

Damodar Rasane was a *Kasar* and one of the earliest of Ahmednagar citizen to learn about Sai Baba. He received the benefit of issue in a most remarkable and unexpected manner and was thereby to be the means of broadcasting Sai's fame in all directions through Das Ganu's chapters. He was a very humble man and began as a poor bangle seller but all his transactions yielded good profit and he soon grew rich. He had everything to make life happy, but had issue. Seeing that his first wife could not bear a child, he married a second time. But even the second wife could not bear him a child. Astrological curiosity made him explore into his horoscope and he found that in the *Putra sthanam*, a *papi* was situated, namely, *Kethu*, and there was no *Guru* influence to overcome that evil. Therefore, the local astrologers, who were consulted, declared that issue for him was impossible in this life.

This reminds one strongly of the preface *Mahatmya* to the Srimad Bhagavata where in a similar manner a great *yati* or seer was consulted by a childless Brahmin about the absence of issue and the seer declared that the Brahmin would have no issue in this life and for seven more births. But the Brahmin said that he would kill himself unless the seer by his powers granted him an issue. Then that seer stated, "Well, I will give you this fruit. Let this fruit be eaten by your wife and let her observe religious vows for a year. And if she eats it, she will have a son." Then, the pious consultant took the mango to his wife and told her what the seer said. That lady was a termagant of a

very vicious disposition and never hesitated to cross her husband's will even in serious matters. She said, "If I get pregnant, there will be much discomfort, and if the child falls athwart the womb, am I suffer the pains and serious risks involved or is the seer or my husband going to suffer?" So she determined not to eat the fruit.

She had a sister to whom she narrated the facts. The sister was poor and cantankerous lady was rich. So, she told the poor sister, "You are pregnant. Give your child to me and I will say that it is born of my womb, and he will have all my wealth to enjoy and you and he will be here." That poor sister agreed. As for the fruit, she throw it before the cow, and the cow ate it up. As Mantra cannot be without their effect, the cow calved and brought forth a human child with ears like that of a cow but the rest of the body resembling a human being. That child was in the house. But it was the sister's child of the termagant that was thought by the Brahmin to be the result of his wife's eating the fruit. Then the sister's child proved to be a thorough villain and he broke the heart of the Brahmin who had asked for issue and even of his mother. Then they both died. The boy became a criminal and died. When he became a *Brahma Rakshas*, that is, an evil Spirit, the *Gokarna* cow-eared boy brother of his gave him relief by making him listen to Saptaha of the Bhagavata. This story contained in the sacred Bhagavata *Mahatmya* shows how planetary influence debarring a person from having issue is considered ultimate, but in Damodar Rasane's case, he was more fortunate.

He had heard of Sai Baba and went up to meet him. Sai Baba had kept apart 8 mangoes to be given to him from a basket of mangoes that were sent to Baba. The children were the recipients of the rest of the mangoes and some children wanted more. When Baba said, "There is nothing," the children pointed to the eight mangoes. Baba said, "They are for Damia." But the children said, "Damia is not here." "I know that. He is on the way. He is coming," said Baba. Then, when Baba went out, some of these petted children of Baba stole away four mangoes, and when Rasane came, there were only four mangoes remaining. As soon as he came, Baba gave him those four mangoes. "Eat and die. People are clamouring for mangoes." Eat and die – Damodar was perturbed by hearing the inauspicious word die, and Mahlsapathy noting his perplexity told him that it was a blessing to die at the feet of Baba. Baba was enjoying the humour all the time, as the word die, which he had used, did not refer to the physical death but only to the spiritual death, which is the same as *Bhramh* or *Pramada* coming upon one who gets deeper and deeper in *samsaric* life with the birth of a child after child and the death of several of them.

Pramada a Marityuraham bravimi

That is, It is the intoxication of the world that makes us forget the Real Life; that I call death said Sanatkumara – *Sanat Sujatiya*.

Baba came to the rescue and said, "Damia do not eat these fruits yourself. Give them to your wife". Damia wanted to know to which wife were the fruits to be given. Baba said, "The second wife." Baba also said, "She will have eight children. The first and second would be boys. Name the first Daulat Shah and the second Thana Shah." Taking up his note book immediately, Damia wrote down the names. Then the fruits were taken and given to his second wife, and, unlike the heroine of the Bhagavata *Mahatmya*, she did eat the four fruits. She begot, as stated by Baba, exactly eight children, one after another, their sexes being in the order given by Baba. It took fifteen years for all the children to be born. Therefore, it was clear that the planetary influence in Damia's case was not quite as deadly as that in the Bhagavata case. Perhaps there is an astrological explanation also. There, in the written horoscope, at Damia's birth there was no *Guru balam* to overcome the *papi's* influence. But the All-knowing and All-powerful Guru of Damia was Baba, and his *balam* was there in 1897, and his Baba's *veekshanyam* could overcome all the adverse influence of all the planets put together. As Sri Thyagaraja says,

Griha Balam Emi?

