

### SATSANG WITH GURUJI

was an extraordinary experience. The atmosphere was electric, sparkling with wit, insight, and humour. In his company one entered a new and powerfully enhanced field of experience. 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. Hours slipped away unnoticed and one felt renewed and refreshed, bathed in the grace of his timeless presence.

Guruji did not give satsangs in public; they were held privately, in an informal, intimate atmosphere like that of a family. The format of satsangs was always spontaneous and essentially unannounced; they could take place any time, day or night, anywhere where Guruji was. The vast majority took place late at night – Guruji's daytime, as it were, since he was usually up at night – 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. Wherever the satsangs were held, pin drop silence prevailed until

Guruji would look up and ask quietly, in his deep, rich, melodious bass voice, "What news?"

It was his 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. Guruji was vibrantly alive and alert, his responses original, fresh and immediate, often challenging our beliefs and questioning our assumptions. His replies were specific and relevant to the needs of the person in front of him and revealed different aspects and dimensions of a question. Many found their unasked questions were also answered, as if their minds had been read and responded to silently.

These dialogues are taken from various satsangs which took place in the different locations Guruji stayed over the years. May they inspire and support our unfoldment into greater love and freedom!

## THE MEANING OF SATSANG

QUESTION: Guruji, what is the meaning of satsang?

GURUJI: Satsang has three meanings: Sat means 'truth' or 'reality', and sang means 'company' or 'communion'. So satsang is our communion with truth, our attunement to truth. That is real satsang.

The second meaning is to be in the company of those who have realized the truth. Whenever we have the opportunity, we should try to meet them and take their guidance and blessing.

And the third significance is being in the company of like-minded people with whom we can share and discuss the truth with focus and passion, in a congenial environment. We can talk about the lives of the satpurushas, those who have already realized the sat. We can explore the truth of our own being, of the universe, of how we

relate to the world. Let it be informal: reading, singing nama or bhajans, meditating and sharing together; let emotional attachment, connectedness and friendship grow with like-minded people. Try to transform your social contacts into spiritual contacts. Share! And when you talk to others, try to talk to them in their own way, in a way they can understand, in the way of human experience and not in abstract philosophical terminology.

We can do satsang in each of the three ways.

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### FINDING OUR OWN SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION

QUESTION: You emphasise that we should make our spiritual path personal. You have talked about it in satsang in different ways, encouraging us to find out what we need and not take up someone else's goal; to have our own path, make our own concepts and not simply go by

something we've read; to set aside many of the concepts and ideas we picked up along the way; to 'write our own scripture'.

GURUJI: To know the value of the destination is making it personal. Not simply following because a hundred people are going this way. You may not know where they are going, or where they are going may not be your need.

That is how most people follow religion: If their neighbours are going to church, they also go. Because they say the Lord's Prayer before taking their meal, they also say it. It's not touching them, personally. Everybody is following, so they also follow.

A religion is a set of beliefs. But Baba is not a set of beliefs or doctrines, some dogma. It is an individual experience.

Everything should be relevant to you, to your problem, to your need, to your situation. If the scriptures are coming in the way of that, if they become an obstacle, then you have to avoid them. If they are helpful to you, good. I never decry the scriptures.

When you put a question to me, I also quote the scriptures, but only if they illustrate my point. Not because it's in the scriptures, that I say it. If they say otherwise, also I don't mind. To me, giving an example from daily life happenings is equal to giving an example from the Mahabharata and the Gita, as long as it is serving its purpose.

## MORE THAN VERBAL TEACHINGS

GURUJI: I can say many things, and people pick up and practise those which are suitable to them. Other things might give you just an intellectual understanding, that's all.

I don't believe that these satsangs will make you enlightened and that I give you knowledge with my lectures. It's just an opportunity to sit with you for some time, that's all. I don't think that what we speak now is very important, because I don't believe in lectures,

in verbal teaching. If it was so good, Baba would have taught, he would have given lectures, going around the whole world! [Guruji laughs] What he didn't do, why should I do? That is why I also don't lecture and don't do public satsang. Just sitting together for some time and, because we have to talk of something we talk about these matters. [Guruji laughs]

Because what Baba does, he does it not by any verbal teachings. His way is different – he gives! He never says, "If you do this I will give you. Don't do that! If you do that I won't give you." Nothing like that. He knows how to give, that is my experience. Satsang is just a pretext for all of us to sit together.

