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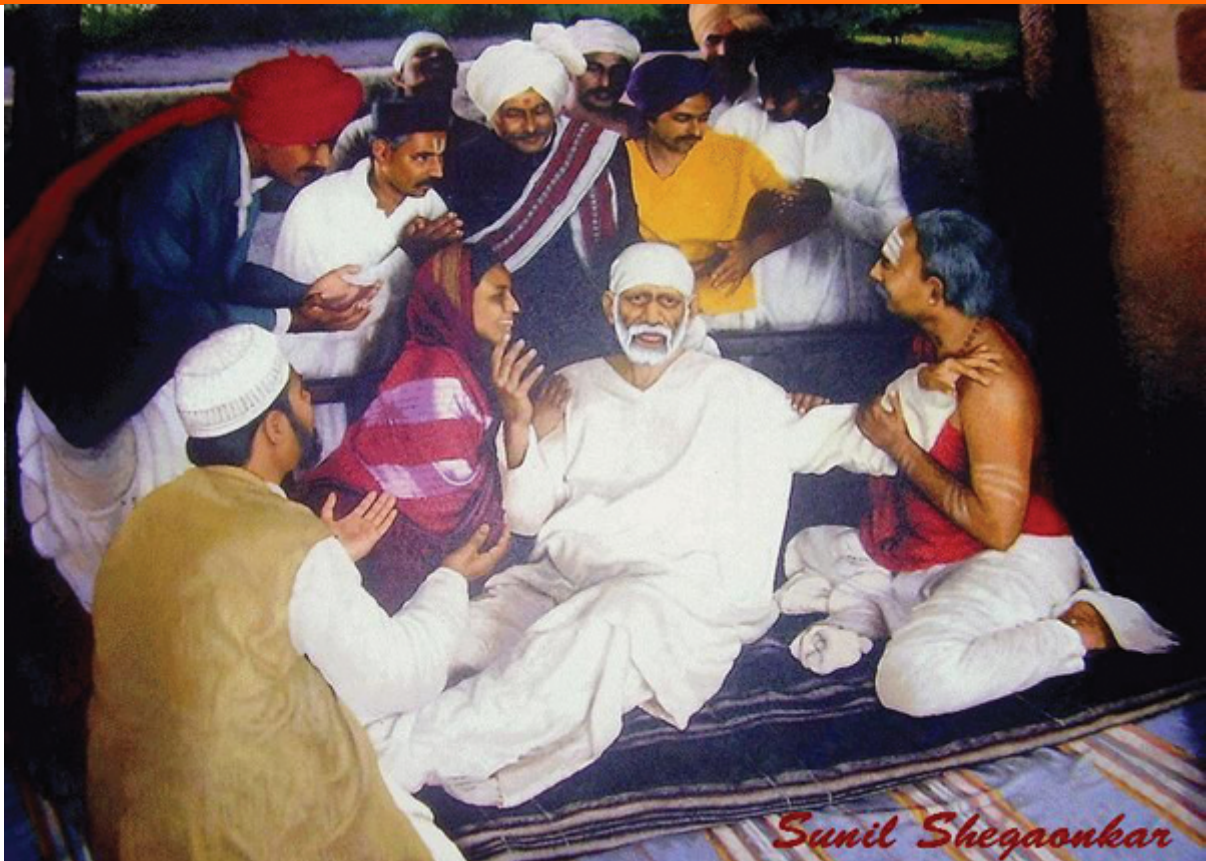
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Main



Why Shirdi Sai Baba choose the day of
Vijaya Dashami (also called Dussehra)
to take *Mahasamadhi* !

During childhood days it used to be fun to go to watch the Dussehra procession in my home town of Manglaur in the Haridwar district. [Haridwar, which is well-known for the world famous *Kumbha Mela* (a festival held once every 12 years), is in the Indian state of *Deva Bhoomi* Uttarakhand. My little heart always leapt, when the gigantic effigies of the ten-headed Ravan and his cruel brothers were set aflame amidst bursting of crackers.

To be honest, I didn't lose my child's-heart yet after 35 years of my birth; but retained the spirit of school-days even into the era of manhood until my parents returned from their pilgrimage to Shirdi in the year 1985.

My father was a truly enlightened master - a *Mahasiddha* (exalted adept), who had realized the divinity of Shirdi Sai Baba at his very first time prostrated obeisance at His lotus feet in total surrender. He instantly recognized that Universal Form of Lord Sai Baba inside the *Samadhi Mandir*, which Arjun had made out of Lord Krishna on the ringing plains of holy Kurukshetra, where that Great Charioteer imparted the eternal and celestial message of the *Bhagvad Gita* to dejected and depressed Dhananjay and became the centre of a marvellous development of the *Bhakti* schools of India.

My *Mahasiddha* father revealed to me all that he himself recognized and realized at Shirdi. My mind gained peace and poise, and I realized an inquisitive look within, that disturbed my whole being with the joy of elevated thoughts...

Why Shirdi Sai Baba chose the day of Vijaya Dashami (also called Dussehra) to take *Mahasamadhi* !

Sai Baba, after residing in Shirdi for an uninterrupted period of 60 years, took His *Mahasamadhi* on October 15, 1918 on the Vijaya Dashami day. His *Punyatithi* is observed each year on the tenth and last day of Durga *Navratri*.

Navratri Durga *Pooja* starts on first day of Shukla Paksha in Ashwin month and ends on Mahanavami or Vijaya Dashami. It was the firm conviction of Baba that Knowledge or Self-realization is not possible, unless there is the prior act of grinding of all our impulses, desires, sins; and of the three *Gun*as, viz. *Sattva*, *Raja* and *Tama*... (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 1)

According to one school of thought, Shri Mahakali (who has a *Tama* pre-dominant temperament) is worshipped on the first 3 days of *Navratri*, to reduce the *Tama* component in ourselves. The next 3 days, to enhance the *Raja* component in ourselves, Shri Mahalakshmi (who has a *Raja* pre-dominant temperament) is worshipped and on the last 3 days, to intensify the spiritual practice, Mahasaraswati (who has a *Sattva* pre-dominant temperament) is worshipped.

