

Eighteen

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Baba's Love of Devotees and Appreciation of Prema

Baba has stated that he loved devotion *and prema*, that is, devotion at its highest and intensest form. This has also been shown in action by him²¹⁵. In this chapter we may deal with these. But as a preliminary, the question may be raised whether this love of devotees and *prema* may not be conflicting with His *samatva* or equality. Students of the Gita would have been puzzled by Sri Krishna's statement²¹⁶

Samoham Sarva Bhuteshu
Name Dweshyo Asti Napriyah
Yebhajanti tu mam bhaktya
Mayi te teshu cha Api aham

this means, I am the same to all creatures. There is no one whom I hate as my enemy and no one who is dear to me. Those who devoutly worship Me, they are in Me and I am in them. Now with reference to the statement that Sri Krishna has no *priyah* or dear to me, *Priyo Asi me*²¹⁷

Manmana bhava Madbhakto
Madyaji Mam Namas Kuru
Mameva Eshyasi Satyam te
Pratijane Priyo Asi me.

this means, Let Your mind rest on Me. Have devotion to Me. Worship Me. Prostrate to me. You will come to Me. This truly I affirm. You are dear to me. Again, in the same chapter, the words are,

Nacha Tasmad Manushyeshu Kaschin Priya Krit tamah
Bhavita Nachame Tasmad Anyah Priyataro Bhuv²¹⁸

this means, There is no one dearer to Me than one who repeats the Gita to others. These and other stanzas in the Gita show that Sri Krishna repeatedly says, Arjuna is dear to Me. And yet he has said, There is no one dear to Me, and there is no one hateful to Me. Is there any conflict here, and, if so, is the conflict only apparent or real, between the above said statements? The answer to this question is obtained by examining the words of each verse. Sri Krishna first states the general proposition that He as God is equally inclined to help all and

favour all. But as for an enemy, there is no one who can be styled his enemy, because, to be an enemy, one must be in a position to stand against Sri Krishna. Yet, there are persons who fancy they can stand against Sri Krishna, and in their fancy they may be enemies, but in reality, they cannot be counted as enemies. A person who begins to hate Sri Krishna like *Kamsa* ends being absorbed by Him, just like the dear ones and *bhaktas* of Sri Krishna. The primary proposition that at the outset, all are in the same position towards God, gets modified by the subsequent actions of various people,

Ye Bhajanti tu Mam Bhaktya

Those who with deep devotion direct their minds to Me, they are in Me and I am in them, says Sri Krishna. If He is in them and they are in Him, they are certainly His *priyas* or friends. Yet this is not a contradiction of the earlier statement. It is a natural law that the human mind partakes of what it dwells upon. If we dwell upon love for Sri Krishna and view him as a friend and protector, then the ideas of love, friendship, and protection of Sri Krishna, all roll up into one and seize the thinking soul. The *Jiva* immerses in those thoughts and loses hold of other thoughts, especially, thoughts in a contrary direction, and, therefore, the *Jiva* turns into what it thinks of. This is a fact of psychological science, and there is nothing in it which contradicts Sri Krishna's statement that he has no loved ones and no enemies. Sri Krishna is the *Antaryami* or soul within and *Prakriti* nature of all, and acts like a mirror. If you laugh at a mirror, you get back a laugh. If you turn a frowning face at a mirror, you get back a frowning face. If we indulge constantly in hatred, like *Kamsa*, and hate Sri Krishna, then we constitute ourselves into Sri Krishna's enemies. Ultimately, however, hatred does not survive. It is swallowed up in the general law of love. That is how *Ravana*, *Kamsa* and others got quick salvation and became part of God, may be earlier than many weak-willed persons. What has been stated about Sri Krishna applies also to Sri Sai. He was once asked by a *Prarthana Samajist*, 'Shall I ask you a question?', 'Yes', said Baba. The *Prarthana Samajist* asked, 'Do you look upon all people equally?' Then Baba said, 'Yes, I look upon all equally'. It requires some sense to ask a question. The point is that Baba had several persons to whom he

showed great consideration, for example Nana Chandorkar, Tatya Patil, M.B. Rege and others just as Sri Krishna showed special affection for Arjuna. Baba distinctly stated that he was anxious to help Chandorkar, Patil and Rege, and did actually help them. Yet, Baba has said that he is impartial and does not prefer one to another. What is the explanation? The same as in Sri Krishna's case. If any one has previously been loving Baba and getting attached to him with repeated efforts, the natural law of psychology and of ethics makes Baba respond to him more vigorously and constantly than to others. Thus he seems to favour those persons who have been constantly drawn to him in the past. Nana Chandorkar had been his *sishya* for *four janmas*, and the affection of four *janmas* cannot go for nothing. That is why he sends for Chandorkar when he has not sent for any one else in the world. Similarly he takes the *naivedya* of Mrs. Khaparde first without touching any of the previously offered ones, because for several *janmas*, one after another, she has been anxiously and lovingly taking up *naivedyas* and giving milk and food to him²¹⁹. Baba said, The food she gives me is sweet, with her love. Similarly towards Tatya Patil, Baba showed considerable concern, and helped him to get a large income on which income-tax was levied. He was well known to be the pet of Baba. The reason was what Baba himself gave out and what everybody knew. Tatya Patil's parents were greatly attached to Baba from the very beginning of Baba's visit to Shirdi when he had made no name and exhibited no powers. Tatya Patil's mother would run into the jungles taking food in her hand to feed Baba, a self-forgetful *fakir*, who did not care for his food. She was looking after Baba with so much love even in this *janma*. Baba's nature like *Bhisma's* nature had gratitude as its bedrock, and he could never forget such ardent and loving service. He also explained that Tatya's mother was his sister in several previous *janmas*, and she was always feeding him. Therefore, Tatya, being a son of his sister of so many *janmas*, was expressly called by Baba his Nephew, and Tatya always called Baba his *Mama*, that is, maternal uncle. The effects of so many *janmas* cannot be forgotten or brushed aside, and that is why Baba paid so much attention to Tatya. Tatya's own conduct towards Baba was also one of great surrender and attachment.

