

Baba's Samsara

The term *Samsara* is used by almost every Hindu and is supposed to be fairly understood. *Samsarati* is the derivation of the word; *Samsara* is that which perfectly cycles round and round. The whirl of births and deaths for each *jiva* is denoted by the term *samsara*. The generally accepted idea of a life from birth to death is that it is predominantly overladen with sorrow, and, therefore, it is the common desire of persons to escape *samsara* that is, to escape a very large round of sorrows in birth after birth. The question might be raised as to why stress should be laid upon the sorrows of life when in point of fact, if we examine honestly the life of any person or creature known to us, the predominant part of each life is joy or happiness. It is not correct to say that any body or child or any other person that we see is for the major portion -of the day mourning and in gloom. Life has been so arranged that the proper fulfilment of every function necessary for the maintenance and growth of the organism is attended with a feeling of pleasure. Pleasure is the index to the person or *Jiva* that it is properly functioning and guides it to the correct course which will enable it to maintain itself, prolong its existence and reproduce its kind thereby ensuring the continuance of its species. So, Providence seems to have dowered animal existence with an abundance of joys. There is joy in eating, joy in sleeping, joy in resting, joy in working, and joy in almost everything that we can mention. Yet it is the human tendency to emphasize that which is painful. And there are undoubtedly pains especially in the case of some people either on account of

their inability to find out how to manage their conduct in life or an account of extraneous circumstances. There might be a preponderance of pain, for some periods and for special reasons in the life of a good number. This appears to be the basis of pessimistic dicta in the *Sastras* which say that life is full of sorrow,

Anityam Asukham lokam

Imam prapya bhajasva mam.

This means, Having come into this ephemeral existence which is unhappy, worship Me. This is the saying of Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the Gita, and may warrant, in the view of some, the conclusion that life in the world means sorrow. But with reference to the principle that every statement should be referred to the context, and the circumstances in which it is made, we see undoubtedly a very good justification for Sri Krishna telling Arjuna that life is unhappy because the whole Gita begins with Arjuna's deploring his wretched lot. He said, 'Whichever way I turn, I find only sin, sorrow and trouble, and I do not find happiness. Whether we win or lose this battle, that is equally a painful event'. It is in that plight when he could see no gleam of light in his situation that Arjuna surrendered to Sri Krishna and said, 'Please order me what to do. I am unable to see any course that will lead to happiness'. To Arjuna at the time of the Gita, life was full of the prospect of pain and, therefore, the statement that life is *Anityam Asukham* was correct in the circumstances in which it was made. But if we take up any child who is romping and playing about practically all the hours of the day and having 10 or 12 hours of happy sleep, and say that its life is *Asukham* or unhappy that would not be correct. But all this apart, we may note in what sense the word *Asukham* is used in the *Sastras*. In the *Sastras* they say that everything is *Anityam* and *Asukham* compared with the ideal *sukham*. Sri Krishna says²⁵²,

Duhkam Kamqsukhapeksha

Sukham Duhkasukhatyayah

that is, Depending on sense enjoyment leads to unhappiness. Happiness is raising oneself above the ruffling caused by pain and pleasure. And he says²⁵³,

Asca hi paramam duhkam,

Nairascyam Paramam sukham.

that is, Desire is the cause of the greatest unhappiness, Freedom from desire is the cause of the greatest happiness. The ideal *sukham* described in *Taittiriya Upanishad*²⁵⁴ is that of *Brahman* which is pure, unalloyed bliss and perpetual bliss. Tables of happiness are given therein, the quality and duration of various joys are arranged, beginning with the unit a human or royal bachelor's happiness and proceeding in that way, the last in the table is said to be *Brahma* that is, the four-faced Creator's happiness. That may be suggestive of the happiness of God which is *Satchitananda*. It is a multiple of human happiness by a number which is hardly imaginable. And every sort of happiness, including that of *Brahma*, is said to be enjoyed by a *Scrotriya* that is Knower of the *Vedas* and therefore a Realiser of *Brahman* or God who has conquered desire. It is this desire which runs through life that consequently renders, according to the *Upanishad* and *Sastras*, life miserable or sorrow laden.

