



## RAM NAVAMI 2014 MESSAGE

Devotees of Shri Shirdi Sai Baba often ask a question, “why is it that even though I have surrendered to Baba, my financial, physical, social, and official situation has not improved?” Or that “I have prayed to Baba to cure my son every day for the last week. Why is he not getting cured?” Some of them even say that they would visit Shirdi or a temple of Baba if their wishes are fulfilled.

The main problem lies in the conviction of people about their faith/surrender to Baba. They do not have the noble qualities, sacrifices and the period of time required to establish closer contact with a Sadguru. While social relationships vary from one society to another and from time to time, most social relationships are based on prior calculations about mutual benefit. Such considerations apply even within families. Any deviation from expectations or non-fulfillment of anticipated results from the other side easily spoil these relationships. But when these norms are applied in relation to the Spiritual World or in relation to a Sadguru, it becomes a non-starter from the beginning.

Bhakti Marg at its highest point leads to ‘surrender’. Surrender means sacrificing everything - our mind, body and soul to the God or Sadguru whom we worship. Once he surrenders the devotee has to think that his body, mind will and soul belong to God/Sadguru and not to him. Also, he has to utilize these for the cause of the Sadguru. Since everything belongs to the Sadguru, he has nothing to be happy about, nothing to be sorry about, nothing to complain against and nothing to desire for himself - materially, mentally or spiritually. Such a state of total surrender can be achieved only by a few from among millions of spiritual aspirants who have received the kindness and support of a Sadguru.

How many of the people, who claim to have surrendered to Baba, have truly surrendered? Once Baba told his devotees that in order to test him, His Guru hung him upside down in a well with a rope for a few hours. When the Guru returned he asked Baba how He felt. Baba replied that He was in an ecstatic mood, had no complaints and was happy about what the Guru had done to him. Having said this, Baba asked the devotees sitting around Him in Dwarka Mayee Masjid as to how many of them had this level of faith. None had the courage to come up to Him.

Therefore, simply to say, feel or show that one has surrendered is not correct because a surrendered man will have no desires or will of his own and therefore no complaints. He would only follow the two prescriptions given by Baba i.e., Shradha (faith) and Saburi (patience):

**The word 'Shradha' means:**

- Genuine devotional faith in the Master i.e., Baba for the Sai devotees;
- An intrinsic faith that Baba is in a God state and is his Protector;
- Knowing that the past, present and future of the devotee are known to Him and are controlled by Him, from near and far;
- Ability to tolerate all vicissitudes of life with patience and equanimity;
- The realization that Baba is always with His devotees and watching over their welfare;
- To follow the dictates of the Master in letter and spirit, without being concerned or worried about the consequences thereof;
- To hold on to Baba and not run to different deities/temples for different purposes.

**The word 'Saburi' means:**

- Tolerance and patience, both physical and mental, under all circumstances with faith in Baba.
- In the spiritual sense it has a wider and subtler connotation of natural acceptance of all problems of life with equanimity. It is not mere tolerance of something wily-nilly.

How many people have this attitude of mind? Each devotee should examine his thought process to find-out where exactly he stands. Then only one would understand whether or not he has surrendered in the real sense of the term.

If anyone wants to establish perfect association with a Perfect Master, then he should, at first, become a perfect devotee. Baba used to say that a devotee will experience Him according to his 'bhava'. An imperfect mind will reflect an imperfect image of the Sadguru and the person will get imperfect results. It is not easy to surrender the state of mind so easily without understanding its full implications. The

better path would be to develop the qualities prescribed by the Sadguru gradually, while living in the world like an ordinary man - enjoying happiness and suffering unhappiness - while keeping the Guru in one's heart.

Generally this part of the puja activity, i.e., recital of 'mantras' and Sanskrit 'shlokas', in temples and even homes is delegated to the 'Punditji' and 'Pujari'. Many such 'Pandits' and 'Pujaris' are found to be ignorant about the real purport or the complete meaning of the 'Mantras' and 'Shlokas'. Some of them just go on reciting these as a matter of professional habit. At times the pronunciation of Sanskrit is highly defective and conveys different and awkward meanings. If the original authors of the 'Mantras' could listen to the present day archaic style of presentation, they would perhaps turn in their graves. Further, there are 'Mantras' for every occasion, be it a deity's birthday or death anniversary of some one's father. However, one comes across erudite 'Pundits' in some temples, but they are rarely to be found.

Thus the ignorant but gullible devotee is waylaid in the devotional path by some of these so called 'Punditji's at huge cost of their time, money and energy. The unfortunate devotee has no choice but to agree to whatever the 'Punditji' says, does or prescribes to be done, with the fear of losing God's blessings or incurring a divine curse or losing the good will of the 'Punditji' who often usurps the role of an intermediary between God and his devotees!

What the simple devotee does not understand is that the entire system of worship of God or 'Guru' is meant to establish and sustain an emotional rapport between the God or 'Guru' and the devotees. That is possible only when the devotee is truthful in his emotional beseechment or prayers. This part can't be delegated to the 'Punditji' to be manipulated through the process of uttering of a few Sanskrit words (Mantras), the meaning of which, he may not be aware of.

That is why the enlightened souls like Shri Nanakji ('Guru Vani' written in Gurumukhi), Shri Tulsi Das ('Shri Rama CharitaManas' written in Hindi), Shri Sharala Das (Mahabharata written in Odia) and many others had tried to make it easy for the devotee to develop a direct emotional bond with God (or the Deity) by giving vent to his feelings through the medium of regional, local and understandable language. In Maharashtra, saint Tukaram wrote 'abhangs' in Marathi language and in Bengal, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to deliver his discourses in simple Bengali language and style. Such changes brought about by these enlightened souls were fully accepted by the common man of the society and were highly beneficial in their spiritual progress. Shri Shirdi Sai Baba also prescribed His devotees to appeal to God in a faithful and truthful spirit in whatever language the devotee found it to

be easy to do so. Therefore, the devotees, who recite mantras, should try to understand the meaning of the 'Mantras' and 'Shlokas' and then recite them during worship and prayer, rather than doing it mechanically. Worship (Puja) without Bhava (devotional emotion) is an exercise in futility. Bhava is the pulsation of heart uniting the human soul with God and there is no role of an intermediary character.

Shirdi Sai used to tell His devotees just to recite His name Sai-Sai lovingly. History has shown that numerous simple, uneducated (in the formal sense of the term) but faithful souls realised God in this manner.

MAY SHRI SAI BLESS US ALL

**Jai Shri Sai.**

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