



# Rose Petals

*Extracts from Sri Babuji's Satsangs*

## Longing with Belonging

DEVOTEE: Guruji, can prayer be used as an expression of our longing?

GURUJI: The experience of longing is prayer. Prayer doesn't mean only a formal expression in words – if you are hungry, that is a prayer for food. If you are thirsty, your very experience of thirst is a prayer for water: you're praying. Your love, your longing for Baba, is itself a prayer. That longing should be there, as a perpetual, constant prayer. What is that longing? Deep down, it is the sense or the feeling of belonging – I belong to Baba, Baba belongs to me – and of experiencing that sense of belonging. Because you are not yet able to experience it fully and concretely, in order to bring it into your tangible experience, there is longing. And as long as you have that keen experience of longing, that is prayer, that is meditation, that is the spiritual quest, that is *sadhana*. Do you follow? Do you follow what I'm saying?



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DEVOTEE: So once you have that longing and realize you belong to him, then that brings fulfilment – is that what you're saying?

GURUJI: The experience that Baba belongs to me, and that I belong to Baba.

DEVOTEE: Does everybody have that longing to some degree?

GURUJI: Yes, everybody has that longing. And that longing relates to the belonging. That is, to 'be longing' is 'belonging' also, isn't it? Having that longing is belonging. Because you all feel that you belong to me, you long for satsang, isn't it? [Guruji laughs]

DEVOTEES: [In unison] Yes, Guruji! [Laughter]

GURUJI: What is important is the experience of remembering that sense of belonging-ness: I belong to Baba and Baba belongs to me. That's enough. As long as you remember this, that is real *smarana*, real remembrance.

DEVOTEE: Is belonging always unconditional?

GURUJI: Whether it is conditional or unconditional, as long as you remember, it is enough. And I can't even understand what you mean by 'unconditional'.

DEVOTEE: What I meant to say was that most of the time when I have a desire and I ask Baba, if he gives, I feel that sense of belonging for only a moment, for a brief time.

GURUJI: If you have that sense of belonging-ness, even if he doesn't give, the experience won't go. For instance, you have a child. You very much expect her to pass in first class, but if she doesn't, do you stop loving her? Why do you still love the child? Because she belongs to you! In the same way, whether Baba fulfils your desire or not, once you have that experience of belonging-ness, everything is done. The whole work – everything – is done. You need not explore anything, you need not learn anything more. That is enough. What we are all trying to achieve here is this only: to realize our sense of belonging-ness.

Even in the case of Bhagavan, if you read his biography, his whole quest actually started with that sense of belonging-ness, his search for identity, his quest for identity. Ramana wrote in the note he left for his parents upon leaving home, "I have, in search of my Father and in obedience to his demand, started from here...". His quest was for his Father. He felt "I belong to Him", so he ran to Arunachala. Just read what he wrote in this perspective and you will see what I am telling you now. It sounds so simple, but it is not so simple. It is that sense of belonging: "I belong to Arunachala, He is my Father, I belong to Him." At that young age he didn't know who or what it was; he thought it was Arunachala. So he came here and saw the mountain. At one level he got contentment, but it was not only that: something else was there. Then he started experiencing that: "He is the Father, I am the son, He is the Father, I am the son" – that identity – answering the question of identity. He expressed this question in his own way: "Who am I?" Or, in another sense, we can ask, "Who enquires?"

DEVOTEE: You mean enquire, "Who is my Father?"

GURUJI: No, I mean the enquiry "who am I?" It is a question of one's own identity. People experience their identity in different ways. Some may experience it as "I am Atman, I am Brahman, I am *Ishwara*." Others may experience it as Ramana Maharshi experienced it. What was his identity? The son of Arunachala.

Like that, you can experience "I am the son of Sai Baba. I belong to him, he belongs to me." Because he belongs to you, you want to possess him, you want to experience him and all your expressions become expressions of your so-called 'possessiveness'. It may sound negative, but it is not. You want to possess him – his love, his nature, his bliss.

