

Sadhutwacha Ambari, Ha Sai Bhaskarapayi (In the sky of Sainthood, Sai is like the Sun)

Shri Annasaheb Dabholkar alias Hemadpant has written the biography of Shri Sai Baba in form of poetic stanzas. This biography is a literary manifestation of Baba from the point of view of the devotees. A contemporary Sai devotee of Dabholkar is Shri. Ganesh Dattatreya Sahasrabuddhe alias Das Ganu... Actually the job of writing the biography could have been done by Das Ganu who had a great experience of writing in the form of poetic stanzas but Sai Baba wanted to get a unique job done from him. That job was writing the biography of Saint....and Das Ganu also did it with a lot of efforts and faith.... Bhaktileelamrut, Santakathamrut and Bhaktisaramrut, these three books are the autobiographical narratives of known-unknown saints from the society. He has also described the life and teachings of Sai Baba in these books. In this biography, the teachings given by Sai Baba from time to time have also been mentioned. This is an attempt to convey these teachings of Baba to you through this article.

With the divine directions and blessings of Shri Sainath Shri Das Ganu's task of writing the life sketches of saints was accomplished in an excellent manner. Shri Sai Nath's divine order of "Call all the saints to have meals" was followed. On seeing all the saints sitting gloriously in a row for meals (pangat) Shri Sainath must have experienced immense satisfaction. In this way, it was as if Shri Sainath was the host of this pangat. That Shri Das Ganu should write life sketches of saints, they should be a guiding force to the society...this was the inner fervor of Shri Sainath and hence in these life sketches of saints Shri Das Ganu has not just mentioned incidents and dates but has also touched many topics in connection with the biographies. An excellent introduction to and experience of many various topics like the vices of the discord among castes, the selfishness of the priests dwelling at holy places, hostility towards duties, laziness etc., the practical secrets of various customs and traditions, hypocrisy, atheism, political situation, pride of ancient cultural values, patriotism, love for independence is obtained from these books and hence these books should be regularly read and contemplated by all.

From among these books itself in Chapters 31, 32 and 33 of the book Shri Bhaktileelamrut and in Chapters 52, 53 of Shri Bhaktisaramrut Shri Das Ganu has described the Charitra (sacred life and teachings) of Shri Sainath in brief. In brief only because Shri Das Ganu must have thought that when there is 'Shri Sai Satcharita', a very extensive, detailed, very interesting Charitra of Shri Sai Nath written by Hemadpant, why should he unnecessarily again write this Charitra as 'His'. Even though the Charitra of Shri Sai Nath in this book is in brief its ability to convey the thoughts of Shri Sai Nath, His fervor to the devotees is great. Since the events in the life Charitra of Shri Sai Nath have been heard by all here we shall only consider the topics of the character of Shri Sai Nath and the teachings of Shri Sai Nath as described by Shri Das Ganu.

The character of Shri Sai Nath described by Das Ganu in Shri Bhaktisaramrut is very novel. Das Ganu says – After coming to Shirdi Baba used to reside under the Neem tree. This Neem tree became the house of Baba for a few days after that. The walls of this house of our Sai were of eight directions and the roof was of branches! It was felt that the ascetic whom King Bhartruhari had described has descended again for the deliverance of the world. One who sees him outwardly may think He is a lonely Fakir (mendicant) but Sai Nath was fondly attached to His family and He used to reside there with his huge family. The description made by Das Ganu of Shri Sai's family is very remarkable. Das Ganu says courage as father, forgiveness as mother, peace as wife, mercy as sister, and good thoughts as brother, such is the family of Shri Sai which is happily dwelling there with Him.

This description made by Shri Das Ganu is not only interesting but also very enlightening. Shri Das Ganu says – I really don't understand how I should describe such a Mahatma (Great Soul). What similes should I give Him, I do not understand. If I call Him common from outward deeds then Shri Sai's house is blessed with pure knowledge. If I call Him a beggar then Lakshmi (the Goddess of Wealth) is standing at His door. If I call Him rich then he fills his stomach on alms. In short the character of Shri Sai is such that you are made to say 'Neti Neti' (there is no end, there is no end) Due to the influence of Shri Sai all the vices have run far away and hence whoever is close to Shri Sai it is impossible that they will get affected by them! But not just by body but there has to be proximity by soul and whoever comes to Shirdi with such sentiments all of his harm will be averted, this has been assured.

