



Rose Petals

Extracts from
Sri Babuji's Satsangs

The Longest Longing

GURUJI: My favourite parable is the one about the *sadhu* in the forest. I have told it to you many times before in satsang, do you remember it?

There was an old man who yearned in his heart for the *sakshatkar* (vision) of Lord Vishnu. So, as explained in the *sastras*, he went into a forest, sat under a tree and started doing *tapas*: controlling his senses, focussing, concentrating, and contemplating "Who am I?"—Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, all these things he was doing. [Guruji laughs] He was very sincere, and all that he had heard and read, he was practising. One day the divine minstrel, Narada – the angel Gabriel of Hindu mythology [Guruji laughs] – was going that way and happened to see this fellow. Somehow, intuitively, Narada liked him, so he approached him and asked, "Man, who are you, where have you come from, and what are you doing?" The *sadhu* was so happy to have the *darshan* of such a great sage as Narada that he explained everything to him. Narada was pleased and said, "Okay, do you have any wish?" The *sadhu* replied, "O Narada, I don't have any wish, I have only one request: O great sage, next time when you go to Vaikunta, the abode of Vishnu, just please ask him when he will give me *darshan*. Afterwards, whenever possible, please return and give me his answer." Narada said, "Oh, it's a small request. Sure, I'll take care of it, don't worry about it." And he went away.

Some years passed and Narada clean forgot about it. Then one day he happened to visit Vaikunta and was chatting with Vishnu, when suddenly he remembered the old man and his question. So he asked Vishnu, "O Lord, I forgot to ask you something. Long ago I met a poor *sadhu*, and he was doing very intense *tapas*. He was a sincere, honest man, and I liked him very much. He had a small question: when are you going to give him *darshan*?" And Lord Vishnu said, "I'm sorry, Narada, I'm afraid it will be a long time – so long that he will have to take as many births as there are leaves on the tree under which he is sitting. That means some thousands of births he'll have to undergo before I give him *darshan*." Then Narada said, "Oh, I'm very sorry, because that fellow is a very nice chap." "What to do?", said Vishnu, "It's his *prarabdha* (karma), I can't help it." "Yes, my Lord, as you wish," Narada said, and he went away.

After some time, Narada happened to be going again in the forest on the same path near the *sadhu*. He saw the man, but didn't want to give him the sad tidings. So he was just passing



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him by, ignoring him. But the man saw Narada and immediately ran up to him saying, "What is this, great sage? Why are you so cross with me? What wrong have I done, that last time without my asking, you came and gave me your *darshan*, but today you are just ignoring me and going away?" Narada replied, "Oh, it's nothing, nothing. I'm not angry with you. I was just busy. How are you? Is everything going well?". "Everything is going well," the *sadhu* replied, "but what about my question?" Then Narada said, "Don't worry about it, you're doing well. Go ahead, Lord Vishnu will definitely grace you – his grace is always with you. Go ahead, you're doing well." But the *sadhu* insisted, "No, no, O Narada, please answer my question." Again Narada replied, "Don't worry about the answer, come on, go ahead!" He didn't want to discourage that fellow by telling him what Lord Vishnu had said. But the man insisted and insisted, so at last Narada had no other choice. He said, "What can I say, poor fellow, Lord Vishnu said you won't get his *darshan* until you take as many births as there are leaves on this tree you're sitting under."

As he was saying this Narada thought, "Oh my god, this man will have a heart attack when he hears this!" But to his great surprise, when the man heard it he started dancing with joy, shouting in ecstasy, "Oh, I'm so happy! Lord Vishnu promised me *darshan*! He's going to give me *darshan*!" and he was dancing and dancing.

As he was dancing, at that moment Lord Vishnu came down from Vaikunta and gave him *darshan*. At this, Narada was even more surprised and put out [Guruji laughs]. He sincerely wanted Lord Vishnu to give him *darshan*, but after telling the man it wouldn't happen for a thousand births, Narada now felt like a fool when Vishnu suddenly appeared before him! [Guruji laughs]

Afterwards, when Lord Vishnu and Narada had gone away together, Narada couldn't help complaining to the Lord, "What is this you have done, my Lord? You have made a fool of me in front of him! First you told me you wouldn't give him *darshan* for thousands of births and I told him that. Then suddenly you gave him *darshan*: now what will he think of me!?" [Guruji laughs] Then Vishnu said, "What can I do, Narada? According to his *prarabdha karma*, he was due to undergo that many births before I could give him *darshan*. But when you told him I would give him *darshan*, even after so many births, the mere promise of my *darshan* made him so happy that in his state of ecstasy the karma of all those years of waiting was burnt up in a moment, and he was ready – that is why I gave him *darshan* immediately. It is not in my hands, what can I do? [Guruji laughs] I didn't mean to fool you, it just happened like that. I am helpless."

See! Again, this is the real prototype of what was said in the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, and the story [in the *Sri Sai Satcharita*] about Das Ganu's maid and the sari in the box. Like the sari in the box, the promise of *darshan* in this story could be taken in two ways: normally, people would say, "Oh, my god, Vishnu's grace is not at all there – a thousand more births? What kind of love is it? [Laughter] So many births – can't he burn up all this karma? Is He not capable of doing it? [Guruji laughs] But no, his attitude is so positive that instead he shouts with joy, "Yes! He's going to give me *darshan*! Oh, I'm so happy!"

