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Estd. Year 1923

Year 8 Issue 1

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More

English Section

- * **Adi Shankaracharya & Sai Baba - The Pillars of Advaita Siddhanta ... Subodh Agarwal** 20
* **In Sai's Proximity - Nanasaheb Chandorkar ... Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar** 26
* **IS BABA LIVING AND HELPING NOW ? ... Jyoti Ranjan Raut** 28

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Main

Adi Shankaracharya & Shirdi Sai Baba :

The Pillars of Advaita Siddhanta

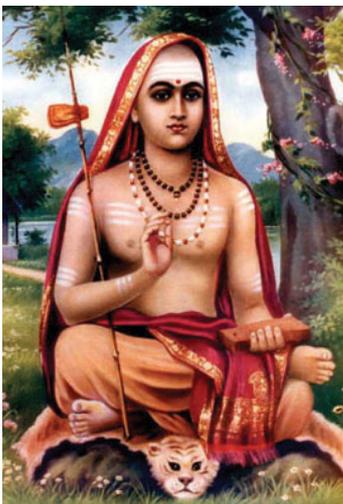


O Baba ! I am Your child..., and to-day, once again... I stand here... on the threshold of Your Dwarkamai... and beg Your leave to recite my nursery-rhyme on Adi Shankaracharya, which tickles in my inward ears while I sit in silent Sai-meditation :-

Adi Shankaracharya was born as Shankara in around 788 A. D. in a *Brahmin* family in Kaladi village of Kerala. He was born to Shivaguru and Aryamba, a number of years after their marriage. It is said that Aryamba had a vision of Lord Shiva, in which He promised her that He would incarnate Himself in the form of her first-born child.

The life history of Adi Shankaracharya tells us that he was attracted towards *Sannyasa* right from his childhood. One day, while he was taking bath in the river Poorna or Periyar at Kaladi, a crocodile caught hold of his leg. Shankara called out to his mother for help. Aryamba came running; but found herself incapable to rescue her son from the clutches of the crocodile. Seeing his mother's failure to get him freed, Shri Shankara revealed his intuition to his mother that his life was nearing to an end; but if he became a *Sannyasi*, he could get a new lease of life; and subsequently requested permission from her to renounce the world and become an ascetic. Being left with no other choice except to accept her son's impulse, she agreed to it. Shankaracharya recited the *Mantras* of renunciation and immediately, the crocodile set him free.

Thereafter Shankaracharya quitted Kerala and undertook pilgrimage towards South India in search of a *Guru* to be formally initiated as a *Sannyasi*. At the banks of the river Narmada, he found the river gushing forth into floods. By invoking the higher power, he compressed the river in his *Kamandal* (a vessel *Sannyasi's* carry), and released it in the banks of the river. Shri Govinda Bagawathpathar - an ascetic, who was closely watching this, goggled at Shankara and took him on as a *Shishya*. Shri Govinda Bagawathpathar taught various *Vedas* to Shri Shankara. He also taught him about *Advaita*.



Advaita... Advaita... Advaita... O Baba ! My dull brain 'perplexes' and makes an attempt to 'retard' on hearing this word. But, O Sai ! Please do believe me that the sound of the word doesn't at all succeed in pulling me back from the heights - Your *Mantra* of *Shraddha* and *Saburi* would help me to scale. When the splendor of Your glory sheds its light within my heart, a moment of pure spiritual transfiguration follows, and my spirit starts roaming in the regions of celestial light. These pure regions of Dwarkamai, where You spent over 60 years in Shirdi, refresh my dull brain and remove its perplexity; and I listen while You read from a book to enlighten me :-

Once, in Kashi, when Shri Adi Shankaracharya was going to the Vishwanath temple, his path was blocked by an 'untouchable' who was accompanied by his wife and four dogs. Shri Shankara shouted at him to make way, and to keep a distance. The untouchable smiled and said, "According to your principle of *Advaita*, which you practice, all the *Jivatma* are same as God. How do you ask me to go ? How am I different from your *Paramacharya* ? What you say is unreasonable. How can I go away from myself?"



Shri Shankara realized that it was not an ordinary person and understood that it was Lord Shiva Himself Who had come along with His consort and the four *Vedas*. He prostrated before the Lord and sang five *Shlokas* called '**Manisha Panchakam**'.

Lord Shiva presented Himself along with Vishalakshi and blessed Shri Shankara.