Vijaya Dashami festival is also known as Dussehra. Dussehra is the final day of Durga *Pooja* of *Navratri*.

There are a number of reasons for the celebration of Dussehra festival. Dussehra in every part of India is celebrated with great pomp and splendor and no matter, what the reason, at the end of the day this wonderful Indian festival gives out one special message which says - 'the good always shines over evil'.

Sai Baba truly propagated this message during His six decades stay at Shirdi.

The most popular reason for the celebration of Dussehra festival in Northern India is that, on this particular day Lord Ram killed Ravan. Thus, the occasion commemorates the victory of good over evil.

On Vijaya Dashami, Sai Baba left His mortal coil signifying the triumph of good and righteous over evil; and also denoting that, He practiced till the end of time He took *Mahasamadhi* what He preached since His advent in Shirdi, viz. conquest of sensual values by spiritual ethics.

According to Sai, it's very important to control six inner enemies [lust (sexual urge), anger, greed, temptation, ego and jealousy], that attack and overpower every human being at some point of time. They act as an obstacle to man's spiritual progress. Man acts like a wild animal; nay, like a demon, if he succumbs to any of these negative qualities. The one, who has control over these six inner enemies should occupy the throne. (Aad Guru Granth Sahib, p 1039)

Apart from the story of Lord Ram and Ravan about Vijaya Dashami, another legend behind Dussehra is rooted in the great epic Mahabharat. When the Pandavas were in exile, they had to spend one year incognito. During this period they had to hide their precious weapons, lest they give away their identity. They chose the Shami tree to hide their weapons. Arjun's *Gandeev* bow was one among them. This tree is also known as Banni tree. The botanical name of this tree is *Prosopis Spicigera*. It is said that the Shami tree chosen by the Pandavas stood inside a cremation ground. It was chosen to render detection, that much less likely. The Pandavas wrapped their weapons in a white cloth and concealed this on that Shami tree, making the weapons look like a dead body.

At the end of exile, they came back to the tree and found their weapons intact. They worshipped the tree, and invoked the Goddess Durga, and asked for power and victory in the

ensuing battle. They went to the battle field of Kurukshetra to fight the Kauravas. The Pandavas won the battle on the day of Dashami. On this day, good had achieved victory over evil; thus it came to be known as Vijaya Dashami.

After this it became a tradition that on Vijaya Dashami day people hug each other under the Shami tree and exchange its leaves as gold and greet and wish each other and worship the sacred tree thus :

shami shamayate paapam shami shatruvinaashini |

arjunasya dhanurdhaari raamsya priyadarshini ||

karishyamaanayaatraayaa yayaakaalam sukham mayaa |

tatranirvighnakrtritvam bhava shriraamapujitaa ||

Meaning of the Shloka :

The Shami tree cleanses sins.

It's thorns are reddish in colour. It is Lord Ram's favourite tree and in such a tree Pandavas hid their arms.

O' Shami, Lord Ram has worshipped you.

I now embark upon my journey to victory.

May you make it pleasant and free from obstacles !

This custom is followed in North Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Likewise, Sai Baba's message of universal brotherhood, religious tolerance, love and compassion to the fellowmen embodies the eternal truth in simple terms.

In Southern India, Eastern India and Western India, the festival of *Navaratri*, which culminates with Vijaya Dashami commemorates the legend, in which the Goddess Durga, also known as Chamundeshwari or Mahishasura Mardini, vanquishes the demon Mahishasura, Shumbha and Nishumbha - an event that is said to have taken place in the vicinity of the present day city of Mysore in Karnataka. Vijaya Dashami being the last day of the celebrations, a grand procession passes through the streets of the city of Mysore.

The main attraction here is the idol of the Goddess Chamundeshwari placed in the golden *Howdah* on top of the elephant seat. *Jamboo Savari* is a procession that marks the end of the nine-day Dussehra festival in Mysore. The festival dates back to the Vijayanagar empire and is held on Vijaya Dashami, the day on which kings launched wars or expanded their territories. The *Wadiyars*, who ruled Mysore brought the tradition to Mysore. While *Durbars*, cultural and sports events were and are still being held across nine days, the procession is the one that was and is held on a grand scale.

In those days the king would start Vijaya Dashami day by worshipping the royal sword and offering *Pooja* at the Bhuvaneshwari temple. He would then sit on the golden *Howdah* that is placed on an elephant and go on a procession. A 21 - cannon salute marked the beginning of the event that culminated at *Bannimantap*, where the present day torchlight parade is held.

After reaching *Bannimantap*, the king performed the Banni tree *Pooja*. Banni is the Kannada word for the Sanskrit Shami, and *Mantap* means 'pavilion'.

Simollanghan is yet another ritual performed on Vijaya Dashami day in Maharashtra. *Simollanghan* is crossing the border or frontier of a village or a place.

In ancient times, kings used to perform the *Ayudha Pooja* / *Astra Pooja* (worship of weapons) on Vijaya Dashami day and then used to cross the frontier of their kingdom to fight against their rivals or neighbouring kingdoms. Since then, on every Vijaya Dashami day, people in Maharashtra, cross the borders of their villages / places and return back. Sai Baba also used to take part in these *Seemolanghan* festivities with the villagers.

Once, during the Dussehra of 1916, when the villagers were returning back from the ritual of *Seemolanghan*, they found Baba in an angry mood. Actually, during the ritual, some people were trying to know, whether Baba was a Hindu or a Muslim; and when Baba came to know about it, He became furious. He took off His *Patka*, *Kafni* and *Langot* etc., tore them and threw them into the *Dhuni* (sacred burning fire) before Him. Everybody was trembling with fear and nobody dared to approach Baba. But, somehow Bhagoji Shinde gathered courage and succeeded in tying a *Langot* round His waist and requested Baba to be calm at least on *Seemolanghan* day.

Baba, striking the ground with His *Satka*, said, “This is my *Seemolanghan* !”

By this incident, Baba gave a sufficient indication, that this act of His on Vijaya Dashami day was just a prelude to the future event; Vijaya Dashami was the right day for Him to cross the border of life.