Now we may go back to the question as to what *samsara* is. We find that Nana Saheb Chandorkar on one occasion told Baba²⁵⁵, I do not like this *samsara*. I do not even want to touch it with a pair of tongs. Please let me get rid of *samsara*. This is similar to a lady's statement to Baba that he should be pleased to enable her to escape from *samsara*, that is, the round of births and deaths. To both, Baba gave the answer which is suggestive of the fact that these two questions were laying undue emphasis on the sentimental sorrows of life and the powerlessness of the human being to escape the miseries of life or the implied effects of life. To that lady Baba said, 'Have you come to die? Because *samsara* means round of births and deaths²⁵⁶'. The lady was startled and then asked Baba what he meant. Baba asked her to think who she was, ordering her to make the enquiry, 'Who am I?'. That is, he asked her to make *Atma Vichara*. Her husband explained to her that *Atma Vichara* would lead her to the conclusion that her idea that she was a separate individual *Jiva* and not the Universal Soul or god, as declared by the *Sastras* and also by Baba, to be incorrect, that she should constantly identify herself more and more with *Satchitananda* and merge in it, and that was the only escape from *Samsara*. That is, if we are the Supreme Being above all creation, maintenance, and withdrawal, then there is no *samsara*

for us. Otherwise there is *samsara*. That seems to have been the teaching to that lady. To Nana Chandorkar, Baba went into more details and gave him the answer that *samsara*, that is the perpetual cycle of births and deaths, is the result of the law of *karma*. As long as there is the -body, which is the result of *Prarabdha Karma* one cannot escape going through the results of previous *karma*. Merely running away to a forest or leaving the family will not enable one to escape the series of events which must make up the present life. Baba said that even he himself was not free from *Samsara*. As long as there is the body he said, there must be *samsara*. Now, we shall go into the question of Baba's *samsara* in connection with Baba's body.

Baba's body had previous existence in previous states and lives, and Baba has given various accounts of himself in previous times and his connections with his *bhaktas* in previous *janmas* with some, even for *12 janmas* or 10,000 years. So Baba declared that *samsara* was binding him also. Now in a sense, that is obviously true. But still there is the counsel which Baba himself gives that one must behave properly in *samsara* and thus escape the effects of *samsara* that is *samsara* need not be painful if one acts properly. One may escape trouble, sorrow, and difficulties, and thus lead a life of *Asanga*, which is prescribed by the *Sastras* for escaping *samsara*. The *Sastras* order every one to worship God, in any form and thus get identified with God and lose oneself in God. As the Gita puts it,

Bhaktyamam Abhijanati

Yavan yachcha Asmi tatvatah

Tato mam Tatvato Jnatva

Viscate Tad Anantaram

this means, By *bhakti* or devotion, one knows Me, what I am and to what extent, and in what forms, I am truly. Then, having known Me correctly, he enters into Me, that is merges in Me or becomes part of Me. So, *samsara* is a necessity for a soul that recognises itself as a *Jiva*. The *Jiva* may realise itself ultimately as God as Sai Baba did. Then it is identical with *Paramatma*, or in the words of Baba, *Analhaq, Aham Brahmasmi, Main Allah Hum*. The Supreme that is bound by the I

am the body idea is the *Jiva* and a *Bandha*. The Supreme without that idea is the *Paramatma*. Therefore, according to one's modes of being a *Jiva* or not a *Jiva*, one is in *samsara* or out of it. In *Srimad Bhagavata*²⁵⁷ Sri Krishna says that the ideas of bondage and *moksha* are merely mental concepts and that in reality there is no *bandha* and no *moksha*. That is, when one reaches this state or Krishna or *Parabrahman*, there is no notion of *bandha* or bondage or *moksha* that is liberation. One fact has been mentioned above, namely, that treating various states of pleasure in life as important parts of one's life, life may be viewed on the whole as a mass of happiness preponderantly happy, and to meet this view, *Srimad Bhagavata* says, 'Let alone human happiness. Even the happiness enjoyed by the gods in the various worlds, is ephemeral'. Even the four faced god has to end his life at the fixed time. Kala, Time is to destroy even that Brahma, and therefore, all the joys of all the persons, celestial or human, are treated by comparison with *Satchitananda* as misery. It is only by our merging in *Satchitananda* that we get free from this state of misery. This is found in *Srimad Bhagavata*²⁵⁸. Hence one thing is clear, that is the course of one's conduct must be to get farther and farther away from the 'I am the body idea *Dehatmabuddhi* or the narrow notion of oneself as body, and expand oneself farther and farther so that one may realise that one is *Sarvabhutama Bhutama*. That is, the soul of all creatures, *Sarvantaryami*, Baba had achieved that position, and he declared that he was the *Antaryami* of all creatures. He was coaching up his best disciples to view him as the *Antaryami* of themselves and of all others, and gradually to deem themselves also the *Antaryami* of all, just as Baba is the *Antaryami* of all. By constantly thinking of Baba as the *Antaryami* of all, the devotee becomes the *Antaryami* of all. This is in effect the highest coaching that we find both in the *Bhagavata* and in Sai Baba's teaching.