We need to always remember that the way Shri Sai is all powerful He is also omniscient. If there is a firm faith that He is looking at us every second then how will anyone ever engage in bad conduct? Considering the fact that we should realize all of this the form and character of Shri Sai as described by Shri Das Ganu is such that the devotees shall always remember and meditate upon.

In Chapter numbers 31, 32 and 33 of the book Shri Bhaktileelamrut Shri Das Ganu has described the sacred life and teachings of Shri Sai Nath.

From this we can notice that how mean it is of people to divide saints into castes and creed, to respect or disregard them on the basis of it, to speak in a foul, insulting language about them for their own selfish caste hatred and to utter dirty words about their character. We should never forget one thing that these life sketches and teachings of saints, literature of saints is our grandeur. They are our victuals, victuals for life. It is our greatest destiny and is there any option other than calling these

people who abuse our wealth, our destiny as ill-fated or miserable? Therefore devotees must be careful about such people who indulge in making such arrogant, improper and clearly false statements for cheap publicity. The reason behind saying this is that the debate on whether Shri Sai Nath was a Hindu or Muslim is so meaningless and irrelevant! Just because of any caste-religion or the belief or disbelief of any unimportant person is there going to be even a slightest difference in the powers, might, and reverence of Shri Sai Nath in any way? We should always remember that 'Budti hey jan. dekhvena dola' ('When people drown, the eyes cannot see') is the custom of the saints and 'We are the residents of Vaikunth' is the caste of saints.

Anyways, in these Chapters Shri Das Ganu has described many remarkable events of Shri Sai's life. But the advices given by Baba from time to time have been described here by Shri Das Ganu. I feel it is more important to know them. All the villagers saw the miracle of how the earthen lamps of water were lit and took refuge at the feet of Shri Sai. If you listen to the advice that Baba gave at that time you will know what Shri Sai expects in our demeanor.

Shri Sai says "It is beneficial only if you behave like mentioned above. Always remember these words of mine. Conduct yourself according to it. You also shall meet my Narayan. Have faith in me." As if Shri Sai is giving here the criteria of what should be the personality of a person who is called a Sai devotee. Faith on Sai itself means faith on the affirmations of Sai and really the fact that a person whose conduct has become like above by virtue of firm faith has no fear at all is true. But 'we are like this only, shall remain the same, but You should keep giving', can that ever happen?

All your wishes shall be fulfilled but you will have to prostrate at Sai's feet and it is of no use if this prostrating is restricted only to the body. Offering our entire disposition and getting deeply immersed with servitude means prostrating.

Hence following the teachings of Shri Sai with the sentiments of a follower is taking true refuge in Sai and hence this advice is like nectar for us.

One day when Shri Nanasaheb Chandorkar, Shri Nimonkar came for Shri Sai darshan Chandorkar said to Baba "Baba it is said that the scriptures, the world all are futile. Whenever we desire happiness mountains of sorrows stand before us. We don't find even an iota of happiness. I am fed up of this world. Baba! Please liberate me from it. The advice given by Baba on this has been expressed in words by Shri Das Ganu and it is like this – Nana whatever you are saying is true, but you are getting confused. Look, till the time there is body how can you get liberated from the world? The mutual relationship of desire-anger etc is also the world. The vision of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, the tasting of the tongue, all the mental operations, duty of the body all of this is the world, has anyone been able to escape it? The world is not restricted to one's wife, children and relatives and friends. It is true that you are fed up of it but you yourself have created it right? Now what's the point in getting fed up of it? Look, all this is the destiny of the accumulated merits or demerits of past life. It has to be endured and completed.

The situation of a person is based on the accumulated merits or demerits of his past life. Then what is the point in getting fed up unnecessarily? We blame others or destiny for our miseries and failures but it is not right. You can never find happiness till the time you clear the misunderstanding that some other person is responsible for your happiness-sorrows.

The first mantra (secret counsel) of happiness is 'I understand that I myself am responsible for my sorrows'. Shri Sai Nath is teaching us the same thing here. 'There are flowers in one basket and thorns in another, Oh there must be some reason' we should remember this.

