

Rose Petals

SELECTIONS FROM SATSANGS WITH SRI BABUJI

Vol. 1



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Vol. 1



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SHIRDI CHENNAI HYDERABAD

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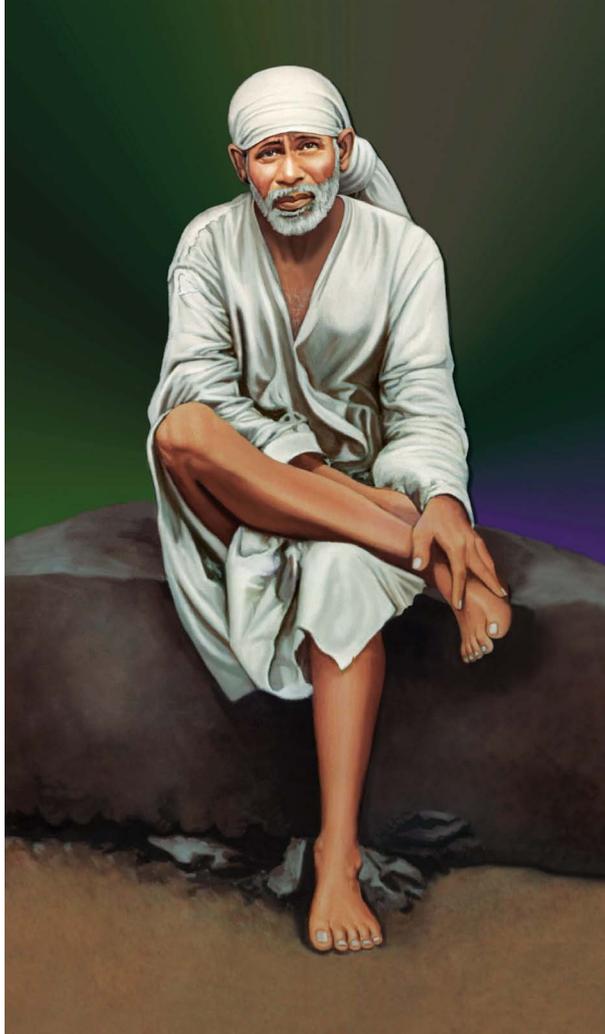
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*To Sai Baba of Shirdi
who gave us Guruji*



If you're not able to walk, Baba will carry you. He'll give you food, he'll give you water, and if you're sick, he'll give you medicine. He says, "Don't worry about anything – I'll take you to the destination!" To me, Baba fulfils my concept of a Satguru, not only in an abstract, mystical sense, but practically also, right from the simple thing of getting a berth on the train, up to getting the final experience.

– Sri Babuji

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All of us who have contributed to *Rose Petals* feel privileged to have had this opportunity to offer a small token of gratitude for all we have been given so freely by Guruji, who accepted nothing from us in return except our imperfect love and devotion. How fortunate we are to have known him and to have benefited from his wisdom and grace! Our wish is that, with the publication of this small book, others may also share in that grace and taste the incomparable joy of being in the presence of an genuine, enlightened Master.

NOTE ON TEXT AND SOURCES

The sources of the extracts forming each topic are given in the **Appendix of Sources** at the end of the text. They appear there numbered in the order in which they appear in the text for that topic, according to the number and date of the satsang, or its derivative source as given in the **List of Abbreviations**.

Foreign words and Sanskrit terms are defined in the **Glossary** at the back of the book. Words enclosed in square brackets in the text have been added by the editors.



INTRODUCTION

THE ENGLISH SATSANGS OF SRI SARATH BABUJI

When the charismatic south Indian saint and Satguru, Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji, known affectionately as “Guruji”, took *mahasamadhi* on 13th November, 2010, at the young age of 56, his devotees around the world mourned his untimely loss. The adored and beloved figure who had so dominated their lives by the purity of his love and peerless devotion to his *Satgurudeva*, the great Sai Baba of Shirdi (d.1918), was no more in his mortal frame. It seemed impossible to believe that his radiant spiritual presence would not continue, so vibrant and intensely alive had his living presence been. It was therefore equally heartening to realize that his *vardhate*, the subtle expansion of a saint’s presence which occurs when his body dies, was already taking place and was even then being widely felt.

At this momentous juncture, to honour Sri Babuji’s memory and to share his priceless teachings with devotees, it was decided to bring out selections from his English satsangs, unpublished up to then, in a monthly email format, each month

forming one topic, called *Rose Petals*. It was hoped that the “petals” of his words would evoke the fragrance of his presence and so help devotees transcend the ocean of grief aroused by his passing. The first issue of *Rose Petals* appeared on January 1st, 2011, less than six weeks after the moving scenes of his *mahasamadhi* ceremony were witnessed by thousands of bereaved devotees on 17th November 2010, in Shirdi, where his body was entombed in the location he had pointed out some time before.

The twelve monthly issues of *Rose Petals* that appeared initially in digital format have now been collected, re-edited and presented here bound in print format for more permanent reading, as *Rose Petals – Vol. 1*. This marks the first publication of Sri Babuji’s satsangs in English, with simultaneous publication of the text in Telugu, as *Sarathchandrikalu* (Moonlight Petals). It is hoped that Guruji’s original and insightful understanding of the nature of spiritual unfoldment will be of interest and benefit to a wide range of devotees and sincere seekers of truth.

The texts of *Rose Petals – Vol. 1* have been drawn almost entirely from Sri Babuji’s English satsangs, which took place gradually as Western devotees from countries around the world came to be with him in India. Naturally, they felt barriers of language and custom and were sometimes non-plussed by the unfamiliar devotional culture that surrounded Guruji, unlike anything in the West. They were yet undeniably drawn to him, attracted by the transparent purity of his love and the electrifying magnetism of his spiritual presence.

Understandably, they had their own questions to which they longed for answers, which only he could give. Guruji compassionately recognized their need and graciously responded, providing opportunities to be with him and have their questions answered in their own language. These meetings were the beginning of his English satsangs, of which eventually 140 were recorded over the years from 1993 to 2010, the last given a week before his passing. (Sri Babuji also gave numerous satsangs in Telugu, his mother tongue; their publication is happily anticipated.) The satsangs were recorded live, then transcribed and later coded into searchable extracts and entered into a specially-designed database. Extracts from various satsangs were then collated and edited to form the topics of *Rose Petals*. The final text reflects the vibrant speaking style of Guruji’s original satsang and some of his endearing, idiosyncratic ways of speaking English.

The format of satsangs was always spontaneous and essentially unannounced; they could take place any time, day or night, anywhere Guruji was. This meant one had to be there, on the spot, in the moment, to attend. This could, and often did, amount to waiting over many days and staying near Guruji even when he travelled, hoping for the rare chance of satsang. Though satsangs could happen at any time, the vast majority took place very late at night – Guruji’s daytime, as it were, since he was often up nights – and in a variety of places: in Shirdi, in Tirumala, by the sea on the coast south of Chennai, in Rishikesh, on the

Ganga in Varanasi, in Uttar Kashi, or on the roof of his simple flat in Tiruvannamalai, or even while travelling on boat or train. Usually no more than thirty people were present, so the atmosphere was informal and intimate, as in a family. Wherever the satsangs were held, pindrop silence prevailed until Guruji should first open satsang by speaking. Usually this happened when he looked up and asked quietly, in his deep, rich, melodious bass voice, "What news?"

In giving satsang it was Guruji's custom not to speak unless asked; he never spoke unilaterally, or discoursed or gave lectures. He took questions by turn, remaining silent until another question was asked. If no more questions were forthcoming, he would start to get up and go, so it became the congenial task of those present to keep him there for as long as possible. Since his replies were always specific and relevant to the needs of the person in front of him, very often this resulted in his giving a different answer to the same question from another person, or even in contradicting what he had said earlier in response to the same question. But this individual approach revealed the vast treasury of Guruji's experience and attainment, since each reply incorporated a different aspect of the subject, adjusted to the needs of the questioner. Although the topic often changed with the question, if the subject raised were of sufficient interest, it would be returned to again and again, with Guruji's replies each time adding another dimension to his earlier answers. It is from such replies that the texts in this book have come.

Guruji's satsang was extraordinary and the atmosphere electric, flashing with wit, insight and humour; in his company one entered a new and powerfully-enhanced field of experience. At the same time, behind the verbal and visual foreground, one felt a deep current of boundless peace and silence, radiant with an unfathomable love and held by an impregnable sense of security. Sri Babuji often noted the real importance of satsang lay in the silent communion taking place beyond words, remarking, "This is just a pretext for all of us to sit together, to express our love and to experience love." When he spoke, it seemed the whole range of spiritual wisdom and knowledge was available to him and he had an uncanny ability to understand intuitively one's innermost needs and problems, and to respond on multiple levels simultaneously, or on a subconscious level of which the questioner was unaware, so that afterwards those present often felt their underlying issues as well as their conscious problems had been addressed. His vast experience allowed him to interpret traditional practices like *arati*, *namaskar*, *namajapa* and *smarana*, from an inner dimension that made them accessible and come alive as expressions of love, rather than as obligations prescribed by some sacred text or *sastra*. This was true for everything he said about spiritual life.

Guruji seemed inexplicably free from the biases and religious conventions of his own culture, so that he looked at every aspect of spirituality anew. He emphasized that we should never accept spiritual truths uncritically or simply on

the authority of a text or teacher, even himself, but to verify everything by our own experience. "Trust your own experience!" he would say, "Let your path be personal and your realization be your own." And, "Write your own *Gita!*" Or even, "Truth is more important than Baba," though no one loved Baba more.

He repeatedly urged us to be honest with ourselves and get clear about our true needs, goals, and priorities. Lack of clarity led to lack of focus. This fragmented effort and made attainment of the fulfilment we longed for hostage to ignorance of our own experiential reality. The first *desideratum* was to dispel the hypocrisy signified by the gap between our words and deeds through honest and sincere introspection. This produced clarity about our needs and goals by aligning our thoughts with our feelings, which in turn strengthened focus and gave effort a basis to arise less from discipline than from love. Guruji could be quite confrontational in exposing hypocrisy and in challenging one's preconceived ideas and concepts of spiritual life if he thought it necessary. At the same time his ever-ready wit and humour could turn any situation to laughter, and he would tell stories from the Puranas or his own experiences on the path with a gifted mimicry and entertaining élan. He seemed to have a photographic memory for everything he'd heard or read and could recall everything said to him previously by the same person.

Guruji knew Sanskrit well, had read widely in the canonical and commentarial literature of Hinduism and Buddhism, and had an extensive

scholarly library in English, Sanskrit and Telugu. He was highly proficient in English and was known for the beauty and poetic diction of his spoken and written Telugu. He carried out significant, original research on the origin of *arati*, citing the relevant Sanskrit and scholarly texts, and also on Sai Baba, and was an unparalleled authority on Baba's life and teachings. It could truly be said of Guruji that whatever he undertook he carried through to perfection.

Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on Vijayadasami, 7th October, 1954, on the same day the famous life-size marble statue of Sai Baba was installed in the Samadhi Mandir in Shirdi – an auspicious coincidence which in retrospect foretold his destiny of devotion to Baba. Enormously gifted, spiritually precocious and endowed with exceptional virtues of mind and heart, Guruji's rise to spiritual attainment was meteoric. He was that rarest and highest grade of aspirant, what the Kashmiri *Trika (Saiva) sastra* calls *tivya tiva* ("intensely intense") – those having an all-consuming, one hundred percent, burning desire to know Truth and be free – rare souls capable of sustaining absolute, one-pointed devotion, along with the unhindered capacity to integrate and express its results fully into their life and experience. Already, at age four, while standing before the deity of Sri Venkateshwara at Tirumala, a venerable saint appeared to Guruji in place of the idol, beckoning him forward; Guruji retained a deep reverence for him ever afterward. Subsequently, as a small boy, while seeing Sai Baba's

portrait hanging on the wall of his grandmother's house, he felt a peculiar, prescient attraction, "a strange familiarity". By 17, he was serving his master and mentor, Sri Ekkirala Bharadwaja (1932-1989), himself a peerless Sai devotee, and together with him researching the lives of saints and visiting various saints and holy places. Three years later, at age 20, he was sent by his master to visit the great *avadhuta*, Sri Poondi Swami, and remained in his presence for a month. This culminated in a profound, transformative experience, one facet of which, Guruji later said, was Poondi Swami's mind (*citta*) was so pure and transparent, that in it Guruji beheld Sai Baba. And when, some time earlier, *siddhis* had begun spontaneously to manifest in Guruji, he prayed to Baba for their removal as distractions from his love.

Such renunciation of lesser gifts in favour of an exclusive quest for truth reflects the clarity and focus of Guruji's approach to spiritual life and the sincerity of a devotion so intense it allowed nothing less than pure love to motivate its fulfilment. One could see a tremendous unity in Guruji, an integrity in everything he said and did, that gave his life an aesthetic quality and beauty of proportion, since no side of it was fulfilled at the expense of another. Guruji's brilliant, original approach to the path of devotion as expressed in his satsangs, nourished all sides of his life equally, uniting them seamlessly into one harmonious expression of fulfilment. Every aspect of his life in thought, word and deed, was integrated by his devotion to Baba, so his love manifested as truth,

and vice versa. His integrity extended to details of his private life: he accepted no donations, established no ashram, owned no property, avoided any commercialization of his spiritual life and all publicity, and insisted, as a householder, on earning his livelihood "by the sweat of his brow". This he did by founding a school – now one of the finest in Andhra Pradesh – from which he received an honorarium to support himself and his wife and daughter. Even his marriage was an act of devotion: it was done in accession to his Guru's wish. In the classical *yogasastra*, attaining such a degree of inner and outer integrity is called *trikarana shuddhi*, the "triple purity" of thought, word and deed. When it becomes firmly established and irreversible, such a rare yogi becomes, according to the Veda, an *aptavadin*, "a sage (*kavi*) whose words are trustworthy as truth". The words of such a sage have an hierophantic, revelatory power that divinely sanctions his function as a Satguru and a vehicle guiding humanity to fulfilment.

The magnetic attraction natural to total truth may also account for Guruji's matchless living presence and its ineffable power – so great that it held literally thousands of people spellbound in Shirdi when he came out for his public *darshans* or, when he used to travel, would cause immense crowds to gather wherever he went. In Shirdi, they gazed in rapture as he sat unmoving, eyes closed, on a stage in front of a large portrait of Sai Baba, without even saying a word. It was one of the great displays of spiritual power in modern India, embodying a degree of realization very

seldom seen. "I am a coolie of Baba," he would say, laughing. Or, "I think of you all as Baba's *prasad*. I am only sharing my love of Baba with you, that's all. I am not your guru, you are not my disciples. I am a simple Sai devotee" – indeed, he was *Sainathuni* (belonging to Sai). These were realities of his everyday experience for Guruji. If, as Soren Kierkegaard so rightly remarked, "Purity of heart is to will one thing," then Guruji was its perfect example. As with everything else, his own life was testament to his teaching.

It has been said that Guruji had no "teaching" as such; indeed, he said so many times himself. But in retrospect what is interesting is that, because all that he said came from the same unified, self-realized source and arose from his direct experience, this fundamental integrity reflects a larger teaching, whose depth and contours are discernable in Guruji's own life. They constitute the path he himself walked, which we may call *Saipatham*, the path of Sai. It is too early and beyond the scope of this introduction to characterize that path and its teachings further here, but that it is an original, viable, effective and comprehensive approach to spiritual fulfilment will become clearer as future volumes of *Rose Petals* appear. Sri Babuji's insights constitute a distinguished and significant contribution to the psychology of the enlightenment process which are of potential benefit to every sincere seeker, whatever their path or *sadhana*. It is therefore to be hoped that this brief, initial selection from his English satsangs, so full of his wisdom and all-encompassing love, will

continue to inform and inspire all those who seek clarity and fulfilment on their spiritual path and help to make their aspirations both more real and attainable.