Sri Ramanugaraga Balame Balamu.

It may be noted that the eight mangoes representing eight children that Baba set apart for Damia, four were stolen away. Corresponding to that loss, of the eight children that were born to Damia, four were filched away by Yama. The remaining four are living now (1956) healthy, strong and flourishing. The first named Daulat Shah is now known as Nana Saheb Rasane, and is a trustee of the Sai Sansthan. Daulat means prosperity and fame. With the wealth already acquired by Damia, the children started or carried on a successful business, and they are keeping up the name of Damia for wealth and generosity. In addition to the above, Nana Saheb, the eldest son was helped by Baba in his spiritual development. He is now carrying on Sai propaganda, spreading the Sai faith by lectures, etc., and is fully deserving of the name, Daulat Shah. When Daulat Shah was five years old, and when he first began writing the letters *Hari* on the slate, Baba held his hand and helped him to write. After that he was, taken to a school at Shirdi. At his marriage also, Baba helped him. When there were several girls

offered for this rich man's son, Baba was requested by Damia to select the one, which he considered proper out of four horoscopes. Then Baba selected a poor girl's horoscope; and that was the girl that Rasane married, and that was a happy marriage. It took place at Pandharpur and Damia went to Baba to invite him to Pandharpur. Baba replied "I am with you. Do not fear. Wherever you think of me, there I am with you." Still Damia pressed him to attend. Then Baba said, "Without God's permission, nothing can be done by me. I will send Shama to attend the marriage as my deputy." And Shama attended the marriage.

The manner, in which Damia got children by his wife consuming mangoes, naturally reminds one of the way in which the Ayodhya king Dasaratha got his children. Dasaratha was also childless, and after consulting Vasishta, his *Kula Guru*, he was advised by the Guru, to perform an *Asvamedha Yaga* and *Puthra Kameshti Yaga*. In the latter *yaga*, conducted by Vasishta, a divine person *Rishyasringa* came out of the fire with a vessel full of nectarine, *payasam* and that was offered to Dasaratha with the direction that his wives should drink the same and thereby have issue. Dasaratha distributed it amongst his wives and, in consequence of it, had four sons. In the case of Damia, he was not rich enough to conduct an *Asvamedha Yaga*, nor were there any rishis to conduct a *Puthra Kameshti Yaga*, and yet he got his four children just like Dasaratha. Sai Baba represented in his own personality and in the mangoes that he gave, the *Asvamedha Yaga*, *Puthra Kameshti Yaga*, Vasishta, *Rishyasringa* and divine nectar. So, the childless devotees of Sai Baba look upon him as a never failing giver of the boon of children, and others who are afflicted by being in the bad books of the planets look to him for getting rid of their other evils. Above all, the words of Baba as to issue proved strictly true. There was not a single mistake about them. Our astrologers, as Baba himself has said, make declarations about future and only half of them come true. In the case of Baba, there was no such thing as missing. This may be described in various ways by the learned – *Satyavak*, *Satyasankalpa*. Some may call it *Vaksiddhi*. Others may call it *Trikala jnana*. Some others may refer to it, as *Yatha Sankalpa Samsiddhi*. Still others may call it, *Isatvam*. These names are found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras in the Srimad Bhagavata, and in the Chandogya Upanishad. Some others may say, it is merely pre-cognition, that is knowledge of the future. But whether the future is fixed enough for one to have knowledge of is a moot question, and the difficulty of its being unfixed is overcome by people putting forward an alternative explanation of Baba's faculty, calling it either knowledge of the future or control of the future.

Rishinam Punar Adhyanam
Vacham Artho Anudhavati

This means, In the case of ancient rishis, events follow their words, that is, where they declare a thing is, there that thing comes about by their will power – Satyavak Satyasankalpa.

Therefore, Damia's having derived a blessing of this very rare sort was the means by which Baba's fame for the grant of issue and other similar blessings even in the face of adverse planetary influences got widely published in the town of Ahmednagar and in the neighbourhood. This was around 1895 to 1897. Damia wishing to show his gratitude undertook to pay the expenses of a grand ceremony of 'The standards procession' on every Ramanavami Day. Two very tall standards were nicely decorated and carried from the Mosque through the streets of Shirdi on that day every year and finally brought back to be planted at Baba's Masjid to remain there as a mark of the residence of the weird saint. Damia, not content with this service, was always ready to undertake further trouble and expense for Baba in other matters. At the time of the reconstruction of the Masjid, he made his contribution as also on other similar occasions. But the best contribution that Damia made was his becoming an Ankita or child of Baba, whom Baba looked after wherever he was and wherever he thought of Baba. Baba told him, "I am with you wherever you are and whenever you think of me." This was said when Damia was afraid that Baba would leave his body and would no longer be helping him personally with his presence. Baba's assurance, Damia says in his statement in 1936 has been, perfectly true. Baba is with him and frequently appears before him. When he is not personally present, Damia casts chits before Baba, and the chits always give the answers of Baba. He says in the innumerable cases that he consulted Baba on chits, not even on one occasion was Baba's direction found to be wrong. But we may first mention the sort of assurance that Baba gave him before *Mahasamadhi*.

