

Saints as Guides: Spiritual Tools for Modern Healers

by Nehha Bhatnagar, Founder of The Holistic Shala & Sarvam Shakti

Across time and cultures, saints have walked among us—quietly yet powerfully shaping humanity with their compassion, devotion, courage, and inner strength. They were not distant figures carved only in stone or remembered only in hymns. They were human, like us, yet they touched the Divine in such a way that their lives became living teachings.

This small guide is especially put together for healers like yourselves, in the fields of mental health, physical health and personal development. At The Holistic Shala, we come together to expand our toolkits holistically so that we can offer our clients a vast array of tools for long-term results. More importantly, when we learn and apply these tools on ourselves, we raise our own vitality and thereby are able to better entrain our clients to higher energetic states of being.

This is not a biography of lesser known Indian saints, nor an exhaustive spiritual treatise. **Instead, it is an offering: a way to glimpse their essence and discover one simple spiritual tool we can carry into our own daily life.** From the patience of one saint, to the power of mantra from another, to the service, silence, or surrender they embodied—each chapter invites us to reflect and practice.

In today's noisy world, the wisdom of saints is more needed than ever to help us **distil between what is real and what is unreal**, quite literally and also metaphorically. These tools are not meant to stay on the page; they are invitations to experiment, to integrate, and to slowly transform the way we live.

May this guide serve as a gentle companion on your journey—reminding us that the footsteps of saints are not behind us, but always ahead of us, showing the way forward.





Gauri Ma – The Tool of Humility

Gauri Ma (1857–1938) was one of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's earliest women disciples—a pioneering saint who remains little known outside the Ramakrishna Mission. Born into a traditional Bengali family, she longed for renunciation from childhood. Against all societal odds, she wandered in the Himalayas alone for 12 years, practicing intense devotion to Krishna. Later, she founded India's first monastic school for women—the Sri Saradeshwari Ashram—a revolutionary institution blending adhyatmika (spiritual) and adhunik (practical) education for women.

What is Humility in Indian Knowledge Systems?

- **Bhagavad Gita (13.8):** "Amanitvam adambhitvam ahimsa kshantir arjavam" Humility (amanitvam) is the first quality of wisdom. It is not self-deprecation, but freedom from ego-identification, knowing the Self is universal, not limited.
- **Upanishads (Kena):** "He who thinks he knows, knows not; he who knows he knows not, knows." True wisdom reveals itself only to the humble.
- **Yoga Sutras of Patanjali:** Humility is implied in Ahimsa (non-violence), Asteya (non-stealing), and especially Ishvarapranidhana (surrender to God).
- **Bhakti Tradition:** Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught: "Be humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree." In Bhakti, humility (vinaya) is the ornament of devotion.

Saints' Lives: Ramakrishna: "I am but the child of the Divine Mother." Anandamayi Ma: "All is He, nothing is mine." Shivpuri Baba: Walked the world teaching dharma, never claiming greatness.



Gauri Ma and the Tool of Humility

From Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, Gauri Ma imbibed humility as a living principle. Though she had walked the Himalayas and founded a revolutionary movement for women, she kept no pride.

Door-to-Door Service

She would personally go door to door begging for food when her Ashram ran short, never revealing who she was. Once, a woman noticed the radiance in her and later became a lifelong donor—proof that humility shines brighter than fame.

Rejecting Recognition

When her name appeared on a plaque beneath Sarada Devi's, she grew upset and had it removed. "Name and fame are like the excreta of pigs," she would say. "When you serve, why seek praise? Name and fame are suicide in spiritual life."

For her, only service and surrender mattered.

Real-life Applications for Holistic Healers

- **Detach from outcomes.** Work is your reward. Release the constant pull of "likes," followers, or prestige. Focus instead on impact.
- **Remember interdependence.** None of us is "self-made." We exist because of the food, air, sunlight, teachings, and kindness of countless beings. In Indian thought, this is the concept of rnas (debts)—to ancestors, teachers, nature, humanity, and the Divine. Remembering these keeps us humble.
- **Humility protects energy.** It frees you from the draining need to prove yourself, allowing you to channel energy into service, learning, and healing.

Reflection Prompt

Choose 5 areas of your life (food, education, health, career, family). For each, create a gratitude chain tracing the many beings and forces that made it possible. ✨ Example: Your meal today → the farmer → the rain → the sun → the truck driver → the cook → your plate. Notice how many invisible hands support your life.