Sri Satchidananda Satguru Sainath Maharaj ki Jai!
Satguru Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji ki Jai!

Ram Brown Crowell
Co-editor, *Rose Petals* – Vol. 1
Shirdi
2nd April 2012

Rose Petals



Tirupati, 2001



The Satguru

GURUJI:

Once you have a Satguru, once you know he's taking care of you, even though you experience certain difficulties along the way, it's backed by that sense of assurance: he is there. So the sense of longing and your experience of suffering are not the same as you were experiencing before – they change. The quality of your happiness is transformed, and even the quality of your suffering and the quality of your desires are transformed. Until you get that, until you get the Satguru, the desires seem to trouble you unendingly, they seem to be self-perpetuating, but once you get him, the nature of the desires changes. You have desires,

but now they are fulfilled through him. And at a certain point what happens is, all those desires become expressions of your love, they take shape as expressions of your love.



GURUJI:

What a Satguru does as a good teacher is to try and inculcate in you the spirit of love, the spirit of enquiry, the fire of the desire to grow, to become mature, to know the meaning of the text of your life. A good teacher doesn't say it's hopeless when a child doesn't understand a text – she's only a child! If she believes she's a grown-up, what is the use of a teacher? A teacher is there to teach the child, knowing the limitations of a child. He doesn't say it's hopeless, he is patient.

No enlightened teacher will tell you to be disgusted with the world. Instead, they will slowly inculcate something which will give you the desire to grow, to become more and more mature, to become an adult. Then you'll automatically drop your toys and start talking and interacting with real people.

We can't make a bud into a flower just by expanding its petals. We must give it manure, some water, good sunlight – all those things which help it to become a flower. And what a Satguru does is to give you those circumstances, some oral teaching, some mystic experience. He provides good soil, good manure, good water, light and air, and good protection – a fence of satsang. By doing all these

things he sees that the bud flowers. He doesn't directly touch the bud to expand its petals so that overnight it becomes a flower. Rather, his way is to make the bud grow naturally, and mature in its own time into a flower.



GURUJI:

The Telugu saint and poet, Vemana, said, "One who says this world is false, that it's an illusion, that material life is something to be shunned, and you must seek some reality that transcends this world... If anybody says this he is telling lies, he's a rogue!" Only one who can show you that transcendental state – if at all you call it a transcendental state – here in this world, one who brings that state to you here and gives it to you here – only he is the real Satguru. If anyone says you must leave this world, you must leave all desires, you must break all attachments to this world, and then if you come up to me I will give you bliss – then what is it he's going to give? We are here in this world, we can't climb a ladder, we can't go up there, we can't give up all these attachments – how can we go up to him? He must come down to us, as if from Skandashram to the foot of the hill, and hand over that state to us *here* – where we are – in *this* world. If we can give up all our desires and climb up to him, what is his use? Only he who comes down, who frees us down here where we are – he only is the real Satguru. Regardless of our effort, regardless of how we do *japa*, or self-enquiry, or this and that, the Satguru

showers his grace on us: it is unconditional. He just loves us because of the connection, the way a father loves a child. Does a father view the child's qualifications before he loves her? And what is the qualification of the child? Being born to him, that's all. That's the sole connection. Whether the child is worthless or very good the father does not care: he simply loves the child. Just like that, the Satguru loves us. We are all his children. And surely, in any case, the one who precedes has the right of choice, not the child. Will anybody say, "I have chosen to be born to this father?" No, it is not our choice; it is *his* choice. So Baba said, emphatically, "I choose my devotees."

It is the guru's choice to select his devotees. In the Indian tradition, the disciple will go to the guru and request him to be accepted as a disciple, and then wait. It is the heart which must tell you. Recognizing the guru is something we cannot explain. It is a certain attraction, an attachment, some liking. We must crave his acceptance. And we must realize that he has chosen us even before we came into contact with him. Only after he has chosen us can we seek and find him.



GURUJI:

Who is Baba? What is Sai Baba? That is the question. How are we to understand Sai Baba? I am saying he's the one who takes care of us, like a watchman, always looking, like our eyelid guards our eye. And he is the one who is anxiously, avidly waiting

for when we will be free of all these patterns – and then ask him what he wants us to ask. Always waiting expectantly, "When will they ask?" [Guruji laughs] – that is Sai Baba. So-o-o patient. He asks us to give him patience. We don't give it, so he gives it to us – that is *saburi*. What can he do? If we can't give it, he has to give. [Guruji laughs] He gives and then takes: "Come on! Come on! Give! Give up at least one pattern!" [Guruji laughs] So he's full of *saburi*. And he's so persistent. Whatever we do, he'll be persistently, patiently waiting. And *he does it*. That is Sai Baba.



GURUJI:

Baba said, "People come to me because of *rinanu-bandha*," because of the karmic relationship, and I see you as a part of that karmic relationship. I take you all as Baba's *prasad*, nothing else. You are sacred to me. Whether you feel sacred or not that is a different matter, but you are sacred to me – because I receive you as Baba's *prasad*, and he is the one who does the good. If he does good to you and you are happy, I also am happy.





Shirdi, 1997



Focus on the Joy

GURUJI:

Focus on the joy, that is enough. Focus on your need and the solution which gives you joy; just the thought of the solution will give you joy.

That is what Baba taught Das Ganu Maharaj from the *Ishavasya Upanishad* when he sent him to Kakasaheb Dixit's house. It's a beautiful teaching. Das Ganu Maharaj longed for an interpretation of the first *sloka* of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* which had puzzled many scholars. No scholar could satisfy him and so at last he asked Baba. Baba simply said, "Oh, is this your question? Why do you ask me? Go to Dixit's house, his housemaid will tell you."

Das Ganu felt insulted. He was a great scholar and he had consulted other great scholars but they couldn't give an answer. Now he thought Baba was insulting him by asking him to go to Dixit's housemaid, an illiterate person! Anyhow, simply because Baba had said so, Das Ganu Maharaj went to Bombay, to Ville Parle, and then to Dixit's house. He stayed overnight and in the morning he saw the housemaid: she was dancing with joy! When he asked her why she was so happy, she said it was because Dixit's wife had given her a sari, and the sari was there, in her box. That's all! Just the very thought of the sari was enough to make her dance, she wasn't even wearing it! Then Das Ganu realized that Dixit's maid had answered his question.



GURUJI:

In Baba's own way, a beautiful way, he explains the exact mechanism of bliss and happiness. Kakasaheb Dixit's housemaid was given a new sari. She did not even wear the sari – she kept it in a box – but she was dancing with joy. The very awareness that her new sari was there, in the box, gave her such bliss that she was dancing with joy. Why? It's meaningless – she hasn't even put the sari on yet! But when she puts it on, what will happen? Will she get more joy simply from putting it on? No, because the joy is already there, in just her knowing "the sari is mine, and it's in my box". Just that thought is enough to give her joy, so she's happily dancing. That is called love, that is called

presence, and that is what the great *Ishavasya Upanishad* says.

This is what people are missing [here]. A sari has been given. It is just there in the next room, but no, we don't want it! Because with most things, except for our physical needs, our happiness depends only upon our awareness of them, not on actually possessing them. The very thought that we have money in the bank gives us happiness; whether we actually draw one rupee of it or not is a different matter. The very awareness that it is there, in the bank, that "It is mine!" – that is enough. We feel so secure, so happy. It is there and we are here; it is there and we are here. [Laughter] Like Dixit's housemaid: she doesn't put on the sari and we don't spend the money – it stays five, ten, fifteen years on deposit – still we enjoy it.



GURUJI:

[Referring to the Satguru] Once the awareness is there that, "Yes, he is mine, he belongs to me, I belong to him," that is enough. When you sit here, whether I am upstairs and you are downstairs, whether we are in one room or two – even if there is a wall there – it is the same difference. I am sitting here and you are sitting there, just in the next room. But the wall is more important to you. That is why Baba said, "Pull down the wall!" Just the wall is there, that's all. You are there, I am here. Just like the sari of Dixit's housemaid – I am here!



GURUJI:

Your actual enjoyment is not dependent upon the object of enjoyment. It is only your *attitude* towards it, how you relate to the object, that gives you happiness. That is why Dixit's housemaid was so happy that she was dancing with joy.

For instance, someone is looking for a job. He needs it desperately and then one day he gets employment. He hasn't even received his first pay, only an e-mail notice that he's been employed at such and such salary, that's all. But, he's so-o-o happy! What has happened to him? That simple awareness – the possibility that a job is there and that he can get a salary – allows him to enjoy the whole thing. Just the very awareness makes him really happy. And like that, not only with regard to these worldly things, it's the same when you meet a Satguru like Sai Baba. It's the very awareness that, "Yes! This is my e-mail letter!" [Laughter] "I've got it!" – that should make you happy. Even though you haven't got nirvana, *mukti*, realization or anything – still the possibility, the promise, the clear promise that, "Yes! I've got Baba!" – that should make you happy. So let us all be like Kakasaheb Dixit's maid – she happily has her sari, you have got Baba, what is there to suffer? What to worry about? Ah, happily enjoy life, happily enjoy! Dance, dance, dance!



GURUJI:

Let us enjoy every minute, every breath. Life is a gift to us, it is not a curse, it is not a bane. It is a gift

of nature. Let us enjoy it. If you are not able to enjoy it, then seek how to enjoy it. All these things, these satsangs, are only meant to make you learn the art of enjoying your own life, that's all. Then every minute our life is renewed, nothing old, nothing previous, nothing dead remains. Every minute it is new – every minute!



GURUJI:

Try to appreciate and enjoy the beautiful life that Baba has given you: it is an embodiment of his grace. I see in everybody, in each one of you, how Baba has placed you, where he has put you, what Baba has given you. If you want more, I will give you more! But enjoy it, enjoy what Baba has given!



GURUJI:

Learn! Experience, enjoy and radiate the joy of Baba! I want to see that joy. When I see that joy I am also joyful. All your faces will be bubbling, radiating that joy of love, the love of Baba. The conviction that he is yours, the identity that you are his – that royal feeling should be there. We are all sons and daughters of Sainath Maharaj; if he is royal, we are also royal, we are princes and princesses! [Guruji laughs]





Tenali, 1993



“My Samadhi Will Answer!”

DEVOTEE:

Would you explain the word *samadhi*?

GURUJI:

Experiencing that love, that bliss or sense of fulfilment – whatever you call it – getting fully absorbed in it without any reflexive defense mechanisms, that is *samadhi*.

DEVOTEE:

But why is Baba’s tomb also called a *samadhi*?

GURUJI:

The word *samadhi* has several meanings. The first

meaning is a tomb. The tomb of any person can be called a *samadhi*, so one meaning is "tomb". *Samadhi* also means a state of *samadhana*, a state in which our quest for concretization of our abstract sense of fulfilment is answered and all our needs are fulfilled; this is the second meaning of *samadhi*. The third meaning is that state of mind where you are so inwardly absorbed, without any conflicting intellectual or emotional pulls, that all your emotions become totally harmonized. That blissful state is also called *samadhi*.

So the meaning of *samadhi* is where you experience that all your needs are answered completely so that no grounds for conflict can arise again – there ends the matter! There are no further needs or desires to be answered, so there are no seeds for future conflict. In the ordinary biological sense death answers or completes the physical need for life, so a tomb is called a *samadhi*. In the spiritual sense, *samadhi* is the name given to that state in which all our spiritual needs are answered and get fulfilled, and in which we experience that our abstract ideal of fulfilment has become totally concretized – that is *samadhi*. So the word can be used in different ways: Baba is in *samadhi*, that state of consciousness; what we see concretely is his tomb, his *samadhi*; and when we go there what we get is *samadhi*, our needs are answered. So in all these senses it has meaning. That is why Baba said, "My *samadhi* will answer!" His state of fulfilment will answer the various needs of the people. It is the *samadhi* which answers.



GURUJI:

Baba was never confined to his physical body even before 1918, because he himself said, "My *murshid* (guru) has already freed me from this body. Whoever thinks that this body is Sai Baba, hasn't seen Sai Baba at all." Because he had already been released from his body, it was already a tomb – a small, moving, limited tomb that was capable of interacting with a number of people. Then, because he is so loving and he wanted to cater to the growing needs of the people, and the devotees need some means of interacting with him, he had to change. So he changed his tomb – from that "tomb" [his physical body] to the present tomb, which is an extension of Baba's body and a form of it. That is why he said, "My tomb will speak, my tomb will move, my tomb will answer," just as his physical body had been answering.



GURUJI:

We see Baba's form and think that he is a Satguru, but by what signs? Because he manifested a particular state. That state gave him the stature of a Satguru. What is important is the stature, not the form. That is why Baba used to say repeatedly, "I am not this body, I am not only this form. This body is only a means, a tomb, which manifests something." That state was manifested through the form of Sai Baba because we can't understand it unless it is conveyed to us through a concrete channel.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, today is Bhagavan Ramana's *mahasamadhi*. Nowadays it is celebrated with great spirit and joyfulness, but when he left his body fifty years ago it can't have been like that for the people left behind then. So, although today is a beautiful day, there is also a certain poignancy to it, thinking what it must have been like for his devotees who were left without his form that was so beloved to them.

GURUJI:

The day when he left his body would have been a very painful day for the devotees, no doubt about it. But in India the anniversary of a saint's death is usually celebrated, not mourned, because they know there is no death for a saint. Because of the personal attachment that the devotees had when their master was in the body, it was natural that many people cried and it was a day of sorrow. When you have a personal connection with the saint's physical form, it is a painful thing when it passes away. But in the course of time, the tradition comes in its place and they realize that it is only the body which has gone, and they experience his presence more and more in a different way.

As I have already told you, a saint's death, the so-called death, signifies for some saints the growth of his influence and his mission. So that day is actually celebrated, not mourned. If you have to mourn the death of a saint then he's not a saint, because there is no death for a saint. That is why such a thing is called *vardhate*. *Vardha* means

that which grows, develops, unfolds – actually, growth. It may be stoppage of the growth of the body, but not the influence of the saint. He is not really dead.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, when somebody dies, is it possible to know where they go, what happens?

GURUJI:

Yes, it is possible to know.

DEVOTEE:

And how can one know this?

GURUJI:

If you know *this* here, if you know your soul first. Do you know where your soul is? Do you know really that your soul is in your body? If there, where is it? How is it? First try to know that!



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, Baba said if you can't meditate on me in the form of bliss, meditate on my form. For those of us attached to the form, could devotees feel abandoned if their guru takes *mahasamadhi*? Or will they still feel taken care of?

GURUJI:

When I experienced bliss from Baba's form, it was after his *mahasamadhi*.

DEVOTEE:

But how would it have been if you had had the experience of Baba's living form as well?

GURUJI:

Then it would have been even greater, because I would have realized that Baba was not the form at all at the first instance itself, just by seeing him. Because I was unfortunate to have only his picture to look at, I had to cling onto his form for some time. But if Baba could not give us that experience *at any instant*, what would he be?

Anyway, first think about now! [Guruji laughs] If we know now that all forms are transient, that sooner or later any form will disappear, from this we should know the value of form; and that form is only a means to formlessness. That's why I give the example of the window: don't look at the frame, look at the window.

DEVOTEE:

But don't we need to start by looking at the frame? Isn't that the only way for most of us?

