

34. How Devotees Are Tested and Found Wanting

In my previous body (as Shirdi Sai Baba) everyone was taught through actions. For example, Dhamu and Naana were rendering service to the Lord (Shirdi Baba). Baba collected a few copper coins and was playing with them by tossing them from one hand to another and also testing them in various ways. He appeared to examine them individually. He did not exchange a word with Dhamu and Naana. He went on playing with the coins for half an hour in this manner.

Curious to know what Baba was doing, Naana asked him why He was scrutinising the same coins, again and again. Baba replied, "Beta (Dear Son), it is true I am repeating the same action again and again, repeating the same words. Look at that mango tree in front of you. It is in full bloom. The leaves are hardly visible. If all the flowers in the tree were to become fruits, will the branches be able to bear the weight? But it does not happen that way. Most of the flowers are swept away by the wind. Many others drop of their own accord. Only some of them become fruits. Of these some are eaten by squirrels, birds or monkeys. In this way ninety percent of the flowers do not result in fruits. Only ten percent remain in the tree. Is it not so?" They agreed, that it was so.

"No one comes for My sake"---Shirdi Baba

Baba continued, "In the same manner thousands of devotees are coming to me. Are they all ripening into good devotees? Many drop away in the middle. Some come for getting their desires fulfilled. Some seek wealth. Many are coming either for study or in connection with jobs or marriage or other personal desires of their own. In each of them there is some defect or other. No one comes for My sake. I have a precious thing to offer in my coffers. But no one seeks it. It is for this reason that I am examining them (coins). Among these coins there are some which are worn out, some which are debased and some which are twisted and worthless."

"Just as I am examining the defects in these coins, I am also looking for the defects among the devotees who come to Me. I am trying to find out what defects are there in these people and whether, with those defects, they can really comprehend My Truth. They want Me, but all their desires are related to mundane objects. How can they attain Me with this attitude?"

How can you reach your destination if you get into a wrong train going in some other direction? They want Me, but they don't make efforts for realising Me. Among the many who come to Me, it is only one in a thousand who really makes the effort to realise Me.

"The minds of the so called devotees are turned in the wrong directions. If their desires are fulfilled, they praise Me. But, once a desire is not realised they go to the extent of even reviling Me. Even while they are attempting to understand Me, they harbour doubts from head to foot. Some even leave Me when their worldly desires are not fulfilled. These are not sincere devotees at all. They are in fact the worst sinners. How can they reach Me?" said Baba.

Experience of Baba's devotees

At one time a wealthy man came with a lot of money to Shirdi Baba with the object of gaining *Brahma Jnana* (Supreme Wisdom). He boasted about his wealth. Baba asked him: "How long will you be here?" He replied that he had come by a taxi fixing to and fro charges and had to return in a day or two. Baba said: "When you have greed for wealth, how can you realise God? It is not a goal that can be accomplished in a fixed time. Get away." Baba noticed that he was still sitting and became furious. He chased him out, wielding a stick.

To one who sought His grace with purity of heart and selfless devotion, Baba conferred His grace abundantly. Mathaji Krishna Priya was one such devotee. Living in Nagpur, she used to worship Krishna and considered Baba also as another form of Krishna. She frequently visited Shirdi to seek Baba's blessings with genuine devotion. Once she went to Simla. She was offering worship with unstinted devotion to Krishna considering Him as Baba.

She came to know that Baba had left his mortal coil at 2.30 p.m. on *Vijayadasami* day in 1918. Immediately after this *Ekaadasi* followed. Baba had told his close devotee, Kaakaji, in the year 1916, that Dhadha would be shedding his mortal coil in 1918. Kaakaji thought that Baba was mentioning only about Dhadha Sahib, another devotee, and never thought the reference was to Baba himself.

The last days of Shirdi Baba

On September 28, 1918, Baba developed high temperature. Two days earlier he had collected food by seeking alms in some houses. He took that food and at noon, He expressed His wish to his devotees that he should be taken from the choultry to Bootywada. He hoped to have a quiet time there. In that ward, a Muraleedhar temple had been built by a devotee by name Booty. He wanted Baba to install the idol of Krishna in the temple. But Baba was putting off the installation on one pretext or other. Booty did not want to install the idol without the blessings of Baba. Until his end Baba did not say anything about installation of the idol. He directed Booty and Kaakaji to go and take their lunch. Feeling that Baba was better, they went out. Baba had nine rupee coins under His pillow. He took them out and gave them to Lakshmibai. Then Baba summoned Shyaam to come near Him. Shyaam sat close to Baba. Baba reclined on Shyaam's shoulders and passed away.

Baba reappears in Simla after passing away

Krishna Priya came to know of this and felt very sad the whole day. The next day she closed all the doors and windows in her house because of the severe cold in Simla. While she was resting in the house, a tall and well-built monk arrived at the next door and enquired about Mathaji's house. He made enquiry not because He did not know where Mathaji lived, but only to make others know that he was physically present in Simla. The neighbour sent a servant with an umbrella as it was snowing, to show the stranger Mathaji's house. He knocked at the door.

