



Rose Petals

Extracts from Sri Babuji's Satsangs

Helplessness & Grace



Shirdi, 1999

DEVOTEE: What is the remedy for the sense of helplessness we sometimes feel?

GURUJI: To seek help! [Guruji laughs]

DEVOTEE: What do you mean by seeking help?

GURUJI: When you really experience your helplessness, then you'll want to come out of that condition, that state of helplessness. The desire to come out of helplessness is seeking help. Even if you don't know it, you have already been seeking help. Inevitably you seek, and when help is given you have the experience that you've succeeded in overcoming your own helplessness. It will remove your sense of frustration when you gain that help.

DEVOTEE: Does the state of helplessness bring us closer to Baba?

GURUJI: Helplessness creates a greater need for Baba, and once we need something, getting it is more fulfilling.

DEVOTEE: Does it mean we stop feeling helpless?

GURUJI: Yes, we stop feeling helpless. Then we start feeling 'help-full', full of Baba, because Baba is the help.



DEVOTEE: What is the best way to seek help, to seek grace?

GURUJI: To have the strong desire, the need for help. For instance, if you are drowning and you don't know how to swim, what will you do? You'll simply grab whatever comes to you. There's no dilemma, you don't think, "Will this stick take me to shore – is it strong enough?" No, you simply grab it!

Read the last song of the morning *arati* to Baba and you will know how to seek help. "*Mee budato bhavbhaya dohee udharaa!*" [Oh Sadguru, make haste to save us promptly!]¹ Fortunately, we have such good help in Baba, but the thing is, we think we don't need it that much, so we always

¹ *Arati Sai Baba*, by Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji, Saipatham Publications, 1e 1996, p.22 (under reprint).

keep him in reserve. "Okay Baba, I know you can help me, it's good. Stay for some time, then whenever I need your help, I'll ask for it. And thanks for your offer!" [Guruji laughs]

You have needed many things in your life and you have asked for help. Nobody taught you how to seek that help. As a baby you sought help from your mother. Who taught you how to seek help from your mother? You have travelled such long distances from your countries to come here and you would have sought help on so many different levels. Who taught you those things? First, you should have the need, then the need itself will teach you how to seek. It will teach you the method, the technique. Don't seek techniques – so-called 'unique', 'best' or 'advanced' techniques – there's nothing in techniques. Once we have the need we invent our own technique. "Necessity is the mother of invention." And that technique which we invent for ourself, for our own good, that is the best technique.

I'm not advising you always to seek help. First, try to get it on your own, that's the best. If you can't do it, then there's no other choice – you have to seek help. So there's no question of whether a guru or help is needed or not. No, it's not like that. If you really need help, seek and resort to a Sadguru. It's not your choice: there is no other choice. Until you have that state of 'there's no other choice for me', you still have some hope. "Yes, I still have some resources, why don't I try them." Then do it! First, exhaust your resources. If you succeed, good. Then it is your own earning. Good. If you can't do it, what else can you do but seek help?



DEVOTEE: I'm always fearful about choosing my own path and making mistakes by not choosing the right thing. What can be done about this fear?

GURUJI: You only choose what you want, the goal, the object. And if you're fearful about how to get it and don't know the way, then a Sadguru like Baba comes into the picture. If you know how to get it, good, go ahead on your own and try to realize your goal. But if you have fear and feel you don't have sufficient resources and don't know whether what you're doing is right or not, then, when you are so helpless, seek help from Baba. Help for what? Help to achieve what you want, what you need, your personal goal.



DEVOTEE: What emotion places so much importance on choice?

GURUJI: It's your basic emotion of wanting to get rid of your state of helplessness and of always being subject to making inevitable choices. It's a kind of longing for freedom, freedom from the inability to choose.

DEVOTEE: Then the desire to be free from helplessness is actually quite a powerful emotion.

GURUJI: Yes, it is a very powerful emotion. It's at the basis of our whole being. Our very existence is choiceless, beyond our control. Come on, ask anyone this question, "Why are you living?" The only answer they can give is, "Because we haven't died so far!" What a sad state of affairs that our own existence is so helpless that we are helplessly living! It is beyond our choice. From that state of helplessness everything else springs – our trying to overcome it and to free ourselves from that sad condition.

The book of life has been given to us by nature, and we simply turn the pages without understanding a word. We don't even know by whom or why it is written, or how many pages the book contains.

DEVOTEE: You said that we need to find a more powerful emotion that pulls all these things to-

gether but that, too, is choiceless, just something that comes on one of the pages.

GURUJI: Yes, that also is choiceless but it frees you from your state of choicelessness. When you are turning the pages of the book without understanding a word, what actually helps you? You need someone who will teach you the meaning of what is written in the book – the language, the alphabet, the grammar and syntax of it. Then you'll understand your book of life and appreciate it.



DEVOTEE: Because I don't believe I'm helpless I don't really look for help. What can I do about this?

GURUJI: You have to experience your helplessness fully. People experience it in different ways and get help in different ways. How they seek help and how it comes varies. Buddha tried and tried, but then he came to a certain stage where he just experienced helplessness and stopped all endeavours, all efforts, and sat down beneath the Bodhi tree. He gave up. He gave up everything, everything he had been doing, and then that state – fulfilment, nirvana, 'the answer' or whatever you want to call it – immediately came to him. Even the Buddha had to experience helplessness, a giving up. But our case is different. Our endeavour, our effort, our need is not so strong, and so our need for help also is not so strong. We even need somebody to show us how helpless we are! That is our state. [Laughter] Or, if we are like the Buddha, and give up, good. After his awakening he said about the path, "*Buddham saranam gacchami*" [I take refuge in the Buddha]. To which Buddha he surrendered we do not know. It's not historically recorded whether he surrendered to his own help, to his own helplessness, or to whatever else it was. It need not be in this form, it can happen in many different ways, but what the Buddha meant was, to express our helplessness and to seek help at the feet of a Buddha, a Sadguru. One who seeks refuge is one who experiences that helplessness.