GURUJI:

First it starts with the frame – but don't get stuck there. In order not to get stuck there, just look through the window more and more. Be focused

on the window, then that itself will take you to what is beyond the window.



DEVOTEE:

In spirituality, why is formlessness usually given more importance than form?

GURUJI:

No reason. Form is just as important and just as valuable. Even now form is so important to me – who said it isn't? Even now I worship Baba and I think of Baba's form. I don't have any problem with form, or with formlessness! [Guruji laughs]

DEVOTEE:

But we always hear that we have to transcend form and go beyond to formlessness.

GURUJI:

Baba's form is a form, but the bliss which that form gives is always formless. What form will you give to bliss? Both are there at the same time. When you look at Baba, what you experience is the form which gives bliss, which is formless. Baba also said the same thing – “Meditate on me as bliss. If you can't do it look at my form.” But if you look at the form what happens is you start to meditate on bliss again! [Guruji laughs] That is Baba!





Tiruvannamalai, 1995



Living One Life

DEVOTEE:

Are the spiritual life and worldly life separate?
How can we balance them?

GURUJI:

In fact, there are not two lives. You live only one life. What determines whether it is spiritual or worldly depends upon your object, the goal, and the source from which you derive your fulfilment. If you derive your fulfilment from a worldly object you call it worldly life, and if you derive it from a so-called spiritual source, you call it spiritual life. Baba never differentiated between the two. He saw the real source, the basis of a person's endeavour – why

people strive. Whether it is worldly or spiritual, why do people strive? It is for fulfilment, for happiness!

Usually people's concept is that fulfilment comes only through worldly objects. If someone says to them, "No, no, that is not fulfilment!" they still experience it as fulfilment! They want money, or they have a problem, and unless it is solved they can't be happy. If you say, "That is all *maya*, real happiness lies somewhere beyond!" they may listen out of respect, but it can't go into their heart and they don't really understand it. So what Baba does is he first fulfils our desires by his power. Then once we know that Baba is the source of the fulfilment, our focus slowly shifts from the actual object of the desire to the one who gives that object.

There are different kinds of objects through which we derive our happiness. When there is one source, the Satguru, which can give all of those, our mind starts focusing more and more on him. Then as the love for him develops, the pull towards the other objects slowly gets weaker until only the pull towards the Satguru remains.



DEVOTEE:

Gurujī, how can we integrate spirituality into our everyday life?

GURUJI:

Why do you divide life into spiritual and non-spiritual? Why make this artificial division and give more value to one and less to the other? Life is

life. So there is no question of integrating spiritual life into our daily life. It is not that *sadhana* (spiritual practice) should be part of our life, but that our whole life should be part of our *sadhana*. Spiritual practice has to happen twenty-four hours a day and not only at a special time that we allot for it – one hour of meditation every day! If we have an attitude of learning we can see and use all the situations of our day-to-day life as *sadhana*. That is to see the whole world as the guru, to see the whole life as the guru, to learn from everything and everyone.

So, basically there is no difference between the worldly and the spiritual. It all depends on our attitude. Something worldly can be spiritual and something spiritual can be purely material.



GURUJI:

As you have a pull towards the world, make it a means to achieve your spiritual end. Then all the world will become a means to that.

Usually, for a seeker, the world is considered an obstacle, an enemy, a nightmare, whereas to a Sai devotee it is a tool to draw him nearer and nearer to the object of his love. For example, when we have an illness, what happens in many spiritual circles is that one should not complain about it. It is nothing to do with our *sadhana* or our Satguru. The guru tells you that you are not the body. "Focus on the Self, don't worry about this illness!" But we are troubled by our poor health. So we say to ourselves,

“We are not the body,” but at the same time we are worried about the illness and so a clash is created. But for a Sai devotee, if he gets ill he goes to Baba to cure him. Then once he is better he feels, “Oh, Baba has cured me!” Even the illness, that same body which is normally considered an obstacle, even that becomes a means of drawing him closer to the Satguru.

By looking at things in this way, we can make all our life an expression of our love towards our Satguru, a perpetual, unending ritual which doesn’t seem to be a ritual and which breathes into us the spirit of love.

That is what I mean by making your whole life a part of your effort for spirituality.



GURUJI:

Baba never asked people to give up their desires, to shun desires, “Desires are not good, they are not spiritual,” no, he didn’t say it. He slowly transformed these pulls into a bigger pull.

See, for example, a businessman. Once he has come to Baba, he prays to him before making any decision and he gets the success. So his success and the business link him to Baba. Business is not something which takes him away from his Satguru. In fact, his main pull, his main desire – money – is bringing him more and more to Baba. Whenever he gets a contract he makes a point of coming to Baba. If there were no contract, maybe he wouldn’t come at all! [Guruji laughs] So it is the

business, the so-called unspiritual activity, that is actually pulling him to the so-called spiritual. And Baba knows how to slowly transform. His life is based on the business, and since the business is based on Baba, ultimately, his whole existence is based on Baba. These pulls, these burning desires, are like small sticks of fire scattered around here and there, and he wants to gather them together and make a big bonfire. That is the way.



GURUJI:

Once the desire is fulfilled and the devotee knows that their experience came through their Satguru, the loving bond between them leads to their transformation. It is not the fulfilment of the desire that is the purpose; it is the transformation.

DEVOTEE:

But for the devotee, it seems in most cases that the purpose is the fulfilment of the desire.

GURUJI:

To them it is like that. They may not be seeking any transformation, but if Baba fulfils their desires, it is for transformation. They may not be aware of it. It doesn’t matter. It is enough if they know that it is Baba who gave the experience.



GURUJI:

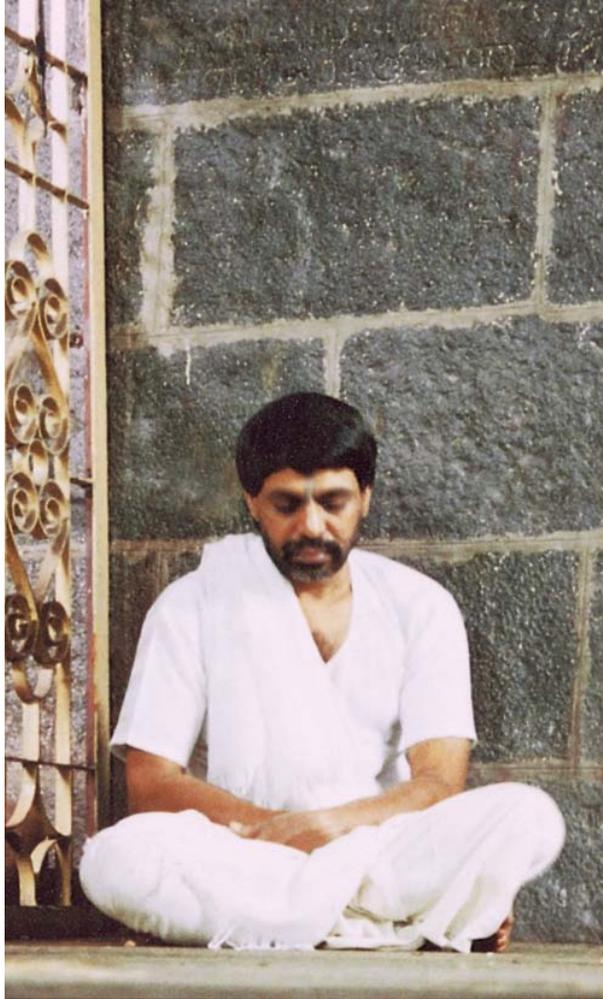
We feel that something is missing but we don't know what it is, so we experiment – maybe this, maybe that will give me happiness? The whole world is experimenting, struggling for that which is missing. The so-called spirituality is one of the ways.

Everybody is struggling, everybody is a seeker, everyone is on the spiritual path, as long as we are trying for happiness. It is only the method that differentiates the paths. Happiness is a basic need of human nature. If it were not, spirituality would have no meaning. For example, a person who is striving for money, why do they want money? For happiness. Why do they want power? Happiness. Why do they want friends and relationships? Happiness. There are thousands of different things. Everybody is striving and striving and striving. The whole world is full of that struggle and striving for happiness. Among the millions of methods which human beings are trying – and still inventing more and more – we are also trying in our own way. Maybe by trying this way we will get something, a happiness which is not dependent on anything else, that which the saints have spoken of.

The struggle for happiness is a human problem. We are only responding to the human problem. Everybody is. It is not our special problem that we are trying to use special methods to solve. It is not a special disease; it is a common complaint. Only the means are different and some are branded as spiritual and some are branded as worldly, but I am talking about the basic struggle of all beings.

Everybody is eligible for happiness. Everybody is capable. Everybody is seeking. And everybody is bound to get it, as long as they seek and are sincerely seeking.





Tirumala, 1995



Meditation

GURUJI:

Meditation is an expression and experience of our love, of our need, of our object of love. See, for instance, when I leave the room after satsang you sit quietly. All the talk that normally comes to the mind is not needed then. You'll have absorbed some words, some pieces from the satsang. It's not the intellectual theory, or the concepts, or the teachings. The mind refuses to think; it dissolves, it falls away. You simply sit with your eyes closed and feel the joy inside. That experience of joy is meditation.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, what is profound meditation and what role do thoughts play in it?

GURUJI:

Profound meditation is an ecstatic experience in which one feels that one's vessel is full to the brim. It is the experience of fullness by which one is so overcome that it doesn't matter whether thoughts arise or not. Our attention is so held by the experience that thoughts become totally secondary; even if they come they have no power to distract from the experience.



GURUJI:

The main purpose of meditation is to awaken our emotion. Real meditation starts when our love gets awakened. Meditation is not turning a human being into a stone: static, stoic, indifferent, without any thought, without emotions. Meditation is turning a stone into a human being. If the emotions are cultured and harmonized they can find meaningful expression in life. If one emotion is stronger, the others will naturally harmonize with it. Meditation is not keeping the mind blank. It is experiencing and relishing the taste of life, not withdrawal from life, not shutting yourself away from life. Life is so natural; if you shut yourself off from the world, you shut yourself off from Truth itself. And since life *is something more* which you are

not able to experience yet, in meditation you come to experience that part also. It may be called the search for Truth, but in that search do not reject the rest of life, thinking it's all *maya* (illusion), or *shunya* (void). Rather, participate in life! Embrace life!



GURUJI:

When meditation becomes an expression of our effort to concretize our abstract sense of fulfilment, then alertness automatically comes, interest automatically comes. When love towards our object of love is there, one of its symptoms or by-products is alertness. Not sitting in a morass of dullness, watching the clock, watching the time – that is not alertness. When interest and alertness are there, even if you sit for two or three hours, you won't watch the clock.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, when we sit for meditation should we use any technique?

GURUJI:

Nothing! Simply sit and feel the bliss; real meditation is actually experiencing the bliss. If the mind wavers, try to focus on Baba in whatever way you like, whether calling him by name or by thinking of him, whatever it is. When the time comes that you

are not even aware you are doing meditation, that is right meditation. It should feel like when you're really hungry and there are no restaurants around. You run here and there until you finally find a restaurant and greedily eat the food. After eating, how do you feel? You say, "Oh, my God! That was delicious!" You feel immense satisfaction. Then comes, "Ahhh, now I feel like taking a siesta." Real meditation is like a siesta, when effortlessly your eyes close from the experience of full satisfaction.



GURUJI:

People try to control the mind by observing thoughts, or try to stop thoughts by concentrating on a form or concept, though both are concepts [thoughts]. Meditating on "having no thoughts" is still a concept and the thoughts become obstacles. Or some want to brush aside thoughts and concentrate on "having a voidness"; they want to have an insight, a *vipassana*. And there are other techniques: watching the breath, and this and that.

But I always advise people to do it the other way around, and without all these things, go with the natural tendency of the mind. The natural tendency of the mind is to concentrate automatically on what you love, or on what you hate, what you don't like. In the second instance, this is accompanied by displeasure, a negative feeling, a sadness, and you are not at ease; you lose your peace of mind. But in the first instance, you experience love and a kind of fulfilment. So first try to catch hold of

an object that spontaneously evokes your love, and try to make that love grow, grow, grow. Then, automatically, you will get a thoughtless state – a void, *vipassana*, everything will come. This is the spontaneous [natural] method, not the forceful stopping of thoughts – that is manipulative. This is making effort through effortlessness.



GURUJI:

Always remember that the experience of expansion, of vastness, is a sign of good meditation. Even though you are focusing on something, your experience should be one of expansion, not of contraction or constriction. You feel expanded. That happens when you are aware of what I said before – the nature of the Satguru, of Baba, vast like the Himalayas – that awareness. That gives you the experience of vastness, of expansion. Look at the sea: you can't even pinpoint the horizon – your mind expands, it goes on expanding – that is meditation.



DEVOTEE:

Gurujji, what can be done if the mind doesn't feel bliss and can't stay focused on Baba?

GURUJI:

Without forcing the mind, try to contemplate your

object of love and connect yourself to it in any way you can. Do whatever connects you more and more, because that connection is what will give you the fulfilment, the experience of bliss. Your object of love itself will give you the experience: bliss is its nature. Once you are experiencing the bliss, there is no need of the form, the connection or any other means. But to get it all the time is not possible, and often we miss it, so at these times we have to use our own ways to connect again.



GURUJI:

Because they love Baba so much, people like me like to look at him, like always to think about him and talk about him – there's nothing they'd rather do. They can't do otherwise, because they want always to be with him. For these people their love is not an effort or a means to do anything – to be meditating, contemplating, or doing *nama*. For them these are not spiritual practices done to achieve a goal, they are simply expressions of their love. And all the spiritual practices should be done like that – this is what I feel. And what you get from Baba – the fulfilment, the final goal – is not dependent on this directly. As though “Because you have meditated on me for four hours, I will give you bliss” – no! It's not directly related to it. Because for them it's done simply as an expression of their love for Baba, not as a means of getting anything; they know Baba will give whenever they are ready to receive.



GURUJI:

As long as we have the love, meditation will naturally come. Then gradually everything we do throughout the day becomes an expression of our love, not only sitting here for one hour looking at Baba. There are different ways of expressing that love; meditation is one of those ways. When all our actions are expressing our experience of love, everything becomes part of meditation.



GURUJI:

Since you can't sit still for twenty-four hours and stay focused, you need something more. The body needs some activity because there are so many distracting pulls and patterns. The solution is gradually to let all these patterns be channelled in such a way that the activity we do is, in the end, related to Baba. So while doing it we are reminded of him and feel the satisfaction of doing it for him, or to him, while remembering him. Then, when the mind clears enough, just sit and experience the happiness, for as long as you can. After some time, again the mind starts getting disturbed. Then again some activity is needed. By working in this way, the hours of meditation and stillness are prolonged until finally there is no need to get up any more. When the need to move is gone, it doesn't matter whether you sit or get up, both are the same.

But here the most important thing is: many people take care of what they do in meditation, but they pay no attention to what they do outside

it. Then they say, “Oh, we have been meditating, doing *japa* for two, five, or ten years, still nothing has happened.” This is because they take care only of what they do in meditation. But I tell you, what decides, what modifies, what spoils, or what keeps up what you do in meditation, is what you do outside meditation – usually people don’t take care of that. But if you focus on what you do outside meditation, you won’t need to make any effort in meditation at all – it will naturally come.

Try to go through the routine of your whole day in such a way that it becomes meaningful and fulfilling by keeping it more and more focused on Baba. Do it! Then see how you sit and how you experience it!



DEVOTEE:

How do we know that we are really meditating and not just sitting with eyes closed?

GURUJI:

You judge a tree by its fruit. What you are doing outside your meditation will tell you – you don’t need any other test. To see your forearm, you don’t need a mirror. The quality of your meditation can be seen from what you do in your daily life.