That ecstatic happiness and positive attitude is the key to *darshan*. That is why, if anybody puts the question to me and asks, "Why does it take so many births, what makes the process so long?" – there's no answer to it. It could be this minute, or it may take forever. "How long?" is a meaningless question. How much *longing* you have, is how long. So how long means how *long*, that is the answer. It is as long as your long-ing, your long-est longing.

It is a beautiful story. It tells hundreds, even millions of things. It is worth volumes of *sastras* to me, that one story. Even though it is a story, and a fiction, it doesn't matter. What it conveys to me is the essence of the *sastras*.



DEVOTEE: Guruji, does longing end when we reach our goal?

GURUJI: In one way yes, but as I told you, it is not only that. That is why you see even Ramana Maharshi expressed longing, even the *gopis* expressed longing. What kind of longing is it? Even Baba used to dance, singing songs of longing, expressing longing. Some of Kabir's songs express his longing for Ram, for the *darshan* of Ram. Do you think Baba or Ramana hadn't fulfilled their goal? Their longing was fulfilled, but still they wanted to express it in this way. Expressing it in this way is longing, but it is a different kind of longing.

DEVOTEE: Guruji, we know that other great saints like Mirabai and Ravidas also wrote poetry expressing their longing and separation from their Beloved. Is there a commonality in their experience?

GURUJI: Yes, there is. But it is not just longing, there is something else in it – there is joy, it is a joyous longing. It is the experience of union expressed in separation. Do you understand?

DEVOTEE: Guruji, is fulfilment endless? Even after reaching the goal is there longing for more and more fullness?

GURUJI: Yes, for more and more. The whole path should be happy, that is what I am saying. If anybody just frets and fumes, they are not on the right path.

DEVOTEE: Isn't there sometimes a sense of suffering in longing?

GURUJI: I don't call it suffering. Sometimes longing feels to us like suffering, but it is not actually suffering. It has an aesthetic joy also. I think I explained this concept many times before, the difference between actual suffering and longing. And how that longing gave rise to so much beautiful poetry.

In order to describe the joy of the experience of union, Ramana Maharshi wrote *Arunachala Padikam*. If you read it, it is just an expression of his longing, of his separation. But was he really separated from the Self? No! Separation is the way he describes and expresses his experience of union, because the state of union cannot be described. So the experience of union is described in terms of separation; it is in separation that you get the sense of union, because words come in separation only, when there are two. He expresses so much the longing, the difficulty, and the suffering that comes from separation, that you can imagine how much joy there is in union. It is like explaining how much you are starving when you haven't had a meal in three days. When eating food again the first thing that you say is, "My God, for three days I haven't had a good meal!" See, you think of the meals you missed, not the meal you're having right now, in the moment. In order to say how much you're enjoying this meal, what you say is how much you suffered without it. That says how much you are enjoying it.

So the experience of union cannot be described in words. Therefore the saints don't make the mistake of trying to describe or explain it in words of union. Instead, they describe it in terms of separation and longing. In the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, see how the *gopis* are longing for Krishna. And in the case of Ramana Maharshi, see how he is longing for Arunachala. Baba also used to sing songs of Kabir, songs which expressed his longing for the Satguru or Ram. That is the only way to express union because union itself cannot be directly described.

So there is a joy in this kind of separation. Think of it as poetry. Of course, Ramana was describing union in terms of separation because he had the experience of union, but even if you are still longing for union, the very idea, the very thought of your object, should give you happiness. What gives unhappiness is not being able to get it fully, so there is happiness and unhappiness – both are there. It is a very peculiar thing, it is the paradox of love.



DEVOTEE: Everything takes on a sweetness when you are present with us, Guruji. How can we hold on to that when you are not with us?

GURUJI: Try to hold on to it. Try to grasp it, to bring it back. Try again, struggle again! That struggling should be there – real experience comes out of it. In Baba's *arati* they say, "*Mi bu-dato bhavabhaya dohi uddhara*" (I am drowning in the ocean of worldly desires) [*Kakad Arati, Padh XIII*]. How you gasp for breath when you are drowning, that kind of gasping should be there – "Haah! haah! haah!" Then you will get the help, Baba will save you. And then you'll know the real value of just one breath. Now you are breathing, but you don't know the value of just one breath, which you have had millions of times. But then you will know the value of a single breath: "Haa-ahh, my God!". Again you forget, then again you know the value, until with every breath you come to know the value of breathing. Then every breath becomes so valuable and so blissful and so happy and so fulfilled. Then we breathe fulfilment – we inhale and exhale fulfilment – we'll become like that.



DEVOTEE: Guruji, we long for Baba's presence. How can we feel it more and more?

GURUJI: If you really need Baba's presence he will give it, and he's been giving. And if you look back, you will see how sometimes, even when his presence is given, we don't take it. We ask for something, and when it is given we don't recognize it, and so we miss it. But Baba's presence is there always.

If you want his presence and you are really honest, earnest and sincere – call! That is the only way. Call, call, call! Do it! Then you'll get it. After I told you this last time, how many hours have you been sitting and calling? If I were in your place, I would sit a minimum of 8 to 10 hours, calling and calling and calling. "Guruji said, 'Call! and it will be given!' He has given assurance. So come on, let us do it." Like this, let the longing grow, let the desire grow, let the obstacles diminish which come in the way of our longing and fulfilment. Then you'll get it. Baba won't leave anybody, I tell you. Nobody will go empty-handed!



Guruji's voice

