



## NEW YEAR MESSAGE 2014

It has often been observed that some of the devotees and spiritual practitioners, whether they are followers of Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi or other Gurus or any Deity of the Hindu pantheon, enter into the subtle and sensitive world of faith, with certain convictions in mind. Such convictions do not get infused into the minds of the devotees in a cursory manner. When a new thought, inspires one to adopt a fresh approach to life, it takes the form of a mission. In the case of belief in God or Guru or Divinity in any form, it usually takes an extremely long period of time for the belief to settle down in the mind before one truly tries to convert the belief to an existing reality of life. Let me try to qualify my statement. Let us venture to examine the case of a person who had very little conviction about the existence of God or of a divine force, even though he used to visit temples and willingly followed the prescribed ritualistic rigmaroles. He used to do so more as a socio-religious habit inculcated from childhood because born in a traditional Hindu family, he had learnt it all from his parents, priests and others during the course of his childhood.

Majority of people of our society belong to this category. Nothing is wrong with them but they are just like this because the existing social milieu considerably conditions their mind. Such devotees can be seen in most of the temples, religious functions, ashrams and in huge religious congregations like Kumbh Mela (mela means a huge congregation of people). While performing such activities they nurture a sense of self-purification in them. They think that because they perform such religious activities, the stock of their paap (accumulated evil deeds from the past) will automatically get exhausted. They feel free from their mental tension having downloaded their past sins, present worries and future concerns before the guru or deity, in whom they believe. Such a frame of mind exhibited in temples towards the deity and for self purification is good, but this is as far as it goes because, generally, as soon as they leave the temple the promises made before the deity or guru are conveniently forgotten. Many people, sooner than later, display the same evil propensities, when they are out of the temple. A few days later they return again for

the mitigation of their nascent evil doings. In such a state, the relationship between the God or guru and devotees becomes conditioned by the devotees who want God or guru to play the role of a benevolent provider and protector, notwithstanding their self-created and oft-repeated evil activities. More often than not, their post-haste feeling of repentance becomes as transient as their kindness towards poor people on the street.

Such people, at times, display melodramatic exhibitionism about their spiritual attachment with the deity or guru. However, such pretensions do not build within them the inner strength to hold themselves at the time of distress. This is so because they don't try to inculcate the qualities of Shraddha (faith) and Saburi (patience) so essentially required for spiritual evolution as prescribed by Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi. The first step to evolve in the spiritual path is to truly repent for the mistakes done and not to repeat them and undergo self-imposed penance, howsoever severe. There are no shortcuts to evolution, be it the evolution of nature around us or nature within us. Therefore, realisation of the weaknesses within himself is the first step towards self-realisation by a devotee. One may read all the scriptures visit all the temples, practice all the religions or even worship all the deities but spiritual advancement will delude him till he consciously tries for it.

At Shirdi the old Fakir was ever vigilant about the thought process of His devotees and used to influence their minds through various gross and subtle methods, day-in and day-out. One day, Baba taking the name of a certain devotee told the devotees around Him that what will happen to that person, if He (Baba) were not awake to protect him.

May Shri Sai protect us from evil thoughts and lead us towards purity.

**Jai Shri Sai.**

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