This is what we also see in Baba's life – how he experienced his helplessness – but he expressed it in a different way. He used to say, "I'm a slave of Allah". See how totally dependent he was on Allah. And Ramana Maharshi expressed it in another way. He experienced his helplessness as an experience of death, the most helpless state. There you want to hold on to yourself, your own life, but you are helpless in keeping it. It goes away – that is death. He expressed his helplessness as death. They all experienced that state of helplessness in different ways and sought help in different ways. What helped them was also different. It's very personal. So, again I tell you, experience your helplessness, seek help, get the help and experience the help all in your own way.



DEVOTEE: Can we actually enjoy our helplessness if there is somebody there to help?

GURUJI: This so-called helplessness is, in fact, not really helplessness. It is experienced differently. Being grown-ups, it is very difficult for you to understand that. Just think about the case of a small child, a month-old baby. A baby is really helpless: she can't walk, she can't protect herself or take her own food, she can't do anything. Her whole survival is dependent on the mother or her caretaker. But see how happily a child plays and enjoys.

Does the mother say, "You should be ashamed of your helplessness, child! You can't make your own food and for everything you're dependent on somebody! How come you're so happy?!" [Guruji laughs] As long as she has the warmth and love of the mother, this so-called helplessness ceases to be helplessness. We are grown-ups but in the case of helplessness we are all simply children and we need a mother, a caretaker, who can give us that feeling of protection, security and care. Once we have it, we cease to be sad about our own helplessness because in fact we feel we are being helped. Not that you enjoy helplessness, it is just experienced in a different way. What you enjoy is the help.

And that is exactly the role of Baba, why a Sadguru is needed. Without that, one can tread the path, but to most of us, it is just like cutting off the branch we are sitting on.



DEVOTEE: If I still feel helplessness after I've prayed and asked for Baba's help, what am I to do? Do I simply pray and wait?

GURUJI: I have told you many times that the very experience of helplessness *is* asking for help. You need not formalize or verbalize it. There is nothing you can do. If there is anything you can do, you are not helpless. "I am helpless, what am I to do?" – this is a meaningless question! So, if you can do something, you are not helpless. It's because you can't do anything that you are helpless.

DEVOTEE: Then what can I do?

GURUJI: [Guruji laughs] You can't 'do' – you can only experience the helplessness, realize how helpless you are. Many people are helpless but they don't accept it, that's the problem. What I'm asking you to do is, try to accept, realize and self-actualize your helplessness, that is enough. Baba will take care of what needs to be done, what you'll do and how the help is to be given. And there is no way that you can help Baba to help you! [Laughter]

DEVOTEE: But is it necessary to verbalize, to actually ask for help?

GURUJI: If it gives you satisfaction, yes. If it is in the process of accepting and realizing your helplessness, it's good, there's nothing wrong in verbalizing it. It becomes a kind of ritual, one of the expressions of your helplessness, that's all.



DEVOTEE: Guruji, are you helping me? And, if so, why don't I feel it more?

GURUJI: First you ask, "Are you helping me?" Yes, I am helping, but you think I am not. Then, if you think I'm not helping, I say, have you really asked for my help? If you have, what help have you actually asked for? What sort of help do you want? And, if at all I give you that help, are you ready to take it? Ask me for that help which you can receive. It's so clear. I don't think there's any need for philosophy here.

The problem is, people are afraid to ask for help. First, we should realize that we need help. I'm taking it one step further: do you *really* need help? I would advise you first to try to get it without anybody's help. Strive to get it yourself. If, after trying, you say, "I'm sorry, Guruji, I can't help myself. You have to help me," then I am ready to help – but then you should take it! The next thing is, our ego pops up and says, "Ah, I don't want to take your help, I can help myself. Anyway, why do I need help? Maybe I can do it myself if he gives a little push!" [Guruji laughs] And even if a push is given, we think, "Maybe it's not really a push. I doubt very much whether he's actually pushing me, maybe I'm only imagining it!" [Laughter]

First of all what is needed is clarity, absolute clarity that you can't help yourself. That is the qualification for seeking help. Then, if the help is given – and it will be given, one hundred percent sure – you should take it. In all these matters, why people fail, why they have fear and confusion, is because they lack clarity.



GURUJI: If you really realize you can't help yourself then you seek help, without any reservation.

You don't ask, "Could you give, could you advise, could you ...?" This is no way to ask! Instead, you need to demand, "I don't have, give me! I'm begging you, I'm standing before your door like a beggar, a beggar among beggars!" With that sincerity, with such openness and need, you should ask.



GURUJI: Seeking help should not be accompanied by a sense of misery or frustration. It is in the state of utter helplessness that you will experience the help. Helplessness itself paves the way to feel the help and then you live with the sense of help, not helplessness. You experience being full of help, a happiness. Then it is positive, it is blissful, it is fulfilling. You are always in need of help and Baba is always there to give it.



Guruji's voice 