On this Shri Nanasaheb Chandorkar says – "Baba I am tired of this cycle of happiness and sorrows. Hence I feel like leaving this world." On this Baba says "Look Nana, happiness sorrow is a definitely curtain of illusion. To consider worldly happiness as truth is actually a mistake. See, whether it is a delicacy or bran the use of both is to calm the gastric fire. Whether it is a silk garment or a valkal (garment made of inner bark of a tree) the use of both is to protect modesty. Then isn't it silly to believe that there is happiness in one and sorrow in another?"

Here as if Shri Sai Nath is giving us the Moola Mantra (important fundamental counsel) of happiness. That there is nothing like happiness at all. There is only satisfaction and it entirely depends on our belief. Any subject or object is not originally by itself pertaining to happiness-sorrows but the emotions of happiness and sorrow are generated respectively from the favorable and adverse reaction of our mind upon its contact. This teaching of Shri Sai is very beneficial for people like us who are today running behind the mirage of confused ideas of happiness. That is – 'Happiness does not depend upon paristithi (circumstances) but upon manastithi (mental state)'. Here itself we commit a very big mistake. We think that once the circumstances change, prosperous times come and there is abundance of enjoyment and material objects of comfort and pleasure we shall become happy but it doesn't happen like this. If it was so then today the citizens of western countries that are very prosperous in terms of material objects of comfort and pleasure would be lying in the ocean of happiness. That is why the teaching of Shri Sai that we should keep the best condition of mind, inculcation of mind and bent of mind is so fundamental and also true. "We should remain as we have been kept by God, there should be satisfaction in mind" this has been said not to kill our ambitions but it has been said to make our state of mind strong. This saying is only so that we do not waste our time and energy in false restlessness, unreasonable struggles and unnecessary lamentation.

How should we conduct ourselves to overcome the happiness and sorrows that we experience in life? Shri Sai Nath gives us this extremely valuable advice ahead – enemies like desire-anger etc should not be annihilated but they should be enslaved because the virtues of lust etc are also essential in some instances. Lust is necessary for continuity of progeny, anger is necessary

for retaliating against injustice and pride is necessary for maintaining individuality. But they should be under our control.

It should happen like this. Do not have any ego of wealth. On the contrary how the tree which is filled with fruits bows down, be humble just like it but not before the wicked. One must be strict towards them. Respect the saints and sages. Do not trouble anyone unnecessarily. Make some donations to the deserving people who are worthy recipients after assessing your income. Wealth is important in life but maintain its quantity and sanctity. "Just like there is bile in the body, similar is the place of wealth in life" The quantity should be only this much. When the bile increases in the body we lose health, happiness and peace. It is the same for wealth in life. ' Joduniya dhan. Uttam vewhare'. Keep your ways of earning income legal and ethical. 'Arthataha Shuchi. Kaamtaha Shuchi. Sa Eva Suchi' . Only he, whose ways of earning money and spending money are pure, is pure.

Just like there is shower of the monsoon clouds on the earth heated due to summer, this teaching of Shri Sai Nath is a life sustainer to the person heated up in this world. All of this description has been made by Shri Das Ganu in his books on life sketches and teachings of saints. By this we can easily understand the importance of these books and can also know why Shri Sai Nath persistently got the job of writing life stories of saints from Shri Das Ganu.

We shall be experiencing the life of Shri Das Ganu which bloomed in the company of Shri Sai Nath even hereafter in this series of articles.

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Devotion of Sai in foreign countries

Malaysia

The teachings of Sai Baba are very simple...it moulds a man and awakens the humanity in mankind. The teachings of Sai give arms to the rites and observance but gives preference to actions. It would be surprising only if such a teaching does not cross the borders of the country....That is why one day the entire world will be filled with the vigilant Gondhal (a tumultuous festivity in propitiation of God) of the devotion of Sai. In this article an analysis has been made as to how the little sapling of devotion of Sai was planted in the country, Malaysia and how in a very short period of time its creeper kept climbing up.

Shri S.P. Kannan of Malaysia established the Shirdi Sai Baba Society of Malaysia in the year 1999. This religious institution has been functioning to propagate and spread the teachings and philosophy of Sai Baba in the whole of Malaysia and the continent of south-east Asia.

The chief objectives of this institution are as follows.