QUESTION: So Guruji, what is the role of verbal teaching in the process of spiritual transformation?

GURUJI: It depends upon the need of the individual. If one needs verbal teaching, then it will be given. If one doesn't need it, then there's no need. For those who can understand only through verbal teaching, it has to start with that. But that is the beginning, then it actually pushes them towards something non-verbal. Because at the experiential level there are no verbs! [Guruji laughs] That is why the scriptures say, "The mind can't reach it, the speech can't reach it." And yet, there are volumes of books written about That which words cannot describe. They try to describe the indescribable, to explain the ineffable. Why? Because this is also needed. Not that all verbal teaching is of no use. No, both are needed.

QUESTION: Does that mean that ideally satsang should take place increasingly in silence?

GURUJI: Let us concern ourselves with our own need, our own fulfilment: what is our problem, are we trying for it, is the satsang or the meditation helping us? Let us focus on that. To me everybody is individually coming and sitting here – you are not sitting as a

group, each of you is sitting with me, and I am sitting with each of you.

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# THE PURPOSE OF SATSANG

GURUJI: Even in a satsang like this, it is a myth that I answer your questions. It is a lie if anyone says that anybody could answer anybody's questions. No! I don't believe that! I'm not deluded. [Guruji laughs] By your questions and answers something else happens which is totally not related to this. That is the real purpose of the satsang. Not my verbal answers or your verbal questions. Not your intellect or my intellectual answers. No. Something else has to happen. Whether it is happening or not, that has to be your experience.

QUESTION: What is that 'else' that is happening then?

GURUJI: We can't explain. You

feel that, "Yes, beautiful! Something is cleared". What is cleared? If somebody asks you, "Come on tell me, what is clear?" "I don't know, but I got some clarity, some burden has been lifted from me." What is that burden? You're not aware of it. Something happens.

QUESTION: So for it to happen you actually have to be physically present in the satsang. Listening to recordings of the satsangs does not do the same?

GURUJI: Sometimes it does also. What I am saying is, it's not exactly the words. The words have some other effect.

RECEPTIVE TO GRACE

QUESTION: What is the role of grace in getting clarity?

GURUJI: For instance, you need clarity, and you come and sit here in

satsang, and then my words clarify something which you were striving for – that act is called grace. What happened is grace.

And if you don't want it, if you have already come with a set of ideas and you resist everything I say, always trying to create a negative argument to all I'm saying – a running commentary – then you get more confused and my satsang is not an act of grace.

So grace is what you experience and how you experience it. It depends on whether that experience is needed for you. It should be a graceful experience. [Guruji laughs] And if you feel that it is happening because of something or someone outside of yourself, then we use the words "by whose grace" – by Baba's grace, by somebody's grace. But it is not their actions, it is how you receive it and how you experience it. That is grace.

### SITTING AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER

QUESTION: Guruji, would it be correct to say that in sitting at the feet of the Sadguru, all manuals and teachings are contained in that one act in effect? That if one sits correctly, all the instructions and everything can be contained in that itself?

GURUJI: That is actual sitting. The real sitting is that. The very fact of sitting at the feet of the guru is an upanishad. What is the meaning of the upanishad? Not what you get there, but the very fact of sitting there. That itself is upanishad [from Sanskrit, literally 'sitting near (i.e. at the feet of a master)', from upa 'near' + ni-shad 'sit down']. Then, depending upon the needs and the requirements of the disciple, the master gives different teachings. That is why you see different theories, different schools of philosophy.

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## THE EFFECT OF SATSANG

QUESTION: You said we may feel answered in satsang but the real thing happens outside of satsang.

GURUJI: The real transformation which comes in your heart is not due to what I speak in the satsang. It's not the spoken word which actually affects you, which transforms you. It may be intellectually nourishing and some intellectual confusion may be cleared – I am not saying it is worthless – but the actual transformation is not due to these words.

Books and lectures will never transform anybody. For some they may be a trigger.

