

Shri Shirdi Sai Baba

Guruji Shri C. B. Satpathy Message on the occasion of

GURUPURNIMA

July 2002

An analysis of the life of Shirdi Sai Baba would indicate that the advices rendered by Him and the examples set by him can be considered to be the easiest path to spiritual evolution in the present world, in case, they are followed in the correct perspective. As described in the Hindu scriptures, during the Satya Yuga the majority of people trying for spiritual evolution resorted to the path of meditation and righteous living.. During the Treta and Dwapar Yugas, practices in 'Yoga' and Yagyan' were adhered to as methods of spiritual evolution. In those periods of time, people endeavoured and opted for a life of purity leading to Mokshya (emancipation) and God-realisation. Shri Krishna was born in the inter-mediary period between the Dwapar and Kali Yugas. For the spiritual evolution of the people in Kalyuga, Shri Krishna has prescribed different methods described in the Gita. Would one try to find the actual application of the principles enumerated in Gita in the life of any one, he can find it in the life of Sri Sai Nath Maharaj.

During the Satya Yuga majority of the people accepted spiritual life as the real life and did not give much importance to the worldly life considering it to be illusory, temporary and painful. The realised souls of that time known as the Great Rishies established a social order which contained in-built norms and principles for the spiritual evolution of each and every person. After the Treta and Dwapar Yugas the number of people consciously striving for spiritual evolution gradually reduced and the people afflicted with worldly desires increased progressively. Therefore, the realised souls had to prescribe simpler methods for the people of Kalyuga towards their evolution. The social, economic and ethical norms having undergone a sea-change during the last few centuries all over the globe, difficult methods like Yoga, Sadhana etc. prescribed earlier would have certainly been difficult for most of them. Kaliyuga has crossed more than 5100 years of its age and during this period the number of persons with evolved spiritual potentiality has greatly reduced in today's materialistic world. Even if the path needed for spiritual evolution in the present age has been made simpler yet the intellectual potentiality to understand the subtle world of nature or of God is highly lacking in them as their minds are more worldly oriented. Under these conditions, the easiest path is "Nam Samaran" or "Remembrance of the name of God or the Sadguru" constantly.

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Sai Baba once told his devotees that "I went on repeating the name of Hari and my troubles ended". He used to advise the devotees visiting Him to read different books on religions, and spiritualism and to remember the name of God constantly and to have a righteous living. Although the population of the world has multiplied manifold yet the number of true and spiritual persons in comparison to the last three yugas has reduced substantially. On the other hand, the number of people afflicted with family and worldly miseries has increased substantially. There are examples of many persons who had families but were also spiritually realised in the earlier yugas. The ancient Rishies like Kapil, Gautam had their families but maintained their spirituality through rigorous spiritual practices. But today's man engrossed deeply with the worldly problems is painfully convinced that he cannot get out of these problems and, hence, cannot evolve. He is desperately trying to find a path, a direction, which would give him an independence from the worldly encumbrances. But he is not able to find a way. In spite of all the technological and scientific facilities provided to him a feeling of hollowness, restlessness and desperation goads his life.

An evaluation of the role of Sri Sai Nath Majaraj as depicted in Shri Sai Satcharitra would indicate that he tried his best to pull these house-hold people having mundane responsibilities into the path of spiritual evolution through certain perceptible and imperceptible methods. No doubt, some Sadhus, Fakirs, Yogies used to visit him often but even at that time their number was much less than the number of house-hold people visiting him. Most of the families of Shirdi were connected with Sri Sai Baba. For example all the family members of Shama, Tatya, Mahalsipati were attached to Baba. Some families even constructed rest houses (wadas) at Shirdi to stay for long periods. Many people like Megha, Vijayananda came from outside and even breathed their last at Shirdi and all of them who came from outside were taken of care by Baba. These people came from different stratas of society with different professional backgrounds and also used to believe in different traditions of worship. Yet all of them used to gather around Baba for His guidance and support for the fulfillment of their temporal and religious aspirations. Thousands of families from many places used to visit Baba regularly as they do today with an ever increasing number. However, a study of the available literature on the contemporary activities at Shirdi would show that comparatively very less number of people approached Him purely for their spiritual evolution. Yet, the lives of all these people had become simpler, purer and peaceful after they came in contact with Sri Sai Baba. In spite of their struggle for existence, they did evolve spiritually

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to different levels of their consciousness under the close guidance of Baba, the all knowing Master.

