



# Rose Petals

Extracts from Sri Babuji's Satsangs

## Work – A Concrete Sense of Connection

DEVOTEE: Guruji, as far as we know, did Baba ever recommend meditation to anyone?

GURUJI: He only said meditate, read good books, work. He actually said to work, remember God and read good books – that's the proper order. These three things he recommended.

DEVOTEE: Did you say they were in a specific order?

GURUJI: Yes. Work is number one, that is why I was insisting upon the order.

DEVOTEE: Why is work number one?

GURUJI: Because it is not possible for people to constantly remember Baba and meditate on him and, for that matter, read good books! [Guruji Laughs] Somehow, people have come to think of work as a curse. The Bible states that God inflicted the punishment of work on Adam and Eve, so they had to "earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow". But to me, actually, work is a boon. The satisfaction of eating a piece of bread, even a dry piece of bread, got by our own earning, has its own sweetness. So I give first preference to working. You have to work. Or, at least, if you have your own savings or pension, and you can live from them, no problem. I'm living on my pension, on my own earnings. But the first principle is: work. Don't be lazy and while away your time.



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DEVOTEE: They say one of the Gita's great contributions is the idea of *nishkama karma* [desireless action]. What does that mean? Is it karma yoga?

GURUJI: What I'm trying to make people around me experience is karma yoga. Some people, for instance, want to write something but I never give an assurance it will be published. [Guruji laughs] They simply write as an expression of their love. I always say do whatever you like, but as an expression of your love. People come and do many things here, the so-called contributions, but they're never acknowledged. They naturally get into that groove of doing something without any desire, not even the desire to be acknowledged. It's just as an expression of their love, that's all. Even the desire to be praised by me is not there. If it's there, it is *kama*. That is why I immediately discourage it when someone tries to draw attention to what they have done. It's not because I want to put them down, but that desire is the seed, it feeds the ego. One has to do things around me with no motiva-

tion other than an expression of love. Then love expresses itself purely.

If you really want to do something, use your talents as an offering to Baba. It will give such a satisfaction to your mind. As long as you do it like this, you will remember Baba with love. Not a trace of commercialism in it, not a trace of business, not a trace of selfishness. What is more *nishkama karma* yoga than that? Some people write, that is their talent. Others cook, that is their talent. Some clean, that is their talent. Your talent is a gift from Baba and your offering is a means of remembering him. It is both an expression and an experience of Baba. Even an iota of this kind of activity will be useful for you. And I don't want to tarnish or spoil it by making it a profession or business in the guise of spirituality. No, it won't give you any peace of mind.

When your whole life becomes a part of that expression of love, then everything becomes *nishkama*. People usually interpret the concept of *nishkama karma* in the *Bhagavad Gita* as activity done without any desire, but what it actually means is activity done without desire for the result, without thinking or worrying about the outcome. And how is it possible to do anything without a desire? Or desire for a result? Normally, that's not possible, it's out of the question. Only when it's an expression of your love, does it become possible. That is *nishkama karma*.

Whatever we do here, we do because it's a way to connect ourselves to Baba. We love to do it. It is both the means and the end. It is not a path in order to get a result: The path itself is giving you the result. That is *nishkama karma* yoga. Then any activity becomes yoga, whatever you do, whether it's writing a book, washing the dishes or sweeping the floor. And I am, in my own limited way, making you do all this *nishkama karma* without telling you it is karma yoga. Because, if I tell you, it loses its thrill. I always want people to do things without their knowledge, I want to strike them unawares. [Guruji laughs]



DEVOTEE: Guruji, when I want to do *seva*, how do I know what activity to choose?

GURUJI: As I've said, it should be an expression of your love. And, when we are choosing our expression, we should choose according to our capacities and abilities, not according to our likes and dislikes. We shouldn't avoid expressions where our ego might get hurt, then justify our choice, saying it's also an expression. So, there is a difference between expressions, and if any care has to be taken, it's care about why we choose one particular form of expression over another. There, we have to be cautious. For example, we might not choose a certain activity, thinking, "Oh, there's a very domineering personality I have to deal with there," or "I'm an intellectual, I don't want to do kitchen work!" [Guruji laughs] If that kind of choice comes, you have to be careful.