GURUJI:

Working in the world and meditating, both become *sadhana* until we reach the goal. Don’t confine meditation to the time you sit with eyes closed, because that is only a part of your life – your life is not only that. Make meditation part of your life, but make your whole life part of your meditation. How? Baba said, “Meditate on me in the form of bliss. If you are not capable of doing that, then meditate on me in this form you see here.” But his first preference was bliss, the “taste” of life, the relish of life. When you really enjoy something all the symptoms of meditation will come. Why do you close your eyes when you taste something delicious? Because you relish it and feel fully satisfied – you are happy! What I am asking of you is to relish the taste of life. Meditation is the enjoyment that arises from relishing the taste of life – that is true meditation.





Shirdi, 2006



The Unique Mahima of Shirdi Sai Baba

DEVOTEE:

In a book I read recently the author referred to Sai Baba as a miracle worker, but others say that it is not a correct way to describe him.

GURUJI:

They may say that Baba is a man of miracles, but he never materialized anything. Such things he called *chamatkar*, and he emphatically said, "We don't do *chamatkar*."

DEVOTEE:

So then what did he call those superhuman acts?

GURUJI:

To him it is just like a mother caring for her child. But if you want to call it a miracle, it's okay. When a baby feels hungry and milk suddenly just materializes and flows from the mother's breast, is it not a miracle? As long as the child needs the milk, it comes; and when the need is gone, it automatically diminishes. It is a miracle that every mother does and every child experiences, and yet it is so natural. And Baba experiences it like that, so naturally.

DEVOTEE:

But we don't experience it like that, do we?

GURUJI:

That is why you call it a miracle! I call it natural mothering. Baba is taking care of us like a loving mother. What you call a miracle is natural mothering to a Satguru like Sai Baba.



DEVOTEE:

Many miracles were seen in Baba's life. As well as fulfilling a person's need, was there any other purpose to them?

GURUJI:

With Sai Baba almost all his miracles carry a transforming effect on the experiencer. This is very rare in any saint. The so-called supernatural acts or so-called miracles that happened around him always carried a teaching, which pushed a transformation. You can see that in his biography, to some extent. Just try to imagine yourself in the place of any of the devotees who experienced a miracle with Baba, and you will see.

In this way, Baba's biography is his teaching. There was no verbal teaching, no separate teaching, in fact. Baba taught through his acts. With regards to *chamatkar* they only baffle the experiencer's mind, but with Baba, the miracles carry a teaching. For example, if people came for money, Baba didn't simply give it, or say, "Go there and you will find money," nor would someone come and just hand it over to them. No, Baba would try to make it seem as if it had simply happened naturally, but the experiencer knew that there was more to it than that.

There was a devotee, for instance, who used to come to Shirdi from time to time who was a big manager in a cotton mill in Bombay. At one point he had some trouble with the management so he resigned and was unemployed. Almost a year passed and he was having difficulty maintaining himself. He was in the financial doldrums. One day he decided, "What am I doing simply whiling away my time in Bombay? Let's go to Shirdi and at least stay in Baba's presence for two or three months until I get another job."

So he went to Shirdi and by then he was experiencing bitter poverty. As he entered the mosque Baba greeted him, "Oh avo, seth, avo. Come, rich man, come." (A wealthy man is called a *seth*.) "Come *seth*, come!"

The man felt embarrassed. "See, Baba is ridiculing my poverty. He is calling me a rich man, a *seth*. I am not a *seth* now," and he went and sat down.

Baba asked, "What is your programme?"

Then he said, "I want to stay a few months here, Baba."

"No! Go to Bombay!" Baba said. "Start for Bombay immediately!"

That man was baffled. "I only came just now and he is already asking me to go away! Oh, even Baba is only thinking of rich people. I'm a poor man, that is why he doesn't want me to stay here." Then he said, "Okay, Baba, as you have ordered it, I will go."

Then, when giving that man *udi*, Baba said firmly, "Go via Pune!" Nobody goes to Bombay from Shirdi via Pune. It is ridiculous! It is a completely different route. Yet, "Go to Bombay via this route!" he said.

So the man went to Pune, and, just as he got off the train, he met somebody who was the proprietor of a cotton mill and who said he had just been thinking of him. A manager's post had been vacant in his mill for about a month and he was wondering, "Who is the right person for the job?" Actually, the mill owner knew this man and thought he would be suitable for the post, but he didn't know his address or how to reach him, so he couldn't do anything. But when the man got off the train in the busy railway

station, the mill owner was right there and saw him immediately.

"Oh, I was actually looking for you! What are you doing now?"

"I'm not doing anything."

"Will you accept a post in my mill?" he asked.

"Oh, very happily I will!"

"Okay, then come to Bombay tomorrow. I'll be back there by then."

So he went to Bombay, he got the appointment, and he did become a *seth*, in fact.

All this happened within a week. Do you think it was all a simple coincidence? If Baba had just said, "Go home!" and he had met that person in Bombay, it would have been a different matter, but Baba purposely said, "Go via Pune!" And the meeting happened in a railway station, where there are hundreds of people, and where even just one second is enough to miss a person, yet he got down from the compartment exactly when the mill owner was there! So accurate, as if everything had been planned exactly.

Just think how that devotee must have experienced it! He not only experienced that Sai Baba gave him a job, but also how miraculously the whole thing unfolded.



GURUJI:

Sai "miracles" seem so natural. We receive his kindness, mercy, protection and grace from the people around us. When we pray to Baba – for

example, "I am in dire need of money. Please help me Baba," – Baba does not place a *lakh* of rupees under our pillow as we sleep. Someone will come to us at the right moment and advise us, "Do it this way and your problem will be solved." If we follow their advice, circumstances turn favourable for us, our needs are fulfilled and the problem is solved.

Baba does his *leelas* in this way – he is not performing magic tricks. This is the special feature of Baba's so-called miracles: whatever help we get is from the people around us and the surrounding circumstances. This is his approach when responding not only to our mundane everyday needs, but also to our spiritual needs. That is why he has said, "I have no spiritual heirs. I will answer the needs of my devotees even from my *samadhi*."



GURUJI:

With Baba, if we are worried about a problem, someone will come and show us the way; it flashes upon us as the answer to our problem although the person who advises us does not know that this is the solution we were longing for.

This was Baba's way even when he was in the body. He would never give discourses on Vedanta, or directly answer questions on philosophy, but people used to ask him and he would answer in his own way. Once when somebody asked such a question, Baba answered, "Go and attend the *pothi*." "*Pothi*" means *parayana*, devotional reading, and some of the devotees were sitting together

every day and reading aloud a few pages of *Eknath Bhagawat*.

This man went there, and just as he came in, they were reading a chapter in which Eknath Maharaj was answering precisely the same question he had asked Baba! The devotee who was reading the passage didn't know that this man had already asked Sai Baba that same question, or that Baba had sent him there to get an answer to his query. Another remarkable feature of this is that it was a regular reading that took place every day and there was no guarantee that the man would go there directly. He could have stopped for a cup of chai in the canteen, or for a chitchat with a friend, or he could have gone to his room, to the toilet, whatever. But just as he sat down, the question was addressed and answered! Baba had said, "Go to the *pothi* and your question will be answered." Just look at the stage management of Baba!



GURUJI:

Before I went to Poondi, I was very hectically reading all the scriptures. They all extol the efficacy of *tirthas* and going to *kshetras* (places of pilgrimage, holy places) and I had a doubt: why do saints – who are completely fulfilled and have attained their ultimate object – why do they need to go to *tirthas*? In the Puranas we see that many saints visit *tirthas*, and different holy places. I wondered, what is the need for them to do that? What more holiness do they need? Are they in need of holiness? Or do

they need some polishing of their holiness? [Guruji laughs] Why?

I was thinking about this one day when I was outside, and of all the *slokas* and all the different references in the Puranas, when suddenly there was a big gust of wind. Then, a piece of very old notepaper, which somebody had used as packaging for some peanuts or something, came and just dashed against my face. I caught it and opened it and then I saw: it was a page from the *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, with exactly the sutra where somebody asks Narada, "Why do holy men go to holy places?" and Narada gives the answer, "Holy men go to holy places in order to make the holy places holy." [Guruji laughs] That was the *sloka*!

Then I thought, "Oh! If Baba wishes, he can give an answer wherever we are." That is why I always tell you when you say, "What Guruji, you are going away! What are we going to do?" No need to worry. Baba is so great – you will get your answers!



DEVOTEE:

Sai Baba did not give philosophical teachings in the way that some saints do, did he?

GURUJI:

No, no. Nobody expected such a thing from him. The moment they went to him they saw the power, they were aware of their helplessness, they sought help and they got it. By getting the help they also got the message. So every *leela*, every incident,

every miracle that you see, every experience that you read conveys a message – the message which some other saints taught verbally. Nobody felt any lack that Baba did not teach, because they were so fulfilled. There was no need for that. Teaching is needed in order to get that experience of fulfilment and to get rid of our helplessness. When that is spontaneously achieved in his presence, what is the need of any other thing?





Shirdi, 2005



Love and Devotion

GURUJI:

Happiness comes because of love. When you have an object of love, thinking of your object of love will give you the experience of love. And if at all I tell you anything to do, it is this: when you are unable to experience love, the only way to bring it back and to strengthen it, is to give expression to it. The more you express it, the more it grows, and the more it strengthens.

Some people think, "I should simply sit and keep my mind focused on Baba." But how long can you sit simply focusing, focusing, focusing? That focusing is losing its focus! So we need to find other ways which give us the focus. People are always

searching for ways to do this – some bring flowers, some bring fruit, others do *puja* or sing *nama* – what are all these things? Are they done to focus on the fruit or flowers? [Laughter] No, they are done to strengthen our focus, weakened to distraction by other objects, and to centre it on our object of love. This is needed because our minds are so active and we have so many pulls.

So when we choose to do certain things mindfully, discerning what are our real expressions of love, then our actions become genuine expressions of love and we experience it. The more we express that love the more it grows and the more we experience it; this is how to strengthen our focus. There are some resistances, which are our old habit patterns, and these tend to distract and divert us. The only way to resist your resistances is to give your love more expression. If your love is weak and not expressed, it slowly withers away. The experience may be there, but it feels soft, weak, not so strong.

So when anybody complains that they are unable to experience love, I say, “Then express it!” And in fact, these expressions are the real rituals. It may appear sometimes that they are just rituals, but if they express our love they are not merely rituals. If it expresses our love, any ritual is fine. And any ritual, or non-ritual, that doesn’t express our love should be shunned. Because what we want is love, and to express love.

To some of you the statement, “Expression strengthens love” may seem strange. How can expression strengthen love? Have you ever thought about this?

But we know the technique instinctively, everybody does, because it is so human. The technique I am referring to is not something new, not a bolt from the blue.

For example, the father goes to the office, then comes home and sees his small child; he loves the child so much, but he is away all day at the office. Why is he working? To feed the child; that is a different matter. But as soon as he comes home, what does the father do? He just picks up his child and gives her a kiss, and then a doll or a dress he bought while coming back from work. What makes him do this? Why does he hug the child and kiss her? Simply because he loves the child, that’s all! The love is there inside us – is it necessary to express it? Yes, because even though it’s there it can grow weak and wither away if not expressed. But even when weak, it’s there, and expression can trigger it. See – you want to give just one kiss to the child, but the moment you kiss her something springs up, and you can’t help giving her two, three, four, even five kisses, until she’s almost smothered in kisses! This is the nature of love – to want more and more expression – and are these not rituals?

Daily the father comes back from the office and performs that ritual. And in the morning the mother gives the child a bath, dresses her in pretty clothes and puts flowers in her hair. Usually at such a young age a child has no dress-consciousness; whether you dress her in rags or riches she won’t care, it’s the same for her. But will any mother think, “Oh, she doesn’t know the difference, so I’ll dress her in rags”? Will any mother think like

this? Then why do we dress her in pretty clothes? Again, it is our expression of love. It's not that the child needs it: *you* are the one who wants to see her dressed in the latest fashions and hairstyles, and to take photos of her and maintain an album. Are these not rituals expressing love? In *puja* they chant, "*Abishekam, vastram samarpayami,*" (I offer bath and garment), and "*Naivedyam samarpayami,*" (I dedicate the food offering). So here also, you bathe the child, dress and feed her. There, at the end, you say, "*Dhyanam karishye,*" (I will perform meditation) and then you sit for a while. Here, you simply sit and enjoy playing with your child. And if you miss it, you think, "Oh, today I haven't spent time with her! Let me sit five minutes at least, otherwise she'll miss me so much!" But in fact, it's *you* who miss her so much, it's *you* who make the time to sit with her. Is it not a ritual?

So these are the ways we express our love. But they are not the only ways. Sometimes, when the need is there, a new way is invented, and we keep on inventing new ways, new expressions, more rituals to express our love, in ever finer, more beautiful, more fulfilling ways. Always, the more you express it, the more it grows and needs to be expressed – there is no end to it. In fact, "no end" is not a negative statement because in love, no one wants an end to it: "Oh! Love should also have a limit!" – No fool will feel like that. Rather, it should be so unending, with umpteen expressions and endless experiences. And this love is triggered by the Satguru, it's not our choice, and because that experience gives us fulfilment, even an iota of fulfilment, we try to

strengthen and experience it more and more, more and more. You may call this a spiritual practice, a ritual, or just a need. To me it is simply the most natural way of living; it is the art of life.

In this there is no beginning, no end. It's not that through suffering, through *tapas*, through turmoil, that you reach the cessation of suffering – the freedom, nirvana, *mukti* – that you're looking for. The practice from the very beginning is the end. The experience of fulfilment through love is your goal, and you experience this from the beginning itself. The path itself is the end – in fact, there is no end to it. It matters only how much you are experiencing it at any moment – whether in full, fuller, fullest, or the most fullest way! This may be wrong grammatically, but that is how we feel: every time it is full, at every step it is full. But always it wants to be fuller, and you want to experience it more and more. So no suffering, no means, no end, just that self-consuming love, that experience of love which is our fulfilment – a fulfilling love. That is the start, it is the means, and it is the end. Not a means to an end, but the end itself – that is what I am saying.

And once you experience that, then this checking business, of where are we going, what are we doing, are we getting anything, what is our progress – all this is not needed. Nothing. No progress, no progress reports. If at all you get any "progress", you progress in more expressions and experiences of love. And even if you don't "progress", you don't lose anything because you are already there. That is the path here. That is Saipatham!

I'll give you a mundane analogy. If you want to go to Madras, you go to the bus station and board the bus. Then, if you are really wise, you simply, happily go to sleep, because by getting into the right bus, all your efforts are ended; in effect you are already at your destination. Why? Because even though the bus is still in Tiruvannamalai, when it reaches Madras you will still be in the same bus. So there is no fretting and fuming, "Oh, have I reached the right destination? Is this the right bus?"

Here the means is also the end so there is no question of whether we are wasting our life in order to get something. Or, if you don't get it, that you think, "Oh, all these efforts, all this time has been wasted! Now we have to retrace our steps and start all over again!" There is no business with all these things. You are already there experiencing it, and trying to experience it more and more. Then your whole life becomes a part of it, a part of that experience. Not that we experience it as part of our life: even one lifetime is not sufficient to experience it! Is one short life sufficient to experience the bliss of love?

Then our life has meaning and value. Otherwise, what meaning do we have for our lives? Come on, anybody tell me: why are you living? If you are honest, you will answer, "Because I haven't died so far." Because it's beyond your choice, because you can't help it otherwise. What kind of fate is it, living this helpless life?