Baba in giving advice to N.G. Chandorkar gave him practical directions and details as to the rules of morality that he had to follow and other precepts taking him on higher and higher in the scale of happiness. It is the exclusion of others from the self that is the source of misery. It is the inclusion of more and more of the excluded set so as to make it part of one's life that is the way to

happiness. In this programme, moral rules such as gratitude and love play an important part. Gratitude and admiration take us out of our narrow selves. And love binds us to the object of love. There is a narrow sort of love in one's saying, 'I love my child and will beat any one who interferes with my child'. This contains the germ of the crude principle of love, but has also much dross which hides and taints that crude principle. Ordinarily in human circumstances with people's narrow views of themselves as bodies or body bound souls, love of one excludes love of others. But the correct view of the soul, that is as a spirit unattached will enable one to see that love of one need not and should not exclude others. Love of one should be the love of all. If our centre be the body self as understood by ordinary beings, persons farther and farther away from the body self are thrown out of it and will not be loved. But if in imitation of great souls like Sai Baba, we fix our centre not in one place or body but in all places, then we shall have a figure for our soul with centre everywhere and circumference nowhere,

Ayam Nija paroveti gananalaghu chetasam

Udara charitanam tu Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam²⁵⁹

which means, Petty minds discriminate between their own and strangers. High souls view the entire world as their kin.

In this connection one may note the *Maya* theory that has been referred to in *Srimad Bhagavata* and in Baba's teaching.

In Baba's teaching, the word *Maya* is clearly indicative of darkness. That is, what binds one to darkness is *Maya*. It has *Avarana* and *Vikshepa*; the *Avarana* portion of it covers up our consciousness and knowledge and *Vikshepa* creates fictions over that *Avarana*. For example, a person who is a cooly dreams that he is a king, forgets his coolyship and assumes kingship and the whole thing is a miserable fiction. Therefore *Maya* does exist, and is a thing to be avoided. But *Maya* has another sense, namely that it is the creative power of God. Even in this sense it creates fictions and makes the world run on the basis of those fictions. But the conclusion drawn and acted upon by some people that everything in this phenomenal world is fiction is not to be accepted as its logical conclusion. Baba said no doubt that *Maya* is a covering over *Chaitanya*,

but he did not follow it to the logical conclusion that everything that is seen is merely a fiction and therefore to be disregarded. As long as we are in this phenomenal world with its rules and principles, we have to follow it. Therefore Baba gave many directions to his pupils and never treated his relations to pupils and to others as mere fictions. He was a realist quite as much as any other that we have seen, and he asked people to stick to truth, the truth understood in the phenomenal sense and not in the sense of *Advaitic* Philosophy, that is a reality which is not sensed but is merely conceived of in philosophy as beyond all time and place. Baba gave advice to Chandorkar as to how to behave in society. Baba himself behaved excellently in respect of every relation in society. What are the ties of Baba and what were the ties also of Baba in previous *janmas* and what would be his ties in future? Baba recognised in his accounts of previous births and of the present one that he had parents, and that he had to help and support his mother or his father, and his brothers and sisters. He recognised that sisters of his former *janmas* gave him support and took birth in this *janma* again to continue the support. Taty Patil's mother, Bayaji Bai was a sister of his previous birth and by that strong tie she took immense pains to see him fed, especially in his young nomadic days at Shirdi, when he used to wander into the jungles not caring for food. She would run up into those jungles and feed him wherever he might be. From the beginning of his life, this sister made it certain that he would have his food and not starve. For such a provision one must be indeed highly grateful, and Baba was grateful. Baba could never forget even the slightest offices done to him. On one occasion when he climbed up a house and wanted to descend and a ladder was brought to him, he paid Rs.2/- to the man who brought the ladder, saying that services should not be accepted gratis. Similarly when a Muslim applicant for dynamite, who had been twice improperly refused licence by the Collector, came to Baba for his intercession, Baba told Chandorkar that he Chandorkar must help that applicant with licence for dynamite for deepening his well. Baba said, this time let him present the application to the Collector, and the Collector will grant the licence. Baba added, This man has left a box with us, and it is not proper for us to say no when he