QUESTION: Does asking a question make any difference at all to the transformation of the person asking a question?

GURUJI: Nothing. If it is something that is troubling you at an intellectual level and if at all it is answered at an intellectual level, then that part is cleared. And for many people receiving an answer at an intellectual level seems as if it has answered them, and they have become very clear. But it is not true. It is only temporary. Afterwards again it starts. That is why after one or two hours of satsang, actually none of you will have any questions to ask. But, will it remain like that? No! Just after a few days, some other questions appear. So it goes on.

The real purpose of satsang is the state of mind you get when you leave the satsang after sitting here for one or two hours. You don't have any intellectual or emotional pull to ask a question, even if you try. Even if you make a big effort to form a thought in your mind, it refuses to come. Usually our problem is to stop the thoughts, but after satsang the effort to even formulate a question becomes impossible. That state of not having a thought,

even if you try to have a thought, that state has nothing to do with what I have spoken before. And that is the real effect, the result, the fruit of the satsang.

QUESTION: So what is happening here is so ineffable, in essence it's so beyond the mind that indeed it doesn't really seem to matter on an individual basis whether one asks or not, or how much or how little we are doing. There is something else, something mysterious, something that we can't understand, perhaps will never understand, but which is still effectively working, just being in the presence of the Sadguru.

GURUJI: And from our side, what we are thinking, how we understand and enjoy, how we receive and how we retain it... Whenever I talk in the satsang I talk about that aspect, because we are not aware of the deeper effect and we do not know the mechanisms behind it.

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## HEARING AND ACCEPTING

QUESTION: Guruji, sometimes someone amongst us will ask you a question and when you answer it seems to many that you give an incredibly clear and succinct answer, sometimes spelling it out again and again to that person. And yet, often the person who asked the question seems unable to hear your answer and it's kind of puzzling. Is it because we have some resistance to hearing or, why is that so? Why can we at times not hear?

GURUJI: It happens because of many reasons. One is that when they are spelling out the question, they are just intellectualising an emotional or egoic confusion and the answer caters only to the intellectual aspect of the question. For the others who don't have that emotional complexity, the answer is very clear. But for the person who asked, it is actually not the real answer. For the real answer it

needs something to be done and that happens later, not during the satsang.

And for some it is because they come with fixed ideas and suddenly it would be very difficult for them to accept it. The ego feels it as a defeat, so they may not be ready to admit it. To the others it actually is clear.

Like this, there are many reasons. For instance, if somebody has some sight problem and if they say that this is not an ashtray but a glass, and I say, "No, it is an ashtray." And I show it to you all, and to all who don't have the sight problem, for you it is very clear. "Yes, we see, it is an ashtray." But for the person who has a sight problem it is not, that is why she mistakes it for a glass. "I can't see it! It is still a glass!" So what we have to do is to change the glasses or have some treatment so that the sight is clear. Then that person also starts seeing it for what it is.

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### ENQUIRY AND THE STATE OF BEING ANSWERED

QUESTION: Guruji, the questions that you're encouraging us to ask ourselves, like, "Are we deluding ourselves? Are we really having this need? Are we really focused?" I hear your questions, but I don't know the answers. Will Baba give us the answers?

GURUJI: What is the nature of the question? Ramana said, enquire: "Who am I?" Can Ramana give an answer? He asked you to enquire "Who am I?" Do you know the answer? No. It is not the type of question which needs a kind of answer as with an objective type of question: a,b,c, and what comes next? Come on, it's 'd'. [Guruji laughs]

You have to investigate whether you are deluded or not.

Suddenly you see something that looks like a snake. You are deluded. What will you do at that time? Either you run away, or you'll put a light on or

go nearer to see. Then your delusion will go. You have to make that effort. Otherwise you'll be simply running away. What I am asking is instead of running away, go and clearly see whether it is actually a snake or a rope or something else. Even if I tell you, it is not a snake, it is a rope, you say, "No, you don't know. That is a snake, I know it. For you, O Sadguru, O Baba, it may be a rope, but for us it is a snake!" [Guruji laughs] Then you'll try to teach him the difference between a rope and a snake. The only way is you have to go and see. If you are deluded you have to remove your delusion.