One should not forget the basic principle behind these expressions, otherwise they won't be useful. One has to be careful whether an expression lifts the ego or destroys it. It is very subtle and very tricky. Whatever your expression is, it should soften you. The very purpose of love is to erase the ego – you have to lose yourself there.

So you only have to remember this principle: The purpose of any work, whether manual or intellectual, is to lose some part of your ego. When you've finished your work, you should feel lighter. Again you do it, another few grams you lose, again you work, another few grams. The more you lose, the more you gain.



DEVOTEE: How can we overcome our likes and dislikes?

GURUJI: If you start liking Baba more than all these things you like, with that liking, the other likings will go. Not that you don't have any likes and dislikes, you have. The moment you try to erase them, it's like trying to erase yourself, and you don't like it and resist. In fact, you can't erase your likes and dislikes, because it's like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. Or, in computer

language, it's just like trying to erase the operating system, starting from the same partition. You can't. Because what erases the system is also a part of it and it can't erase itself. [Guruji laughs]

DEVOTEE: And so, when likes and dislikes arise, then we should remember Baba? Is this what you're saying?

GURUJI: I don't mean just to remember Baba, but try to imagine what he would like or what would make you feel closer to him. Whether you like something or not, because it is connected to him, you'll start liking it. Try to like it and that trying will help you remember that it is connected to Baba. And remembering that connection will give you the liking.



DEVOTEE: You said that the value of being engaged in work is in becoming less obsessed with ourselves, forgetting ourselves. Is that true for only that period of time or is there some accumulative effect?

GURUJI: Definitely, as long as you are doing that work, your patterns are getting broken. It's not only during the period of work, it also continues afterwards. The pattern of self-obsession, self-centredness and always discussing and thinking about our own stories gets weakened. It is this story that breaks the other stories.



GURUJI: As long as we are not ready for total renunciation, we need some work. And let this work be channelled to our object of love. The material and the spiritual, both have to be met.

I'm not stressing karma yoga, selfless activity, or work over meditation. If one can sit, absorbed, without any effort, for 24 hours – yes, that's my first preference. But, if you are not able to go into deep meditation, keep the mind engaged in some other activity, don't spoil it by simply sitting and brooding in the name of meditation, otherwise it becomes the devil's workshop. They say, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." And why isn't the mind going deeper? Because some needs or motivations, or some energy has to be worked out through interaction and work. So, come on, let it be worked out and then again begin meditation. It need not be *seva* or service, just do whatever you can.

DEVOTEE: But if it's work in ordinary life, and not in relationship to a guru or holy objective, isn't it possible that our tendencies don't get released by it and we get even more entangled? What makes the difference?

GURUJI: The grace of the guru.

DEVOTEE: Will our tendencies get more easily released when our activities are chosen by the guru?

GURUJI: No, no, it's not about the guru choosing. It's about you doing what the guru likes, even when it's not to your liking. If we only do what *we* like, there's the danger of our complexes growing stronger. But if we start doing what he likes and have no personal liking, where is the question of our *vasanas* getting strengthened?



DEVOTEE: The whole attitude towards work seems to be so different here at Saipatham. Rather than just helping to get the work done, people look for opportunities. I remember when I experi-

enced this for the first time, it happened when a *gurubandhu* came up to me as I was sweeping and said, "Please give me a chance to sweep, you have so many chances."

GURUJI: Yes, it's a different attitude. People who engage in some work here seek opportunities to help themselves, rather than thinking they are helping someone. As long as you think you are helping somebody, you don't get anything.

DEVOTEE: It seems that the ones who work around you are more in contact with you and receive more grace.

GURUJI: It is not the work which gives them the grace, it is their desire to be connected to me. Actually, to have the desire for connection, is the grace. It's not that when someone is here, I give more grace, it's that they are able to receive it more. If you're really anxious to get more, you'll get it.

DEVOTEE: Yes, that's also my experience, Guruji. It's not that grace is given as a result of being with you. Being with you itself is the grace.

