

## NEW YEAR MESSAGE OF SHRI SATPATHYJI 2010

Birth and death are the two terminal points of human life. To be born is to die. In the cosmic period of time, human existence is like a bubble of moments. All embodied souls, be it human beings or any other species, will have to go through this short journey of a lifetime. Such embodied souls are known as 'Jivas' or life forms. There are millions of such life forms, both visible and invisible on this earth. Many of these forms are known to human civilization due to research and others are yet to be known. Their body forms, capabilities, intelligence level and periodicity of existence between birth and death are different and too numerous to be codified. However, the main principle of these manifested life forms is that once they are born, they must die after carrying out certain activities in accordance with their inborn capacities.

Once they die, that is, when the life force holding the body elements together departs from the body or stops functioning in the form of a pulsating heart beat, the body elements separate from each other. The earth goes to earth, water goes to water and air goes to air. Hindu philosophy holds that 'Panch Bhutas' (Five elements) of nature merge with their primordial elements, once the life force departs from a living organism.

Then comes the next question as to what happens to the 'Jiva' without the body? What happens to the life force that holds the body together? Do the 'Jiva' and the life force (Prana) have any existence and significance after separating from the body? Some spiritual thinkers define the life force (Prana) as the manifested dynamics of the soul (Atman). According to some religions and philosophies the 'Jiva' after death is re-born again and again. According to others, there is no re-birth or re-incarnation of human souls. This series of re-births continues till the 'Jiva' reaches the stage of 'Moksha' as Hinduism believes or 'Nirvana' as Buddhism states. Therefore every Hindu, from his very childhood, is taught to commit good deeds and avoid evil deeds. Like Newton's law of motion of matter, which states that every action will have an equal and opposite reaction, Hindus believe that every good or evil act committed by a human being shall have an equal and opposite reaction. The only difference is that, in the case of human beings committing such acts – good or evil, the reaction may not manifest in a single lifetime. It can stretch over to the next life or lives. Therefore, it advises each human being, to be prepared to enjoy or suffer the results of his good or evil deeds respectively in future lives to come. This is known as the famous 'Karma' theory, as propounded so meticulously in 'Geeta' and other Hindu scriptures.

One often hears of Hindu teachers and pupils speaking in terms of 'Moksha' as a panacea to the unending series of painful births and deaths. Such people give donations to temples, feed the poor, perform numerous 'Poojas', visit places of religious significance (called 'Tirtha's) with the wish of achieving 'Moksha' or less than that to go to heaven (Swarg), a place of unhindered and absolute enjoyment and receive benefits for their so-called good deeds during life time. Many such activities are programmed like a modern corporate system – investment and profit, in this world and in the nether world doing noble jobs like feeding the poor and rendering services to the needy people is considered good. The problem is that, such an approach contradicts the other root principle of Hinduism which holds that such acts should not be performed with a desire, as desire creates a series of births necessary to fulfill these desires. Shri Geeta advises desireless (Nishkama) activities against desired (Sakama) activities.

'Shri Sai Satcharitra' and other literature on Shri Shirdi Sai Baba indicate that Shri Sai believed in re-birth of human beings. He in fact revealed to some of His devotees about their past lives and about His relationship with them during such past lives. He always advised His devotees to follow the righteous path of sacrifice, tolerance and faith in God, with patience. He has never spoken anything about 'Heaven'. His devotees were asked to cleanse their minds of evil or negative thoughts and fill it with pure and divine qualities and serve others without the wish to get returns.

In the backdrop of what has been stated hereinbefore, it is for each devotee to examine whether his approach towards such religious activities is in accordance with the dictates of the Master. If confused, they should sincerely submit to Baba and pray for an answer.

I believe that answers are there if the questions are genuine. May Shri Sai bless us all.

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