O Sadguru Sai ! You are the Incarnation of Lord Shiva, and though "in the broad daylight, Thou art unseen [as You are *Nirguna*]; but yet I hear thy shrill delight."

Hence, with due apologies to the great British romantic poet P. B. Shelley, I entreat You to

Teach me half the gladness of *Advaita* that Thy brain must know, such harmonious madness from my lips would flow, the world should listen then, as I am listening now !

O Baba ! You never allowed people to have ill feelings towards the so called 'untouchables'. You made *Brahmins* eat from leper's dish or untouchable's plate. When they felt loathsome to do the same You castigated them and preached them everything is *Atma*. If they hated them they in fact hate Him Who is residing in them.

And lo ! Now I am looking at one of Your devotees seated in one corner of the *Masjid*. He is Bhagoji Shinde. He suffered from leprosy; but this never deterred You from keeping him close by. You allowed him an easy 24x7 access to You. Every reader of '**Shri Sai Sat Charita**' still very fondly remembers the incident that happened in Your Dwarkamai exactly a century ago from now :-

Once, You plunged Your hand into the *Dhuni* (the sacred fire) in Your bid to save the life of one of Your devotees' baby. (**Shri Sai Sat Charita, Ch. 7**) The hand was badly scorched. But, You turned down repeated request of the renowned dermatologist Dr. Parmanand who had especially come down to Shirdi from Mumbai to treat You. Instead, You only let Bhagoji Shinde to clean and dress the wound with a bandage. **O Sai ! You extended this favour upon a leper just to teach a lesson in *Advaita Vedanta* (a non-dualistic reality) to the entire Universe – the lesson Adi Shankaracharya got from no one other than Lord Shiva.**

In fact I know not what You read from the book on Your knee and in Your hands, O my Sai ! I simply look to Your lips in silent amazement, and find the *Vedantic* words flowing out like endless rain :-

Once, Shri Shankara's travels brought him to Thiruvidadaimarudur in Tanjore district of Tamilnadu, which is a great religious place. The Ruling Deity in the temple was Lord Shiva. The learned Saivites of the temple informed Shri Shankara that Lord Shiva is the Creator and that they are all merely lowly life created by Lord Shiva, and if that was so, how does Shri Shankara say that they were one with the Lord ? They did not agree with the *Advaita* principle. Shri Shankara asked them to enter the temple. As they reached the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, there was a thunderous statement "**Satyam is Advaita.**" This was repeated thrice and it was also followed by a hand

which came out of the *Linga* which confirmed the truth. All the learned persons acknowledged the principle of *Advaita* and accepted Shri Shankara as their *Guru*.

In fact the *Upanishads* exhort to perceive God or Divinity in all the creatures. One of the main features of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* is the ethical advice it offers, and it is interesting to note that the ethics of the *Upanishad* are definitely based upon the meta-physical position advanced in it. The very opening words of the *Upanishad* tell us that God pervades every thing. *Advaita* is a Sanskrit word which means ‘non-duality’. *Advaita* is that state or reality which cannot be known by the separate or divisive ego (“I am me, and you are not me”) precisely because the divisive ego lives in, depends upon, is a function of, a dual reality (“I am me, you are you, God is God”). O Baba ! You too always preached that God penetrates everything and lives in every being, and as well that God is the essence of each of them. You ever emphasized the complete oneness of God, i.e. You also taught man-kind about *Advaita*, the principle that every one in this world is the manifestation of God and that God and *Atman* are one and the same. “See God in all beings” is the moral of Your principle of *Advaita*.

O Sai ! You have practically demonstrated how to put the *Upanishadic* teachings into practice. In this way You stand as the best Exponent or Teacher of the *Upanishadic* doctrine of *Advaita*. To illustrate this, we may need to take a look at the following example :

O Baba ! Ramachandra Atmaram alias Babasaheb Tarkhad from Bandra (Mumbai) and his wife were Your ardent devotees. Once, both of them came to stay for a few days in Shirdi, with the noble desire to serve You. You were pleased with their service and faith. One day, while lunch was being served, a hungry dog turned up whimpering pathetically. Mrs. Tarkhad got up at once and put a piece of bread before him, which he gulped with great relish. In the afternoon, when she went to the *Masjid*, You thanked her thus, **“Mother, you have fed me sumptuously up to my throat; my afflicted *Pranas* (life-forces) have been satisfied... The dog which you saw before meals and to which you gave the piece of bread is one with me, so also other creatures (cats, pigs, flies, cows etc.) are one with me. I am roaming in their forms. I am very much fond of the one who feels my presence in all these creatures. So abandon the sense of duality and distinction (*Dvaita*), and serve me, as you did today.” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Ch. 9)**

Mrs. Tarkhad shed tears of joy after learning this hard lesson on *Advaita* taught the easy way by You.