Whenever Sai Baba’s *Kafni* or *Langot* was worn or torn out, He never gave it to anybody; rather He used to burn it to ashes in the *Dhuni*. It was not essential that the clothes of Sai Baba had to be old in order to be burnt. Sometimes He even used to burn clothes, which were used for a short time. Sai Baba’s act of taking off His *Patka*, *Kafni* and *Langot* etc., tearing them and throwing them into the *Dhuni* (sacred burning fire) in the year 1916 was the divine rehearsal of leaving His mortal coil two years later in the year 1918. This the devotees could only understand after two years in 1918 on Dussehra day.

In view of Baba’s *Punyatithi* being observed each year on the tenth and last day of Durga *Navratri*, it would be significant to co-relate that once, Sai revealed His identity with *Maa* Durga or *Maa* Ambika :

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Maa Rupena Samsthita I

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Shakti Rupena Samsthita I

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Buddhi Rupena Samsthita I

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Laxmi Rupena Samsthita I

Namestasyai II Namestasyai II Namestasyai II

Namo Namah II

Meaning of *Devi Mantra* :

To the divine Goddess, Who resides in all existence in the form of universal mother I

To the divine Goddess, Who resides in all existence in the form of energy I

To the divine Goddess, Who resides in all existence in the form of intelligence I

To the divine Goddess, Who resides in all existence in the form of true wealth I

We bow to Her II we bow to Her II continually we bow to her I

Saptashrungi *Devi* is Durga *Devi*; Saptashrungi *Maa* is another *roop* of Goddess *Devi* Ambika; Saptashrungi *Devi*, Whose *Shakti* (power) is recognized by Sai Baba Himself (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 30), is located at Vani - a place near the city of Nasik in the state of Maharashtra. This place is one of the 51 *Shakti Peethas*. The state of Maharashtra is the home to four of these *Peethas*; they are :

- * **Saptashrungi *Devi* at Vani**
- * **Tulja Bhavani at Tuljapur**
- * **Amba Bhavani or Mahalakshmi at Kolhapur**
- * **Renuka *Devi* in village of Mahur**

The *Devi* is carved on a rock cliff on top of the mountain Saptashrungi at an altitude of 1230 meters above sea level. The carving is eight feet tall and is carved on a single rock face. *Sapta Shrungi* means seven beauties; these are a chain of seven mountain peaks and thus the name Saptashrungi identifies with Durga *Devi*, Who resides here.

One of the very important books that were composed at this place is the *Devi Mahatmya* or *Durga Saptashati*, which is one of the sections of the *Markandeya Puran*. Sage *Markandeya* wrote it after doing penance on the top of a peak, which faces the cliff, on which the *Devi* resides.

One *Kakaji Vaidya* was the priest at the temple of Saptashrungi *Devi* of Vani in Nasik district, and regarded Her as his chosen Deity. Once, he had an experience of the oneness of Sai Baba with Saptashrungi *Devi*. In fact, some calamity had befallen him and he had become restless and upset. So, he entered the *Devi*'s temple and prayed for the Mother's protection. He who drinks pure nectar will realize Sai's greatness and all pervasiveness. The *Devi* appeared to him in his dream and commanded him to approach Baba. He was assured by Her, that he would restore his peace of mind. *Kakaji*, for his failure to understand the exact words, uttered by the *Devi*, could not identify Baba. Perhaps, he thought, Lord *Tryambakeshwar* was what Saptashrungi *Devi* was referring to; and so he went to *Trimbak* for Lord's *Darshan*. Every day, on waking up, he would first have *Darshan* of *Tryambakeshwar* and after a bath perform *Rudrabhishek*. He did this for ten days. However, his ten days *Pooja* and stay at *Trimbak* did not yield the required result, and his mental anguish remained unabated. He again prayed to the *Devi* on his return to Vani. That night She again appeared in his dream vision and clarified, 'Why did you go to *Tryambakeshwar* in vain ? I mean by Baba - *Shri Sai Samartha* of *Shirdi*.'

Kakaji woke up wondering where *Shirdi* was and how to get there. In the meantime it so happened that an astrologer visiting *Shirdi* had told *Madhavrao Deshpande*'s younger brother *Bapaji* that because his elder brother *Madhavrao* had not fulfilled the vows of his mother, he had incurred the displeasure of Saptashrungi *Devi*. When *Bapaji* reported this to *Madhavrao Deshpande* (*alias Shama*), the latter recollected that in his childhood he was once seriously ill and his mother had vowed to take him to get *Darshan* of Saptashrungi *Devi*. On another occasion, when his mother had developed tumors on her breasts she had vowed to present two silver breasts to the *Devi*, if she was cured. *Madhavrao* had promised his mother on her death-bed that he would fulfil her vows. But, since his *Ishta Devata* (Personal Deity) was *Sadguru Sai Baba*, he told Baba, "To me, You are the Saptashrungi *Devi*. Please accept these silver breasts in fulfilment of my mother's vows."

But, Sai Baba would not have them. The vow was to make the presents to Saptashrungi *Devi* and He felt, He could not substitute for Her. He advised *Madhavrao* that he should personally go to Saptashrungi *Devi* temple and place the offerings at Her feet. Accordingly, *Madhavrao* proceeded

to Vani and in his search for the priest, arrived at Kakaji's house. It was as if all this had been pre-arranged. There was Kakaji looking for Sai Baba and here was Madhavrao, who had come straight from Shirdi. Kakaji was overjoyed. After Madhavrao had fulfilled both the vows of his mother, he and Kakaji started for Shirdi. As soon as Kakaji arrived in Shirdi he went for Sai Baba's *Darshan*. He neither asked for anything nor did he wish to converse with Sai Baba, nor did Baba bless him. For Kakaji, Baba's *Darshan* sufficed by itself and he was finally at peace with himself. But, the incident showed the essential unity of Sai Baba with Saptashrungi *Devi*.