GURUJI: I'm not saying that people will get more grace if they stay with me. For them, the staying itself is the grace. That is their idea, their experience, that is why they are here. Not with any faith or hope, or because of any theory or doctrine, simply because it is their experience.



GURUJI: Activity influences us. It's our nature to be influenced by whatever work we do. So try to participate in work that is connected to satsang, to Baba, or to whatever your object of love is. It's not actually the work but the working itself that has the value. That, for us, is karma yoga. People have different talents. Express them in your own way, whatever your limited time and capacity allows, making them part of your life, and see how fulfilled you feel.

You might feel, "Oh, I'm always thinking of Guruji. I'm always thinking of Baba," but if you are really thinking of Baba, it should express itself in your nature and in your actions. People say that when they're away from here, it's different. I simply don't believe that. If you have the need, sincerity and honesty, you can connect, and if you don't have the need, you won't connect even here.

When you come home from work, you can take up some activity connected to your object of love, whatever your skill and aptitude is. For example, some people set up an email server [Saimail] so that devotees could communicate with one another. They had that skill and knew the technology. Like this, try to choose an activity that not only connects you to Baba, but will be useful to others as well.

So don't simply talk about your abstract sense of connection. "My mind is always on Baba, not even a minute passes without my thinking of Him." [Guruji laughs] People say that, but I think that for ninety-nine per cent of them, it's not possible. For those without any thoughts or pulls, like Ramana Maharshi, yes, for them, it is possible. Whether they do anything or not, they are always tuned to their object of love. For Ramana, not even a single minute passed without thinking of Arunachala.

For us, who see and hear many things, think about them and draw different impressions from them, we need to use some activity to protect the mind from other influences and keep us connected. It only has that value. I don't call it *nishkama karma*, it's just our need to connect, that's all. It is the expression of our love, our need, our yearning.



GURUJI: Everything on your path, even going to the office, should be part of your yoga. Without thoughts of getting merit, or a certificate, or whatever it is, just do your job perfectly, do your best.



DEVOTEE: But most often, what I think to be my best is not necessarily *the* best.

GURUJI: It need not be. It is not about efficiency or inefficiency, it's about how you do it. If a sense of achievement comes in, it kills your efficiency and you stop enjoying what you're doing. You lose the art of it by thinking, "Is what I'm doing perfect? Maybe I'll make some mistakes. What will people think about it?" The more you think about it, the more mistakes you make.

I'll give you an example about something we've all experienced. When you're with your friends in the West you easily give lectures. One friend asks you what Guruji said in satsang and you beautifully expound. Your friend gets so enchanted by your discourse, he says, "Oh, I'll arrange a meeting tomorrow, a big gathering, and you can give a speech about it." Here comes the problem: Once you stand on the dais, nothing comes from the pulpit. "Guruji, last time in the States ..." you say, "Sorry, in India, when he gave a satsang in Shirdi ... no, no, not in Shirdi. What is that place's name? Tirupati, no, I mean Tiruvannamalai." [Laughter] Everything goes, the mind becomes blank. You forget everything – names of places, even my name! [Guruji laughs] Your natural capacity to speak is hindered, is gone, the moment it becomes a feat, an achievement, an act of doing.

This is what happens when there is a sense of achievement and insecurity about the result. It kills our efficiency, our capacities, our faculties, and stops us from enjoying life. So I don't give any room for the sense of achievement. I don't even praise people. [Guruji laughs] I don't want to spoil them. To me, what you do is not important, it's how you do it.

First, try to practise with things that are connected to Baba. Because the world is so deluding, it's difficult to keep the focus there, very difficult. It is easy here, because here we have love, we have a goal, we have contact. So, get the practice here. Once the mind knows the taste of it, then it can apply it to other walks of life. Then, as I said, everything – your being in the States, having a family, having a flat, having a car, going to the office, working – everything becomes an expression of your love. What we have to concern ourselves with is only the love. So, take care of that love, and Baba will take care of how it is expressed. And be ready to express it, be eager to express it, grab every opportunity to express it! The more you express it, the stronger it becomes and the more it grows.



Guruji's voice 