Tatya used to sleep in the Mosque along with Baba and Mahlsapathy for many years, that is as long as he was a bachelor, and Baba used to attend to his body and soul. Baba would massage his legs, make passes over his head and see that he did not come to grief. Tatya was a person of no education, and would ordinarily get easily ruined in the countryside. But Baba's company kept him up to a pretty high mark of culture and morality, and thus saved him from spiritual and moral shipwreck. There were also factions in the village, and bickerings of various sorts were common. Baba occasionally helped Tatya even in those bickerings where he had sufficient reason. He would help him even with *chamatkars*, that is super normal powers. Some men of Tatya's faction like Raghu were charged before the Kopergaon Magistrate for outraging the modesty of a *Marwadi* woman. On the evidence of six eye witnesses, Raghu and his set were all sentenced to imprisonment. This was the result of faction. The case was not true. When Raghu was crying in the Ahmednagar Jail, Baba appeared to him in a dream and told him that he would be released quickly. Tatya took up the appeal papers first to some lawyers in Ahmednagar who thought that the case was too strong to have any success in appeal. But when the papers were taken to Baba, Baba ordered the papers to be taken to Bhav, S.B. Dhumal, Pleader of Nasik, to be presented by him with an appeal memo before the Ahmednagar District Magistrate. Baba by a wonderful *chamatkar* gripped the mind of the District Magistrate and made him acquit Tatya's whole set of men, Raghu and others without sending for the papers or reading the judgement or the appeal memo, or issuing notice to the respondent. This might be considered to be a very strong piece of evidence showing Baba's love of Tatya leading to the disregard of Law. That is true. But still, if Baba secured justice without caring for and observing the formalities in a special case, there seems to be nothing wrong in it, for in the annals of civilian trials, there may be several extraordinary instances showing disregard of laws of evidence and procedure. Coming back to the question of Baba's love for his devotees, his love for Rege was the return of a powerful love by the young Rege to him. In Rege's vision, Sri Narayana appeared and pointed out the figure of Baba to him as his *Guru*. In a vision Baba

had told Rege that he was bound to him and that he Rege, need now bow to Him. On the first day of Rege's visit at Shirdi, Baba appeared to give Rege a rebuff, but told him in the afternoon that Rege was his child, and embraced him. He loved Rege and encouraged Rege, because Rege's *bhava* was *Putra*, that is, the child of Baba. Baba offered to give any promotion that Rege wanted or anything else that he wanted. But Rege wanted only that *janma* after *janma*, Baba should be with him. He cared for nothing else. That is the proof of his strong affection. *Aham bhakta Paradenah* that is, I am subjugated by the love of my devotee is a statement not merely of Narayana but also of Sai. Baba also said, If one ever dwells on me in his mind and will not even taste food before offering it to me, I am his slave. So also if he hungers and thirsts after me, and treats all else as unimportant.²²⁰

I am *bhaktaparadheena* the bond slave of my devotee. I love devotion²²¹. He who withdraws his heart from wife, child, and parents and loves me is My real lover and he merges in Me like a river in the sea²²².

Sai Baba was merged in God and, therefore, his reactions to *bhakti* are exactly the reactions of God as shown in Srimad Bhagavata and Bhagavad Gita. Baba's consideration for his devotees, made him exercise all his powers their behalf. He underwent considerable personal trouble and undertook to risk his health and even life for the sake of his devotees. He drew plague to himself to save Balwant Khaparde, son of Mrs. Khaparde, He drew also a Superintendent's plague at Goa to himself. He offered his own throat to Mir Jaman, who wanted to cut the throats of all the Hindu *bhaktas* at the *chavadi*; in order to save his *bhaktas*. As stated by Baba to G.S. Khaparde, a fact noted in his diary, Baba was steadily ruining his health for his devotees' sake. He could not but respond to every appeal made to him by night and day from every place, and, in consequence, his digestion gave way, his general strength gave way, and he knew that this would continue up to the time of his leaving the body. But, he told G.S. Khaparde, 'I do not care for my life. I care for my *bhaktas*.' Therefore, love towards loving *sishtyas* is not a detraction of any general principle or moral law, but enforcement of the general principle that every action produces a reaction,

that good begets good, love begets love, and Baba wanted his devotees to make use of the general principles and laws of nature for developing themselves. Baba's sacrifice for the masses and for the public, has been characteristic of him, *janma* after *janma*, as we see from an account of his recitals of his own past *janmas*. In every *janma* we find that he was self sacrificing and working wonders, and always helping people, especially those who put their trust in Him and were attached to Him.