When you are deluded and somebody gives an answer, you receive a deluded answer. The Sadguru gives you the answer by making you go and see it. That is what I am doing. It's not by making you accept the answers, it's by giving you a state of being answered.

That is a beautiful word in Sanskrit, samadhana. What in jnana a person gets is samadhana: a state of being answered. What are the questions and what are the answers? He can't say. He gets a state where there are no more questions, as if everything has been solved. The quest has ended.

The Buddha started his quest: What is life? What is death? What is disease? Is there a way to overcome this? Those were the questions. And he went in search of the answer. When he sat under the Bodhi tree, his questions were answered. What were the answers? Could he conquer his death? For him, death meant the physical death, that is what he started with. No. he couldn't find a solution for that. But he said he got the answers. And he didn't give the answers, he asked you to put the same questions and do the quest. That is the beauty in it. In Vedantic terminology they call it samadhana, in Buddhist terminology he said bodhi, but both are the same.

So these are almost a kind of rhetorical questions, where there are no concrete answers. Something happens, that's all, then you feel answered. And that is what actually has to happen.

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### A DIFFERENT ANGLE

[Sometimes Guruji would say in satsang, in the late hours of the night...]
Achcha! I think you're all sleepy.

QUESTION: No, just confused, sufficiently confused!

GURUJI: If it's really confusion, then you should try to find out the points that are not tallying – not now, do it at your own leisure. It's a good symptom. If you experience confusion, it means you are thinking.

So in that way I succeeded. At least one is confused! That means that you are really following me! [Guruji laughs] We are all fused to something, some patterns, some well accepted brainwash. That is why if something comes from a different angle we get confused. The fuse is lost. Then, if you try again, it will be okay, you'll be again fused – to the new circuit. After some time this also becomes again a pattern. Don't think that I am going to stop here! [Guruji

laughs] This is for the time being.

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# CREATING A SENSE OF MYSTERY

GURUJI: I'm not trying to give you answers, I am only trying to create a sense of mystery in you. Because by trying to give you answers I'm shutting down your curiosity, your sense of mystery, your quest. "All is Brahman! Everything is God! This is perfect! I am perfect!" "Ah, so what!?" That's all. There ends the matter. "You're perfect, I'm perfect. I am That, you are That!" Finished! Then, so what? [Guruji laughs] So don't go for ready-made answers. Try to find out. Is it that? What is that?

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### MAKE AN EFFORT

QUESTION: Guruji, I like very much

to do pradakshina around Nanda Deep in Lendi Garden. I'd like to know the significance of this place. Would you please speak about it?

GURUJI: Haven't you read Baba's biography? If you read the Sai Satcharitra you'll find out.

QUESTION: I did, but I can't find anything about Nanda Deep.

GURUJI: Then you haven't read it thoroughly. First make some effort on your side. If you are really not able to get it, then ask. I still want you to go and explore.

I like questions to which you don't find answers in books, where it shows some kind of an effort. Satsang is not to make you more and more lazy. "Ah, why the trouble of going through a book, we can simply put a question to Guruji in the satsang and then he will answer." Hmm? Make an effort!

I like to talk about saints, no doubt about it. But if I go on answering these

kind of questions you won't make any effort on your side. Why I am pointing this out is, a question should not come out of laziness. We should make an effort. Do the endeavour. When you are not able to grasp something, then try for help.

### REAL QUESTIONS

GURUJI: When I ask you to repeat your question and you simply say, "Ah, it's okay, it's not important", it really proves that it is not a real question. A real question should be very important to you. You should know it. It should create some hollowness which has to be filled.

QUESTION: I have a friend who says you should work on your question to make sure it's important.

GURUJI: It need not be, because all these things we talk are not really im-

portant. It is only a simple get-together and all these questions will help keep us here together. In that sense they are serving their purpose: to keep me in my chair! [Guruji laughs]

What happens is if somebody puts questions in satsang, some other people who are not asking any questions may think that there is something wrong with them, so they try to imitate and put some nonsensical questions. It is not needed. If they don't have any questions, there is no need to ask anything.