That is how Baba has very beautifully put it. He said, "Find the guru, otherwise why and for what have you come? Is it to collect dung cakes?" In India

they make cakes with cow dung which they use as fuel, as firewood to cook food, and then when somebody dies, at the funeral they are cremated on a pile of dung cakes. If we don't find that object of love and make our whole life consumed in our experience of that love, what happens is that all our life, all our efforts, every breath we take and every breath we give out, is like collecting dung cakes for our funeral. Then all our life is like a preparation for death, because we can't ascribe any other meaning to it. We feel frustrated, we are not fulfilled, we are not enjoying life. Is there a meaning to it?

When you find your object of love, life is no longer a preparation for death. Why then are you living? To experience the Satguru's love! Then your life has a meaning and a purpose. Every breath will be an expression or an experience of love, expression and experience. When we breathe out we express love, when we breathe in, we experience love. What you experience you express, and the more you express, the more you experience.





Shirdi, 2006



Two Paise: Nishtha and Saburi

Radha Bai Deshmukh came to Baba for *upadesh*, got none, and resolved upon *satyagraha*. She started fasting, which should end only with her death or with *upadesh* from Baba, whichever occurred first. After three days of her fruitless fast I interceded with Baba on her behalf and requested him to utter some divine name in her presence. Baba sent for her and addressed her thus,

“Mother, why do you think of dying and torture yourself? Take pity on me, your child. I am a beggar. Look here, my guru was a great saint and highly merciful. I fatigued myself in trying to serve him and yet he did not utter any mantra in my ear.

Instead, he first shaved me clean and then begged of me, two *paise*. What he wanted was not metallic coin – he did not care even for gold – but only *nishtha* and *saburi*. I gave these to him at once and he was pleased.”

– Sri Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings, No. 137



GURUJI:

Nishtha is one of the *paise* Baba asked for as *dakshina*. It means paying attention, keeping our mind on our purpose, asking ourselves, “What do we want, where are we going, what are we doing?” Remaining steady and devoted to our purpose whatever comes, whether palatable or not, whether happy or unhappy, just persevering in it, that is *nishtha*. It is natural to any beggar, in fact – a real beggar perseveres! If someone doesn't give, or chases him away, he won't go. He'll keep on asking, “Sir, one rupee, one rupee,” but he doesn't go. He sticks to his purpose, he'll keep pursuing it. Learn *nishtha* from him.

The other *paise* Baba asked for was *saburi*. *Saburi* is happily waiting, not complaining, “Oh, this is too much, I can't take it!” or getting disappointed and easily frustrated, or giving up out of impatience. Waiting cheerfully, with patience and love, that is *saburi*.



GURUJI:

The story of Siddiq Falke comes in the *Sri Sai Satcharita*. He came to Baba after having done the Hajj pilgrimage and Baba didn't even allow him to step into Dwarkamai. He told him he could take *darshan* from a distance only and that he should not enter Dwarkamai at all. And so Falke waited for nine months in Shirdi.

In fact, it was a shame, wasn't it? For a Hajji not to enter a *masjid* – how he would have felt! Yet this Hajji Falke waited for nine months and his patience was so exemplary that at the end he used to dine with Baba. Very few people were allowed to sit in Dwarkamai and dine with Baba – only nine or ten – but Siddiq Falke was chosen. This man who was so ill-treated before – *so-called* ill-treatment, of course – was so much honoured later. What was the reason? What gave him that? His patience, his *saburi*. What was the basis for his *saburi*? His love. “What's the use of my staying in Shirdi? I don't even get the chance to enter Dwarkamai!” He never thought like that. He knew why Baba was making him wait, and he waited and waited and waited, and he got what he wanted. That is *saburi*.



GURUJI:

Nishtha doesn't mean “faith”. *Nishtha* should actually be translated as “unflinching perseverance”. Why unflinching? Because what “flinches” you are your likes and dislikes, so unflinching means *na-ishta* (no likes). Everybody has their own likes

and dislikes, their own pulls, their own brand of preferences; all these are called *ishtas* in Sanskrit. That is what is meant by *ishta*: it is your liking, something chosen by you. So “*na-ishta*” means “*no-ishta*” – no liking, no choice. So, among all your *ishtas*, one *ishta* (our object of love) should be there first! Holding onto one *ishta* amongst all the rest is *nishtha* – this is the unflinching devotion Baba asked for. Love becomes unflinching when the pull towards the object of love becomes stronger than our other pulls – then this pull itself gradually pulls you away from the others, and your love becomes unflinching and steady; that is *nishtha*.



DEVOTEE:

Do *nishtha* and *saburi* mean that our relationship to suffering changes, or that we actually experience suffering less because now it has an underlying purpose?

GURUJI:

It all depends on how you relate to your reason for suffering, and to its object. For example, see the difference between waiting at the airport for your boss or for your Beloved. Suppose your boss is coming and you’ve been sent to receive him. You arrive with a name tag and you’re standing there when an announcer says, “This flight is delayed two hours for technical reasons.” Just see, during the next two hours, how you suffer! You feel anxious

and stressed by the waiting, you’re impatient for it to be over. But if your Beloved’s flight is delayed by two hours, even though you must also wait, it’s a different kind of suffering, you almost enjoy it. With your boss, if you don’t wait you will lose your job; there are longterm consequences to not staying. Here, with no consequences and nothing to lose by not waiting, even if the flight is four hours late, still you will stay. Why? Because the longer we wait, once the flight comes in and we glimpse our Beloved, the greater our enjoyment is! We feel the extra two hours was worth it, no problem. We love to stand there, we enjoy the waiting, we enjoy the anticipation of seeing our Beloved! Just the thought of seeing him makes us happy! Even the waiting is so thrilling, we enjoy it! And this actually changes the whole quality of waiting: it ceases to be waiting in fact. Instead, the waiting for becomes waiting upon. You know the difference between these two, hmm? Waiting upon our Beloved. This is true *saburi*.



GURUJI:

Na-ishta means no *ishta*, there’s no “my *ishta*”, there’s no “your” choice or liking. Always keeping your focus, keeping your object in view, always mindful of why you’ve come – that is *nishtha*. Always that attention, that carefulness, that focus – that is *nishtha*.



GURUJI:

Suppose our Beloved is arriving by train and we want to be at the station to meet him. We even arrive one hour before the scheduled time to ensure we won't be late. We are looking forward so much to seeing him that we are waiting happily – this is *saburi*. And while waiting, in order to be ready to receive him, there are several things that need to be done: we have to enquire about the platform, check the time of arrival, find out the compartment, then stand at the right place and be alert. Our waiting and eagerly looking in the direction of the expected arrival won't make the train come sooner. But when it comes, we are prepared, we are able to glimpse our Beloved as soon as the train comes in, and we are ready to receive him. All these preparations are what *sadhana* is about – it is the art of "happily waiting", the art of readiness and receptivity.



DEVOTEE:

In the *Sri Sai Satcharita* it is written that Baba's guru first got Baba's head shaved and then asked him for two *paise*. Does that mean that only after all his thoughts were cleared that he was asked for *nishtha* and *saburi*?

GURUJI:

If everything else goes, then what remains is *nishtha* and *saburi* – total, loving attention, waiting upon the guru. That is *nishtha – saburi*.

DEVOTEE:

That's what remains?

GURUJI:

That's what remains. These were the only two *paise* that actually remained with Baba – and even these were to be given as *dakshina*!





Shirdi, 1996



Concretizing Fulfilment

DEVOTEE:

Guruji, what exactly is it that causes this longing, this desire inside us for liberation and enlightenment, for seeking Baba? Where does this longing come from?

GURUJI:

I think I explained this many times. It happens because you feel you need something, that you are lacking something, but you don't know what it is. And when you see Baba, he personifies, he epitomizes, he gives you a concrete picture of what you are aspiring to. You can't explain it, you can't describe it, but something tells you instinctively,

intuitively, mysteriously, “He is the one!” He is the concretization of your abstract sense of fulfilment. Baba triggers that abstract sense in you, and because it represents your own sense of fulfilment, you love him. Just as you love your own fulfilment, you love Baba. “Your love for Baba” is another way of saying “your love of your own abstract idea of fulfilment”. Otherwise, there is no reason for you to love Baba: why should you love Baba? Only because in your heart Baba stands for that!



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, so many people come and prostrate to you and seek your blessings. How do you feel when they touch your feet?

GURUJI:

[smiling broadly] I don’t feel anything! I don’t even think that it is to me they are doing *namaskar*. Everyone has their own abstract sense of fulfilment which they are constantly seeking to make concrete. It is to that sense of fulfilment that everyone always surrenders. Since it is so abstract and diffuse, you do not experience it clearly, so everyone is struggling to realize and concretize it.

For some, their sense of fulfilment is triggered by a Satguru like Sai Baba, who stands as a concrete symbol of their abstract ideal. To them a Satguru is the means to their fulfilment, so as part of their efforts they seek a Satguru and surrender to him.

Outwardly they seem to have surrendered to the Satguru, but in reality they have surrendered to their own sense of fulfilment. If you understand this process and its mechanism, you will realize that all these people who are prostrating to me are not really touching my feet. Actually, they are trying to touch their own state of fulfilment.

You asked what I feel when people do *namaskar*. Yes, if at all I feel anything, I feel that those *namaskars* are being offered not to me but to Sai Baba, because Sai Baba is the concrete image of my own sense of fulfilment and perfection. Also, most people need a guru to trigger and help concretize their sense of fulfilment, so it is their need for a guru that makes some people see me as one and treat me as such. For myself, I feel no need for devotees or disciples, so I do not see them in that light.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, would you explain what you mean by “concretization of the abstract”?

GURUJI:

Suppose you know that someone has deposited one *lakh* rupees in your bank account, but you don’t have a cheque book and you can’t withdraw it – do you think you are rich or poor? You are rich, but you need a cheque book in order to concretize it, to actually get hold of the rupees. The fact that there’s one *lakh* rupees on deposit is abstract; getting them in your hand by withdrawal – that is concretization.



GURUJI:

I will say it again: you do not surrender to a guru or to a Satguru or a Buddha. You always surrender only to your own sense of fulfilment. Everybody surrenders, is already surrendered. Many people do not know to what they have surrendered, because their idea of what fulfils them is still so abstract, so unclear, so confusing. But it is the surrender to your own sense of fulfilment which is expressed, is enacted, when you touch the feet of a Buddha, because he stands as a concrete symbol of this for you. Just as when I look at Sai Baba, he is the concrete expression of my sense of fulfilment. And because you can see your abstract ideal in something concrete, the process of clarifying it becomes possible; it becomes more earthly, more real. Once we realize this is actually our own process, then all our other doubts cease. You only surrender or “give up” at the feet of your own life, not somebody else’s. So I am not asking you to “give up” your life – no! Take it! Make your whole life the path leading to that final fulfilment! Then everything, every breath you take, is breathing your longing for fulfilment.



GURUJI:

Everybody – every living creature – is seeking something, some kind of fulfilment. Everybody. There is nothing like spiritual seekers and non-

spiritual seekers: everyone is seeking something. Some seek money, some seek fame, some family, some children, some seek comfort – there are so many ways to seek. Why do people seek these things? Because they think that is where their fulfilment lies. They do not know whether getting it will actually give them fulfilment. Their sense of it is still so abstract and unclear that they believe they will be fulfilled by obtaining these things. “If I get a good job, I’ll be fulfilled.” “If I have one billion dollars in a Swiss bank account, yes, I’ll be fulfilled.” Or, “If I have a beautiful wife, I’ll be fulfilled.” And she says, “If I have an obedient husband, I’ll be fulfilled.” [Guruji laughs] So many things.

Everybody has their own concepts that they are trying for. But to some, in spite of getting all these things – a good job, good wife, house, children, bank account, some name and fame, living all these stories, the stories of their lives – they still experience that something is missing. “Yes, I have everything. What is lacking? Nothing.” But are they really fulfilled? Do they have everything? Are they in such ecstatic contentment that every second of life they are experiencing that happiness? Or it can be a kind of a complacency, “Yes, we have everything, what more to say? What more to think of?” But to some, this is not enough; they still feel something is missing.

To those who experience that missing, that “missing part” is a “mystery” it’s their “missing story!” [Guruji laughs] It is a mystery, in fact: they do not know what gives them fulfilment. Then,

for some reason – I don't want to go into concepts of why – they come across the concrete form of a person who they feel, without any reason, will give them fulfilment, who somehow embodies their own abstract sense of that.

In my case for instance it was Sai Baba. Just looking at him I felt satisfied, not that he had given me anything, not that he's such a handsome figure [Guruji laughs], not that he's a good speaker or writer. Actually we do not know whether he's a scholar, an intellectual, nothing. We haven't even heard him speak, but still by looking at him something happens where we feel a sense of security and contentment, a happiness, a sense of fulfilment. As though something that was abstract got concretized: "Ah, this is it! This is the one." How? We do not know. We simply feel an attraction and, mingled with that attraction, a sense of security. Not that we have got any security from him, not that he has given a warranty, any guarantee that, "Don't worry, I'm going to take care, your troubles I know; I'm going to do it." No, he hasn't said anything, and we haven't received anything, but still we experience a sense of security. "He will take care, nothing will happen to me."

What is this feeling? It's not just a simple joy, like watching a movie or looking at nature. It is a carefree joy, a joy coupled with a sense of security. "Even if something happens to me he's going to take care." Why? We do not know! [Guruji laughs] Is it because we are so deserving? We do not know. Or whether he is so anxious to help us? That also we do not know. But we are so sure that, "Yes, he's

going to help!" that if at all we are in trouble, we know where to turn. Just the presence, just the thought of him, just the sight of his form, reassures. And there is no "why", no "how". What is the basis of this attraction? What is the basis of this contentment, this fulfilment, this sense of security, this carefree joy? We do not know of any reasons.

So that is the mystery. Finally, if you want to call the form which has given you all this, a Satguru, yes, you can call him a Satguru. Or you can call him by whatever name you like. But what happens here is this: the "missing story" in the "mystery" is the fulfilment that happens through the Satguru. If you want to add some more concepts and mystify it some more, okay. Or if you want to know exactly "What's going on here?" then this is what's going on! [Guruji laughs] Nothing more, nothing less.





Shirdi, 2003



Guruji's Baba

DEVOTEE:

How did you come to Baba, Guruji?

GURUJI:

It's not that I "came" to Baba. I always liked looking at him. And whenever I looked at his photo, it was almost as if he were alive, as if he was interacting and responding to me – not that he was appearing or "giving messages" – not like that! But whenever I looked at him there was something that was so dynamic, there was so much rapport between him and me.



DEVOTEE:

Would you share your first experience of Baba?

GURUJI:

First, second, third... There is nothing like that! My experience was that when I looked at him, even when I was a small boy, somehow I always felt attracted. There was a sense of belonging. That could be called my first experience.

I didn't know what Baba was, I didn't know his name – nothing! When I was a boy there was a photo of him in our house and I used to ask my grandmother who he was. All the gods and goddesses had crowns and jewels, some looked human, some had animal faces – there were various kinds – but he looked different from them. He looked so human, like any ordinary person. He was the only one among the whole pantheon that was like that.

So I used to ask my grandmother, "Who is he?"

She didn't know anything about Baba, but she was a teacher and she never said, "I don't know." [Laughter] Elementary school teachers never say "I don't know" to children! [Guruji chuckles] They'll give an answer to everything, whatever the question, even about the relativity theory they'll say something! So when I asked, "Who is that Sai Baba?" she said, "He's a big Siva *bhakta*."

"And what is he doing?"

