



New Year Message -2009 Shri Sai after Maha Samadhi

The very premise of worshipping a Sadguru or a Perfect Master is termed 'Bhakti'. The two major attributes of Bhakti, as defined by our Master Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi, are faith (Shraddha) and Saburi (Patience). The history of different Bhakti movements has shown us that the maintenance of steadfast faith in the Master is 'Perhaps' easier when He is in a bodily form and not as easy after He leaves His body. That is so because a Master in a human form can communicate and carry on with numerous visible activities over and above His subtle and invisible activities. When in a bodily form, the Sadguru can be communicated with by the devotees through the different cognitive instruments of the body (eg. ear, eyes, mouth etc.) but the same is not possible with the Master's statue, photograph or painting. Those devotees who, during the period of human embodiment of the Master evolve spiritually and establish a subtle mental communication with the Master (even when physically away from Him), don't find it difficult to continue such communication with Him even after His taking Samadhi. However, those devotees who did not evolve when the Master was physically there or had never seen, heard, touched or smelt the Masters body or items (through the use of their gross physical instruments), find it difficult to maintain their devotion and faith as steadfastly as before, after the physical departure of the Master. There is a possibility of their devotion and concentration on the form of the Master getting affected gradually. The devotees usually get what can be termed, as a 'spiritual feeding' or 'spiritual vitalization' when directly in the presence of the Master. Once His body is entombed (Samadhi), they worship the tomb not because of its aesthetic value but because underneath the tomb lies the body of the Master whom they continue to love.

For devotees who are born after the Samadhi of the Master, it is a different issue altogether. Their devotion emanates from the knowledge they receive from the old, experienced and direct devotees of the Master. They also get lots of information from the print media (books, magazines etc.) and audiovisual media (Movies, T.V., Radio etc.) about the divine personality, qualities and noble deeds of the Master. Today, they can get the requisite information through the medium of the internet. Thus when they start following a Master, they start reading the available literature on Him, asking questions about Him and participate in discussions on Him. Once influenced by the superior divine and humane qualities of the Sadguru they start worshipping Him. In this process, they establish a mental and emotional connectivity with the omnipotent spirit of the Master and also realize that the spirit of the Master even without a physical body can guide them in the path of spiritual evolution and protect them from worldly miseries.

However, there is another school of thought which holds that a Sadguru while in a mortal body alone can guide and protect His devotees. Once a Sadguru leaves His body, he cannot actively help His devotees. Therefore, they insist on following, what they call a "living Sadguru".

Let us take the case of our Master Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi. Before leaving His body, Baba gave certain assurances to His devotees in unequivocal terms, popularly known as the eleven sayings (Gyarah Vachan) of Baba. The gist of these eleven sayings is that, Baba will protect and guide His devotees (old or new) from His Samadhi, where His body is entombed. Once when in a mood of divine ecstasy, Baba made a forecast to a group of devotees that in the future, Shirdi would be visited by an un-imaginable number of devotees - both big and small- and they would make a bee-line to His tomb and also that He would be present in 'Guli-Guli' (correct pronunciation is Gali- Gali in Hindi which means 'every lane'). This finds a mention in chapter of the Shri Sai Satcharitra. Let us examine whether Baba's forecasts have come true ninety years after His Samadhi (1918 to 2008).

During the last 90 years and particularly during the last 20 years or so, the spread of the name and fame of Sai Baba and the increase in the number of His devotees is phenomenal. There has been a mushrooming growth of temples and other related activities (medical, educational, social and religious) in the name of Baba all over the country and abroad. The number of books, magazines, souvenirs etc. created exclusively for spreading the name and preaching of Baba in different Indian and foreign languages is too numerous to be listed herein. Not only are hundreds of new temples coming up all over the globe, but also in many existing temple complexes, His statues and images are being consecrated. Television channels and internets etc. are regularly displaying various shows of His life and His preachings. Many devotees are experiencing His kind divine intervention in times of distress as a result of their prayers even today. Thus, the 'Sai Movement' is an intensely dynamic process that is flowering and prospering day by day.

This naturally leads to the belief that a Sadguru or a Perfect Master is as potent without a body as He is with it. Therefore, the devotees of Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi do not have to lament that they could not experience the physical presence or the divine activities of the Master when He was in His mortal embodiment. He is omnipresent and omnipotent and the mere lack of a physical manifestation of His power need not make His devotees lose faith and hope. Baba had promised His devotees of protection even after leaving His body and He has kept his promises as His devotees feel.

On this New Year, I pray Shri Sainath Maharaj to bless the millions of His devotees, grant them health and happiness and lead them on the path of spiritual evolution. May the year 2009 bring them closer to Baba.