It is just like imitating a patient taking medicines. Because some have an uneasiness, an intellectual uneasiness, they are taking this medicine of these questions and answers. If you don't have any disease, there is no need for you to take medicines. "That person is taking beautiful medicines, daily four times, I too want to take four times medicines!"

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# WHAT IS OF VALUE IS THE ESSENCE

GURUJI: Always remember one thing in any satsang: never try to understand everything! If you go to a restaurant, a menu is given to you, there are lots of things – you pick only two or three things and eat. You don't have to eat everything on the menu simply because you have gone to a restaurant, do you? This is like a restaurant, I have provided you with a menu, you pick those things which you like.

QUESTION: I would like to quote you, but I don't remember the exact words you used in satsang...

GURUJI: Don't go back and quote me from a previous satsang. Even with regard to satsang let us be spontaneous. And you want me to go back again, which I can't. What is of value is the essence.

You are hungry. Last time I gave you

chapatti. Now I will give you puri or idly. "No, no, no. Last time you gave me chapatti for my hunger, now you are giving me idly!" My point is to see that your hunger is sated, that's all. So don't quote chapattis!

### REALIZE WHAT YOU NEED

QUESTION: You've talked about the importance of having a goal. I'd like to ask you what is the best way to set a goal?

GURUJI: Instead of trying to set a goal, realize what your goal is. The goal is like hunger. Because of our indiscriminate food habits our appetite has been killed. It's totally gone and you don't realize your hunger. And what I am trying to do now in these satsangs and these things, is just to give you some appetizers. When the appetizers work, you realize your hunger – not that you 'set up' the hunger. Then you know what

you want. Setting up a goal is wrong.

QUESTION: So you mean it shouldn't be conceptual.

GURUJI: Yes. That's what many people do, they set up a goal which they don't need. Like moksha, Self-realization, 'Who am I'. These are all set up goals. "I want to realize who I am" – but they don't really have the need to know who they are – it's not their hunger.

QUESTION: So then how to proceed, if not conceptually or in reference to something one has read or heard?

GURUJI: One has to realize it, one has to experience it, like a hunger. When you are hungry you don't 'set up' hunger, you feel it, you realize your need: you should feel it like a need. And when you're not feeling it, or not feeling it so acutely, then it will be intensified by appetizers. Or if not, by some laxatives, some purgatives or,

if needed, some medication! [Guruji laughs] So in all these ways, what is being done here around me is to make you realize your own hunger, your own goal. To experience it more acutely. You all have goals – not that you don't need them, everybody has their own goals – but the appetite is not there. It's killed, you're not experiencing the hunger, there's constipation! So it has to be shown.

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# HAPPINESS IS THE CHILD OF LOVE

QUESTION: Two things that you emphasize a lot are happiness and love. What actually is the relationship between the two? Is happiness the child of love, or is happiness the food of love? In what way is it born?

GURUJI: Happiness is the child of love.

If we love something and we get it, simply loving it gives us joy, happi-

ness. If that love is not there, no joy will come. And even the most difficult situation, if we love it, we can feel joy. What kind of a happiness is it to sit like this in satsang late at night, after having travelled the whole day and gone to such high altitudes and back, after having had a bath and a full dinner – is it not a torture? [Guruji refers to travelling from Uttarkashi to Gangotri and back.]

DEVOTEES: [In chorus] No, Guruji!

#### GURUJI: Why?

Because you love this. That is why you have the joy of it. So what gives you joy is your love. So it is equal to: love is the mother of happiness!

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# CREATING A CONGENIAL ENVIRONMENT

QUESTION: How to culture and nurture love? How to make it grow?

GURUJI: There is no method, or a technique to make it grow. The only thing is, when you realize that you have love and you have a need for that love, and you want to realize that love, then try to create an environment, or to be in an environment, where that love is widely cultivated. Then it will grow on its own. When a congenial environment is provided, the plant grows, that's all. What can you do to make a plant grow? Nothing. You can only give support, water, fertilizer, the proper environment. That is what you have to give. That is enough. Will you take a sapling, straighten it, and then it grows?

QUESTION: What is the proper environment?

GURUJI: Where nothing obstructs your love. Where there is more possibility that you can realize the love, you can experience the love. Where such a love exists in different shades in the people who are experiencing it in different ways, and share. Then you have

the right environment there.