In the picture, there was a small horse and some hills or mountains. I think those paintings can still be seen, if you look in the old houses.

"He lives in the Himalayas and is doing *tapas*."

"On whom is he doing *tapas*?" – because what we knew about *tapas* was only from the movies. [Guruji laughs] In movies like "Bhukailash", they used to do *tapas* on Siva. So, "On whom is he doing *tapas*?"

"On Siva!"

She used to give answers spontaneously. So, a Siva *bhakta* living in the Himalayas – that was the picture I had! That's all. My grandmother didn't know anything about him, not even that he had lived in Shirdi. I too didn't know anything about him, but somehow I had a feeling... Whenever I entered the shrine in our house, I used to look at him more and more. Somehow I liked him, he looked so tangible, so human, someone with whom I could easily relate. The other figures looked so strange to me.

That was my first experience – and that was also my first knowledge of Baba. It was not because somebody told me about Baba, his greatness, his *mahima*, that I got attracted to him. Without any knowledge about him, I got attracted.

I didn't read about Baba's life for a long time and I went to Shirdi only in 1977. But whenever I thought of a Satguru or somebody who could help me, who could do something for me, who could be so understanding, with love and affection, and who would respond just like a parent when a small child asks for something – how the parent gives – that is how Baba appeared to me.

And I couldn't think of anything else. I was not conditioned by any tradition, any devotion, any gods, goddesses, temples. I was fortunate in not

having all those influences [Guruji chuckles], so my mind was clean, like a piece of white paper. So only Baba's picture was there.



DEVOTEE:

At what point did you recognize Baba as your Satguru?

GURUJI:

I didn't "choose" Baba like that. It was not that at a certain point I felt, "Oh, now Baba is my Satguru, I will take him!" No! Because I have to use these words – "my Satguru" – I talk like that, but it's not the feeling in my heart. If you ask me, "Who is your Satguru?" Yes, Baba is my Satguru. That is the word you are familiar with, so I use it. But I don't see it like that, because that sounds rather formal, as if there is some underlying motive in it, some relationship in which he wants something from me and I have to do something, or some principle, some philosophy, some metaphysics, all that stuff – but I don't have that feeling. To me he's my caretaker, my parent, my grandfather... just like that.



GURUJI:

At college I was very closely associated with a professor, my English lecturer; he was like a guru – though not a spiritual guru – and I was almost like

his pet. He didn't have any devotion or spiritual tinge at all, but he belonged to the same department as Bharadwaja Master.¹

Master was head of the Department of English. I started sitting every day with Bharadwaja Master, as I had been sitting with the English lecturer, though that had been mostly about English. During that period, the English lecturer was transferred. Before he left he saw a picture of Baba in a shop, and because Bharadwaja Master was a Sai devotee, he bought it and presented it to him. About a week or ten days later, Master presented it to me. I had the picture with me when I went to say goodbye to the English lecturer.

"Oh, that is the picture I presented to Bharadwaja! Has he given it to you?" he said.

So it was almost like Baba handing me over to Master. It was so symbolic to me.

I took the picture home with me. There was already a small picture of Baba in my house, but this was a big one. When I got home that night and wanted to install it, to my amazement, the other Baba photo had gone! The frame was there, but there was no Baba picture: the frame was empty!

DEVOTEE:

Why? What happened?

GURUJI:

What happened was – rats! [Guruji laughs] It was an old photo. A rat had taken the photo from the

¹ Guruji is referring to his guru, Master E. Bharadwaja (1938–1989).

frame and eaten it. Later we found some of the pieces in a corner. It happened on exactly the same day. In the morning that photo was there, and when I got back to Kota² at about 1 or 2 that night and went to the *puja* room – shock! (Laughter) Everybody in the house was shocked. “What happened? What happened?”

DEVOTEE:

Did you think it was inauspicious?

GURUJI:

Yes, it was definitely inauspicious – that was Baba's picture! But Baba was already there – the new big picture. So I moved all the other pictures to one side – because like in any normal Hindu household there were many – and then placed the big Baba picture there.

I used to sit in that room just looking at Baba. I did not know any *sadhana*s. I did not know about Baba. I hadn't read his biography. I did not know he was a Satguru and was going to help me, or that he had powers. I knew nothing. But when I sat in front of him, that feeling of being intensely troubled, like having a severe migraine, lifted. So I needed to sit more, more, more. The moment that I went away, it started again. So I used to sit for hours and hours – not as a *sadhana*, not that somebody had told me to do it, but out of need, that is what I am saying, out

² The small town in Andhra Pradesh where Guruji's family was living at the time.

of my own migraine headache. By “migraine headache” I don't mean a physical headache; I didn't have any headaches at all. It was a different matter, a kind of internal migraine.



DEVOTEE:

Did it happen suddenly for you? That one day you didn't have much to do with Baba and the next day suddenly Baba was the object of your love, completely, totally? Did it happen like that?

GURUJI:

Something was there which I did not know: love for something. My mind was struggling for something. When I saw Baba I realized, “Oh, this is the one I have been searching for.”

DEVOTEE:

Was that recognition of Baba as your object of love enough, or was it just the beginning?

GURUJI:

It was the beginning.

DEVOTEE:

The beginning of what, Guruji?

GURUJI:

The beginning of trying to experience it in a more

and more concrete way. For example, when you need accommodation, you look for a good house and you go on looking. You have an idea of what a good house is, you have your own specification, your own concept, and you try to see each house. "No, it's not that, it's not that, it's not that." Then you see one, "Ah, this is the one! This is the right one." But that is not the end, it is the beginning. You have to see who the owner of the house is, what the rent is, whether it fits your purse, and whether the owner will actually give it or not; there are so many things. So it is only the beginning. It is the end of something and the beginning of something else.



DEVOTEE:

Everyone in the world is searching for security of some kind. For some people it's in relationship, for others it's their family, or money, or whatever. I know this may sound like an odd question, but in my heart, I'd like to ask it: what is your security, Guruji?

GURUJI:

Baba!

DEVOTEE:

You find all your needs met through him, in the same way that worldly people find their security in...

GURUJI:

Yes! I don't feel the lack of anything. Baba gives me everything. It is more than security, because security is that which protects what we have, or protects us from any further danger, but this is almost a kind of a wish-fulfilling tree. It not only protects what we have and secures us from further impending danger, but it also fulfils our wishes.



GURUJI:

What is very important is that sense of belonging, that experience, that remembrance, "I belong to Baba and Baba belongs to me!" That is enough. As long as you remember this, that is real *smarana*. *Smarana* means "remembrance".

DEVOTEE:

Will the belonging always be there, not dependent on getting what I ask from Baba?

GURUJI:

If you have that sense of belonging, then even if Baba doesn't give, that experience won't go. For instance, you have a child. You very much expect her to pass her school exam, but she doesn't. Do you stop loving your child? Why do you still love her? Because she belongs to you! Whether Baba gives or not, once you have that experience of belonging, *everything* is done. That is enough. It sounds so simple, but it is not. What we are all

trying to achieve is that: to realize that sense of belonging, that identity.



GURUJI:

The enquiry, "Who am I?" is a question of one's identity; people experience their identity in different ways. Some people may experience it as "I am *atman*, I am Brahman, I am Ishwara, I am the son of Sai Baba, I am the son of Arunachala. I belong to him, he belongs to me." Ramana Maharshi said he felt possessed – "*avesham*" was the word he used. Because it belongs to you, you want to possess it, you want to experience it.

That "possessiveness" is not a negative thing; it is beautiful, in fact, to be possessed by a greater identity. And that sense of identity is the crux, it is what transforms, because all our thoughts and all our emotions are based on it. Once our identity starts changing and transforming, then our whole life and all our experiences also start transforming. That is the root: identity. That is why Bhagavan said, "Know who you are. Who am I? Who am I?" First know your identity. Don't try to identify yourself, but know your identity. There is a difference. Unless we lose the present identity we won't get the real identity, whatever it is. Bhagavan didn't say what it is, but it's enough if *we* know *our* real identity.



GURUJI:

If you get something, some happiness, you share it with others. I saw a treasure in Sai Baba. I experienced something. When you come here, I share my experience with you. I don't call anybody, but I don't refuse anybody. Why? Because Baba himself said, "Whoever comes to you, remember that I have sent them. They have come to you because of the karmic relations that you have with them."

So because of past karmic relations we are all sitting here like this. And I treat you as Baba's *prasad*. I want to respect you. I have to do all that I can. What I can do? I can only share. That is what I am doing. It is all an expression of my love towards Sai Baba.





Shirdi, 2004



Expression of Love

GURUJI:

Love is an experience of the presence of fulfilment. Usually we find that something triggers that experience and we say that we love what triggers it. There is always something that we want, but often it is very abstract and unclear; we do not know what it is. And our whole life is trying to make concrete what our abstract sense of fulfilment is, whatever gives us real fulfilment. Some people in life come across a person – the Satguru – where that love is triggered. You don't find any reason why, but you experience an indescribable sense of security, of trust, of fulfilment, where all your accumulated so-called likes and

dislikes simply fade into nothingness. It is not because those likes and dislikes are fulfilled that it is like that: something happens. And experiencing, expressing, and expanding that experience is love.



GURUJI:

You all yearn for love. You give it different names: freedom, the unconditioned, liberation, *mukti*, nirvana, all these things. But in your heart of hearts what you really crave is to be loved, to be really loved by somebody. If you experience that you are really being loved by someone, then love starts springing, it is triggered. Once it is triggered, it catches hold of you and swallows you completely, because that is your abstract sense of fulfilment, and you're always seeking some concrete expression of it. So when it is concretely triggered you give in to that experience. That triggering is not in your hands: somebody has to love you. And that person should be an embodiment of love; he should be capable of loving you, and of triggering that love in you. That is the Satguru.



DEVOTEE:

It seems that expressing love usually means to give. But how can we be more open to receiving love?

GURUJI:

Even though you are expressing your love, you are receiving it also. What are the expressions? What I call expressions is to make yourself open more and more – you call it opening and I call it expression. When you're expressing love what happens is, you receive. While expressing, you receive. Just think about it. When any expression of love comes to fruition, you receive love, you experience it. In fact, it is not a question of receiving – of giving and taking. That is why I don't use the expression "to give love" – because then there is a question of receiving something. So I only say "express love", "express and experience love". When you express love, you experience it more. Something is "pressed" inside, not opening up, not unfolding. Then you "*ex-press*" it – that is expression! That is what the word means, hmm?

What I am saying is: you already have love, the problem is you are not able to express it. Why are you unable to express it? Because it is not triggered. Once it's triggered, expression is needed: the more you express it, the more you experience it. That is what we want.



DEVOTEE:

Is there a way to thank Baba?

GURUJI:

Just to experience his love, with a sense of belongingness, that itself is the real thanking. Yes, I

remember someone has said, “No greater gift can be given than giving one’s attention.” So give your attention. That is thanking him. Hmm?

DEVOTEE:

Somewhere Sankara said, “Attention is *bhakti*.”

GURUJI:

Yes, it is *bhakti*. That is why I called it love. What is love? *Bhakti*. What is *bhakti*? Attention. What is attention? *Jnana*.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, because Baba is not in his body we can’t run after him, so somehow we have to connect with him beyond his physical form. So are there ways to connect with the guru inside also, and not only running after his physical form?

GURUJI:

Actually, that is what all the people here are doing in different ways – trying to make their lives in tune with Baba, making this more and more concrete, feeling Baba in every walk of life, in every step, in every breath.

DEVOTEE:

But that’s internal, isn’t it?

GURUJI:

It’s internal. And even the so-called running after

Baba should also be internal, an external expression of the internal run. If you don’t run inside and only run outside, it is of no use. That is why Baba himself said, “If you think Baba is only the form, you haven’t seen me at all! Even if you stay lifelong by my side, it is of no use.” That is what he said. The external run should be an expression of the internal run; as I said before – an expression of our love.



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, you said calling Baba is something that comes from the heart; when we love Baba, we love Baba’s name. And so we want to call him, and very often that happens spontaneously. But is there a place for effort when it doesn’t happen spontaneously?

GURUJI:

Yes. Just now someone said, “Will prayer help?” Yes, it helps. This is the prayer, you call Baba. You do it when you really need it, because you can’t find any other ways, nothing, so what else can you do? Then you sit and try to call to Baba from your heart, thousands, millions of times.

DEVOTEE:

But then that’s trying, isn’t it?

GURUJI:

It’s your expression of love. You are expressing

it more and more. It's just what I said – the more the need, the more the expression, the more the love. You'll get it! Then the responsiveness and receptivity is more. If you simply say, "I love it. I want that. I'm desperate, I need it." Nothing. How are you desperate? If you are really so desperate, what are you doing in your "desperate" state? Is it so imperative? So desperate? So needed? If so, then do it in order to get it. What else will you do? I like it, that calling, calling, calling. But we don't do it because our mind is so tricky that it tries to find ways to escape that calling. It refuses to make the calling our calling!

But what I always ask you is to make calling your calling, your way of life. Sit once in a while, try to focus on your heart, and call, call, call. Hours, hours, hours. You will see the result, how everything turns out, how wonderful. If you want to call it a technique you can do so – I don't mind. Of course, I don't call it a technique. It should be an expression of your need, your love. Call in your heart, call to Baba ardently, earnestly, with all your heart, backed by all your need. Call! Don't just repeat the name. Call!



DEVOTEE:

Guruji, you said calling Baba should be our spiritual calling, but may I ask what you mean by calling Baba? Do you mean specifically sitting and calling Baba, or is there a way of calling Baba in our ordinary everyday life?

GURUJI:

Actually, the real calling is the expression of our love, of our emotion. For example, when you are very hungry you think of food, you long for it. That is a kind of calling for food. You need not say, "Bread! Butter!" You need not say it. But the mind says "Bread!" and it seeks that. Because earlier we were speaking about *nama*, I said calling, but it's actually seeking, too. That loving, that expression of love, that longing – there are so many words for it. And depending upon the context, the word that is suitable varies – it could be longing, it could be just an emotion, an expression. It could be just thinking and experiencing the love and enjoying it. To me, all these are calling. For example, you want to have satsang but you haven't been given a satsang. So you're thinking of satsang, "Oh, how nice it would be to have satsang, we very much want to have satsang!" That is calling for satsang. There are so many expressions which can go with calling – call about, call for, calling on – use all of them. They are all calling Baba. In English there are so many expressions which come just by changing the prepositions. Think about all of them – they are all calling. Sometimes you call for, sometimes you call on, sometimes you call about. Whatever it is.

DEVOTEE:

But there are really limitless possibilities which could be involved in that kind of calling. Any expression whatever could be a calling.

GURUJI:

Not whatever it is – expression of *love*! Ah, yes!
Whatever expression of love!



DEVOTEE:

If life is happy, what is there to ask for?

GURUJI:

Some of us have what we need but still we ask.
That is the beauty of it. In that asking, there is
happiness, there is satisfaction.

DEVOTEE:

The beauty of what?

GURUJI:

[Guruji laughs] The beauty of asking, I'm saying.
Not that the only people who ask are those who
don't have anything – though this may be true
for many. But some people have everything and
still they ask. Why? Simply because asking is an
expression of their love, and receiving is itself an
expression of love. In Baba's path everything is
so happy that we ask because we are happy. Not
that we are wretched creatures, damned creatures,
sinners. But because we are so happy and we
express our love by asking. That is the beauty in
it. Asking from fulfilment, asking because it is an
expression of our love, that is real Saipatham. Just
as now you put so many questions. It's not that

you really need the answers, I know. It is just an
expression of your love. And my answers are just
the expression of my love, that's all. That is asking.
That is why I enjoy it. I love it! [Guruji laughs] Our
whole life should be like that. Our asking is an
expression of our love.

