Rose Petals
Extracts from Sri Babuji's Satsangs

The Gap

Varanasi, 1995

GURUJI: My advice is to try to reduce the gap between what we think we are, what we say and what we do, otherwise it leads to hypocrisy and a lack of awareness of our actions. And what counts, what tells us who we really are, is what we do, not what we think or say. If you think about it, you'll come to know the gap or disparity between your actions and what you say.

For example, somebody says in satsang, "Guruji, I'd love to see you in Shirdi!" And of all the people, exactly that person is missing when I go to Shirdi. [Guruji laughs] It always baffles me. Exactly that person is missing! And you don't know what causes that discrepancy – whether it's concepts, pulls or impulses – usually, you don't even realize there is a discrepancy. Someone says, "I love to have your darshan during a big function when thousands of people come, it's so powerful." But exactly that person doesn't show up. [Guruji laughs] I'm not complaining or saying it is wrong or that they lose something. But I want you to see the gap. You think you want something but some subtle inner obstacle prevents you from following through. It is so subtle but, at the same time, it expresses itself so obviously on the outside. To an outsider – at least to me – the gap is so obvious, but to the person it is invisible. They may say, "What am I doing wrong? What is the obstacle? I can't see it." So what is needed is discrimination, discernment. Think deeply, enquire honestly! It's hard, it's difficult, like walking on a razor's edge. Or, as Baba said, it is like crossing Nanhe Ghat[1] on a buffalo. Unfortunately, Baba has given you this buffalo [Guruji points to himself, laughing], what can you do? And there are a lot of difficult Nanhe Ghats to cross.

Daily, I see umpteen examples and they are so obvious and conspicuous. I'm asking you to try to reduce the gap between what you think you are, what you say and what you do. Our actions should validate what we say – they are the fruit that show us what we are. As they say, you can know a tree by its fruit!

Try to focus on uniting what you think, say, and do – actualize what you are. Then, at least on that level, there will be self-realization. [Guruji laughs] When there is no gap, then we can grow.

1 Nanhe Ghat is a notoriously steep, almost impassable mountain pass in Maharashtra, India.

DEVOTEE: Guruji, I feel I'm a hopeless case because I seem so far away from my object of fulfilment and I'm wondering if these feelings of hopelessness can be transformed so they can become more helpful on the path.

GURUJI: Yes, this so-called hopelessness could be used to make yourself more hopeful, which would be then reflected in your actions, and could happen in different ways. What we say, that we should do: they should be one. The gap between what we say and what we do can be the reason for our hopelessness. Some people try to reduce the gap between their words and deeds; others give up entirely. If you really give up, then there's no question of a gap. [Guruji laughs] For those of you who are trying to reduce the gap, the crux of the whole matter is to unify what you think, say, and do – there should be no gap between them, this is what the scriptures say. Whatever we do, it should be done with the three *karanas* [causes] – thought, word, and deed. When these three become one, that is right action. Otherwise, hypocrisy grows and gives rise to so-called hopelessness and more hypocrisy.

GURUJI: Try to reduce the gap between your words and actions. If you can't change your actions, at least try to change what you say. For instance, instead of saying things like, "Guruji, I can't live without you. To be one day away from you, I will die!" Instead say, "No, it's not true, I can happily live away from you and, actually, if being with you doesn't interfere with a free lift in a car, or with the rent I've already paid in my hotel, that is, if everything is convenient and nothing else interferes, then being with you is valuable." Accept that! That will give you a lot of clarity and self-actualization, otherwise you'll go on deceiving yourself. One thing which we should shun at all cost is hypocrisy, not being honest with ourselves. Don't let yourself be ruled by hypocrisy!