- To provide information to people about the teachings and message of Sai Baba.
- To provide educational assistance to poor and promising students, likewise providing medical assistance to the poor and needy.
- To provide food and clothes to the poor and needy.
- To make the new generation especially the youth realize their duties. Likewise to give them guidance for the purpose of moulding good citizens out of them. For this purpose, providing information through experts.
- To execute religious, spiritual, educational activities in entire Malaysia and also in the world wherever possible or to give support to such activities.
- To give necessary assistance for the purpose of building temples of Sai Baba in Malaysia and likewise in the entire world.

A total of 11 branches of the religious institution Shirdi Sai Baba Society of Malaysia are functioning in Malaysia and till now around 22,000 Sai devotees have become the members of this organization. The Sai Sadhana (penance) camps organized by this organization at various places in Malaysia are based on cultural, educational and spiritual values. Many music composers and artists who dance on bhajans (devotional songs) of Sai come to the various Sai centers and display their art and offer their service at the feet of Sai with devotion.

Many medical professionals give guidance to people through various camps based on disposition and health. Because of it many Sai devotees and also other people take advantage of this opportunity and keep taking the necessary care in respect of their health by being aware. Likewise, many activities like running classes of classical dance, teaching to play table, teaching bhajans, running classes of studies in various fields, etc also are conducted by this organization in the whole of Malaysia. Also, in a certain period of time a parayan (thorough reading and narration of any scripture) of the holy book Sai Charitra is also done. The response of the devotees to this parayan function is commendable.

Many devotees voluntarily distribute food in charity on the occasion of various festivals. Similarly, some Sai devotees arrange a charity activity of food distribution on any specific day as per their will on the occasion of their birthday or the birthdays of their relatives, remembrance or any other reason. These activities are carried out at all the centers of Malaysia. Many programmes like wedding functions, birthdays, naming ceremony, Sai Party etc are organized at all the Sai centers in Malaysia by charging a nominal fee. Many such programmes and festivals are organized with great devoutness at Sai centers as follows.

- Pongal festival (January)
- Thaipusam (January)
- Ramnavami festival (March/ April)
- Anniversary function (May)
- Guru Poornima festival (July)
- Sai Chariot procession (September)
- Navratri festival (September)
- Diwali festival (October/ November)
- Christmas festival
- New Year function.

The chief objective of this institution is to build a huge temple of Sai Baba in Malaysia. The cost of this project is going to be RM 5.4 million and it is expected that this project will be completed in the coming two years through the medium of the organization. All the legal formalities in respect of the construction of this project have been completed and the government of Malaysia has shown a green signal to this project.

This temple is going to be the first temple of Sai Baba in South-east quarter of Asia.

Most of the activities carried out by this organization are executed with the intention of service for the purpose of assisting and developing the society. The following activities are carried out by this organization.

- To provide space for meditation.
- To run classes for Yoga lessons.
- To organize cultural programmes
- To organize lectures of experts on topics like education, health, etc.
- To run laughter clubs.
- To organize bhajans.
- To organize debate competitions in order to increase knowledge.
- To distribute food in charity on every single day.
- To conduct daily prayers and aartis of Sai Baba.
- To put in efforts for the marriage of single Sai devotees.
- To organize picnics to various places of pilgrimage in Malaysia and to Shirdi.
- To publish the fortnightly 'The Malaysia Shirdi Sai Times'.

Shirdi Sai Baba Centers in Malaysia:

- 1) Klang Shirdi Sai Center
21, Jalan Dato Hamzah, Klang
- 2) Klang Shirdi Sai Centre
Plot, 2574, Jalan Seruling 59, Tmn Klang Jaya,
41200 Klang, Selangor
- 3) Sri Muda Shirdi Sai Center

- No. 46, 48, Jalan Mesra 25/66, Taman
Sri Muda, Sek 25,
40400 Shah Alam, Selangor
- 4) Ampang Shirdi Sai Center
27, Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur
 - 5) Brickfields Shirdi Sai Center
278 A, Jalan, Tun Sambanthan, Brickfields
 - 6) Seremban Shirdi Sai Center
1424 and 1425 Beketi, Rasah Business Center, Jalan Rasah Saremban, Negari Sembilan
 - 7) Butterworth Shirdi Sai Center
No. 4382, Jalan bagan Luar 12000 Butterworth, Peneng
 - 8) Ipoh Shirdi Sai Center
22 and 24, Jalan Sultan Iskander, Ipoh
 - 9) Peneng Shirdi Sai Center
40, 42 and 44, Queen Street Georgetown, Peneng
 - 10) S G Petani Shirdi Sai Center
43, Jalan Sekarat, Tmn Campian
S.G. Petani, Kedah
 - 11) Johor Baru Shirdi Sai Center
17, Jalan Trus, 80000 Johor Baru

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What is meant by Brahma?