Closing Reminder  Humility is not weakness. It is knowing: I matter, but I am not the only cause of my life's success. True humility lets us serve without craving recognition, love without needing return, and act without clinging to results. It is strength, freedom, and grace—just as Gauri Ma lived it.



Shivpuri Baba – The Tool of 'Right Life' (Swadharma)

His life should be a movie-I am not joking. Read on!

Shivpuri Baba (1826–1963), born Jayanta Namboodiri, is one of India's most fascinating yet lesser-known saints. Orphaned young, and raised by his famous astrologer grandfather, they belonged to a very rich and pious family. His grandfather decided to take sannyas and at the age of 18, Jayanta joined him too- he donated everything he owned- everything- and he spent decades in meditation near the Narmada before receiving enlightenment at the age of 50. His grandfather had told him to spread the fruits of his enlightenment to those who may need his help and so what followed was a 50-year global pilgrimage—80% of it on foot—spanning Afghanistan, Iran, Mecca, Jerusalem, Europe, Russia, the Americas, Australia, and Japan!!

He conversed with monarchs and philosophers alike: Queen Victoria (who sought 18 private audiences with him and learnt basics of Yoga), Leo Tolstoy (who begged him not to leave), Albert Einstein (to whom he posed a mystical version of 1+1), and George Bernard Shaw (who made fun of his ease about punctuality to which Baba calmly replied, "You in the West are slaves of time; we live in Eternity.")

In his final decades, Shivpuri Baba lived in Nepal's Shivpuri Hills, where he became a quiet beacon of humility, discipline, and divine longing. His ONLY live interview is at the age of 135 to an earnest disciple of Gurjdieff. Dr S Radhakrishnan, the then President of India was a great fan of his and would visit him privately to seek blessings.

He shunned pictures and refused to get any biographies penned of his absolute blockbuster of a life!



What is "Right Life" in Indian Knowledge Systems?

Bhagavad Gita (3.35)

"Better one's own duty, though imperfect, than the duty of another well performed." Swadharma (one's right duty) is central to spiritual progress.

Upanishads

Teach that discipline of the body and senses to create the foundation for higher knowledge. Without it, the mind remains restless and unfit for truth.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

The very first limbs of Yoga are Yamas (restraints) and Niyamas (observances). Before meditation or Samadhi, life itself must become disciplined.

Vedantic Tradition

Dharma (right action) is the support of the cosmos. To live rightly is to align one's personal rhythm with the universal law.

Shivpuri Baba and the Tool of Right Life

Shivpuri Baba's lifelong teaching was simple yet profound: **Right Life is the Way to God.**

- Perform your necessary duties to society, family, and nation.
- Keep the mind fixed on God.
- Build a life on a foundation of physical, moral, and spiritual discipline.

He compared life without discipline to a shaky chair: if the legs are unsteady, you cannot sit in peace. Similarly, a life without order creates constant restlessness.

His daily counsel was:

- Eat and exercise only to maintain the body.
- Train the mind like a garden: plant good seeds, pull out weeds.
- Reduce unnecessary worldly duties; maximize God-contemplation.
- Give 10% of your income in service: one-third to culture, one-third to spirituality, one-third to the poor.

Even when offered high posts, like the Vice Chancellorship of Banaras Hindu University, he refused—"What use are posts to saints?" For him, Right Life was above all positions, wealth, or recognition.



The Interview at 135

When asked by journalist J.G. Bennett if he would change anything in his long life, Baba replied, "No. I will live just as I am living." Out of 145 global figures surveyed, he was the only one to say this. His life of Right Discipline needed no correction.

Dharma for him was everything. What use was earning money and having material desires, if not on the basis of right living. The goal of life was to realize God and if dharma is upheld while material duties are carried out, then God will be the outcome.

Real-life Applications of Swadharma for Holistic Healers

01

Daily Disciplines

Begin with physical (food, sleep, exercise), then moral (truth, service, restraint), then spiritual (prayer, meditation). This layering makes your inner practice stable. Your cup must be filled before filling anothers.

02

Swadharma First

Focus on your chosen path of service instead of comparing yourself with others. This prevents burnout and scattered energy.