asks for its return. Chandorkar explained that statement to mean that applicant had done in a former birth some good service to Baba or to him Chandorkar or to both, and out of gratitude, he must be helped on this occasion. When Baba was so full of gratitude even for such slight services, he would be the last person to forget a life-long support for food such as Bayyaji Bai gave him. He never forgot it. In addition to that, her son Tatya Patil was attending upon him at the Mosque and spent his nights for many long years with Baba, serving Baba and sleeping with Baba. Baba, remembering all that, was very affectionate towards Tatya. Tatya would call Baba *Mama* that is maternal uncle, and Baba would refer to Tatya as *Puthna* or nephew. Baba would not get up from his bed till Tatya came up and lifted him and lit up his pipe for him to smoke. He was watching over all devotees no doubt, but especially over Tatya, and he gave him frequent advice based upon his own superior knowledge. When there was the danger of his valuable horse getting damaged by a journey, Baba warned him. Tatya did not mind the warning and went on the journey, and nearly lost his horse. Similarly on other occasions Baba gave him the use of his *Antarjnana* or super-sensual knowledge. But what people mostly judge by, is the extent to which one gives them worldly goods. Baba gave plenty of the world's goods to Tatya. During the last ten years when Baba was getting a Provincial Governor's income, Tatya was paid daily a fixed sum on which income tax was levied. With his funds, Tatya was able to build three storeyed houses for himself and also purchase lands. He grew rich and respectable, and was looked up to as a person who was the pet of Baba. It is even said that in 1918, when Baba said that Tatya would die, Tatya was saved. Some people believe that Baba gave up his own life in order to save Tatya's life. A dictum in Srimad Bhagavata is,

Gurunasyat Svajano na sa syat

Namochayet yah Samupeta Mrityum

this means, If one does not save the life of a person in peril of death, he is unfit to be called a *Guru* or Kinsman, Baba has said that he would sacrifice his own life for his *bhaktas* who concentrate their affection on him. This certainly applied to Tatya. Baba's concern for Tatya Patil's family did not stop with mere provision of

funds. Unfortunately amongst the Patil families, all of whom were devoted to Baba, there were divisions and factions. Baba was watching over them. On one occasion in the Mosque, he suddenly said, 'Don't beat, don't beat'. When G.S. Khaparde's son asked Baba why he said so, Baba explained that in the quarrels between the Patils, there was imminent danger of clash, and to prevent it he said 'don't beat, don't beat'. That is how Baba has been safeguarding and helping Tatya and his people. He helped Tatya, by a *chamatkar* in his criminal appeal against the conviction and sentence of Raghu, and others. Baba has helped Tatya in so many other ways also. So, it is clear that Baba recognised the bonds of kinship with Tatya as binding on him and exercised all his powers for his benefit. He has rendered similar help to a number of others. These ties of kinship are called *Rinanubandha*. Baba has stated that *Rinanubhandha* has to be respected. That *rina* may be due to kinship in past births or in the present. Baba stated his kinship to Kondaji, G.S. Khaparde and others. He recognises *Gurubandhutva*, that is, being under the same master, as a powerful bond or tie or *rina*. Once, he said that Dada Kelkar, G.S. Khaparde, Bapu Saheb Jog, H.S. Dixit, Shama, and he Baba were all under one common *Guru* in a previous birth, that is, as *Gurubandhus*, and therefore, he had brought them together in this life so that they might renew their contact. He helped each of the above in very remarkable degrees, as set out fully in other chapters of this book. To Upasani also he revealed the fact that the ancestors of Baba and Upasani were for centuries closely connected, and in consequence Baba was under a very heavy obligation to help Upasani to lever him up, so to speak. Baba said to Balakrishna Sastri, Upasani Baba's brother, There was a tree or a log of wood. There were two on it, evidently one at each end, and by pressing oneself down, the other would be levered up.' Baba said one of these went down and the other went up. Sri Upasani Baba explained this to mean that it was something like see-saw and that Baba had levered up Sri Upasani in this way. That is, by his powers he had raised the spiritual level and the happiness of Upasani Baba, vesting him also with considerable psychic power or *siddhi*. Baba recognised even a playmate of his who was dead and buried in a tomb, and found her haunting that tomb. So,