GURUJI: I am not saying that earning money or having property is bad – it's okay, but accept it. Speak honestly, "Yes, I thought I was a very spiritual person and only wanted to do sadhana, but no, that is not true. What I really want is a piece of land, a good, comfortable house, and a sound bank balance with the means to clear my debts." That is what you really want. So, have the clarity to ask Baba for it and Baba will provide it for you. Then you'll be happy. There will be no gap, no clash, no conflict, no guilt, no hypocrisy – good!

DEVOTEE: What if someone needs worldly acceptance before seeking enlightenment?

GURUJI: Then he has to seek it, because his own abstract sense of fulfilment is pointing to that. If you tell him, "That is only a transient, temporary thing, there is nothing to it. There is something beyond it which you have to catch hold of," then his whole search becomes meaningless, because it is superimposed and artificial, since he is seeking something that he doesn't really need. But the person himself has to realize the futility of fulfilling these transient needs, then the search will become a real need for him. Otherwise, he is just imitating another seeker.

Buddha had the genuine need and he searched, but there is no point in simply imitating Buddha. Are you really struggling so much to know the mysteries of life and the world? If you are, then you are a seeker and that is your need. But don't say universally that this is everyone's need. How do you sense your own fulfilment? You have to start from there. And your needs may change, because your idea of fulfilment may change over time. If at every moment you are enquiring, "I want to concretize my abstract sense of fulfilment. How can I make it concrete? How to realize it?", then even

a small search, this so-called worldly search, becomes really meaningful. Otherwise, there will be a conflict. Some of the emotions you have inculcated and nourished will pull you toward the so-called spiritual, but most of your emotions will pull you toward the worldly. And that's where you stand. When it's not your real need, it's like putting the cart before the horse.

DEVOTEE: For some people it feels impossible to get the worldly things they seek.

GURUJI: So they have to try. If they turn to spirituality because they can't get the worldly things they seek, do you think that is real spirituality? It's even worse. Spirituality is definitely not a substitute for failing in the world. If they fail in worldly endeavours and turn to spirituality, as if it is easier or lesser than that, they will repeat the same thing they did in the world. In worldly matters, the success of the endeavour can be easily seen and we can't deceive ourselves, whereas in spiritual matters we can just go on in the name of a seeker and coin a respectable image. Our helplessness, our inefficiency or failure can be very cleverly covered over by the guise of a seeker. There is a possibility that one can deceive oneself, since spiritual success is only experienced internally by the seeker.

So, you should try first to get success in the world. If your sense of fulfilment, your desire is not fulfilled there, you will carry the sense of frustration more and more throughout your search, throughout your so-called seeking. I wouldn't call this real seeking.

GURUJI: Some people want to avoid work and have an easy life, and for that they need some pretext. And of all things, spirituality seems to be the best! [Laughter] So they are not obliged to feel, "I am lazy!" or "I don't have work!" In fact, they can feel even superior to those who are working. "Oh, these people are entangled in their attachments – to work, money, business, all these things. Look at us! How happily we are meditating!" [Guruji laughs] Of course, I'm speaking in general terms here.

Concerning the question of whether to renounce the world and dedicate one's life to the spiritual path, Bhagavan [Sri Ramana Maharshi] was very clear. One day a young man came to Bhagavan and asked him, "Bhagavan, I'm not interested in this world – in my work, studies, employment, marriage, children. I don't have a desire for all these things. I want to take *sannyas* and renounce the world. Please give me your blessings and permission to renounce the world." Bhagavan said, "No, young man, it is better to go back to your work and marry. I feel that is good for you." "No, Bhagavan, please excuse me, but I can't do it, I can't marry! I can't be in the world!" Again Bhagavan said, "No, that is not good for you. Go back to your work." After some time the young man got somewhat irritated and said, "You renounced the world when you were very young and came here and became a *sannyasin*. Now you are advising me not to do the thing which you yourself have done. Is there one dharma [law] for you and another for me? What is good for you, should you not also advise me to do?" Then Bhagavan replied, "When I left home I didn't ask anybody's permission."