Today the number of such family members have multiplied a thousand times but the number of devotees seeking purely spiritual evolution has reduced substantially. I am not mentioning here about those handful of people who are quietly striving for their spiritual evolution and that of the world as a whole. Today millions of people in India and abroad are trying to follow the advice and precepts of Baba, having accepted him as their Master, within the limits of their intelligence, faith and capacity. It has been experienced that if one develops faith in Baba, gradually his negative qualities like restlessness, selfishness etc. reduces and good qualities like kindness, tolerance and honesty increases.

The greatest contribution of Sri Sai Nath Maharaj is that he stands like a beacon-light in the tempestuous and darkened ocean of this Kaliyuga, singing to his devotees a soothing a melody of loving assurance and keeping His compassionate hands on them. He is saying "When I am with you why do you fear". To those who are lost in the whorlpole of the worldly sufferings, Sri Sai Baba is assuring that "You can have spiritual progress and even in this evil world full of trials and tribulations you can realise God and emancipate".

Baba further tells us that "for this you do not have to strenuously practise Yoga, Tapa, Dhyana, Hatta Yoga etc., only take my name, meditate on me with or without my form, follow my advices and make me the very basis of your existence with faith and patience, believing that I am always with you". Baba proved what he said through his own examples. What he means to tell all his devotees can be put in the following language:

" You see me in this world in the poor you help; you see me in the kindness you extend to the distressed; you see me when getting rid of debts; you see me when getting rid of hate and anger; you see me when caring for your children; you see me in loving your neighbours; you see me in fulfilling the promises you have made; you see me in getting out of greed and you see me in every religion, every guru and every pure thing around you".

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The gist of all that He said in Shri Sai Sacharitra is that while staying in the society one should look at Him and should test the level of his faith and purity with reference to the ideals set by Baba.

In today's world it is not easy to follow and practice all that has been mentioned hereinbefore. Baba knew that his devotees would fail many a times and, therefore, will feel hopeless and restless. To encourage them what he said can be written thus: "Do not desperate my child. If you take one step towards me I shall take ten steps towards you. It does not matter how many times you fail but try to proceed step by step towards your goal. As I am your mother, I shall, therefore, accept both your virtues and sins, your purities and impurities equally. Therefore, till the last moment of life depend only on me. It may take a few lives but do not be desperate because whatever good act you do, will never go unrewarded." In order to convince his devotees about the continuity of life cycles of human beings, He spoke about the past lives of many of His devotees (mentioned in Shri Sai Satcharitra) and has promised that in all their lives He will be responsible for their protection and evolution. We do not know whether his devotees like Kaka Saheb Dikshit, Shama or others are born and if so where they are, but we believe that in whatever form they are, Sri Sai Baba is taking care of them. Then what is there to fear? When the Sadguru is with us life after life and keeping His promises then why should anyone be desperate, why should anybody feel hopeless and agonized?

In today's world it is difficult to go through the four stages of life (ashramas) as prescribed as of old by Hinduism. They are Brahamcharya, Grahstha, Vanaprastha and Sanyas. Therefore, Baba had shown the way to His devotees to go through these four stages of life even when staying in the family. Baba held that the institution of family is one of the most difficult Ashrams but even being a family man one can carry on the activities of all the four Ashrams. Upasani Maharaj who was a married person was asked to stay for years in Khadoba Mandir at Shirdi. Kaka Saheb Dikshit whose family was at Bombay was also asked to stay at Shirdi.

Similarly, many other devotees came from time to time and stayed at Shirdi and had spiritual evolution and emancipation. It has been experienced that one can evolve out of his miseries, hopelessness, desperation of the domestic and worldly life and evolve spiritually even in this Kalyuga, would he follow the simple path prescribed by

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Baba with faith and patience. The fluttering flag atop the Sri Sai Shirdi Samadhi Mandir at Shirdi announces this eternal truth saying :

"Do not fear when I am there"

Om Shri Sai

C. B. Satpathy