

"I Will Give You...Hookah Major!"

S.A. SARNAD, GULBARGA, INDIA

All of us know that Babuji was a very humorous person, unlike other saints. It is a general notion that saints should not laugh. They are not expected to be humorous, they are not expected to be jolly, they should be serious, without laughing. This is an erroneous notion. Babuji's idea was quite different. He used to say that man must laugh, laugh away the cares of life, and then only will he be able to enjoy spiritual life. Babuji's humour was such that there was no prick, no pungency, no intention to hurt, no sarcasm, nothing of the sort. It was all innocent. It was all well-meant and full of well-meaning and nothing else.

Once when Babuji came to Gulbarga for the first time in 1957, we took him home in a *tonga*, a horse drawn vehicle, from the railway station. He had come from Madras and all the way he went on narrating his experiences with Dr. K.C. Varadachari. So when Babuji Maharaj and the late Ishwar Sahai who wrote *A Peep Into Sahaj Marg* and was Master's constant companion at that time reached Tirupati, they were taken home by Dr. Varadachari and comfortably accommodated in a room. And Babuji could not manage without a hookah. But he was hesitant to take out the hookah from his suitcase because he did not know whether Varadachari liked it or not. K.C. Varadachari was known to be an orthodox Brahmin; in fact, he was not. But Babuji thought him to be so, and he would not displease him on any account. So he asked Varadachari whether he could smoke cigarettes and Varadachari said, "I have no objection, you can smoke." And Babuji managed with cigarettes only for three days. And on all the three days, Dr. Varadachari went on putting questions to Babuji on philosophy. On the fourth day, Babuji said to Ishwar Sahaiji, "Master Saheb, now take out the hookah! This man is entrapped completely!" This philosopher is completely in our cap. You can take out the hookah." picture it even now, how innocently Babuji narrated the whole thing. It was simply wonderful.

In 1973 or so, we were in Channapatna, a town between Bangalore and Mysore, and there is an ashram there. In Channapatna it was natural for some of us to feel that Babuji must see the Vrindawan Gardens which is famous in Karnataka in India. It is a beautiful garden. Some of our abhyasis took him to Vrindawan Gardens. It was late in the night before he returned. We waited until eleven thirty, twelve thirty, one o'clock and still he did not return. Then we slept. He came at two o'clock and when we requested him to eat, he said, "What should I eat? I don't feel like eating." He took something but by the time he took his dinner, it was three thirty or so and all of us were feeling sleepy. Babuji slept on a cot, and I was sleeping by his side on the floor. After a few moments, Babuji asked me, "Sarnad, are you asleep?" Immediately I got up and said, "No Babuji, I am not getting sleep." At this others also woke up. Then he asked me, "What is the time now?" "It is quarter to four." "Then it is useless to sleep now," he said. All of us began to laugh, you know. It was such a subtle humour that he possessed.

At another time, perhaps 1971 or so because at that time Dr. Varadachari had just passed away, we were in Madras and Babuji also was in Madras. We were to visit Tirupati to console Varadachari's father and I don't remember whether Chariji was also with us. We went to Tirupati by car from Madras. Our *Chachaji* was there, father of Master, he was with us and it was a very jolly journey from Madras to Tirupati.

There is a small earthen plate placed in the cup of the hookah, and then tobacco put on it and then charcoal pieces and it is lit up. The earthen plate was broken and there was no another piece available anywhere because nobody uses hookah in South India. I told Babuji Maharaj, "Babuji, don't worry. I will manage your hookah with this only." So I somehow managed with that broken earthen plate and throughout our journey there was no difficulty at all for his hookah. Whenever he required hookah, I prepared it and gave it and he was very much pleased. When we were returning from Tirupati we halted on our way at a place under a tree. It was very pleasant weather and Babuji said, Dear Sarnad, you have managed the hookah very well. I would like to confer a degree upon you, a PhD degree to you, I will give

you a certificate hookah pass. You have graduated with hookah major!"

It was in 1976 or so when I had stayed in Shajahanpur for a long time. During that period, Babuji said, "You know Sarnad, Parthasarathi has written many books of course about the system, about me and other things. They are all interesting books, full of knowledge, full of information, full of education, but he thinks that I have given him all the knowledge that was necessary for that. He does not know that here (pointing to his chest) there is nothing. Inside me there is no knowledge at all. It is all '*than than Gopal*' and he told this story:

There was a monastery—a *math*, we call it in our country—with a *samadhi* or a tomb of some saint and there was a Master who was very famous in that part of the country.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, a disciple came to him to learn something from him and he stayed there for some time. When his education was complete, the moment of parting came and the guru gave him the gift of a baby donkey. The disciple took great care of that donkey because it was a gift from his Master. Unfortunately, on his way, the donkey died. The disciple was very sorry. He felt very unhappy. He said, "What has happened? I am a sinner. I must be a sinner and that's why this thing has happened." So he went on cursing himself and kept on weeping for some time. How long could he weep? So he managed to bury the baby donkey and he sat under a tree nearby without taking any food and without going into the town. Time passed like that.

People passing saw the disciple sitting with his eyes closed. They thought that he must be hungry and placed some fruit before him and went on their way. When the disciple opened his eyes he saw the fruits. He was really hungry. He ate it and thanked his Master. The next day the same thing happened, and within a few days there was a long queue of people coming and offering him all sorts of eatables and money, etc. and the disciple said, "Oh! It is nice! I must thank my Master." And within few months he got a shrine constructed, on the site of the donkey baby's grave, and it became a holy shrine, a monastery and he himself became a guru. His fame spread far and

wide, so much so that his guru heard about him. He said, "How is it that my disciple has become more famous than I? I must pay a visit to him. I must see what he has done and what he is doing now." So the old man went all the way to visit his disciple but he was not allowed in and had to take an appointment for the next day.

This was conveyed to the disciple who realised, "Oh, he is my guru. I should not keep him waiting." So he came running and prostrated at the feet of his guru and begged his pardon, "Sorry sir, I kept you waiting so long. I am very sorry for that. Please excuse me. Please come in." And he took him inside and treated him nicely. Gently the guru asked him, "My young friend, what is the secret of all this fame and name?"

He said, "Sire, please excuse me. I am a sinner. I lost your gift," and he begged his pardon and began to apologise. He said, "It is by your grace that I am getting all this fame and name. It was the gift that you gave, you know. Unfortunately, the baby donkey died and I buried it here and I constructed this shrine and it is due to that all this is happening."

And the guru kindly patted him and said, "Don't worry my son. You need not feel sorry. What do you think there is in my monastery? It is the mother of this donkey!"

So this is how Babuji's humour was full of information, full of education.

Adapted from a talk given in Eisenarzt, Germany, April 1994.