Now, it is for the devotees to contemplate, why Saptashrungi *Devi* directed Her *Pujari* (priest) to Sai Baba ? Could She not give peace of mind to Her own *Pujari* ? Why the pilgrimage to Tryambakeshwar went basically useless ? What is the significance of Shirdi Sai *Samarth* ? Once, Sai had declared, He was Ganapati, Mahalakshmi, Shiva, Ram... Could He not accept silver breasts and redeem Shama from the vows ? A saint only can understand another saint. *Devi* Saptashrungi knew, Who Sai *Samarth* was. Perhaps She wanted the world to know through Her *Pujari* that Sai *Samarth* was Tryambakeshwar in flesh and blood. All know Ramakrishna Paramahansa was directed by Kali *Maa* to get *Sannyas* from Tetapuri. Similarly, Namdev, a Vitthal *Bhakta* (devotee) was directed to go to Visoba, a realised saint. After the visit Namdev, who was limiting Lord Pandurang to a particular form and place could see his Lord in a dog. Thus Shama who could see Saptashrungi *Devi* in Sai Baba could not see Sai Baba in Saptashrungi *Devi*. Kakaji was made to see Tryambakeshwar and Saptashrungi *Devi* in Sai Baba. One must remember Saptashrungi *Devi*'s words 'Sai *Samarth*', and bow down before Him for attaining peace of mind.

Once again, recalling that Sai Baba took Mahasamadhi on the tenth and last day of Durga *Navratri*, one feels compelled to brood over the significance of the figure *Nava* i.e. nine in the teachings of the God, Who descended on earth and walked on the soil of Shirdi for the welfare of the devotees, wherever they may be; and all are so convinced that the *Navadha Bhakti* contains all the essential truths of the teachings of Sai Baba.

But, before discussing the beneficiaries of the teachings of Baba involving the *Navadha Bhakti*, it would be appropriate to evoke a few other divine instances :

“Shravanam Kirtanam Vishno Smaranam Paada Sevanam

Archanam Vandanam Dasyam Sakhyam Atmanivedanam”

This is one of the most popular *Shlokas* in Bhagavat, wherein child Prahlad is suggesting the 9 easiest steps to attain Lord's compassion.

In the Ramayan, Lord Ram explains the nine types of devotion or penance (the *Navadha Bhakti*) to Shabari :

Tulsidas writes : having seen all 9 forms of devotion in Shabari, Lord Ram praised her devotion, clarifying in the following way -

1) ***Pratham Bhagati Santan kar sangaa***

Which means : **The first step to devotion (*Bhakti*) is to keep company of the saintly people.**

2) ***Doosri rati mam kathaa prasangaa***

Which means : **The second step is to enjoy listening to discourses pertaining to the Lord.**

3) *Guru pankaj seva, teesri bhakti amaan*

Which means : **The third step is to believe, humbly in Guru / God.**

4) *Chouthi Bhagati mam gun gaan, karai kapat tajee gaan*

Which means : **The fourth step is earnestly (without hypocrisy) sing the praises of the Lord.**

5) *Mantra jaap mam dridh Visvaasaa, Pancham, bhajan jo Ved Prakaasaa*

Which means : **Chant the Vedic Mantras with immense faith.**

6) *Chattha dasa seela birati bahu karmaa, nirat nirantara sajjan dharma*

Which means : **The sixth step is not to react in adverse circumstances, yet act, perform ones Karma, like the great ones do.**

7) *Saatvam sam mohi main jag dekhaa, mothey sant adhik kar lekhaa*

Which means : **The seventh step is to perceive the world as God Himself. And, believe the saintly to be greater than the Lord.**

8) *Aathvam jathaa laabh santoshaa, sapneu nahin, dekhai par doshaa*

Which means : **The eighth, is a state (which one arrives at when one travels the first seven steps), where there is no desire left, but the gift of perfect peace.**

(In this state) one does not see fault in others, even in a dream.

9) *Navam saral sab san chhal heena, mam bharos heenya harash na deenaa*

Which means : **In this state one has full faith in the Lord, becomes (child-like) simple with no hypocrisy. In this state, he does not fly high or sink low (but becomes equanimous).**

Lord Ram adds that Sabari's *Bhakti* is perfectly complete and there is nothing more to be added to it. Yet, if anyone were to have taken even one step towards devotion, out of all nine, he / she would be very dear to the Lord.

On one occasion Sai Baba told Anantrao Patankar a parable of Nine Balls of Stool (*Navavidha Bhakti*). Baba said, there are nine forms or types of *Bhakti* : 1. *Shravan* (hearing) 2. *Kirtan* (praying) 3. *Smaran* (remembering) 4. *Padasevan* (resorting to feet) 5. *Archan* (worship) 6. *Namaskar* (bowing) 7. *Dasya* (service) 8. *Sakhyam* (friendship) 9. *Atmanivedan* (surrender of the self). (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 21) If any of these is faithfully followed, Lord Hari will be pleased and manifest Himself in the home of the devotee.

Let us recapture the incident, that happened to Appasaheb Kulkarni in the year 1917. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 33) One day, a *Fakir* resembling Baba came to Kulkarni's house at about noon. Kulkarni was not in the house. His wife and children asked the *Fakir*, whether he was Shirdi Sai Baba. The *Fakir* replied that he was a humble servant of God and it was only on His command that he came to enquire about the welfare of the Kulkarni family. He asked for *Dakshina*. Kulkarni's wife gave him a rupee. The *Fakir* gave her some *Vibhuti (Udi)* and asked her to keep it in her *Pooja* for worship. Kulkarni returned home the same evening, and when he heard of the *Fakir's*

visit, he felt sorry for not being present at that point of time. He told his family that he would have given 10 as *Dakshina*. Though he was hungry, he went out in search of the *Fakir*. As he could not find him anywhere, he returned home; and after having his meal again set out along with a friend in search of the *Fakir*. All of a sudden, the *Fakir* came from behind and extending his hand asked for the *Dakshina*. Kulkarni gave him a rupee. Again the *Fakir* asked for more *Dakshina*, and he gave him one more rupee. When the *Fakir* asked again, he borrowed 3 from his friend and gave it to the *Fakir*. As he still found the *Fakir* not fully satisfied, he took him home and gave him another 4. When the *Fakir* asked again, he gave him a ten-rupee note. The *Fakir* gave him back 9 and went away. Since Kulkarni wanted to give 10 as *Dakshina*, the *Fakir* was not satisfied till he got the 10. Kulkarni kept 9 consecrated given back to him by the *Fakir* in his *Pooja* room and worshipped them. The figure 9 is significant. It denotes the *Navavidha Bhakti* - nine forms or types of *Bhakti* (devotion).