Brahma means Paramatma (The Supreme Soul)! Paramatma means the one who is responsible for creation of this world. One who is a component of this creation. This Paramatma is all-pervading in this world. Who dwells in the hearts of all and pulls the strings of this world. Due to the fear of this Paramatma the sun and the moon regularly rise and set and due to His fear the seasons change in a cycle and Gods like Indra etc and the Lokpal (king) consistently look after the subjects.

Reference :Satcharitra of Shri Sai
(Supplementary explanation of Chapters 16,17)

Apne Mashid kaa Zaadu Ganu hain !

One day in a meeting one of the persons from the audience asked Das Ganu Maharaj, Maharaj it is said that one should not indulge in slander. Then what you do in kirtans (religious narrations) is that not slander?

On that Maharaj laughed and said, ' It may be probably. But I am helpless. I happen to be a broom. Sweeping the temples, shrines, this is my job. It is true that it is not good to blow the dust unnecessarily. But the dust has to be swept right? Don't we clean the devhara (place where idols of God are installed) before commencing the worship of God? I speak, criticize with the same intention. Das Ganu has composed a song on Sai Baba. In that song ' Apne Mashid kaa Zaadu Ganu Hain!' has been mentioned. From it we can see the clarity of thoughts of Maharaj.

Reference: Charitra of Saint Poet Das Ganu Maharaj

What is meant by Ashtang Yoga Sadhana?

The Sadhana (penance) that consists of eight limbs of Yama (moral Codes), Niyam (observance), Asana (postures), Pranayam (breath Control), Pratyahar (sense Control), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (Oneness with object of meditation) is called Ashtang Yoga Sadhana.

Reference: SatyaCharitra of Sai Chapter 10th

A Sai Baba that we should know Darshan of Sarkar (Beholding the Supreme Power)

When we take the name of Sai Baba what we remember is the earthen lamps of water that He lit, the Ganga-Yamuna (names of rivers) that He made to appear from His legs, the darshan that He gave to the devotees at times in the form of Ram or at times in the form of Vitthal, and His numerous miracles...or probably a saint who does miracle, that is the image formed of Sai Baba. Even the movies, serials and dramas that have been made on Sai Baba have made this same image larger. Because of this Sai Baba and miracles, this permanent relationship has become known to people. However, even beyond miracles there is a Sai Baba. How is that Sai Baba? It is impossible to count the miracles performed by Sai Baba. But in this prophet who did miracles there was also an incomparable teacher who taught with a stick in his hands. He was not hidden. Was openly doing His job. But we just never tried to know him. We only saw His miracles. Hence this effort to know Him.

The avatarkaarya (incarnation mission) of Sai Baba in Shirdi is one which teaches manifold things to everyone right from unattached ascetics to people attached to this world. Consider the daily routine of Sai Nath... This routine has been mentioned in the Sai Satcharita in the beginning in the Preface. For instance, while describing Baba washing His face Sai devotee Hari Sitaram Dixit says – "It was worth seeing Maharaj (ruler) wash His face. He used to pour water at His will on his hands, legs, face, ears, and used to clean all these organs well but He used to do it very delicately." Washing our face is considered to be a petty thing by us. For us it is something which needs to be hurried and finished but it has got connection with our health. We should do it properly, without getting bored, using a lot of water, this is what we should learn from it. This was the matter of washing one's face but there are a lot many things that we need to learn from Sai Baba. Sai Baba was a saint of the highest rank but he was also a personality developer.

Once, Nanasaheb Chandorkar was sitting before Baba. Baba was talking to him. While talking, Baba said, "Nana, if anyone asks for money for social work from us we should help them with whatever we are capable of giving. However, if we are not able to provide such assistance or if we are not interested in helping then we should tell them in sweet words that we cannot help. But we should never tease the person asking for help or should never scold them."

"Yes Baba" Nanasaheb said.