he went and remained there a little while, and afterwards brought her to a *Babul* tree at Shirdi and kept her there, evidently for further spiritual elevation of her soul. Baba recognised his *rinanubandha* even to animals in the present or past. Mrs. G.S. Khaparde was once a cow that gave him plenty of milk, and on account of that *rinanubandha*, after becoming human and the daughter of a gardener, she was levered up into a *Kshatriya* family, a rich *Vaisya* family, and finally a *Brahmin* family. In all her *janmas* she renewed her contact with Baba and gave him food. Baba in his turn helped her, and in *this janma* Baba gave her *Rama Mantra*. He not only massaged her, but asked her to repeat *Rajaram, Rajaram*, as that would ensure her *Sadgati*. Baba recognized two goats as having been his former human companions, who, by their misfortune, had been degraded to the level of animals. He bought those goats and fed them. He recognised a snake and a frog as his former human companions who had the benefit of his company in a previous birth. He had made promises to Channa Basappa that he would save him from his enemy Veerabhadrapa. When actually Veerabhadrapa was born to continue his hatred and revenge as a snake and had gripped the frog that Basappa had turned into, Baba was there in time to keep his word, and saved Basappa the frog from being swallowed up by Veerabhadrapa the snake. This is *Rinanubandha*. Baba also recognised a certain kinship among saints. Some people say that there is a group or *Panchayatana*, that is a group of five of which Baba is one. In the Ahmedabad *Vakil*, C.C. Manikvala's statement, we find reference to the fact that Baba appeared to him and said that he was one of the nine gems into which Datta had turned himself in modern days. The nine included Tajuddin Baba of Nagpur, Akkalkote Maharaj, Dondi Bua, Palus, Madhavanath Maharaj. These saints sent up several of their *sishtyas* on to Baba, and they were recognised by Baba as coming from a saintly brother. References to these are to be found in Baba's Charter's and Sayings. Many other saints like Bidkar Maharaj, master of the Sub J Garde and Kusa Bhav's Master and Poona Bhima Sankar Sadhu, master of Chidambar K. Gadgil and others recognised Baba as their spiritual companion or helper and were sending their men on to Baba. These are his contacts in the

present *janma* of Sai Baba. But these do not exhaust the question of *rinanubandha*. Baba has made several promises. For instance to M.B. Rege, he promised that *janma* after *janma* when Rege takes birth he also would be born to keep company with him. To the young gentleman of Bandra, Master T, Baba said that he would have three more births, and that he would be with him for these three births just as he had already been with him for many previous births. It is the duty of the *Guru* to follow the *sisya* birth after birth, and Baba says, I will account to God for every pie he has given to me. He said that it was his duty to take his disciple to God and not to leave him in the middle. When Baba makes a promise, he keeps it, just as Rama said,

Apyaham Jivitam Jahyam,
Tvam Va Site SaLakshmanam,
Natu Prascrutya Me vakyam,
Brahmanebhyo Visceshatah.

Rama said to Sita, Once I made a promise, I will keep up that promise. I would rather give up my life, yourself, and Lakshman than give up my plighted word, especially, when it has been plighted to *Brahmins*. That is why Baba's re-birth is looked for by several people. That would be *samsara* of Baba to fulfil his promises of re-birth. Baba is not one who is afraid of re-birth. It is only one that has attachment to earthly objects that is to be afraid of re-births. If one wishes to carry out his promise and takes birth merely for carrying out promises with detachment, keeping himself in the *Aham Brahmasmi* state, that is, without detriment to his soul realization, there is nothing to regret. That is not *samsara* to regret²⁶⁰.