It may also be noted here that Baba gave 9 to one Laxmibai Shinde at His last moment. Baba put His right hand in His shirt pocket twice, took out 5 and 4 and gave them as charity to Laxmibai. Baba explained the significance of these 9 as the nine qualities a devotee should have (1) Absence of egoism (2) Absence of jealousy (3) Untiring service (4) Absence of worldly desires (5) Complete faith in *Guru* (6) Peaceful nature (7) Desire to know the truth (8) Absence of envy and (9) Absence of self-boasting and finding faults in others. Unless a devotee improved these nine qualities, he could not have true devotion to reach God. Thus Baba taught to Laxmibai Shinde even in His last moments. He instructed what *Navavidha Bhakti* (9 types of devotion) means. He explained the meaning of each word to Laxmibai after giving her 9.

Thus one can convince oneself that Sai Baba left His mortal coil on the Vijaya Dashami day to annually renew, remind, re-affirm, and re-immortalize the divine wisdom of the two great ancient epics i.e. the Ramayan and the Mahabharat, which propounds the special message - ‘the good always shines over evil’; to remind His devotees of His firm conviction that Knowledge or Self-realization is not possible, unless there is the prior act of grinding of all our impulses, desires, sins; and of the three *Gunas*, viz. *Sattva*, *Raja* and *Tama*; and to elaborate and elucidate the precepts propounded by the *Navavidha Bhakti*, and thereby initiating several of His devotees to be in union with Him by way of baptism into this school of *Bhakti*.

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Experiences of Sai Maharaj

Experiences recorded by late hon. Hari Sitaram Dixit :-

(28)

**“ALLAH WILL BLESS
AFTER FOUR DAYS !”**

A *Brahmin* from Shahade was sentenced to be hanged. A Muslim friend of his was Sai Baba's ardent devotee. He went to Baba and told him about the fate of his friend. Maharaj said, “*Allah* will bless after four days,” and asked the Muslim devotee to stay. While he was still in Shirdi, they received the news that his friend was set free in the appeal.

(29)

“THIS OLD MAN IS A THUG !”

Honorable Chidambar Rao Gadgil was a devotee of Lord Ganesh. He, therefore, perceived Baba as a form of Lord Ganesh. He even did Baba's *Pooja* with all the things associated with Ganesh *Pooja*.

One day, while he was performing the *Puja*, Baba said, “This old man is a thug. He says there is a mouse under my seat.” In this way Baba made it known that He knew Gadgil perceived Him as Lord Ganesh.

(30)

“WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT ?”

Once, I had ordered a floral ‘*Shera*’ from Ahmednagar. I offered it to Maharaj. I had also tucked Rs. 25/- at my waist. Maharaj asked, “What have you brought ?” I said, ‘*Shera*’. “But, you need to give Rs. 25/- as *Dakshina* with it,” Baba said. I replied, “You gave me the good sense to bring it with me, Baba,” and offered the *Dakshina* to Him.

(31)

HOW BABA CARED FOR HIS DEVOTEES

Once, *Haribhaktaparayan* Madhavbuva Badodekar said to me, “Let us both go together for Sai Baba's *Darshan*.” But, it was not to be. He later went to Sangamner, where his brother-in-law was the *Mamledar*.

When he expressed his wish to visit Shirdi, his brother-in-law immediately arranged a *Tonga* for him and he reached Shirdi.

I happened to be in Shirdi at that time. We met in the *Masjid*. I said, “Since you have come all the way, stay over for a day.” But, since the *Tonga* had to return, he said, he could not stay. Because, it was his ardent desire to go, we went to take Baba's leave. Baba consented and said, “Go quickly !” Madhavbuva had hardly gone a mile, when it started pouring heavily. But, it was surprising that he did not get wet or catch a chill from the cold winds, although he was not wearing warm clothes.

(32)

HOW GURU MAULI PROTECTS HIS DEVOTEES FROM CALAMITIES EVEN THOUGH FAR AWAY

Once, while I was in Shirdi, *Sadguru* Sai Baba inquired, whether Pradhan had come. I replied, “No; but should I call him ?” Baba just said, “Okay.” The day Baba thought of Pradhan, it so happened that Pradhan suddenly felt giddy and became unconscious in the lawyer’s room of the High Court. While losing consciousness he remembered Baba. The other lawyers tried to revive him; but he soon regained consciousness on his own.

His colleagues offered to take him home in a car; but he convinced them that he was absolutely okay and went home with his friends Ramdatta Vithoba Desai and Ramkrishna Shrikrishna Navalkar, by train. The next day, Bala Shimpi, a resident of Shirdi visited him with Baba’s *Udi*. He also received my letter stating that Baba was remembering him. This is a fine example of how *Guru Mauli* protects His devotees from calamities.

Sai Leela, Year I,

Ashvin Shaké 1845, Vol VIII

(33)

BABA PRESERVED ADAM’S HONOUR

Adam is a real estate agent, who lives in Bandra. Once, he was accused in a criminal case and it looked like the case would be committed to the Sessions Court. Adam got extremely scared and confused. On the morning of the day of the judgement, Adam went to Tendulkar’s house and standing in front of Baba’s portrait said, “You are laughing at me. But, I will not leave You, even if I am sentenced to jail for six months.

I can see that I will surely go to jail; but You know, I am innocent. You must save me.”

He fell at the feet of Tendulkar and his wife Savitribai and cried. Later, when he met Mrs. Tendulkar on the road, he again fell at her feet and pleaded, “Please, say Baba will save me.” He just wouldn’t let go of her feet until she said, “Baba will surely save you.”

He later went to the court, where Baba upheld his honour. All the accused were found guilty; but only Adam was acquitted. Obviously, Adam was delirious with joy.

He went to Tendulkar’s house to offer his thanks to Baba and touched everyone’s feet. That evening an unknown *Fakir* visited him. Adam said, “Let’s go and have some tea.” The *Fakir* agreed; but after some time when Adam turned around, the *Fakir* was nowhere to be seen. He searched far and wide; but to no avail. The very next day Adam left for Shirdi to take Baba’s *Darshan*.