Mathaji opened the door and could not believe the evidence of her eyes. She wondered how Baba, who had passed away the previous day, could come to Simla. She asked: "How did you manage to come so soon? It takes at least three days to come from Shirdi to Simla."

Baba said: "*Beti* (dear daughter), I am everywhere. You have worshipped Me in the form of Krishna. Is this all that you know about Me? I am feeling the cold. First get Me hot tea." She prepared tea and offered it to Baba. After taking the tea, Baba said that He was hungry after His long journey. Krishna Priya brought Him chapathis and brinjal curry which Baba used to like very much. After taking the food Baba washed His hands and wiped them in a towel. He then told her: The purpose for which I came is over and I am going away."

In those days nobody dared to exchange words with Baba. If anybody opposed or said anything to the contrary, Baba would wield the stick against them. He never brooked any contradiction. Hence Krishna Priya could not tell Him anything. He gave her a jasmine garland.

Krishna Priya watched Him as he went out walking through the bazaar. In Simla, on the roadside, there are usually deep valleys. As Baba was walking along, some workmen were

engaged in some road work. Noticing that Baba had fallen down from the road, they ran to rescue Him. But they could find nobody there. Baba had just disappeared.

Before taking leave of Krishna Priya, Baba whispered in her ears: "See me in 1926." She did not know where to see Him, how to see Him. When I went to Simla about fifteen years ago Krishna Priya came to see Me. She was shivering on account of age and the cold weather. She asked: "Baba, have you forgotten the promise that you made to Me long ago?" I told her: "It is you who have forgotten, not I. I never forget what I promised."

These are some of the aspects of the Shirdi manifestation. When Shirdi Sai sought to impart wisdom, it was not through discourses. Everything was taught by stern methods. It was because of the conditions prevailing in those days.

Baba takes on child's illness

Once, Dhaadha's wife brought her child to Baba with the intention of staying for some time in Shirdi. She got her husband's reluctant approval for the visit. At that time plague was rampant in Shirdi. On the second day of her arrival the child developed fever and boils all over the body. The mother felt sorry that she had not acted on her husband's advice and lamented who would protect her child from the affliction. She immediately rushed to Baba and cried aloud: "Baba! Baba!" Baba asked her why she had come. "Is your child having fever? Are there boils on his body? Not only the child but I am also having boils. You look at them." So saying, he lifted his *Kafni* (coveting garment) and showed the boil on his body. Mhalaspathi, who was standing near, exclaimed: "Swami! What large boils are these?" He touched Baba's body and found that he was having high fever. The temperature might be as high as 105° or 106° F. The mother cried: "Oh Baba! Has the disease affected not only my son, but you also? Who will protect you?" She was in deep distress. Baba said: "Is there any other to protect the one who is the protector of all?" The mother immediately begged for Baba's forgiveness. A short while thereafter, Baba's fever came down.

The mother returned home feeling happy. She saw that the fever and the boils had vanished from the child. She exclaimed: "Baba! Did you take on my child's illness?"

Total faith that people had in Baba

In this manner, Shirdi Baba used to demonstrate His powers as and when the occasion arose. What was the reason for this? It was solely due to *Paripoorna Viswaasam* (total faith) which people had in Baba. The devotees followed implicitly whatever Baba directed them to do.

It is not so these days. Whenever anything is said by Swami ten questions are raised. Besides the questions, they are racked by doubts from head to foot. This is traceable to the influence of modern education. This system is undermining faith in human values. Whatever help a man may receive, he is utterly ungrateful. He forgets all the good done to him and remembers only the harm done to him. Consequently, the demonic nature has grown in human beings.

In the old days, human beings retained at least human qualities. Today, men have only the human form but behave like animals. All their impulses are selfish. When their desires are fulfilled, they come smiling and uttering: "Baba! Baba!" If their desires are not fulfilled they have a different attitude. In such beastly beings, how can devotion to Baba exist? Only when men shed their animal natures, can they become human.

Baba leaves His physical body

This is the anniversary of the day when (Shirdi) Baba gave up his mortal body. The facts relating to his passing need to be understood. On September 28, 1918, Baba developed fever. For seventeen days thereafter he was quite well. On October 15, Baba was not to be found anywhere. Naana, Kaaka, Dhaas and Lakshman Rao made a search for him all over the place. There was a small well nearby and they went to see whether he had fallen there. When they returned to Baba's abode, they found him standing near the door. Baba told them: "Where are you searching for Me? I am in one place and you search for Me elsewhere. I am in all pure hearts. You are searching for Me in all polluted places. How can you find Me?" He then sat down.

Baba left his body only on October 15. He developed high temperature on September 28. He was keeping well for the next 17 days.

After Baba left his body, several controversies arose. Mohammedans came there and claimed that the body belonged to them. The Hindus claimed that the body belonged to them. Baba used to declare from time to time, "Allah Malik! Allah Malik." On account of this, Mohammedans claimed that Baba was a Muslim. At other times, Baba used to say: "Rama Malik! Krishna Malik!" For this reason the Hindus claimed he was a Hindhu. Because of these rival claims, the body was kept for thirty-six hours as no decision could be arrived at regarding the manner of disposal, of the body.