Either you have to be in the environment, or you have to create the environment – both I said. If it is not there, you have to create your own. Being dependent on living in such an environment is not correct. The ability to create our own environment should also be there.

Rice grows so easily in Andhra, for instance. Here, in the Himalayas, in these valley slopes, see how they did it! [Guruji refers to the ingenious terracing of mountain sides to grow rice] They created an environment. With the rocks they have made these boundaries and canals, and then made the water to collect there – see! They have created the right environment for the rice. It is not a proper place for rice cultivation, in fact, but they have made it so, and are growing rice. That is what we have to do.

QUESTION: And how to do that?

GURUJI: By creating it, by having

satsang, being with like-minded people, sharing with like-minded people. Share your love!

Read the biographies of great saints. And it is good if you have some regular hours of meditation. Just sit in front of Baba's photo and feel his presence, either with eyes closed, or if you feel like it, keeping the eyes open, just looking at his photo.

One day, a Western devotee found that Bhagavan's photograph was smiling at him and it felt so real. When he asked Bhagavan whether it was reality or imagination, a fancy of his own mind, Bhagavan said, "Why do you think it is a mere photograph?" So Bhagavan indirectly confirmed that it is not a mere photograph.

When you are at home, if you feel like singing some songs in your own way, some bhajan, some nama, just sing, in your own language – it need not be the fixed bhajan we do here. You can do it while working, for example when you're cooking or gardening.

Try to have periodical get-togeth-

ers with like-minded people, satsang, sitting together morning and evening, whenever you find time. Have some regular hours and take the support of meditation with the group.

That is one thing about a satsang: when we are in the midst of the love of so many people, without our knowledge our dry minds become wet with the love of those around us. Because, sometimes we don't have the emotion, we lose it and we feel dry. Then they can have that influence. Try to make yourself prone to that influence, and reap the benefits of that! There is a benefit in a collective expression of love, that is why I encourage it.

You may think, "What is all this sharing, satsangs and all these things? They have nothing to do with my realization, with getting that experience!" It is just like with a harvest and the fencing. You sow some seeds in the ground, they sprout up, and then the crop comes. But in order to enjoy the harvest, you need good fencing. Fencing is not a part of the harvest, but if you want to

really enjoy the harvest you have to take care of the fencing, otherwise you won't get the harvest at all.

QUESTION: You are saying satsang is the fencing?

GURUJI: Yes, because for most of us our mind is so weak that we are easily influenced by the environment, so we need some kind of protection. Now the plant of love and grace has just been planted, so you must cover it and fence it around, till it becomes a big tree. When the seeds of love are like a small flickering flame, the wind is dangerous to it. It needs some protection, some glass, or a chimney. If it is a big fire, it consumes everything in the environment. If your seeking, your emotion has become so powerful, then you influence the environment, and wherever you go satsang will be created there automatically, but as long as you feel that you are influenced by the environment, you need a chimney.

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#### PERPETUAL SATSANG

QUESTION: Guruji, you talked previously about the state of perpetual satsang. Could you say something about that state?

GURUJI: When you are hungry, when you are eating food, at what level do you feel satisfied? With the first morsel your hunger is not satisfied. Then why do you take it if you're not satisfied? It leads to a second one, a third one, a fourth one. And when your stomach is full you say, "Ah! No more!" then you relax and you don't take any more food. You are not thinking of hunger or food at all, but what you feel is the satisfaction, and you relax, you take a siesta. And that is actually the goal. To get there, you had hunger, got the food and ate it. Even though when you experience the siesta at the end, nothing of this sort will come to your mind. It's not connected to food or hunger. Yet that siesta is a kind of perpetual eating. [Guruji laughs] And what you are

doing now is you are taking one morsel, two morsels, and it goes on. But till when? Until you are full. Then you won't need satsang, you won't need me. [Guruji laughs] You won't need a plate or a dining table and you won't need a restaurant.

QUESTION: But isn't that a temporary experience?

GURUJI: If it is a physical hunger yes, it comes again, but this is something in the soul: once it is gone it won't occur again. You are in a state of perpetual satsang.

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