(34)

HOW BABA RECALLED HIS DEVOTEE FOR THE GURU POORNIMA RATH-YATRA

One of my friends visited Shirdi on the occasion of *Guru Poornima* last year. He had never met Baba while He was in mortal coil. He had heard of Sai Maharaj and longed for his *Darshan*; but it did not happen. But, on the previous *Punyatithi* he fulfilled his desire to at least take *Darshan* of Baba’s *Samadhi*. With Sai’s Blessings he became completely engrossed with Baba and devoted maximum time in Sai’s worship. The joy he felt almost oozed out of his entire body.

A couple of months ago he had reluctantly made preparations to visit his son, who was working in a faraway state. After he had crossed almost three-fourths of the distance, he halted for an overnight stay. There he dreamt of Baba being taken in a procession with great pomp and glory. A horse-rider invited him to join and he saw himself going with him.

After seeing this dream he cancelled his further journey, returned home and came to Shirdi for *Guru Poornima* celebrations. There he joined in the *Rath-yatra*. After staying in Shirdi for a few days, he went on

a pilgrimage along with some other devotees. He finally reached his village at around 4 a.m. His house is surrounded by a compound, which has a gate, that is padlocked.

At about 4.15 a.m. he called out to his folks, who were fast asleep. He banged at the gate; but no one heard him. At that time a girl in the house dreamt of Baba admonishing her, 'Why are you sleeping ? Get up ! He is at the gate.' She immediately woke up and when she opened the gate, lo and behold, she found my friend standing there, just as Baba had said !

(35)

DAKSHINA !

A gentleman from Mumbai had gone to Shirdi for *Sadguru Sai's Darshan*. Later Baba gave him permission to go; but did not ask for any *Dakshina*. When the gentleman returned to the *Wada*, he felt a bit sad that Baba had not asked for any *Dakshina*. Sometime later, Baba sent a man to call him and when he went into the *Masjid*, asked for *Dakshina*, making the man truly happy.

(36)

“WHAT WAS SAGUN SAYING ?”

Mathuradas from Anjanal used to come for Baba's *Darshan* quite often. He used to stay at Sagun's lodge. Once, while both of them were talking, they gossiped about some people. When Mathuradas went to meet Baba, He immediately asked, "What was Sagun saying ?"

Mathuradas was embarrassed and realised that Baba did not like them gossiping. He learnt the lesson that it was not good to talk ill of others.

(37)

“I AM ALWAYS WITH YOU.”

Once, when Babasaheb Tarkhad had gone to Shirdi, Baba ordered him to go to the *Wada* and listen to the discourse (*Pothi*). The topic that day was 'The Tale of Dhruva'. In it was a description of the '*Nirgun*' (beyond attributes) and '*Nirakar*' (formlessness) facets of the Creator.

After the discourse, Babasaheb went to Baba and said, "You brought me here after a year and a half. Now keep me at Your feet forever !" Baba said, "I am always with you."

Sai Leela, year I,

Kartik, Shaké 1845, Vol. IX

(38)

HOW BABA CURED SHANTABAI

Shantabai lived in Turbhe village near Belapur in Thane district. Her left thumb had a deep ulcer in the bone for seven years. One night she dreamt that Baba advised her to use '*Dikemali*', a medicinal herb on it. The woman woke up in a happy state of mind, used the herb as advised by Baba, and was cured. She wrote this in a letter sent to Baba. It is dated 1st September, 1918.

(39)

HOW BABA CALLED RAMLAL TO SHIRDI

A Punjabi *Brahmin*, named Ramlal lived in Shirdi. When he was in Mumbai, Maharaj beckoned him in his dream to come to Shirdi. At that time, he did not know, Who Maharaj was, as he had not seen him in a person or even in a photograph. The next day, while walking on the road, he saw a photo of Baba in a shop.

He inquired with the shopkeeper about the name and address of the person in the photo. Subsequently he went to Shirdi and lived there till Baba took *Samadhi*.

(40)

BABA CURED A STOMACH TUMOUR

A man by the name Narayan Motiram Dighe lived in Mumbai. He suffered from a tumour in his stomach. It was quite hard and he suffered miserably. He consulted a couple of renowned doctors; but to no avail. Later someone suggested to him to visit Baba. Obviously, it was not possible in his painful state.

He said that if, with Baba's blessings the tumour was ruptured and the pus passed through the stools, he would be relieved and then could visit Sai Maharaj. So, the gentleman gave him Sai's *Udi*.

Dighe ingested the *Udi*. The very next day the tumour ruptured and the pus started passing through the stools. In a couple of days he felt better and visited Shirdi for Baba's *Darshan*.

(41)

HOW A CONFUSING QUESTION WAS SUDDENLY SOLVED

One morning while reading, I found a confusing question and was dumbfounded. Ultimately, I left the book and went to have my lunch. After lunch I left for office. At Bandra station, a friend of mine saw me and got into the same compartment. He sat next to me. Later, at Mahim his friend got in and we were introduced to each other. I invited him for *Kirtan* at my place in the evening.

My Bandra friend alighted at Dadar. The friend from Mahim did not speak to me; but I saw him writing something. He gave me a piece of paper before getting down at Grant Road station. There was an '*Abhanga*' written on it. Reading it, solved the problem, which had confused me in the morning.

Likewise, it is my experience, that many such problems have been suddenly solved.

(42)

THE SCORPION STING RELIEVED WITH BABA'S *UDI*

Once, an astrologer went to Shirdi. He went for Baba's *Darshan*; but all his attention was concentrated on money. He did not perceive making much money in Shirdi and so, quickly returned to Rahata. That night a scorpion stung him. When the pain became unbearable, he applied Baba's *Udi* and kept uttering Baba's name. His pain subsided and he trusted Baba entirely. He returned to Shirdi the very next morning. He stayed there for 15-20 days and with Baba's blessings he earned about Rs. 300/-.

