where the next stop is, where the next gas station is,

or where the next hotel is. But someone who has gone there and has stopped at a nice hotel along the way can say, "Hey, stop there. That's a nice place." Then the journey becomes much more meaningful. This is the role of Guru in a body. When I begin to trust that person, love that person, express all those virtues, then it all begins to come out of us. And when it comes out of us, we see "Oh, it was already there within me". When I acknowledge that, all that I have poured out comes back to me. I begin to love myself. I begin to accept myself. I begin to trust myself. That's the way it works. Guru is able to extract all the virtues that are within me, and show them to me, that it is in me. It is mine, I already own it. In the process of extractions, there are moments when it may not be very pleasant, but it always works.

I had a big ego when I met Baba. I was living in America, I had a business, and I had no need for all the material blessings that many people came to Baba for. After being in his service, I had gone back to India with him and was always walking around next to him. I would read letters to him and would also function as his scribe. I felt like I was the chosen one. One day Baba called for all the monks and the so-called 'inner circle'. The young man, who was summoned to gather everyone, asked me to come also, because he had seen me with Baba all the time in the ashram. Everybody gathered in Baba's big hall.

Baba sat, looked around, and his eyes fell on me. "What are you doing here?" he said. "This is not a place for you.

I cannot describe the humiliation I felt. Well, maybe you know... I got up and went to my room. The whole room was spinning. I had never faced that kind of humiliation before. I just didn't know what to do. A couple of hours later, elder brother monk came. "Baba is calling you," he told me.

"I don't want to go," I said.

"How can you say that? If Baba calls, you run."

And I said, "I am not going."

Then another person came, the other monk brother. "Baba is calling you."

"No, I don't want to go."

Finally, they convinced me. So I went.

Baba was in his room, his dinner sitting next to him untouched. He asked me, "Have you had your dinner? I can't eat unless you eat. Look at my plate."

All the hurt that I was feeling before vanished, to see the love. Much later it was quite clear to me why Baba had treated me in that way before all the piers in the Ashram. So that is the job of the Guru, really, to instill love in you. And once the love has been instilled, the work begins.

Living with Baba, it was always in my mind whatever I'm doing, whatever I'm thinking, whatever I'm seeing, is it acceptable to Baba? When I saw a nice fruit in Chinatown I would think, "Oh, Baba would like that" and I would bring it for him as an offering. I look back on it now, and see that it was a meditation in action. Total attention was focused on the Guru: what he would like. In those days, I didn't think that it was meditation, but I look back now and realize it was really a meditation, a very long meditation: living in the company of the

Guru, totally focused on his likes and dislikes and his needs. Not that he really needed anything. He created situations to make you feel, 'without you Baba can't function'. *The Guru-disciple relationship is an exchange. Through the exchange, we find all the virtues are within us. This is Guru in a person.*

When we take this understanding further, we begin to see Guru in each person. *Anyone who loves you, who trusts you, anyone who gives you that seat, anyone who is able to extract good from you is worthy of your respect and love. By giving your love and respect you are worshipping the Guru, you are worshipping God.*

Nothing is separate from the Guru. We are human beings. We do make mistakes. We do forget. But what I would like to share with you is what I practice. I don't want to talk about what's written in the books. If I tell you what is written in the books, it won't have any effect on you. If I share something very simple and practical, it will have an effect on you. For example:

There was a lady who brought her son to Mahatma Gandhi. The woman pleaded, "Gandhi Baba, my son eats too much sugar. He loves candies. Too many candies are rotting his teeth. Please tell him not to eat sugar. If you tell him, he will listen."

Gandhiji said, "Mother I am really busy today. If you come back in four or five days, I will tell your son." The son was standing right there with his mother and heard what Gandhi said.

Five days later, after the third lengthy train ride, mother and son returned. Gandhiji looked at the boy and said, "You know, sugar is bad for you. You shouldn't eat it."

The mother commented, "You could have said the same thing a week ago. Why did you make me go and come back again?"

Gandhi answered, "Because I was eating sugar then."

If the advice we give to others is what we practice, it works. What I share with you, I try to live and then share it with you. What my practice for the past year has been is to take a step back from whatever I am doing. Whatever mood, emotion, excitement, inspiration, vision you have, you are flowing in it. Take a little time to take a step back. Take a nice deep breath. Welcome that breath of freedom, and then dive back in. But you have to learn how to taste that freedom. When you feel free, you can run faster.