Again, in another sense, if we quote Ramana, he said it in a different way: "When that identity came to me, I was possessed." He used the Sanskrit word *avesham* [pervasion, suffusion], as if some spirit had possessed him, not negatively, but in a very beautiful way. He was possessed by a greater identity. And that 'possession' by a greater sense of identity transforms us, because all our thoughts, all our emotions, are based on this one crux: our identity, this 'I-ness'. Once this identity starts changing and transforming, then all the other things, all our life and all our experiences based on that identity, also start transforming. That is the *mula*, the root. What is the root? Identity. That is why Bhagavan said, "Know who you are. Find out, 'who am I?' First know your own identity." Don't try to identify yourself, but to *know* your identity: there is a difference. Unless we lose our present identity we won't find out our real identity, whatever it is. Bhagavan didn't say what it is; his experience was one answer, his own. Some other people's experiences may be different, but it is enough if we know our real identity.



DEVOTEE: Do love and longing transcend ego?

GURUJI: Yes, love always transcends ego.

DEVOTEE: When there is longing it presupposes a duality, of lover and Beloved, doesn't it?

GURUJI: Longing is what gives the pull to go beyond duality. Take two persons, a man and woman, who love each other. They each want to possess the other – actually, duality is present: he is here, she is there, and there is longing between them. But once they are together, when their union takes place, then it becomes, "I am you and you are me, we are not two, we're united, together." At that moment, there is no he or she – it is something else.

DEVOTEE: Can there still be longing in that state?

GURUJI: There is fulfilment. At that moment, fulfilment. But after fulfilment, again longing can come, because the experience of fulfilment is transitory so long as it is the product of longing based on duality. Without duality, there won't be the longing to overcome it. So after fulfilment, as long as the experience of duality remains, again longing comes, the longing to transcend duality, or as Ramana said, "to use a thorn to remove another thorn [duality]". Bhagavan's longing was to see and experience Arunachala which brought him the fulfilment of being united with it. That is why, in the last stanza of *Arunachala Astakam*, Bhagavan said there are not two.<sup>1</sup> His longing culminated in non-duality.



DEVOTEE: Could you say then, in a more general way, that everyone's search for fulfilment is a search for identity?

GURUJI: Yes, for everyone it is the same. But many people are not aware of it in that way. Their problems are more mundane maybe, so this question of identity won't arise for them. Or, the question of identity may arise in a different way. For instance, they have a desire and they want to get it fulfilled, so they ask Baba. Why should Baba have to fulfil it? So, they want to create a relationship, an identity that "I am his devotee, we have a karmic relationship, I have *rinanubandha* with Baba." It's like asking, "Who am I?" with the answer, "I belong to him!" So the sense of belonging creates a relationship which gives them the means to fulfil their desires. Even here, what they are trying for is a sense of belongingness, which again is a quest for identity on a different level, in a different way, with a different scope and intensity. Here also it is the same: we read Baba's life, we do Baba's *nama* repeating "Sai Baba, Sai Baba" – what is all this? Creating the certainty of belonging to him, that identity! "Baba, I say your name so many times, we are familiar with each other. I am intimate with you, I belong to you, so please take care of me and fulfil my desires." [Gurujii smiles]. The result is the sense of belonging, so again it is a question of identity.



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<sup>1</sup> 'Eight Verses to Sri Arunachala', v.8: "...when the soul finds the way back to its source, it will sink and be merged in Thee, Oh Arunachala, Thou ocean of bliss!" (*Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, ed. Arthur Osborne, 6e rev., 1996, p.109).

DEVOTEE: Guruji, if we sincerely pray to Baba, is that what puts us in the magnetic field of the Sadguru? The longing and praying?

GURUJI: Yes. But that longing is so abstract. The words are good and they sound beautiful to say, and in poetry it is even better, but in reality, they are so abstract they are not palpable enough. We have to express our longing, so we do things like translating Baba's *Charitra*, or having satsang, or drawing a picture – all these things are expressions of that longing. But we should take care that it really expresses our longing – simply drawing a picture or making a translation is of no use. We should always check whether it's really expressing our emotion and our longing.

DEVOTEE: Is it by questioning ourselves that we get clearer about how to express our longing, and that increases our happiness?

GURUJI: Yes. The happiness and longing increase, and as the longing is increased, you become closer and closer to him. The more you long, the more its 'length' decreases [Guruji laughs], that's the beauty of it. The longing is not becoming 'longer' because, as it brings you closer, the sense of separation is less.

DEVOTEE: But the longing is both sweet and painful, isn't it?

GURUJI: Yes, both sides are there. It can be painful because of the separation that we feel, but longing also implies an underlying emotion of belonging. As long as that is there, the longing is also thrilling and beautiful. It is wonderful to long with a sense of belonging!



Guruji's voice

