

## In Sai's Proximity

– Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar

### DAMUANNA – NANASAHEB RASANE

Damodar alias Damuanna Savlaram Rasane was one of the devotees of Shri Sai Baba from the very beginning.

His family was very pious. Mahipatibuva Tahrabadkar – a writer of biographies of saints – was the *Guru* of his grandfather while Bhanudas Maharaj was *Guru* of his father.

By nature, he was extremely polite. He began his business of selling bangles at Ahmednagar, when he was financially very poor and soon prospered with the business. He was broken hearted because - though he was blessed with various contentment's of life – he did not have a son. As his first wife did not bear him a son, he married a second time. However, it was of no avail.

He started feeling, that to beget a son, he must serve saintly persons and get their blessings. To secure favor from various astral planets, he even turned to astrologers. He was advised that, in your *Putra-sthan* the evil planet Ketu has entered and therefore, the planet *Guru* is helpless. The result is, it is not in his fate to have a son. In the course of consulting a countless astrologers, Rasane himself earned excellent knowledge of astrology.

During this period, an acquaintance of Rasane Family Shri Govindrao Sapkar (father-in-law of Madhavrao Deshpande of Shirdi – an ardent devotee of Baba) suggested Rasane that he should seek advice and blessings of Shri Sai Baba.

Sometime soon, in 1892, Damuanna went to Nimgaon in connection with some work. There he heard more information about Sai Baba. As Nimgaon is only one-and-half miles from Shirdi, Rasane went to avail Baba's *Darshan*.

Damuanna was a devotee of Shri *Guru* Dattatraya and Shankar. He had made religious trips to various places on pilgrimage. Therefore, on having *Darshan* of Baba, Rasane became an ardent devotee of Him. He had gone with only one desire – that of having a son. And in the first meeting, Baba said to him, "Your desire shall be fulfilled."

As Ahmednagar is near to Shirdi, Damusheth started frequently going there. Initially, Baba did not allow him to stay at Shirdi. However, Damuanna was incessantly thinking of Baba and seeing Him before his eyes. He was sad that Baba was not permitting him to stay longer at Shirdi.

In these circumstances, he lost his sister. He became more depressed. During the mourning period itself, Baba called him to the upper portion of the *Masjid* and lent him advice and consoled him. He instructed Rasane to go to Appa Kulkarni, apply *Tilak* of sandal and have *Puran*

*Poli*. Though this is forbidden during the mourning period, Rasane – because of his steadfast devotion to Baba – followed Baba’s words.

As many as 6-7 years passed, but there were no signs that Rasane’s desire for a son would be fulfilled. It was in the year 1898-99. Rasane’s relatives began cajoling him to either marry a third time or adopt his brother’s son. He decided to place the dilemma directly before Baba and began his journey towards Shirdi.

At that time, a *Mamledar*, named Rale had sent a parcel of excellent mangoes from Goa. The parcel was sent in the name of Madhavrao Deshpande with a request to place the fruits as a gift to Baba. On opening the parcel, it revealed beautiful, sweet and fragrant mangoes. They were about 300 in numbers. Baba inspected all of them and selected eight. Placing them in Madhavrao’s hands and instructing him to keep them in *Kolamba*, He said, “Let these be for Damya”.

Baba was very much fond of children. Collecting them around Him, He distributed sweets and *Prasad* amongst them. Taking advantage of the playful relations between Baba and the kids, they used to sometimes steal articles of food. Baba also ignored such pranks.

When the parcel of mangoes arrived, as usual, several children were playing in the *Masjid*. The mangoes were distributed amongst them. However, seeing the mangoes kept in the *Kolamba*, the kids began asking for the fruits. Baba said, “Now there are no more mangoes left.” The kids pointed out the mangoes kept in the *Kolamba*. Baba said, “These are for my Damya.” Kids replied, “But, where is Damusheth? He is not here.” Baba said, “Yes. That is true. But, he is on his way to Shirdi. He is coming here.”

In spite of this, seeing that Baba had gone to Lendi Baug, some of the kids stole four mangoes from the *Kolamba*.

Baba returned from Lendi Baug and Damuanna had arrived in *Masjid* to perform his *Pooja*!

On seeing that only four mangoes out of eight are left in the *Kolamba*, Baba remarked, “People have their eyes on these mangoes. But, these are not theirs. They belong to Damuanna. One should eat these mangoes and die.”

Damuanna heard these words and was amazed to hear “die”. Though he was familiar with Baba’s way of speaking, he felt hurt and his eyes welled with tears at the inauspicious word.

Mhalsapati consoled him and said, “look at these words as a blessing. He is not talking of death of mortal body, but of evils such as *Avidya*, *Maya*, *Ahankar*. Damusheth, your wellbeing is in following His instructions.”

As per Baba’s directions, Damuanna ate one mango. In a calm tone, Baba told him, “Take rest of the mangoes for your wife. With *Allah*’s blessings, you will bear eight children.”

After performing *Pooja*, Damusheth started on his return journey, but turned back and enquired, “To whom shall I give these – to the elder wife or younger wife?” Baba replied “Younger one.”

Damusheth was totally devastated thinking that his fate has no children for him. However, a new hope rekindled in his heart hearing Baba’s words.

After Damuanna’s wife partook the *Prasad*, she gave birth to eight children – four sons and four daughters. However, during the course of time, four kids soon passed away. Baba had foretold the order in which the kids will be born and in reality, it turned out to be true. Not only this, Baba had also said that, “You will have two sons first.”

Accordingly, the first son was born in year 1900 – on 6 December, on the auspicious day of Datta *Jayanti*. Due to Baba’s blessings all the four sons were able bodied, intelligent, good businessmen, as well as good family men. The sons were born in a rich family and their wealth increased many-folds in later years. Baba’s words thus came out to be true.

Damuanna believed that the flag of his family fluttered (through the births of his sons) due to Baba’s blessings. Therefore, on the suggestion of Gopalrao Gund, Damuanna began the practice of hoisting a flag on the top of the *Masjid*. He also contributed sizable finance for the tiling of the *Masjid* flooring.

After hoisting of the flag, Damuanna donated food amongst the poor and needy. This event took place in the second year of the *Urus*.

Damuanna had prepared *Naivedya* and invited Baba for the meal. He knew that it was Baba’s practice not to go for meals outside the *Masjid*. Therefore, Damuanna requested, “Baba, please send Balaji Patil Nevaskar to have meal at my place.” As Balaji belonged to lower caste, Baba said, “You will make him sit at a far off place and shoo him away.” But, ultimately, after lot of persuasion, Baba gave his permission.

Damusheth served various preparations in a *Thali* and first offered it before Baba’s picture. Then, he placed a *Thali* for Balaji next to his own *Thali* and greeted Baba saying loudly “Baba, *Yaa* (come).” Suddenly, a huge black colored dog – covered with mud and filth – arrived there. Damusheth was going to drive him away, but he remembered Baba’s words about “shooing away”. He was now certain that Baba was trying to take his test by sending the dog. Damuanna first served food to the dog and only thereafter, others had their meals.

Source: Saileela

(contd.)

– Translated from original Marathi into  
English by [Sudhir](#)