



# Rose Petals

Extracts from Sri Babuji's Satsangs

## Desires: Obstacles or Stepping Stones to Fulfilment?

DEVOTEE: When emotions are harmonized and one feels fulfilled, does one still have desires?

GURUJI: No, there isn't any experience of desire. Fulfilment is experienced as the absence of desire; the absence of desire is fulfilment. Because desire always infers some kind of lack, a void or emptiness, that has to be filled. When it is completely filled and we can honestly say, "What else could I possibly need?" then that is fulfilment.

It's like the account of the woman who came to Bhagavan and said, "Bhagavan, I don't want anything, only moksha, all my other desires are fulfilled." Bhagavan said, "Mmm, yes, yes." Again she repeated, "I don't have any other desires, please just give me moksha now, I must be going!" Bhagavan again replied, "Mmmm," that's all. Then she left the hall. The moment she left he burst out laughing, holding his belly and rocking on the sofa. The other devotees in the hall couldn't understand it and wondered why Bhagavan was laughing like that. They asked, "Bhagavan, why are you laughing at her request? What's wrong with it? We have also come for moksha." Then Bhagavan said, "If one truly has the state of no desires, of truly not wanting anything, then what remains is only moksha – freedom itself. What is there then for me to give her?"



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GURUJI: It's a contradiction when someone says, "First, free yourself from all desires, give up your attachments, transcend all these things and come to me with a clear, quiet mind. Then you are eligible and I'll give you mukti!" If he's already free of desires, what is there to give?! [Guruji laughs] That is why if anybody speaks to you like this, don't believe him.

As long as one has desires, the Sadguru must come down to the seeker's level, know what he is seeking, and then be able to give it. If you want material things, yes, he is ready! If you want emotional things, ok, ready; if spiritual things, yes, ready! But to say, "Ah, I specialize only in mukti! Don't talk to me about anything else. [Laughter] If you leave everything and come to me, I will help you." Nowadays, this is what we hear. Bhagavan would laugh at it.

And that is what Sai Baba also says: “I give to my devotees what they ask for, until they ask me for what I want to give them.” He never told them what he wanted to give. He simply said it like that. People come to Baba with many desires, but all are equal in his eyes, there is nothing higher or lower. He comes down and fulfils everyone at his own level, takes them by their hand and guides them up to his level. Not that he’s sitting on the top of the hill, urging us, “Come on up! If you come here to me, I’ll show you the whole mountain!”



DEVOTEE: Is there any way to strengthen the desire for mukti?

GURUJI: That the guru will do. He has his own way of doing things. He exerts his influence and creates circumstances in such a way that our desires are automatically brought to the surface and fulfilled – rather than be suppressed or indulged – and once they are fulfilled they lose their pull. This is the core teaching of Sai Baba. His path uses the natural tendency of the mind. He fulfils our desires; he doesn’t ask us to give them up, or destroy them. He doesn’t say, “Desires are the cause of misery so try to kill them!” or “Mind is the source of all ignorance (*ajnana*), so erase the mind!” If we were able to erase it, why should we come to him? It is because we are not able to do it, that he is needed. He gives us the strength, offering his hand, and he leads us along the path, all the way to the end. When we fulfil our desires by our own effort, they may intensify or give rise to more desires. But when Baba fulfils them, he does so in such a way that our nature is influenced in the right manner and the needed changes come about. There is no separation between the material and the spiritual; there is no struggle, no fighting, no sense of guilt. We need not feel, “I am unworthy, I am a sinner, I have all these worldly attachments, so how can I touch the holy feet of Sai Baba?” There is nothing like that.

People usually think that spirituality is about giving up all worldly desires and endeavours, and thinking only of so-called spiritual goals: moksha, nirvana, heaven, or whatever you want to call it. But Baba never asked us to give up all these things. It may look unattractive and un-Vedantic and un-spiritual, and some people may think “What is this? There is no need to give up worldly things? What kind of spirituality is that?” If spirituality means what is not worldly, then, in that sense it is not. [Guruji laughs] It is a path of fulfilment that leads to fulfilment, not a path of suffering. The cause of our misery is unfulfilled desires, and so, by fulfilling them we get happiness. When we realize that these desires are being fulfilled *through* him, that he’s the one who makes our fulfilment possible, then naturally we start loving him: it is not an effort. Spontaneously, effortlessly, naturally, we are drawn onto the path of love. And then, all those things which are usually considered obstacles on the spiritual path become stepping stones to our fulfilment.

So nothing obstructs a Sai devotee. And the very realization that there are no obstructions gives such a sense of security. Otherwise, if we think, “Oh, my God! We have to give up so many things!” – it can become a monster, a spiritual monster! [Laughter]



DEVOTEE: Guruji, once Sri Ramana got his state of ecstasy, he remained in it, while some people get it but do not stay in it. What does it take to stay in that state once it’s been experienced?

GURUJI: They may get some experience, but not exactly what Bhagavan got. They come out of it because of needs coming to the surface. Bhagavan had no other needs so he was able to remain in that state. If you have other pulls, you will have to cater to them.

DEVOTEE: So we have to be ready to receive that experience completely?

GURUJI: That is what happens. Here, we are trying to harmonize and integrate our pulls. By in-

creasing our love, our understanding, and our clarity about needs and goals, we try to diminish the pulls towards different things. Slowly, they are all put in a coherent order related to our main pull towards fulfilment. Over time, they lose their force as separate pulls, so that eventually only one overwhelming pull remains.