And Baba has given an assurance that there
will be no dearth materially. There will be no
scope for real misery in your life, you'll get every-
thing. If you want money, Baba will give you
money – amply! If you want a good house, he will
give it. If you want something else, he'll give. But
still, in spite of having all these things, we ask.
Only for love, for the sake of love. That asking has
a beauty in it, there is an aesthetic experience in it.
That is *rasa* theory, *Rasa Siddhanta*. We can know
it simply in our ordinary experience, how we ex-
perience our life, how we 'taste' it – the juice, the
rasa of life. Let the whole of life be sappy, be
juicy, and let us savour it! That is *rasa anubhuti*,
the aesthetic experience of life. That is Saipatham!





Tenali, 1993



Namaskar

GURUJI:

Namaskar means “*na-ma*” or “*no-me*”, plus “*askara*”, or “*scope*”. So it means no scope for “*me*” or “*mine*”. A state where there is no scope for me or mine is *namaskar*. Not, “Did that fellow do *namaskar* to me?” Or, “He hasn’t done *namaskar* to me today.” That is quite the opposite of *namaskar*! Do we not pray that our ego, our sense of me and mine, should be “crushed under the feet of the Satguru”? So every time we do *namaskar*, the emotion and feeling of humility should come, and these should be strengthened to enliven the experience of *namaskar*. That is the ritual purpose behind doing *namaskar*,

pada namaskar, or *sasthanga namaskar*, whatever form of *namaskar* you do.

DEVOTEE:

What are the different *namaskars* you mentioned?

GURUJI:

[*Anjali*] *namaskar* is touching the palms together in front of the heart. *Pada namaskar* is touching the feet of a respected or holy person. *Sasthanga namaskar* is touching all eight parts of the body to the ground so no part is elevated; not only the head, but all parts of the body are flat. As in English they say, "He fell flat in front of him." It means nothing remains [of his pride] because everything has gone. That is what is wanted, but in a positive way.

And once we want this [humility], once we have that desire, where is the question of how many times? Actually, it should be done perpetually, so one is in perpetual *namaskar*. That is why the Muslims, when they do *namaz*, they put a piece of cloth on their heads to symbolize their being under their god [Allah], whose divinity is above their heads. That is also why Baba wears a turban, for the same reason.

DEVOTEE:

They put something on the head?

GURUJI:

Yes, some covering to make them feel humble. That is why, while doing *namaz*, they cover the

head. And a fakir is one who is perpetually doing *namaz*, not only four or five times a day, but he is always in the state of *namaz*, so he always keeps his head covered.



DEVOTEE:

All of us eagerly look forward to doing *pada namaskar*. We think if only we could get the chance, we wouldn't miss that opportunity. But what is the importance of *pada namaskar*? How does it help our devotion? And how frequently is it needed? Could you please explain this?

GURUJI:

Actually, the meaning behind the custom of bowing down is to bring the highest part of our body, the head, to the lowest point. Lowest, that is, to what level? – to the feet of the Satguru. We do this to show that before him we are at our lowest, our most humble, so we bring the highest part of our body to the lowest part of the Satguru – his feet. That is how the custom came of placing your head on his feet, touching them, and as long as you have the need to put your head at the Satguru's feet, as long as that need is there, you should do it as often as possible. It should be there perpetually, in fact; it is not how often, it should be there always.

These gestures are only to help make our awareness of this clearer and clearer – that is the purpose of all rituals. "One time enough!" – No! It is only to

create that awareness, to make it more and more, that's all. That is the only meaning of it. Actually the real *namaskar* is the awareness that Baba's feet are always on our heads; doing it outwardly is only a dramatization of that inner experience. All rituals are like this.



GURUJI:

[referring to a question asked in Telugu] He's asking if he has to do *namaskar* every time he sees Baba's photo. The solution to avoid doing *namaskar* to Baba's photo is to do it perpetually, even if you don't see Baba's photo! If you are always doing *namaskar* in your heart, there is no need to do it outwardly. So always be in a perpetual state of *namaskar*, then only the outward expression is not needed. Otherwise you should do it. I do it. There is nothing wrong in it.

When you see your boss in the office and he walks towards you, you say, "Namaste, Sir." Don't you say it? We don't feel ashamed to do that. Only with Baba do we have a problem!



GURUJI:

Many people who are aspiring to so-called spiritual realization say, "We have to empty ourselves of all our thoughts, all our emotions, all the *samskaras*, all the *vasanas*. We should be clean, we should be so-o-o

empty!" We have a vague idea of the positive side of emptiness but we don't like it; in fact, we can't face it. That is the dichotomy, that is the paradox. So first we should know what emptiness is. That is why I don't use the word emptiness, I always use fulfilment. We have to be filled. With what? With bliss, with happiness, with contentment – but there should be space. We are so empty but we don't allow anything inside. How? It is just like a container. You take a container – in the bathroom you can all experiment [Laughter] – just take a container and put it upside down in a bucket of water. Just at the vertical, 90 degrees. Even though the vessel is empty, not a drop of water will enter. Why? It is empty; to our thinking, it is empty. But it is too upright. So then if we tilt it just a little bit, just one degree, the water will come in. And again one degree more – more water. One degree more – more water. After some time there is no need for you to tilt it more because the water gushes in, and the rest of it fills itself.

We are like vessels, put topsy-turvy into these great waters of grace and bliss. That is what Baba sometimes said, that we are all pots, with our mouths upside down. When I think of people, exactly that simile comes to mind – why he said it. We are all like empty pots, but we are totally upside down. And if he wants to pour something into us, no, we don't allow it, we are too rigid, so nothing can get in. And what we have to do – the effort we all have to make – is just to tilt four or five degrees, and the rest will be taken care of. The whole problem comes with that four or five degrees only.

DEVOTEE:

But do *we* have to do this, Guruji, tilt four or five degrees? How can we do that?

GURUJI:

If you are not afraid of emptiness and you really realize that you are a pot upside down, placed in the ocean of grace, then there is no need to do anything, it will be taken care of. The problem is, we are complaining, "We are empty, nothing is coming inside. We've been here so long – still like this, with great difficulty, in the ocean – still we are empty." Are we empty? No, we are full of gas! [Guruji laughs], but we don't like the gas. Just tilt it, then the bubbles will come, blub, blub, blub! These are your spiritual experiences! [Guruji laughs] Blub, blub, blub, blub!

DEVOTEE:

But how can we tilt ourselves?

GURUJI:

I told you: if you are aware that you are a vessel, you will be tilted. The pressure which is trying to rush in can't be kept out for a long time. When you are aware, suddenly the vessel turns, and you are finished. But you are holding onto your vessel with effort, and asking, complaining, "Nothing, no water is getting in." Holding it like that, how can the water come in? The water is powerless. After some time, when you tire of holding it like that, then the water will come in – when you are powerless

to hold yourself upright any more. That's why we have to experience that sense of helplessness and powerlessness, just so we can be tilted a little, and bend. And that is what happens when you prostrate before Baba. You are bending, just tilting your vessel. Remember that. Just one degree more, then the water of grace pours in. That is *namaskar*. Not this bending here, coming and bending before me. I always wish that you bend your vessel – that you just tilt it a little bit more!



Appendix of Sources

Abbreviations:

s – Satsang (English)

RS – Redaction of Satsang

TS – Translation from Telugu Satsang

Chapter 1 – The Satguru

1	s 46	22 July	1998	Shirdi
2	s 00	compilation	1993-1994	Tiruvannamalai
3	s 00	compilation	1993-1994	Tiruvannamalai
4	s113	26 October	2005	Tiruvannamalai
5	s104	10 March	2005	Tiruvannamalai

Chapter 2 – Focus on the Joy

1	s123	17 August	2007	Tiruvannamalai
2	s109	15 July	2005	Tiruvannamalai
3	s109	15 July	2005	Tiruvannamalai
4	s114	07 December	2005	Tiruvannamalai
5	s 29	19 January	1998	Shirdi
6	s107	23 May	2005	Tiruvannamalai
7	s123	17 August	2007	Tiruvannamalai

Chapter 3 – “My Samadhi Will Answer”

1	s 25	13 January	1998	Shirdi
2	s 37	21 April	1998	Tiruvannamalai
3	s 86	12 December	2003	Chennai
4	s 39	24 April	1998	Tiruvannamalai
5	s 39	24 April	1998	Tiruvannamalai
6	s123	17 August	2007	Tiruvannamalai
7	s123	17 August	2007	Tiruvannamalai

Chapter 4 – Living One Life

1	s 99	16 November	2004	Tiruvannamalai
2	RS	31 December	1993	Shirdi
3	s 49	19 February	2001	Chennai
4	s 75	9 June	2003	Chennai
5	s 59	3 March	2002	Chennai
6	s 130	28 November	2007	Rishikesh

Chapter 5 – Meditation

1	s 118	14 November	2006	Rishikesh
2	RS	19 November	1993	Shirdi
3	RS	19 November	1993	Shirdi
4	s 25	13 January	1998	Shirdi
5	s 69	4 February	2003	Tiruvannamalai
6	s 3	12 March	1997	Shirdi
7	s 134	14 December	2009	Rishikesh
8	s 60	21 April	2002	Chennai
9	s 118	14 November	2006	Rishikesh
10	s 133	23 November	2009	Rishikesh
11	s 69	4 February	2003	Tiruvannamalai
12	s 00	compilation	1993-1994	Tiruvannamalai
13	s 00	compilation	1993-1994	Tiruvannamalai

Chapter 6 – The Unique Mahima of Shirdi Sai Baba

1	s 54	25 December	2001	Chennai
2	s 3	12 March	1997	Shirdi
3	TS		1990	Chennai
4	TS		1990	Shirdi
	s 3	12 March	1997	Shirdi
5	s 122	30 November	2006	Rishikesh
6	s 19	27 December	1997	Shirdi

Chapter 7 – Love and Devotion

1	s 37	21 April	1998	Tiruvannamalai
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Chapter 8 – Nishtha and Saburi

1	<i>Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings</i> (#137), by H.H. Narasimhaswami (Mylapore: All India Sai Samaj, 1998; orig. 1e 1939); pp. 44-45.			
2	s 117	10 November	2006	Varanasi
3	s 48	6 March	1999	Shirdi
4	s 134	14 December	2009	Rishikesh
5	s 97	16 October	2004	Chennai
6	s 117	10 November	2006	Varanasi
7	RS	31 December	1993	Shirdi
8	s 85	8 December	2003	Chennai

Chapter 9 – Concretizing Fulfilment

1	s 97	16 October	2004	Chennai
2	"Sri Babuji" [pamphlet], Saipatham Publications, 1998			
3	s 5	30 March	1997	Tiruvannamalai
4	s 17	22 December	1997	Shirdi
	s 8	2 April	1997	Tiruvannamalai
5	s 131	23 February	2008	Tiruvannamalai

Chapter 10 – Guruji's Baba

1	s 122	30 November	2006	Rishikesh
2	s 99	16 November	2004	Tiruvannamalai
3	s 122	30 November	2006	Rishikesh
4	s 123	17 August	2007	Tiruvannamalai
5	s 67	18 January	2003	Chennai
6	s 68	1 February	2003	Chennai
7	s 68	1 February	2003	Chennai
8	s 98	11 November	2004	Tiruvannamalai
9	s 3	12 March	1997	Shirdi

Chapter 11 – Expression of Love

1	s 58	14 February	2002	Chennai
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2	s 44	12 July	1998	Shirdi
3	s 40	5 May	1998	Shirdi
4	s115	30 January	2006	Tiruvannamalai
5	s113	26 October	2005	Tiruvannamalai
6	s118	14 November	2006	Rishikesh
7	s116	23 July	2006	Tiruvannamalai
8	s121	27 November	2006	Uttarkashi

Chapter 12 – Namaskar

1	s 91	12 March	2004	Tiruvannamalai
2	s 91	12 March	2004	Tiruvannamalai
3	s 99	16 November	2004	Tiruvannamalai
4	s 89	7 February	2004	Chennai

Glossary

anjali namaskar Skt. (*anjali* – ‘hands held hollowed together’ + *namaskar* – ‘greeting’); respectful form of greeting by joining the palms together in front of the heart.

arati Skt. “A mode of congregational worship in which devotees stand facing the image of a deity or saint, or a living saint, singing devotional songs in unison while a priest or devotee revolves a lighted oil lamp clockwise around the object of adoration. Afterwards the flame of the *arati* lamp is offered to devotees by turn; they pass their hands over the sacred flame, then quickly draw them to their eyes and faces as a gesture of drawing towards them the auspicious energy emanating from the sacred flame.” – Sri Babuji, *Arati Sai Baba* (Shirdi, 1996).

Arunachala Skt. (*aruna* – ‘red, bright, dynamic’ + *achala* – ‘still, unmoving, static’); the holy mountain in Tiruvannamalai, South India, sacred to Siva, where the *Rig Veda* says Siva gave *darshan* as a pillar of fire; a traditional abode of saints and sages where Sri Ramana Maharshi spent the last fifty years of his life.

atman	Skt. 'the Self'; the spiritual essence within the human being (<i>jivatman</i>); <i>Upanishadic</i> term for the universal non-localized Self transcendent to the empirical ego, held by Vedanta to be identical with Brahman, the nondual Absolute; it is the ultimate ground of consciousness and the principle of life and sensation.
avadhuta	Skt. (lit. 'cast off'); an enlightened saint of the highest order (<i>paramahansa</i>), who has 'cast off' his body-consciousness and lives aloof from society, having renounced all worldly attachments and connections, rejoicing in the bliss of Brahman.
avesham	Skt. 'pervasion', 'possession'; the subtle infusion of grace or divine presence into a person, sacred form, or image; the term used by Sri Ramana Maharshi to describe his initial experience of Self-realization.
Bhagavad Gita	Skt. 'The Lord's Song', (abbrev. ' <i>Gita</i> '); sublime poem of 700 verses in Book VI of the <i>Mahabharata</i> (c.5th century BCE), in which Lord Sri Krishna reveals the nature of death, rebirth, and Self-realization to his warrior-disciple, Arjuna, along with teachings on the yogas of love, knowledge, work, and meditation as paths to salvation. It is Hinduism's most

Bhagavan	iconic, widely-accepted and respected text. Skt. 'Lord'; appellation of God (Ishwara), applied (rarely) to a saint to express highest respect and devotion; used of Sri Ramana Maharshi.
bhakta	Skt. 'a devotee, a votary, a lover of god'.
bhakti	Skt. 'devotion' (fr. Skt. verb root ' <i>bhaj</i> ', 'to share, partake of, adore'); the practices of devotional theism or loving devotion to a personal form of Absolute Being, usually one's teacher (<i>Gurudeva</i>), or a form of God (<i>Ishadevata</i>), as the path to spiritual realization and release (<i>moksha</i>).
Bharadwaja Master	Sri Ekkirala Bharadwaja (1938-1989), college teacher, educator, author and renowned devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba, who wrote a major account of him called <i>Sai Baba the Master</i> . He taught Guruji English and became his spiritual mentor, igniting his love for Baba and guiding him in his quest for truth.
Brahman	Skt. 'Ultimate Reality'; Vedic designation for the nondual Absolute, whether formless (<i>nirguna Brahman</i>), or with form (<i>saguna Brahman</i>); the ultimate ground of Being (<i>Sat</i>), the source of all existence and experience.

chai	Hindi; 'tea'; the popular drink made in India by boiling together milk, water, dust tea, sugar, and sometimes ginger and other spices.
chamatkar	Skt. 'dazzling'; a miracle, or a miraculous experience.
dakshina	Skt. 'gift, offering'; the traditional fee given by a student to their guru at the conclusion of their studies, or to a priest by a sacrificer at the conclusion of a ritual; any offering given in gratitude by a student or devotee to a teacher or guru.
darshan	Skt. 'sight, vision'; seeing or being in the presence of a deity, saint, or sacred image, in the sense of both seeing and being seen.
Das Ganu Maharaj	Eminent contemporary devotee of Sri Sai Baba, author of several <i>aratis</i> to Baba and an early biographical account, renowned for his devotional singing (<i>kirtan</i>).
Dwarkamai	Skt. 'many-gated mother'; the name Sai Baba gave to the mosque where he lived in Shirdi.
Ek Nath Bhagawat	Title of a major work in Marathi by Eknath Maharaj (1533-1599); it is a lucid and scholarly commentary on the <i>Bhagavata Purana</i> , a sacred Sanskrit text extolling devotion. Sai Baba sometimes recommended it to devotees.