How the last rites of Shirdi Baba were conducted

To prevent clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims, the Collector, the Police Superintendent and other officials arrived there. They asked all the residents of Shirdi to assemble there. They decided to take the vote of the people to find out how the majority of the local population wanted the last rites to be done for Baba. Everybody favoured the Hindu way of disposal of the body. When this decision was arrived at, a pit was being dug in the Booty Mandir. Some persons opposed the digging. The dispute went on and ultimately the Collector and the Police arranged for the Samadhi to be consecrated in the Muraleedhar temple. That temple is the present Samadhi Shrine of Baba.

At this time a remarkable incident occurred in Simla. The garland given to Mathaji Krishna Priya was placed on the idol of Krishna by her in the presence of all in her residence. Many wondered why she was garlanding the Krishna idol when she was a devotee of Sai Baba and there was a picture of Baba there. *Bhajans* were going on at that time. The garland placed on the Krishna figure dropped on the picture of Baba. The garland placed on the picture moved to the figure of Krishna. Everyone in Simla rejoiced in the discovery that Krishna and Sai Baba were one.

When all the people came there the next morning, they found that the garland given by Baba was no longer on the figure of Krishna. That garland was found on the Samadhi of Baba in the Booty Mandhir.

Miracles and the messages of Shirdi Baba

Why did Baba manifest such miracles? In those days there were bitter differences between Hindus and Muslims. With a view to ending such communal differences, Baba wanted to show, through his miracles, the truth that Baba is the Supreme master of all beings. He has no differences of caste or community. His religion is common to people of all faiths. It is good for everyone. It is observed by all godly persons. This is the creed for all mankind.

Spiritual wisdom is not something received from others. It has to blossom from within. Each one has to develop the faith by his own efforts. Those lacking such faith make themselves remote from God. Their own past actions account for such lack of faith.

Many spend years here (in Prashanthi Nilayam). But for some reason or other, they go away. This is due to the effect of their *karma*. No man can escape the consequences of his actions.

Whether one is a scholar or an ascetic,

Whether one is in a forest or a temple

Can anyone avoid the

Consequences of his karma ?

Many who claim to be great devotees, fall away sometime or other. The truth is that they were not true devotees even earlier. It is all a make-believe. Whatever devotion existed will not go away; nor will devotion come where it was absent. This means that devotion was absent from the outset. Those who used to proclaim their devotion by saying, "Swami is everything for us," really had no devotion at all. It was all a show. No true devotee will ever leave Swami. The one who leaves is never a real devotee. In this context, it must be realised that the true nature of devotion cannot be comprehended by anyone.

Can one remember the name of God in his last moments,

When the messengers of Death are waiting

And all one's relations are weeping,

If he has not been devoted to God all his life ?

God is moved by unwavering and firm devotion

Only when there is dedicated devotion from early in life can it remain steady and unchanging. The devotion of selfish and self-centred persons will be vacillating. Those with total love for God will never change. That is unwavering devotion. Where there is such yearning for God, the heart melts. God is moved by such firm devotion. That is the kind of devotion everyone should cherish.

During festivals like Navarathri, devotees should develop such divine feelings and strive to secure a direct vision of God in their hearts. God is in and around us. But no effort is made to experience this. People are immersed in dualism, separating God from themselves. Through love, this sense of separation can be ended. Love is the binding force between the *Jivaatma* (the individual) and the *Paramaatma* (the Omni-Self). It is this feeling of *Paripuurna Prema* (total love) that has to be cultivated today.

God has no use for indolent persons

Embodiments of Divine Love! Do not give room for the doubts which arise on account of the food you consume, the company you keep or the environment in which you live. Meet the doubts with courage and faith.

Don't pray to Baba for changing your mind. It is your duty to change your mind. If you expect Baba to do everything, what is it you are doing? God has no use for such indolent persons. You must do your *sadhana* and go ahead. God's help will come when you do your part. Do your duty and leave the results to God. Praying to God to do this or that is a sign of weakness.

If you have full faith in God, your mind is bound to change. Baba's role is not to change your minds, but to redeem you from the consequences of your actions. Everyone should realise and act up to this truth. To start with, get rid of the blemishes in you, strengthen your devotion and make it firm and unshakeable. That is *Purusha prayathna* (the effort which everyone should make). Then you will earn *Daivaanugraha* (God's grace).

Entering on this path of truth, traversing the road of *Jnaana* (spiritual wisdom), merge yourself in the Divine.

In the course of discourse when a reference to Shirdi Sai manifestation was made, Vijayadasami Day, Prashanthi Nilayam, 6 Oct 1992,

The way in which the Avatar has to be used for one's liberation and uplift is: watch His every step, observe His actions and activities, follow the guiding principles of which His life is an elaboration. Mark His love, His compassion, His wisdom, try to bring them into your own life.

Sathya Sai Baba