

student disappears fully in essence, remaining only in form. Mature surrender is surrender between two adult human expressions of God. The master surrenders first, but the process is not complete until the disciple has followed. Surrender cannot be an act of weakness, submission, or the relinquishing of one's own responsibility, but is an expression of profound and total self-responsibility and self-salvation within the context of the student-teacher relationship. When this quality of strength and human maturity is offered as a sacrifice to God or Truth, a magic far beyond the occult begins to emerge. It is the magic of Love, found only through complete release.

The truth of the matter is that we are all surrendered to something. While we cry out about the dangers of surrender to the teacher, we forget that we are already submitting to the bondage of egoic limitation. We understandably feel more safe surrendering to the known and familiar prison of our minds rather than to the unknowable mystery of the master; it is safer to the ego to remain incarcerated within its own confines and to live and die within its own box. But in terms of the life of the soul, it is suicide never to allow the walls of limitation to crumble in the process of surrender from the self to the Self, as is expressed through the conscious relationship between master and disciple.

Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati

Serving the Guru through Love of Humanity



Referred to by her students as “Ma”, Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati is an internationally respected spiritual leader and teacher, as well as a forerunner in the global fight for human rights and religious freedom. Ma has been teaching for more than 25 years in the tradition of her Guru, Neem Karoli Baba and the Shaivite lineage of her teacher, Swami Nityananda.

Q: What is the distinction between a teacher and a guru?

MJ: Everybody has something to teach. I grew up as a poor white girl in Brooklyn, living under the boardwalk with four black folks. As prostitutes, junkies, alcoholics, they were my first teachers. They gave me the reason to be, and from them I gained the capacity to go out in the streets and under the bridges to work, serve and teach. You can have many, many teachers, but there is only one guru. The guru is literally a teacher who would give his or her life for the *chela* (disciple). Just as the mother gives birth to the child, the guru gives birth to the disciple. That's what differentiates the guru and the teacher.

Q: What does it mean to you to serve in the function of “guru”?

MJ: In my teaching work, for over 10 years I wouldn't even use the word “guru” to describe myself because of all the associations it raised. The only way a guru can truly be a guru is to never forget he or she is a disciple. Whatever I have learned as a disciple, I pass on to my students. I always know what they are feeling because I have been there, done that, and am *still* doing that – still learning every day of my life. I learn from my guru and I learn from my students. It is not as mysterious as it is magical. If we all remember that we are constantly *chelas*, then every breath we take *in* is a learning breath, and every breath we breathe *out* has the potential to be a teaching breath.

Q: What is the primary qualification for a *chela*?

MJ: An absolute love of unconditional Love, and not just for the guru but for everyone. If the *chela* has blind love for the guru and is terribly mean to everybody else, the discipleship won't work. That is not real love for the guru. It cannot be.

Q: So just loving the guru is not enough?

MJ: There are two things I insist on for students: kindness and service. Can you be kind and can you serve? If you want to be my student and live at my ashram or help me with my projects, you have to either *be* kind, or be willing to learn to be kind. And in order to teach this, *I* have to be kind. As long as we create a space of kindness within, we are ready for whatever life has to offer.

Q: How do you deal with your students' projections onto you?

MJ: I set the table and invite everyone to come eat. I just spread out my table and say, "Come eat." I don't want conditions in my life. I don't want conditions for me and I don't want conditions for my students. All I want is that the table is set with love, that food is cooked with love, and the meal is eaten in the mood of love. My guru's demand was very simple. "Feed Everyone." That's what I've done all my life and I intend to keep doing that for the rest of my life. That's all I know how to do. I tell students, "Don't try to save the whole world. Just serve whoever is in front of you. Let them feel your love."

Q: As a Western woman guru, you are in an uncommon minority. Are there particular challenges for the female guru?

MJ: Female teachers and a feminine influence is vital right now in the world, because women are connected to the earth. If we refuse to care about this earth, that's the end. It's all over. If people don't accept women teachers, that's the end of everything, because the men have made a real mess of things. Woman is bursting forth like a sunrise on a very dark and gloomy day. We're too strong but we need to be strong. We're too wise but we need to be wise. As a woman feels, she acts upon what she is feeling. One of the things that I teach is equality. Women are not better than men are, but they are certainly equal. Woman feels and man thinks. You have to understand that the recognition of the *fact* of women's equality is something fresh and new and not *wanted*. It is

not wanted in Hinduism, not wanted in Catholicism and not wanted in Judaism. But it will be accepted. We are coming forth.

Q: What is your primary teaching to your disciples?

MJ: I tell my *chelas* that it is a matter of making a difference and stopping that inner war within one's own being. Then one can bring peace to people while they are living upon an earth that is pretty well shattered right now. I don't have the time to make these *chelas* of mine like me. I don't have time to give them a teaching that pleases them but is not totally *real*. But I do have the time to speak of the beauty of serving another human being. And I pray they come to understand those teachings, because at this time on the planet, everybody has to serve another human being in order to maintain their own feeling of "aliveness". It's all about taking what you learn from your guru and putting it into action instead of just clasping your hands in silent prayer. Taking that silent prayer into action – that is what's needed in the world at this very moment. God is not boring. God is very, very exciting. God is extremely exciting. God is my salvation. God is where I run to. There is not one God, but many, many forms. For me, I look toward my guru as my God.