You are human. You do get angry, you get upset, somebody pushes your buttons, or you may feel fear. When you catch yourself in it, take a step back. You do have the choice. *Choice is what separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom.* The rest of the animal kingdom does not have that choice; they are bound by their habits, by whatever they are born into. We humans do have that choice. *It is said we are very fortunate to have received this human body. There are 84 hundred thousand wombs, it is said, that a soul has to go through before Nirvana.*

This human life is the pinnacle of it, the top. From here, you have two choices: either continue the whole cycle again, or moksha, nirvana, liberation. I am sure many questions and doubts, many 'ifs' and 'buts' are rising in your mind right now, but our prayer is that whatever karma, actions, or deeds that have enabled me to take birth as a human being, if I am not able to do more, at least may I do as well in this life. Because if I am born again, at least I'll be born as a human being. If I am not ready to be liberated, if I still have some desires left, some

reason to come back, may I come back as a human being. *This may well be our prayer: "If I am not able to do more than I did in my previous life, at least enable me to do as much."*

Whenever we engage in an act, whatever decision we make, a bell rings within us. A part of us knows if it's not the right choice. But another voice says, "But, I have to...", or finds another excuse to continue. We can make a practice to listen to that bell a little more often. You could be getting angry at someone who is sitting in front of you, and a part of you knows it is not the right thing to do, but the other part just persists in anger. Pay a little more attention to the sound that is very subtle, very gentle. That is the Guru within telling you what the right thing is. Take a step back. You may be upset, hurt for an hour or two, for a day, but when you wake up, try to free yourself from that. It's a practice. If you want to have a practice in your life, make it a practice. And do not guilt trip yourself or justify, "Oh I was born this way, and my parents were this and this..." No. Fine. But what are you going to do NOW? That practice could be: take a step back, take a deep breath, welcome yourself to the new moment, new inspiration. See how life blossoms. This is the only difference between animals and humans (*manushya*). The human being does have a choice to bring about a change.

I am very grateful to each and every one of you here. I see the reflection of those virtues in everyone here. *Guru's grace. Bringing grace in our life is worshipping Guru within us; it is the grace of the Guru within us.*

I was thinking about Carol. She gave me such a beautiful card. I wish I had it here to share with you. It said, "If I had to cook for the ashram like this everyday of my life, I still will not have a second thought of not doing it." It was a little bit more than what I just said, but when I read it, the only thing that came to my mind was, "What a grace." *There are people here with that grace, and that is the blessing of my Guru and company of my Guru around me. So many of you have shown me that grace. You keep giving, without expecting. That is the Guru.*

Guru Purnima in our ashram in India is the day when the whole family gathers, the day to all come together. Thank you for being here to create this. The day still waits for you, so please enjoy yourself. I bow to the Guru within you, and I bow to all the words that came out through you and through me, and may more of them come out as we acknowledge the Guru.

Meet the faces at the Ashram:

Through this column we salute the special individuals at the Ashram:

Penny Snyder

Penny Snyder is another cornerstone in the foundation of the Ashram. From the very beginning she took on some very important responsibilities. She first met Babaji at his yoga classes at the community center.

Her involvement deepened when Babaji first established the Ashram on Carriger Road. She was our first harmonium player, leading the chanting every morning and evening, without fail. She didn't sing loudly, so to follow her you had to listen and sing consciously

for it to all be harmonious. At that time I saw it as a model for the Ashram, if you listen to the leader, the Guru, the Ashram will run harmoniously.

For the first few years, Penny almost single handedly, provided the food and prepared the meals for the Ashram. Providing the food was done in the true spirit of giving, it was done silently, bringing no attention to herself.

While traveling to India with Babaji, she was drawn to Little Stars School, the school established to educate the orphans and abandoned children found daily in the streets of Benaras. She has worked with its staff, asking what were their needs, and how to fill those needs. She also put together a wonderful video of the Aghoreshwar, His teachings, and the Sonoma Ashram.



All the time she has nurtured the Ashram, she has managed the Sonoma branch of Becoming Independent, dedicated to helping developmentally challenged individuals to interact in our everyday community. She certainly carries the teachings of the Aghoreshwar into her daily life.

ASHRAM NEWS AND EVENTS:

Full Moon havan: Monday 14th of August.

Baba's Birthday & Full Moon in Septemeber: Wednesday 13th of September

Navaratri begins: Thursday, 28th of September



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