This is what happens here; people become normal after coming to me! [Guruji laughs] Not that they become exceptional or extraordinary, they become normal! [Laughter] It's the clash of different pulls and consequent lack of clarity that makes people not normal. There are certain pulls which we don't actually need, they're just reactions. For example, after an argument with someone, you feel a pull to go to Chennai and immediately order a taxi. You really have no need to go to Chennai but you just use it as a pretext to get away. It's not a real pull but a reflex action.

Many pulls are just reflexes. Initially, our mind is like a calm pond. The different impressions, relations, and the different sense objects are like stones thrown into the calm, stable waters of the mind. They produce ripples: the thoughts. The force that makes the water into ripples is emotion. One stone, and then another, and then another – like that, hundreds and hundreds of stones are thrown into the water, making thousands of ripples, and then the ripples all collide together, and in reaction form new ripples. Each stone, each pull, we perceive, carries the force of all the stones before it. We think, "I have a pull for my house, I have a pull for my daughter, for my son, for my husband, for money, for this, for that." But, in fact, each pull is backed up by a whole mixture of other pulls. So, it is very difficult to discriminate, to get clarity, to separate one pull from another.

What I'm trying to tell you is to throw this big stone – Baba – into the pond! Ker-splash! [Laughter] But it doesn't calm the ripples down, in fact, it overrides them. The pulls may still be there but now they're mixed up with the Baba pull. They form a wave and eventually dash against the shore, slowly recede, then they're gone. All I'm trying to do is, to toss in that big stone! I want to toss it in, but you're very careful, you catch the stone and throw it back! [Laughter]



DEVOTEE: The other day you used the analogy of a cloth drying in the sun to explain the effect of the Sadguru's presence on drying the pulls that fragment our desire for fulfilment. You said we only need to keep ourselves out on the line, drying in the sun of Baba's grace. But is there a technique we can practise to help us remain in the sun?

GURUJI: One technique can't help because we each have such different pulls, such different desires and patterns. Our being is not so simple, it is multi-faceted. People often think if they do *nama-japa* they'll get mukti, if they do Self-enquiry they'll get realization, or, if they do vipassana or some kind of meditation, they'll get nirvana. But it's not like that. People make the mistake of thinking they can get fulfilment through a technique. Techniques can help at a particular level and can cater to certain needs, but something has to be done that takes place on all levels of our being. And what finally happens is, we need not do: it is done by grace, and grace alone! There is no doubt about it. But in order to make ourselves receptive to grace, to experience grace fully, certain obstacles have to be removed. To identify these obstacles and remove them, we need to understand our own mind. What is actually obstructing us? Then, let us think about that. It is our patterns. For instance, why are you unable to sit quietly, focused, for even five minutes, if it is such a beautiful experience? You love to be in my presence and listen to satsang, but many people's minds are distracted. They can't constantly focus on what I'm saying. Maybe it is physical, because of a need for sleep, or maybe it is mental patterns. Suddenly, a sentence can trigger a thought or emotion and the mind wanders off to something you've read or heard of somewhere before. The mind makes a diversion and you miss five minutes of satsang while you're brooding about that.

So, we have to think about the structure of our mind. And mostly, what makes our mind so helpless, so weak and susceptible to the environment, is our patterns or habit energies, or what in Vedanta are called *vasanas*. Just think what our mind does, what it is comprised of. When a problem comes we try to think. We think that we are thinking, but mostly we are not thinking, we are



brooding. We're remembering something that happened in the past, or we're imagining what will happen in the future. Waves of thought, different thoughts, are coming and going, coming and going, but very rarely do we actually apply our minds and think. And all our decisions – whether something is good or bad, whether we have to do it or not, what to choose or not to choose – all these decisions depend upon our emotions, our likes and dislikes.

So, if we understand these dimensions of the mind, we can stop our habits and learn how to keep the mind clean so it won't obstruct our focus of energy, and stop us from keeping our cloth out in the sun to dry. This is where the so-called sadhanas and techniques can be used to remove the obstacles. These different things – meditation, concentration, group sharings, *niyamas*, and so on – work on that level only. The best way to remove a habit is by adopting another habit, just as we use a thorn to remove another thorn. You have the freedom to choose whatever makes you more and more focused on the object of your love. All these things come under the realm of keeping yourself in the sun, of putting your cloth out on the line. But, always remember, the drying is done by the sun, the Sadguru's grace.



GURUJI: If we are fortunate enough to have a Sadguru like Baba, we need not think of these practices. He knows where to give, what to give, how to give. Even a hundred years of practising mantra and tantra can't do what he can do in just a second! In just a second he can destroy a *vasana*, he can destroy a pattern! I'm not asking you to do anything, I'm just giving you some tips. It's only your patterns that come in the way of your experiencing the happiness Baba is giving. When they're removed, you'll experience the happiness more. You are getting it even now, but many people are not aware of it, and miss the enjoyment, the happiness, the thrill. So, whenever I say anything about removing difficulties or obstacles, I only want to make you aware of what you already have. I'm only showing you your passbook, how much is in your account [Guruji laughs]. You think you are poor and starving, not knowing you have so much on deposit. Just look at your passbook, and you'll see how much is deposited in your account.