03

Detach from Time

Shivpuri Baba reminded us: the modern man is enslaved by time; the wise live in Eternity. Let go of urgency—create pockets of timelessness in your day for prayer, silence, or meditation.

04

Give to Grow

His rule of giving 10% ensures you align wealth with dharma. Charity cleanses the heart and strengthens humility.

Reflection Prompt

Write down your Right Life Formula for today.

- Physical: How will I care for my body?
- Moral: What value will guide my interactions?
- Spiritual: Where will I pause to remember God?

Keep it simple, repeat daily, and notice how steadiness grows.

Closing Reminder  Shivpuri Baba lived 137 years, walking the globe, meeting world leaders and sages, yet he asked for no fame, no biography, no memorials. His message was clear: "Live Right Life. Do your duty. Keep your mind on God." Right Life is not about perfection, but about alignment—turning every action, big or small, into a step toward the Eternal.





Anandamayi Ma – The Tool of Surrender

Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982), whose name means "Joy-permeated Mother", was one of India's most radiant mystics. Born Nirmala Sundari Devi in Bengal, she exhibited spiritual states from childhood—often entering spontaneous trances and ecstatic states of bhava. Without formal training in scriptures, she became a fountain of wisdom, revered by sages, scholars, and householders alike.

People from all walks of life—Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, and the common villager—sought her darshan. She never claimed to be a guru; rather, she said she was simply a "child of God," reminding people that divinity is within them too.

Her most profound teaching was absolute surrender to the Divine.

What is Surrender in Indian Knowledge Systems?

Bhagavad Gita (18.66)

"Abandon all dharmas, and surrender unto Me alone. I shall liberate You from all sins; do not grieve." Here surrender (śaraṇāgati) is not weakness—it is complete trust in God's will. Whatever the outcome will be, only thing in our control is our action.

Yoga Sutras (Ishvarapranidhana)

Patanjali lists surrender to God as the highest form of 2nd limb of Ashtanga or 8 fold path of Yoga- the Niyama (observances)—when we give up ego-control, the Divine intelligence flows through us effortlessly.

- **Bhakti Tradition:** Saints like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu emphasized Atmanivedana (self-offering) as the culmination of devotion. To be "like a leaf blown by the wind of God" was seen as the highest freedom.
- **Upanishads:** The Katha Upanishad speaks of the soul as a passenger on a chariot, with God as the ultimate charioteer. Our surrender is trusting that charioteer fully.



Anandamayi Ma and the Tool of Surrender

Anandamayi Ma embodied surrender so naturally that even her disciples marvelled at the level of non-identification with the small self. She would often say: **"All is He, nothing is mine."**

- She did not plan her travels; she went wherever she felt guided, calling herself "like a leaf in the wind of His will."
- She accepted everything—praise, criticism, comfort, hardship—with the same childlike smile.
- Once, when devotees asked her to bless them with liberation, she said gently, "I am not the doer. I am His instrument. He alone blesses."

She never identified herself as a teacher: "I have no particular path. Whichever path you take sincerely, I will walk with you on it." This was surrender itself—not imposing, only flowing.

Stories of Surrender

The Poison Incident

Once, jealous villagers tried to poison her food. She ate it calmly and smiled, unaffected. When devotees panicked, she said, "Why fear? If He wishes this body to live, it will live. If He wishes it to go, it will go. Where is the problem?"

The Marriage

Married at 12, she later told her husband that her true marriage was to God. Her husband, instead of resisting, became her disciple. This reversal was only possible through her complete surrender, which dissolved ego and created divine trust.

Darshan to All

Unlike many saints who preferred solitude, Ma surrendered to the flow of humanity—allowing thousands daily to touch her feet, ask questions, or simply sit in silence.

Real-life Applications for Holistic Healers

- **Let Go of Control:** Not every client session will go "as planned." Instead of forcing outcomes, invite the Divine to work through you. A 'centering' or a spiritual practice before a session is supremely helpful- even 5 minutes.
- **Hold Equanimity:** Like Anandamayi Ma, accept both success and struggle with the same calm. This reduces burnout and builds inner strength.
- **Trust Timing:** Healing unfolds in God's time, not ours. Surrendering to the process prevents frustration. How do we know the larger picture? We just don't. We are limited by the 5 senses and space and time as a concept.
- **Be an Instrument:** Remember, we are not the ultimate healers—Grace flows through us. We are the water the gardenhose created!