Eknath Maharaj	Famous poet-saint of Maharashtra (1533-1599), whose writings in Marathi popularizing the wisdom of Vedanta, formerly available only in Sanskrit, uplifted the common people after the Mogul invasions, and assisted in the revival of Marathi literature. He advocated reform of untouchability and championed the rights of all people, regardless of caste, to benefit from India's rich Sanskrit heritage.
fakir	Arabic; 'poor man'; a wandering mendicant or holy man, usually Sufi.
Gita	Skt. 'song'; see under 'Bhagavad Gita'.
hajj/hajji	Arabic; <i>hajj</i> , the pilgrimage to Mecca; <i>hajji</i> , a person who has made this pilgrimage.
Ishavasya Upanishad	A brief <i>Upanishad</i> belonging to the <i>Vajasaneyi Samhita</i> of the <i>White Yajur Veda</i> , considered to contain the essence of the <i>Upanishads</i> . It shows a strong theistic and devotional tendency, and teaches the essential unity of Brahman and the world, of being and becoming, and that worldly life and spiritual life are not incompatible.
ishta/ ishtadevata	Skt. 'chosen'; the deity one chooses for personal worship.

Ishwara	Skt. 'God'; personal form of the Absolute Being.		of the name(s) of God or the Guru.
japa	Skt. repetition of mantras or the name(s) of God or the Guru.	namajapa	Skt. 'devotional chanting'; repetition of the name(s) of God or the Guru.
jnana	Skt. experiential knowledge of absolute truth.	namaskar	Skt. 'greeting'; traditional form of respectful greeting with the palms pressed together vertically before the heart; also the act of bowing or prostrating before any object of devotion.
kshetra	Skt. 'place, field'; a holy place, a sacred field; in philosophy, the physical body.	namaste	Skt., Hindi; lit. 'I bow to you' (fr. <i>namah</i> – 'bow' + <i>te</i> – 'to you'); common form of greeting and valediction in modern India, meaning both 'hello' and 'good-bye'.
lakh	Hindi; (fr. Skt. <i>laksha</i>); one hundred thousand.	namaz	Arabic; the act of formal prayer in Islam, enjoined five times per day upon Muslims.
leela/lila	Skt. 'play, sport, pastime'; any act considered to be of divine origin; a miracle.	Narada Bhakti Sutras	A medieval Vaishnava work by an unknown author in eighty-four aphorisms (<i>sutras</i>), ascribed to the Vedic sage Narada, explaining the essence and path of devotion (Skt. <i>bhakti</i>).
mahasamadhi	Skt. 'great absorption'; respectful term for the death of a saint.	nishtha	Skt. 'not my choice' (<i>na</i> – 'not' + <i>ishtha</i> – 'chosen'), commonly translated as faith; stability of state or attainment, one of the two virtues (with <i>saburi</i>) asked of Sai Baba by his guru.
mahima	Skt. 'greatness', 'might', 'glory'; one of the eight major powers (<i>astamasiddhis</i>) of classical yoga; the power of assuming immense size.	pada namaskar	Skt. 'foot greeting'; showing respect and devotion by touching the feet of a saint or a guru, or
mandir	Skt. 'temple'.		
masjid	Arabic; 'mosque'.		
maya	Skt. 'illusion'; the cosmic illusion veiling the vision of Reality or the Oneness of creation.		
mukti	Skt. 'freed'; liberation from embodied existence.		
murshid	Arabic; 'guide, teacher'; usually in a Sufi context.		
nama	Skt. 'name'; devotional chanting		

	their depiction in the form of a sacred image or idol.
paisa	A coin equivalent to one hundredth of a rupee, now obsolete; pl. <i>paise</i> .
parayana	Skt. devotional reading or study of a scripture or holy text.
Poondi Swami	A legendary saint and adept (d.1978), renowned for his unsurpassed spiritual state and for remaining in an immobile state (Skt. <i>ajagarabhava</i>) the last eighteen years of his life, in the small village of Poondi near Tiruvannamalai. In 1974, Guruji stayed in his presence for a month, which culminated in a profound, transformative experience.
prasad	Skt. 'grace, favour'; anything given by a saint or one's guru; food that has been offered to a saint or deity, and is thus considered to be blessed.
puja	Skt. 'ceremonial worship'; ritualistic worship of a deity, saint, or image.
puja room	A small purpose-built room for worship (<i>puja</i>) found in many houses in India.
Puranas	Skt. 'ancient stories'; a class of Sanskrit texts written mainly from the 5th-12th centuries CE but containing materials preserved previously for centuries as oral

	traditions. They consist chiefly of historical and genealogical records, and teachings on religious obligations (<i>dharma</i>) and release from rebirth (<i>moksha</i>), among many other subjects.
Ramana Maharshi	The celebrated sage (1879-1950) of Mt. Arunachala, in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, whose rare degree of realization, saintly life and appearance, and pristine teaching of Advaita, distinguished him as among the greatest saints. At age 16 he attained Self-realization and was drawn to the holy hill, where he remained for the rest of his life, and where his ashram and <i>samadhi</i> are still active and attract seekers from around the world.
rasa	Skt. 'taste, juice, relish, essence, nectar'; joy; subtle state of generalized delight in existence.
rasa anubhuti	Skt. 'experience of <i>rasa</i> '.
rasa siddhanta/ rasavada	Skt. 'Rasa System/theory'. A theory in Indian aesthetics and psychology first proposed by Bharata in his <i>Natya Sastra</i> (Dance Scripture), about 200 BCE. Applied first to drama and later to poetry, it states that the presentation of a work of art is a precondition for allowing an audience member to experience not only a personal emotional state (<i>bhava</i>) tied to

specific experiences (*anubhuti*) regarding the work presented, but a generalized state of joyful aesthetic appreciation (*rasa*) that relishes existence itself as a divine *leela*. When fully experienced, *rasa* was held to be analogous to the attainment of liberation (*moksha*), except that it was of temporary duration, lasting only as long as the poem or drama that was its catalyst and precondition, whereas *moksha* is eternal. The theory was of special interest to Sri Babuji.

rinanubandha Skt. (*rinu* – ‘debt’ + *bandha* – ‘bond’); karmic debt or connection; prenatal bond or relationship.

saburi Arabic; (fr. *sabr* or *sabur* – ‘courageous patience and fortitude’); equanimity in the face of difficulties, often termed “happily waiting” by Guruji. It is one of the two virtues (with *nishtha*) asked of Sai Baba by his guru.

sadhana Skt. (fr. *sadh* – ‘to succeed, attain’); ‘dedication to an aim; means to the goal’; any spiritual practice.

Sai Baba Supreme Satguru and perfect yogi, the most widely-revered saint of modern India, who was Sri Babuji’s adored Satguru and to whom his whole life was dedicated. He appeared in Shirdi, Maharashtra, around the middle

of the 19th century, and remained there over fifty years, until the end of his life (d.1918). No one knew his antecedents, original name or religion; his appearance was that of a Muslim fakir. The name ‘Sai Baba’ (Holy Father) was given by a Brahmin priest when he first arrived in Shirdi. He lived a life of renunciation in a dilapidated mosque and begged for alms. His teachings transcended sectarian distinctions of custom, caste and creed, and his life manifested many miraculous events that showed his incomparable spiritual power and wise, compassionate love for devotees. This endures even today as a living experience for the millions who take refuge in him.

Sainath Maharaj

Skt. ‘Lord Sai, Great King’ (*Sai*, ‘pure’, ‘holy’ + *nath* – ‘Lord’ + *maharaj* – ‘great king’); a devotional honorific accorded by his devotees to Sai Baba.

Saipatham

Skt., Telugu; ‘path of Sai’; the satsang hall in Shirdi and surrounding area where Guruji’s *samadhi* is located; the teachings of the path of Sai Baba as expressed and exemplified in his life by Guruji.

samadhana

Skt. ‘equal fixing, one-pointed concentration’; ‘a (*samadhi*) state in which our quest for fulfilment

	is answered and all our needs are fulfilled." (Guruji)
samadhi	Skt. 'trance'; meditative state of absorptive union; respectful term for the death of a saint or holy person; the tomb of a saint or holy person.
Samadhi Mandir	The temple in Shirdi where Sai Baba's tomb is located.
samskara	Skt. 'groove'; prenatal tendency, latent impression; psychic traces left in the mind after any experience or brought over from previous births.
Sankara	The great philosopher, saint, and poet (788-820 CE) who upheld the primacy of the Vedic Brahman as the formless, nondual Absolute and systematized the teachings of the <i>Upanishads</i> into the school of Advaita Vedanta. His commentaries on the <i>Upanishads</i> , <i>Brahma Sutra</i> , and <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> , are the doctrinal foundation of Advaita, the oldest school of Vedanta.
sasthanga namaskar	Skt. (<i>sa</i> – 'with' + <i>astha</i> – 'eight' + <i>anga</i> – 'limb'); the 'eight-limbed greeting'. Most devotional form of prostration, in which one lies full length, arms outstretched, with all eight parts of the body – forehead, two shoulders, two arms, torso, and two legs – touching the ground, like a stick (<i>danda</i>), thus also <i>danda namaskar</i> .

Satguru/ Sadguru	Skt. 'True Guru'; a rare, fully enlightened spiritual Master, a sage ordained by his supreme attainment to guide humanity. His teachings are truth (<i>satya</i>), and his life aligned with True Being (<i>Sat</i>) becomes a vehicle for manifesting and conveying the wisdom, power and love of the divine state.
Satgurudeva	Skt. 'Guru-god'; a devotional term of address for the Satguru.
satsang	Skt. 'company' (<i>sang</i>) with the 'truth' (<i>sat</i>) or the wise; hence a gathering for this purpose.
satyagraha	Skt. 'holding' (<i>graha</i>) to 'truth' (<i>satya</i>). The policy of non-violence in all circumstances, adopted by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian National Movement which led to India's political freedom from the British in 1947.
Shirdi	A small town in Maharashtra which was the abode of Sai Baba, now a major pilgrimage centre; it was Guruji's home from 1989 to 2010.
siddhi	Skt. 'success', 'attainment'; supranormal (spiritual) power; the <i>locus classicus</i> is the <i>Yogasutra</i> of Patanjali (500 BCE), where eight major powers are mentioned (<i>astamasiddhi</i>).

Siva bhakta	Skt. a devotee of Lord Siva.
Skandashram	A small cave with a facade built on the southeastern slopes of Mt. Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai, where Ramana Maharshi lived from 1916 to 1922.
sloka	Skt. a couplet of Sanskrit verse, especially one in which each line contains sixteen syllables.
smarana	Skt. 'remembering'; continuous remembrance of a divine name or form as an expression and practice of devotion.
Sri Sai Satcharita	Skt. 'True holy story of Sai'; the first comprehensive biography of Sai Baba, written by his direct devotee G.R. Dabholkar (Hemadpant), and sanctioned by Sai Baba himself; it is considered the most authoritative source for Sai Baba's life and a sacred text by devotees.
sunya	Skt. 'void, emptiness'.
tapas	Skt. 'heat'; ascetic practices or penance; one of the observances (<i>niyamas</i>) of classical yoga.
tirtha/teertham	Skt. 'ford' or 'crossing place'; a holy place where there is a well, pond, lake, river or sea, the waters of which are considered to be holy; any place of pilgrimage, where one may 'cross over' to a higher life.

Tirumala	Most popular temple site in India, located in Andhra Pradesh, which receives hundreds of thousands of pilgrims daily to take <i>darshan</i> of the deity, Lord Venkateshwara (Balaji). With Shirdi and Tiruvannamalai, it was one of the three places where Sri Babuji most liked to stay.
Tiruvannamalai	Ancient temple town in Tamil Nadu, about 185 km from Chennai, site of the holy mountain Arunachala and its great temple to Siva; the home of Sri Ramana Maharshi from 1896 until his <i>mahasamadhi</i> in 1950, and where his ashram and <i>samadhi</i> are still active and visited by thousands of pilgrims annually from around the world. Gururji gave many of his satsangs here.
udi	'Ashes'; Sai Baba's name for the sacred ash from the fire (<i>dhuni</i>) that was lit and maintained by him in his mosque (Dwarkamai), and that is still burning today. Its ashes are distributed to devotees as Baba's <i>prasad</i> .
upadesha (upadesa)	Skt. spiritual advice or instruction given by a guru.
vardhate	Skt. (lit. 'it grows', fr. the root <i>vrddh</i> - 'grow'). The subtle expansion of a saint's presence which occurs when he transfers in his subtle body (<i>suksma</i> or <i>linga sarira</i>) to the

	subtle dimension after the death of his physical body.
vasana	Skt. (lit. 'smell', 'odour'); latent tendency, predisposition; the subtle impression created in the mind by enjoyment or the doing of an action, which remains unconsciously in the mind and predisposes it to repeat the joy or act previously experienced. It is the cause of rebirth and the individualized nature of human existence. In Vedanta, <i>vasanas</i> are held to be burnt up in the light of Self-knowledge.
Vedanta	Skt. (Veda + <i>anta</i> – 'end'); the philosophy of Brahman/Atman and spiritual freedom (<i>moksha</i>) revealed in the end-portion of the Vedas, called <i>Upanishads</i> , and enshrined in the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> and <i>Brahmasutra</i> , the triad of sacred scriptures (<i>prasthanatraya</i>) that serves as the primary scriptural and doctrinal basis for all schools of Vedanta.
Vemana	Seventeenth century Telugu saint, poet, and yogi, whose unconventional, caste-free approach to spiritual life and trenchant social comments were much appreciated by Guruji.
Ville Parle	A suburb of Mumbai.

vipassana	Pali (Skt. <i>vipasyana</i>); 'insight'; intuitive vision. The classical system of Theravada Buddhist meditation based on the <i>Satipatthana Sutra</i> which gives insight into the nature of reality.
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Rose Petals

SELECTIONS FROM SATSANGS WITH SRI BABUJI

The satsangs of the charismatic South Indian saint and Satguru, Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji, known affectionately as "Guruji", constitute a rich treasury of spiritual wisdom, the legacy of an enlightened saint renowned for his spiritual attainment and peerless devotion to his Satguru, the great Sai Baba of Shirdi (d.1918). His brilliant, intuitive insights and original approach to spiritual life carry the transformative power inherent in truth gained from experience, and felt by devotees as grace. Guruji's source of grace was his beloved Sai, and his life of fulfilment through his devotion to Sai Baba is the background of the satsangs in *Rose Petals*. Inspiring, innovative, and profound, Guruji's satsangs transcend distinctions of sect or creed and show an extraordinary understanding of the nature of inner unfoldment that can be of practical benefit to every sincere seeker in quest of truth and fulfilment.

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