Baba was relied upon by Damia as his great asset, the one shield against all sorrow and trouble, the one supreme protector who would guard him against every evil. So, whenever he was in trouble, he thought of Baba. On one occasion, his wife's *nath*, nose ornament, usually considered to represent the *Mangalya*, was stolen by an old-time servant. The matter was reported to the police. They came and seized the thief and after making a search, arrested him. Damia felt hurt in every way, firstly by the loss of the *Mangalya* ornament and

next the fact that the thief was a man whom he had trusted for thirty years. That such a servant should turn a traitor was a shock to him. So, he at once went to Shirdi and Baba, noting how upset he was, told Shama to give him a good fine feast. Then he was given a coating of sandal paste and Baba assured him he was with him, and restored his courage, self-possession and equanimity. On other occasions also, he always appealed to Baba and Baba came to his aid. Damia had implicit reverence for and faith in Baba and obeyed his directions. Although he was very orthodox in his ways, he invited Baba for a meal on an important occasion at Shirdi. Baba declined to go and then Damia asked him, "Send at least Bala Patel", who was Baba's constant attendant, though a *Harijan*. Baba said, "I will send him. But do not cry *Dhut, Dhut* at him and keep him far away from your own place of eating." Damia agreed and, in spite of his orthodoxy, spread a plate for Bala next to himself. This was a great achievement in those days at the beginning of 20th century.

Damia has said that his mind was always dwelling on Baba, and he saw him at his own house at Ahmednagar. sometimes, he says, Baba abused him and even beat him fiercely. But he adds, he knew that, as with Akkalkote Maharaj, blows and abuses have an auspicious ending. So, he always found that blows and abuse were not matters for regret.

On religious matters, he had very little occasion to seek Baba's assistance. It was chiefly temporal blessings that he got. For instance, when his son Nana had only one son, Damia prayed to Baba at his Samadhi for a second grandson and a second grandson was born. Being almost wholly occupied with worldly affairs, his consultations with Baba were only on business and domestic matters. On one occasion, a Bombay cotton broker told him that he had a good lot of Rs. 50,000 or Rs. 60,000 with him, and he could safely speculate in cotton and earn lakhs of rupees and that too very quickly. At once Damia wrote to Shama to ask Baba for permission to launch on this speculation. When letter came to Baba, Baba said, "Damia wants to catch at the sky. His head is wrong. He is trying to think of lakhs. I write to him that his present position is not bad, and ask him not to think of lakhs". after the letter came, Damia with great regret dropped the idea of cotton speculation, but not finally. He thought he would go directly to meet Baba, and then induce Baba to give the permission by offering a share in the profits to Baba. so he went to Shirdi and when massaging Baba's legs, was thinking of his plan. Baba at once said, "Damia, I am not in anything." That is, Baba was not going to be a partner in any speculation or similar affair. Baba did not want money at all and, if he wanted, speculation was not necessary for him.

Prakamya is one of the *siddhis* forming part of one's divine nature. Baba said, "I am God". He also said, "I have vast powers." Baba could command large amounts at will. But he had no necessity for wealth.

Again on another occasion, Damia found people trading in grain. So, he wanted Baba's permission for himself to trade in grain. Baba said, "No." He was wondering why. He had friends who advised him that grain prices were rising, and if the grains were stored up the yield of profit would be cent per cent or more. But Baba said, "Arre, you will be buying at five *seers* per rupee and selling seven *seers* per rupee. For a month or two, the prices were rising still, Baba's prophecy seemed to be false. But when *Asvina* came, the monsoon rains were abundant and everywhere the crops were excellent, and so prices fell and the grain hoarders suffered a loss. Damia discovered that Baba had saved him from this calamity.

Damia had occasional curiosity which prompted him put questions. First he wanted to know if when so many were crowding around Baba whether they all got any benefit from him. This was a mental question. Baba at once replied, "Look at the mango tree in blossom. if all flowers turn fruit, what a splendid crop it would be? But do they? Most fall off by the wind. Very few remain." The second question was, that, if Baba should pass away, how helpless Damia would be. This also a mental question. To this Baba answered, "I will be with you whenever you think of Me and wherever you think of Me." This was mentioned before 1918 and is fulfilled even after 1918. Damia says, "Even after his *Mahasamadhi*, He is still with me. He is still guiding me, as per his statement made in 1936." So, he is one of the Ankita children of Baba, whom Baba guided, corrected and helped.

LIFE OF SAI BABA