Reflection Prompt

Write down one area of your life where you feel anxious or overly controlling. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and repeat: "I surrender this to the Divine. May Thy will be done." Journal what shifts within you after this practice.

Closing Reminder  Anandamayi Ma showed that surrender is not passivity—it is dynamic trust. When the ego releases its grip, we become free, light, and filled with divine joy. Her life whispers to us: "Be as you are, but let God move through you." In surrender, we discover our true power.



Shrii P.R. Sarkar (Anandamurti) – The Tool of Service (Seva)

I don't believe I have yet come across someone as accomplished as PR Sarkar- ever. These are probably 1/4th of his accomplishments- Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921–1990), lovingly known as Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, was one of the most visionary saints and thinkers of modern India. A philosopher (wrote over 200 books), spiritual master (founder of Ananda Marga in 130 countries), social reformer(Founder of Prout society and Neo-Humanism), linguist (added new letters to the Bengali language), and composer of over 5,000 devotional songs (Prabhat Samgiita), he was also an Economist, a Botanist (collected more samples than known in Botanical plants), an Astrologer and Palmist, a Tantra practitioner, and a Guru.

Infact he initiated Subhash Chandra Bose into meditation, right before Bose was arrested. In Jail, he meditated profusely and is said to have founded the Indian National Army due to the clarity he received through these spiritual practices!

He believed that spirituality cannot be separated from service to humanity. For him, meditation and social upliftment were two wings of the same bird. His mission was rooted in the idea that true spirituality blossoms only when expressed as selfless service.

What is Service (Seva) in Indian Knowledge Systems?



Bhagavad Gita (3.19)

"Therefore, without attachment, perform your duty for the sake of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme." Service is karma yoga—selfless action that purifies the heart and leads to union with the Divine.



Upanishads

The Isha Upanishad reminds us to enjoy the world through renunciation and service, seeing all beings as expressions of the same Self.



Bhakti Tradition

Saints have taught that serving others is serving God. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu declared: "Jīve daya, nāme ruci, Vaiṣṇava-sevā"— compassion to beings, love of the Divine Name, and service to saints.



Modern Psychology

Research now shows that altruistic service increases wellbeing, reduces stress, and even strengthens immunity—validating what Indian seers always taught. Swami Sarvapriyananda of the Vedanta Society of New York says, service is the fastest way to cleanse an impure heart- then meditation etc becomes easier.



The Living Legacy of Service

Sarkar's life was one of tireless service:

- He trained thousands of spiritual teachers (Acaryas) who dedicated their lives to uplifting communities across the world, including in war-torn countries.
- He encouraged the creation of free schools, relief programs, and community kitchens wherever Ananda Marga spread.
- He emphasized "Service to humanity is service to God."

One of his striking teachings was that service must be done without condescension—not from a place of superiority, but as equals. He said: **"When you serve, do not think you are doing a favour. See the Divine in those you serve."**

Stories of Service



Real-life Applications for Holistic Healers

- **Balance Inner and Outer Work:** Meditation deepens our capacity to serve, and service deepens meditation. Both must go hand-in-hand. One without the other will not have the same effect.
- **See Clients as Divine:** Approach each person not as a "case" or "problem" but as a reflection of the Divine. This transforms the healing relationship. The therapeutic relationship is 70% of the healing done.
- **Small Acts Matter:** Service is not only big projects—it could be listening deeply, cooking for someone in need, sharing money, or sharing knowledge freely.
- **Protect from Burnout:** Sarkar reminded that seva done in remembrance of God does not drain us—it renews us.

Reflection Prompt

Write down 3 small acts of service you can do this week—1 for your family, 1 for your community, 1 for a stranger. After doing them, reflect: "Did I feel lighter or heavier after serving?"

As we conclude this journey through the lives of these remarkable saints, remember that their footsteps are not behind us, but always ahead of us, showing the way forward. Each tool—humility, right life, surrender, service, and fearlessness—awaits your practice, your integration, your transformation.

May their wisdom guide your healing work and illuminate your path to the Divine.



Video discussions on the Saints

If you enjoyed this pdf, Nehha takes you on a deep dive on the lives of some of these Masters as a part of an upcoming book series. The video recordings can be watched [here](#).

If you enjoy evidence-based tools for healing your clients and others- visit us at [The Holistic Shala](#) to be a part of a community that is like-hearted and like-minded.

