



RAMNAVAMI MESSAGE 2003

SHRI SAI FAITH AND REASON

Many people of late are found asking a question i.e. why and how is the number of devotees of Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi multiplying all over! Even at the time of Baba only a few thousand people used to visit Shirdi. Today the number of people visiting Shirdi on a daily average basis is about 35000. The number of temples of Shri Sainath not only in India but abroad is growing in unbelievable numbers. The magnitude of other Sai-related activities like opening of different Sai Mandalis, publication of reading materials (Books, Magazines etc.), the number of web-sites on Baba and other philanthropic/religious activities is mind-boggling. His photographs can be found in Pooja Rooms of millions of devotees and in shops, office rooms, vehicles, etc. in all parts of India. It looks as if a miracle has happened during the last decade or like the invasion of a spiritual power on this earth - mighty and sovereign.

A Master or an Incarnation takes human embodiment as an agent of God to establish a path in a decadent human society. He tries to destroy the destabilizing factors and also re-establish new norms of moral and social conduct. Old order changeth giving rise to new – this is the main work of the Masters, one can say.

The world, and for us India in particular, is presently going through a phase of transition both in the realm of materialism and spiritualism. The human society is no doubt undergoing a process of spiritual dialect. Knowledge of science and technology is empowering the human race to discover hitherto hidden and subtle laws of nature which a few centuries back would have been taken as miracles or as actions of divinity. For example, space voyage, cloning, transplantation of various parts of human body, communication system etc. has enabled the modern man almost to play the role of God of earlier times. All these are based on sound reasoning and intellect but then what about faith in God? Human beings as individuals at all points of history have prayed God in times of crises, but what about a situation where faith in God and reasoning of man can co-exist together in a perfect state of symbiosis and be accepted as a normal way of existence. Cannot Monism be reinterpreted as a theory of unison of reason with faith rather than philosophizing as to whether God is a single entity or a multiple entity?

The conduct and preachings of Baba in the context of the society in which he lived, indicates that he made reason and faith inter-dependent on each other i.e. faith cannot sustain without the highest reasoning and no one can evolve with mere reasoning, without a faith in some force much more powerful than him. It does not matter by what name it is called i.e. God, Allah, Brahman, Nature, spirit or soul.

For example, let us examine a simple saying of Baba like “do not take a service from any one without paying for it”, when he had gone up the roof of Radha Krishna Mayi at Shirdi. From the point of view of spiritualism or religion this is forbidden as creative of a negative Karma called Runa (indebtedness). Speaking from rational point of view one can always ask as to how a society can sustain itself happily and progressively, if some people work without getting paid and others enjoy at the cost of those who work. It is such a situation, played on a larger canvas that had brought about revolution in France and Russia where the French Emperor and Czar had not paid the peasants for hundreds of years for their labour.

A critical study of Shri Sai Satcharitra would indicate that Baba had always tried to bring about a happy and creative amalgamation of faith with reason. When he asked the devotees following different faiths to accept humanitarian concepts of some other religions, was he not pulling reason over faith? No doubt he *was* trying to bring about a perfect social cohesion but what about faith in one’s religion? On the other hand, when he had told his devotees that to follow the Sadguru or the Master will bring about spiritual evolution in them, was he not asking them to stop reasoning and surrender to blind faith?

The greatness of Shri Sai and the ever increasing relevance of his approach in the context of today’s world, remains in the simple way in which Baba brought about a happy synthesis between reason and faith in his devotees. This led to a healthy togetherness among different groups living in Shirdi.

If this experiment is tried in the much wider context of our world, then there can be a better tomorrow for the ever-warring, ever-jealous, human groups existing in a state of perpetual anxiety and confusion. Whatever be the prescription of any religion, the fact remains that one will have faith in God only when he has faith in Man (as a part of God) and one will have faith in Man if he has true faith in God. It is God who created man and gave him the knowledge that God exists, and man used his highest reasoning called faith to perpetrate His existence in his thought process. This interdependence of reason and faith, as amply demonstrated by Shri Sainath Maharaj in his conduct and precepts, is the only way to evolve human society.