**Open, O Lord Sai, my inward ear,
And bid my heart rejoice;
Bid my quiet spirit hear
Thy comfortable voice;
Never in the whirlwind found or where earthquakes rock the place,
Still and silent is the sound, the whisper of Thy grace.**

O Sai ! Now my heart rejoices to know that I am allied to You, and a spark disturbs my clod as my quiet spirit hears Thy comfortable voice thus :-

During his travels, Shri Shankara arrived at Mukambi, a religious place in Karnataka. A poor *Brahmin* came to him with his deaf and dumb son and prostrated before Shri Shankara. Shri Shankara asked the boy, “Who are you ?” The child, for the first time, opened his mouth and explained, **“The body is not me; it is the *Paramatma* who is my body.”** Shri Shankara was pleased with his answer and gave him an *Amal* fruit and named this boy as *Hastaaamalakan*. (*Hastaa* means **hand** and *Amalakan* means *Amala*).

O Baba ! Thy ‘Presence’, that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts, speaks to me thus :-

“Whenever we talk of destroying darkness, we talk of light. Likewise, whenever we speak of destroying *Dvaita* (duality), we speak of *Advaita* (non-duality). If we have to realise the *Advaita* state, the feeling of *Dvaita* in ourselves has to be removed. That is the realization of the *Advaita* state. Who can speak of *Advaita* while remaining in *Dvaita* ? If one did, unless one gets into that state, how can one know it and realize it ?” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Ch. 39)

O Sadguru Sai ! You always taught that the *Shishya* (disciple) like the *Sadguru* is really an embodiment of *Jnana* (knowledge). The difference between the *Shishya* and the *Sadguru* lies in the attitude, high realization, marvellous super-human *Sattva* (beingness) and unrivalled capacity and *Aishwarya Yoga* (divine powers). The *Sadguru* is *Nirguna, Sat-Chit-Ananda*. He has indeed taken human form to elevate mankind and raise the world. But, his real *Nirguna* nature is not destroyed thereby, even a bit. His beingness (or reality), divine power and wisdom remain undiminished. The disciple also is in fact of the same *Swarupa* (form). But, it is overlaid by the effect of the *Samskaras* of innumerable births in the shape of ignorance, which hides from his view that he is *Shuddha Chaitanya*. The disciple gets the impressions - “I am a creature (*Jiva*), humble and poor.” The *Sadguru* has to root out these offshoots of ignorance and has to give *Upadesha* (instruction). To the disciple, held spell-bound for endless generations by the ideas of his being a creature, humble and poor, the *Sadguru* imparts in hundreds of births the teaching - “You are God, you are mighty and opulent.” Then, the disciple realizes a bit that he is God really. The perpetual delusion under which the disciple is laboring, that he is the body, that he is a creature (*Jiva*) or ego, that God (*Paramatma*) and the world are different from him, is an error inherited from innumerable past births. From actions based on it, he has derived his joy, sorrows and mixtures of both. Unless these errors are exposed to his view, the disciple cannot learn what is God, *jiva*, world, body; how they are inter-related and whether they are different from each other, or are one and the same. To remove this delusion, this error, this root ignorance, he must learn the meaning of *Advaita*. To teach him these and destroy his ignorance is the instruction in *Advaita*. Why should *Jnana* be imparted to the *Jiva*, (who is) a *Jnyanamurti* (embodiment of knowledge) ? The lesson of *Advaita* is merely to show him his error and destroy his ignorance. Thus, O Baba ! If there is a lesson to be learnt from Your life, it is nothing other than *Advaita*; and undoubtedly, the embodiment of *Advaita* is Shirdi - Your Eternal Ecstasy.

Yavana Swaroopee Ekya Darshana Twaan Didhale,

Samshaya Nirsuniyan Tadvaita Ghalavile

Gopichanda Manda Twanchee Uddharile...

Jaya Deva Jaya Deva...

[You gave *Darshan* (divine vision) to someone in the guise of a Moslem.

By removing all doubts, You set him on the path leading towards the unity with the Self. Even Raja Gopichanda and the river Mandakini (Ganges) were purified by You...