Sai Leela, year I,

Margashirsh, Shaké 1845, Vol. X

by **Jyoti Ranjan Raut**

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Back



Sai Experiences

Shirdi Sai Baba statue found underground in Wellington, New Zealand

On April 15, 2010, in Wellington's Lower Hutt Suburb Wainuiomata in New Zealand, a Sri Lankan Christian land developer was developing a new subdivision, on Srinivas Gajula's 10 acre land.

While digging the field, a digger found a solid object, about 6 to 7 feet under the ground. He stopped digging immediately and lifted this object out of the ground. The developer, on seeing that this solid object was the statue of some Deity, halted further digging and got the statue cleaned.

He, then called a Hindu priest to identify the Deity, and it turned out to be Shirdi Sai Baba in sitting posture. The statue is approximately two feet tall. Soon, water erupted from the spot, where Baba's statue was found, and it slowly turned into a small pond. Baba's statue was put on a small wooden pallet and now rests floating in the pond, at the same place.

The developer has decided to leave this particular spot untouched and re-develop another area.

Baba once again proves His omnipresence; the New Zealand Sai Sansthan, is regarding it as a good omen and plan to build a Sai Baba temple in Auckland.

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on 15th July 2010

Courtesy : Dr. H. Subhan Singh

H. No. 1082 - Indira Nagar, 1st Street, Vennampatti Road, Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu.



Sai orchestrates my visit to Shirdi

My visit to Shirdi is still very vivid in my memory. It was in February 1975, when I was posted as a captain to my battalion stationed near Gauhati. One night while asleep, an unknown power ordered me to proceed to Shirdi; it was neither a dream nor a vision.

At that time I did not know about Shirdi Sai Baba. The next day after the physical training period I enquired from the soldiers of my unit, if they had heard of Shirdi Sai Baba. The soldiers from Maharashtra filled me in with details pertaining to Baba.

The moment I had received enough information I went to the commanding officer's cabin and requested him for an annual leave with the intention of going to Shirdi. My officer refused me the requested leave; on the contrary he gave me a mouthful of rebukes. He even ordered me to get out of his office. I saluted and left without any remorse or ill feeling.

In a strange turn of events, the next day, the same officer came searching for me in officers' mess and sanctioned my leave. I flew to Mumbai by an IAC flight from Gauhati, travelled by road via Pune to Shirdi. The atmosphere in Shirdi was tranquil and divine and I stayed in a hotel close to Dwarkamai for 12 blissful days !

I felt at home; I would experience Baba in Dwarkamai, *Samadhi Mandir*, *Gurusthan* and *Chavadi*. It is difficult to describe in words the exact emotions; I can only say that my whole being was suffused with love for Sai Baba.

The second day of my visit to Shirdi, Swami Shivaneshan guided me to do *Parayan* (reading) of Shri Sai Sat Charita for seven days in Dwarkamai, *Samadhi Mandir* and *Chavadi*. The whole experience made every cell in my body sing Baba's name, I would be so overflowing with love for Baba, that I would start crying like a baby !

I did *Dhuni Pooja*, attended *Aarati*, applied *Udi*, drank *Teertha* daily. I also participated in *Palkhi* Procession to *Chavadi*. I forgot all my worldly attachments and didn't feel like leaving Shirdi.

After 12 days, on instruction from Swami Shivaneshan I left Shirdi with a heavy heart for Delhi. Everything looked so divinely orchestrated...

I can only say that Sai Baba is love incarnate. He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

He is our ultimate refuge, salutations and prostrations at His Lotus Feet.

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Main

In Sai's Proximity

– Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar

DASGANU MAHARAJ

(Contd. from last issue)

Ishwarmay Jagat

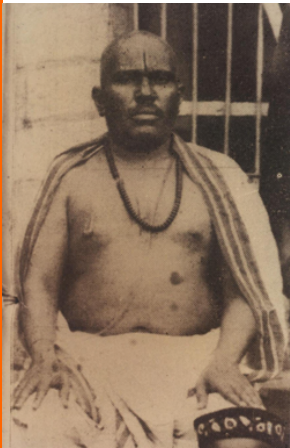
(A universe encompassed

by the Almighty)

Ishwarmay Jagat

(A universe encompassed

by the Almighty)



Due to his above and other similar experiences, Dasganu's vision became wider. Baba guided him on the path of spiritualism and from time to time, clarified his doubts and difficulties in various matters.

He, once, faced difficulties in one of the *Shloka* from Ishavasyopanishad. Baba solved this very tactfully. He told Dasganu to go to Kakasaheb Dixit's house in Vile Parle in Mumbai and further said, "Kaka's maidservant will solve your difficulty."

Accordingly, Dasganu went to Kakasaheb's house and spent the night there. Next day morning, he woke up to some noise and found that the maidservant was cleaning utensils. While doing her work, she was humming a particular song. That song suddenly cleared Dasganu's doubts. As if some realization had come upon him, he understood the meaning of the *Shloka* and his joy had no bounds.

He came to know that, "The entire universe is encompassed by the Almighty and there is nothing else, but the Almighty. Everything in this cosmos has the God in it and is owned by God. 'I' is an essence of God and 'I' and 'God' is one and the same." Once, this reality is recognized in one's mind, then it is not necessary to have the mere mortal things with you.

Dasganu noticed that the maidservant was wearing a tattered rag. Therefore, he asked Raobahadur Pradhan - a staunch devotee of Baba - to purchase a new saree for her. The girl was overjoyed and moved around wearing the new clothes. But, the very next day, she went back to wearing her tattered clothes. However, she was moving around with nonchalance - as if she was wearing her new clothes !

Dasganu realized that, if a man follows her example, he would be much happier. He will have no sorrow or cravings for his so-called 'unfulfilled desires'.

If a person considers that the entire *Vishva* (universe) is his home and if he keeps his mind steady (*He Vishvachee Maze Ghar, Aisee Mati Jayachi Sthir*), then he will never think that he must own any particular thing.

A challenged was accepted

Dasganu wrote 'Ishavasya Bhavartha Bodhini'. The research and study helped him while writing 'Bhavartha Manjiri' - a treatise on 'Amrutanubhav'.