It was so choiceless for Bhagavan – he had to leave. Such a man, who left like that – and we know how he was in Tiruvannamalai – he never booked a room or sought accommodation or boarding, hmm? Did he ask for dates and timings for meditation or think how fantastic it is to go on *giri pradakshina* or *parikrama* of the temple, or this or that? – nothing! When he came, even 24 hours a day were not sufficient for him to get absorbed in the Self. So, unless we get to that state where we can't extrovert our mind, there's nothing wrong with work, and, in fact, it helps.

GURUJI: People may think they can play the role of an advanced *sadhaka*, thinking, "I want mukti, I want nirvana, I want Self-realization." If you think you want to play this role – don't play it! Know your need. What do you really want? People say, "I want to know myself." But is it really troubling you that you don't know yourself? Do you really have a doubt about who you are? I don't think

most people have a doubt about themselves – they know who they are. Somebody has told them they are not what they think they are. "Ah!", you say, but it's only an idle curiosity, it's not a real need. If you really need to know, like Ramana Maharshi did, you'll know it. But is it your problem? Are you suffering day and night, losing sleep, not taking food, asking, "Who am I? Who am I?" If you really act according to your needs, then you don't play roles.

Don't focus on what to do in order to get enlightenment – what *japa* you have to do, what sadhana, what Self-enquiry, what meditation, contemplation, yoga. These all depend upon your genuine need and how honest you are. Otherwise, all these means will be nothing without honesty. Ramana Maharshi was honest. One minute of Self-enquiry, a fraction of a second of Self-inquiry he did honestly and he became realized. That honesty, that total integrity, is needed.

DEVOTEE: Is there a reality or a truth that isn't a concretization of our abstract sense of fulfilment?

GURUJI: Fulfilment is an experience. Who bothers about some abstract truth or reality? [Guruji laughs] When people really want to experience fulfilment, then what they experience is the truth. Now you are experiencing this unhappiness, this frustration, this lack of fulfilment, and now it is true. And if you think that you are already Brahman, that you are already fulfilled, then it's not true because it's not your experience. If it's true that you want to get rid of this unhappiness, if it's true that you make the effort and succeed in getting rid of it, then it's also true that what you experience then is fulfilment. Let your whole life be true, let it be based on truth. Why do you think that this experience is false and that the truth is written somewhere and has to be caught hold of? At different levels they are all truths. It is enough if you are truthful to your own seeking, not to somebody else's or to something else. Be truthful to your *own* effort of concretizing your abstract sense of fulfilment – then it's your own fulfilment!

DEVOTEE: What does it mean to live a courageous life?

GURUJI: In my view, the most courageous life to live is to face ourselves. Trying to know what we are, honestly, without any hypocrisy, without any self-deceit – that is the most courageous life. Courage is needed to climb Everest, but the real courage is needed to see the truth. To me, a Buddha is the really courageous man, not Edmund Hillary or Tenzing Norgay. Of course, they are also courageous in one sense, but the Buddha's was the real courage. Most people live the life of a coward, a timid person, unable to face the truth and get clarity. Everywhere timidity, timidity, timidity! Being always fearful of losing our life, we lose our ability to live. But to me that is not life at all. When it is merely 'survival', where is the life in it? Hmm?

DEVOTEE: How can we become more courageous?

GURUJI: By facing the truth! It's the most difficult thing to do – to face ourselves, to face our own hypocrisy. It's like this for most people. If at all anyone wants to get rid of anything, get rid of hypocrisy.

DEVOTEE: Guruji, the difficulty in facing ourselves is that we are so good at deceiving ourselves, at putting our masks in the way. Is it possible to say the most difficult direction to face is the true direction?

GURUJI: I am not talking about direction or anything, only simple questions. Know your own hypocrisy, it's not very complicated. The first thing is to be aware of what we do, what we say, and what we think we want. See the gap between these three and you will come to know.

Guruji's voice Click