Hail Lord Sai...]

- Dr. Subodh Agarwal

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“I do not need a door to enter. I have no form or dimension. I am always everywhere.” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 28, Verse 199)

“For the one who places his burdens on me and has become one with me, I manipulate all his actions like the actions of a marionette.” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 28, Verse 200)

“Unless I so desire who can cross his threshold ? Who will get *Darshan* by his own volition or come to Shirdi ?” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 35, Verse 154)

“I do not need elaborate worship either sixteen fold (invocation, offering of seat, worship of feet, oblations of water, sipping water for purification, bath, clothing, sacrificial thread, sandalwood paste, flowers, incense, *Naivedya*, lamp, *Dakshina*, *Pradakshina*, *Mantra* with flowers) or eight fold (- sandalwood paste, flowers, incense, lamp, *Naivedya*, camphor, rice mixed with turmeric, coconut)” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 13, Verse 13)

“Any one of you, wherever you are, whenever you come to me, with your hand outstretched, with devotion, I am there to respond to your faith, day and night.” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 15, Verse 67)

“Though I am bodily present at this place and you may be beyond the seven seas, and doing anything there, I am aware of it immediately.” (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 15, Verse 68)

Back

In Sai's Proximity

Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar

NANASAHEB CHANDORKAR

Sachchidanand Sadguru Shri Sai Baba was the '*Niyat Guru*' of Nanasaheb.

May be it was due to the good deeds by Nanasaheb in his earlier births and / or may be it was due to the *Adhyatmik Sadhana* of Nanasaheb's forefathers, it was Shri Sai-Ishwar who was eagerly waiting to meet Nanasaheb. Baba used to say often that that "I will bring my devotees to me (however reluctant he may be) – like you tie a string to the feet of a sparrow's baby and drag it wherever you want – even against its wishes !"

It was a Muslim *Fakir* who used to often request Nanasaheb to come for the *Darshan* of Shri Sai Baba. Initially, he went rather reluctantly and against his own free will. Nanasaheb had several qualities which made him distinct from common man. He was well studied, had a very sharp mind and occupied the high post. Therefore, he carried himself well in the society and maintained an aloof distance from common people. And, to some extent, he was also ruled by his ego amongst the other *Shad-ripoo* (*Kaam, Krodh, Mad, Matsar* etc.).

Baba initially performed the role of Nanasaheb's '*Aniyat Guru*'. He made him suffer with *Trividh Taap*, made him a victim of *Shad-ripoo*, made him more stubborn and inflated his ego. Thereafter, Baba acted as his '*Niyat Guru*'. He gradually eradicated the factors which came in the way of Nanasaheb's spiritual development. Baba achieved this with His advice, teachings and deeds. Ultimately, Baba bestowed Nanasaheb with the divine wealth.

A devotee - who is transformed in this manner - passes on the benefits to others. Nanasaheb did like-wise. He spread far and wide the fame of Baba's *Alaukik* (unique) and *Ishvari* (divine) birth. Due to Nanasaheb's work many people benefitted. The Almighty deeply cares for such devotees and is ever ready to help them.

Earlier life

The name of the fortunate devotee was Shri Narayan Govind Chandorkar. He was born in the year 1860 at Thane. His father – Govindpant – was also known as Nanasaheb. He was the Personal Assistant to the Deputy Collector. He was honoured with the title of *Daptardar* (record keeper). Therefore, his *Wada* at Kalyan was popularly called as *Daptardar Wada*.

Govindpant was blessed by Sakharam Maharaj (said to be a *Guru Bandhu* of Shri Sai Baba) of pilgrimage town of Kavadi (Taluka – Bhivandi). His behaviour was inclined towards purity and he was liberal with donations and charity.

Nanasaheb's preliminary schooling was in Marathi Medium at Kalyan. Thereafter, he moved to the English Medium Elphinston High School and later to Elphinston College. His favourite subject was Sanskrit and he completed his B.A. in 1883.

While in college, at the age of 18 - as per the custom in those days, he was married to the daughter of Shri Vinayak Sadashiv alias Kakasaheb Oze - *Inamdar* of Palapse village (Taluka – Panvel). Nanasaheb's wife was Radhabai. The couple was blessed with two sons and two daughters.

Nanasaheb's elder son Vasudeo alias Baburao became a graduate and became a teacher of Mathematics in a private school at Vileparle. He was married to Indirabai - daughter

of well-known *Jahagirdar* of Gwalior Shri Ramrao Krishna Jathar (author of 'Swanand Samrajya').