An incident had taken place while he was writing this latter book. There was a well-known *Keertankar* in Pandharpur by the name Dada Maharaj Satarkar. Dasganu was very much impressed with the style and contents of his *Keertans*. Once, while casually talking with Dasganu, Dada Maharaj commented, "It is high time that you give up these stories of 'crows and sparrows' (meaning stories about / biographies of various saints) ! Narrate something about *Vedant*." Dasganu replied, "Dadasaheb, these are not stories of mere 'crows and sparrows'. They will help the readers to understand the real *Vedant*. By this, I do not mean that it is difficult to write tales about *Vedant*." Then Dada Maharaj said, "Is it so ? Then why don't you explain *Ovis* (stanzas) from 'Amrutanubhav'. It is not as easy as you make it appear it to be. A person has to toil for years together ! Come and stay with me for that !"

Dasganu was always forthright in his speech. He retorted, "I am not merely saying that it is not difficult for me to write tales about *Vedant*. I will do it and prove this to you. And, for that, it is not necessary for me to come and stay with you. My Sai Pandurang will bless me and help me in understanding the subject on my own !"

Dasganu commenced writing the treatise. But, he took almost 3 to 4 years for the work. Because, while he was doing the work, his adopted son Damodar (alias Damuanna) Waman Athavale passed away due to T.B. in the year 1925.

He completed the work and was happy that the book had turned out well.

The opinion expressed by *Sant* Keshavrao Maharaj (a well-known *Pravachankar*, a steadfast *Varkari* and profound researcher of Dnyaneshwari) from Pune is as follows :-

"In the beginning, I passed some uncharitable comments about you. But, to tell the truth, amongst all the treatises on 'Amrutanubhav', your book 'Bhavartha Manjiri' comes only next to 'Nityanad Deepika' of Shri Shivkalyan."

The proponent of a glorious tradition

As is well-known, Dasganu was always in pursuit of a way to remain away from family life. He wished to devote more and more time to *Bhakti*. However, in a certain period of his life, in spite of his efforts, he was once again started getting attracted to the bonds and love for his family life. The story is very amazing.

At that time, Dasganu was residing in Pune in a *Wada* owned by Shri Wamanrao Potdar (whose son Shri Datto Waman Potdar, later on became very famous as an eminent Indian historian, writer, and orator, and later on became the vice chancellor of university of Pune). Dasganu spotted on a road a 13-14 year old good-looking boy. As the boy was crying, Dasganu asked him, "Will you stay with me ?" He received a lot of comfort with these kind words.

In the beginning, Dasganu put up that boy with Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Once, while Chandorkar was visiting Shirdi, Baba enquired, "Why have you kept that Ganu's boy with you ? Each one should look after his own kids. Why are you meddling in their affairs ?" Similarly, Baba said the same thing to Dasganu "Are, Ganu ! He is your boy, isn't he ? Then you should look after him. The God is strong enough to take care of us all."

Dasganu looked after that child with a lot of love and affection - as if the boy was his everything in life. The bond between this father and son duo cannot be described in mere words.

Later on, this boy came to be known as Damodar (alias Damuanna) Anant Athavale. He had a comparatively a short life, but achieved a lot during the time that he had. His voice was very sweet. He used to stand behind Dasganu and accompanied him while he rendered *Kirtans*.

And, the fate took away such a talented and devote person away from everyone when he was very young. This was a cruel blow to Dasganu. He could sustain it because of his stoic nature. With the death of Damuanna, the responsibility of his young widow, son Anant and other family members fell upon Dasganu. He faced it ably due to his steadfast faith in Lord Pandurang.

Dasganu then concentrated his energies on the development and progress of Damuanna's son Anant. In the later years, Anantrao gave unflinching support to Dasganu in his work. He was himself very disciplined. He studied the science of *Ayurved* and became the principal of college of *Ayurvedic* medicines. He had to spend some of his time on his job and his family. He also rendered *Kirtans* at countless occasions. There was a great demand for his *Kirtans* particularly at the times of various festivals. He devoted rest of his time to spiritual studies. His progress in life was guided by his rich experiences and he faced the various challenges in life capably. Thus, he followed the tradition set by Dasganu.

In April 1991, he decided to relinquish his family life and go to set on the path to *Sanyasashram*. He gave up his name and assumed the name of 'Varadanand Bharati'. He gave up his mortal body on the auspicious day of *Bhadrapad Shuddha Ekadashi* in *Shake* 1924 (about year 2002).

Learning through festivals

While Damuanna was alive, Dasganu and his group had visited various places of pilgrimage such as Shri Dakor, Jagannathpuri, Rameshwar, Madurai, Minakshi etc. While visiting Rameshwar, he was fortunate to accompany Shri Chaunde Maharaj. However, during the next 40-50 years, Dasganu rarely visited any places of pilgrimage other than Pandharpur.

In 1921, during the holy period of *Sinhastha* (which comes once in 13 years), Damuanna undertook *Parikrama* (round) of the holy river Godavari in the company of *Sants*, *Yogis* and other people with similar bent of mind. In 1937, 1938 and 1939 - three years in succession, he did *Gayatri Purashcharan*.

Damuanna was instrumental in constructing the temples. He spent thousands of rupees on celebration of various religious and spiritual auspicious days, observances and festivals such as *Vrat-Vaikalya*, *Anushthans*, *Jayantis* (birthdays), *Punyatithis* (death anniversaries). He did it with great enthusiasm and invite *Sants* and *Yogis* on such days.

On the holy day of 'Tukaram Beej', death anniversaries of *Sant Dnyaneshwar*, *Sant Savta Mali*, *Sant Namdeo Shimpi* he used to perform *Pooja* of persons from respective sects and communities such as *Maratha Warkari*, *Yajurvedi Brahmin*, *Mali* and *Shimpi*. He spent a lot of money on these occasions, but did not take a single *Paisa* for himself.

Dasganu was very fortunate to meet and enjoy the company of many great personalities. In December 1947, he went to Coimbatore on the invitation of Shri Narasinha Swami. The people from there felicitated him as 'a person who had the great fortune to actually see and meet Shri Sai Baba'. However, he always disliked any kind of felicitations and had politely declined countless invitations for the same.

(Contd.)

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