The younger son Mahadeo alias Bapurao took education of agriculture and looked after their farming business. He was married to Girijabai – daughter of Shri Trivikram Kashinath Pitre - well-known advocate of Dharwad.

Nanasaheb's elder daughter Mainatai was married to Shri Kuvalekar of Pune and younger daughter Dwarkabai was married to Shri Pendharkar of Satara.

After his graduation, Nanasaheb started working as a clerk in *Mamledar* Office at Sangamner. Later on he got promoted to the post of Sr. Clerk at Kopargaon in District Ahmednagar. In 1892, he was further promoted to Secretary to the Collector. In 1893, he promoted as *Mamledar* of Ghodnadi Taluka (District Pune). He returned to Nagar District and served from 1894 to 1901 as Secretary to the Collector. From 1902, he was the *Mamledar* of Jamner Taluka in Khandesh. He was thereafter transferred to various places, such as Nandurbar, Pandharpur etc. In 1908, he became the Duputy Collector of Pune District. Finally, in 1915 he retired.

He breathed his last in August 1921 at the age of 61.

Baba's first *Darshan*

In 1892, Nanasaheb was the Secretary to the Collector at Nagar and Appa Kulkarni was the Revenue Clerk in Shirdi. Appa wanted to go to Nagar in connection with his office work and went to first avail *Darshan* of Baba. Baba said, "Appa, go to Nagar and enquire who is the Secretary to the Collector and tell that Nana that I have called him."

Appa conveyed the message; but Nana – thinking "What concern do I have with a *Fakir*" – refused to oblige. Then Baba once again sent the same message and Nana once again refused to oblige. After this happened 2-3 times, reluctantly Nana agreed to visit Baba.

A doubt lingered in his mind – Am I going to meet an ordinary *Fakir* or a true saint ? While this confusion harassed him, he asked his wife to give him his old coat. Wearing it, he set on the way to Shirdi. On nearing the place, he realized that he was empty handed. He was worried about what he should buy and where he can buy it – as Shirdi was a nondescript town. Thinking about this, he casually put his hand in the coat pocket. He was surprised to find a few *Badams* and a few pieces of *Khadi-sakhar*.

He started thinking, "How could this happen ? What a miracle it is ? Is Baba a *Sadhu* ?"

(Contd.)

– Translated from original Marathi into English by **Sudhir**



"You may go anywhere on the face of this earth, I am always with you. I reside in your heart and I am within you." (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 15, Verse 69)

"Wherever you are, and whatever may be doing, always bear it in mind that I shall continue to be informed of the minutest details of your deeds." (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 3, Verse 143)

Back

IS BABA LIVING AND HELPING NOW ?



– Compiled by **Jyoti Ranjan Raut**
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Narayan Babaji Pawar (2/5, Parimal Co-operative Hsg. Soc., Pandit Deendayal Rd., Vishnu Nagar, Dombivli West, District Thane.) :-

SAI'S PALKHI...

My entire family including me, my wife, son, daughter-in-law, grandson and my brother reached Shirdi on 3-11-2007. After Sai *Darshan* in the morning we took breakfast and were in front of Dwarkamai, when my wife felt extremely tired. A shopkeeper gave her a chair. While my brother and I waited near my wife, the others went for *Darshan*. Suddenly my wife fainted. Her body started to turn cold and her hands and feet turned yellow. She turned her eyes upwards. Looking at her condition we were extremely scared.

The shopkeeper gave her some water. My son and his family returned. I prayed to Sai, "Baba, what is this happening to us at Your Feet ? Please make my wife healthy once again !" Meanwhile my son arranged for an ambulance from the Sansthan Hospital. We were really worried. The ambulance arrived. While we were getting inside, Baba's *Palkhi* appeared. Hearing the sound, my wife opened her eyes. She felt better, as though Baba brought her back to life. The ambulance then proceeded to the hospital. All her tests turned out to be normal.

My wife was suffering from Diabetes and sometimes her blood pressure increased because of it. She had taken all her medications that day and yet...

Death had come; but Baba sent it back.

Ps. my wife was a Sai devotee since childhood. She had not worshipped any one else except Baba.

She died on 29-7-2008, *Ashadhi Ekadashi*, after a short illness.



"He, who constantly remembers me after completely surrendering to me, I owe him a debt which I will repay by uplifting him." (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 44, Verse 151)

Back