"Fix my words in your mind" Baba said.

"Yes Baba" Nana said. "I shall fix this in my mind."

"But remember Nana this lesson is not as simple as it seems to be... It is very difficult to follow it."

"No Baba, I shall learn the lesson irrespective of how difficult it is and shall follow it."

"Ok...Ok"

Nanasaheb Chandorkar was an influential government officer who was employed at the post of Deputy Collector in the British regime. He was highly educated. But he was also a believer. He also had a deep knowledge of Bhagwad Gita. The story of how Nanasaheb came to Shirdi is also very interesting. At that time much of the manifestation of might of Baba was in the darkness of concealment. In the same period of time Baba sent a message to Nanasaheb through Appa Kulkarni – Come to Shirdi once!

Appa Kulkarni was a person who collected revenue related to land-surveying. For that purpose he always had to make trips to Kopargaon. Nanasaheb used to come to Kopargaon frequently. When Appa passed on this message to Nanasaheb, Nanasaheb said, "I have never seen this person named Sai Baba. Why would he call me?" This happened three to four times. Baba used to give message to Appa Kulkarni and Nana used to evade it. Finally Nanasaheb agreed to come to Shirdi and he even came... After he came Baba told him, "Is there only one Nana in this world? There are hundreds of Nanas in this world. Even then why did I call only you? Don't you think there must be a reason behind it?" This beginning of meeting made by Baba was very unusual and dramatic for Nana. This experience did not fit anywhere in the details of the picture that he had drawn in his mind as Sai Baba before coming for the meeting.

These words of Baba were just as shocking and awakening as much as they were unexpected. Nana, who used to avoid coming to Shirdi in the beginning, started coming frequently for Baba's darshan (a sight or a glimpse of the divine, a term used for beholding the revered) after that. He started sitting near Him. Baba had given this advice to Nana in one of such meetings.

Thereafter few days passed. Nanasaheb used to often come for Baba's darshan. He used to come by railway most of the times. While coming he used to get off at Manmad and come to Kopargaon from Manmad and then from Kopargaon he used to come to Shirdi. Once, he had left for Shirdi from Kopargaon in a similar manner. Nanasaheb had a practice of going to Datta temple at the banks of Godavari after landing at Kopargaon and taking darshan. He used to sit there for some time. He used to speak a few words with the Mahanta (Chief of the temple, religious superior) and then leave for Shirdi. At that time also Nanasaheb went to the Datta temple. He took darshan and came and sat on an elevated platform outside. He could see the edge of the river before him. On the opposite side the river was flowing. The cool breeze coming from over the river made one feel nice and pleasant. Just then the Mahanta of the temple came.

"Hello, when did you come?" Mahanta

"Just came. Took darshan and sat. How's it going here...?"

"Going good...by the grace of Datta Maharaj!"

"Your surrounding is very beautiful"

"It is definitely beautiful...but there is one thing which I really wish should happen.."

"What is it?"

"A Ghat (jetty) should be made before this temple"

"The idea sounds great"

"It is great but how can this work be accomplished?"

"Why?"

"Be it a ghat or a dharmashala (caravanserai)...all these are the privilege of the rich"

"Yes that is true...Ahilyadevi has built ghats at many places. It is a very virtuous deed!"

"Those days have gone...the king has gone and so has his kingdom...Anyways! But we don't need a very big ghat. We have to build it before the temple...so that it will add to the elegance of the temple. The traveler will sit to rest for some time."

"How much money will have to be spent for that? Nanasaheb asked.

"If you consider the materials then at least three hundred cash is needed..."

"Ok then we shall do like this...I only will give you this amount"

"Then I should say Datta Maharaj has obliged..." Mahanta looked at the temple from where he was sitting and folded his hands.

"But at present I do not have that much amount... When I come here next time I shall get it."

"Yes Yes...It is not urgent. Your promise is as good as getting the materials."

Then Nanasaheb spoke about a few things here and there and got up. He greeted Mahanta and left for Shirdi.

Few months must have elapsed after this meeting. Again he got a chance to visit Shirdi and Nanasaheb left. At that time he also had his sister-in-law's husband Biniwale for company. Both of them came to Kopargaon. They saw the dome of the Dattatreya temple in the front and Nanasaheb remembered the conversation he had with Mahanta in his previous visit. He also remembered the three hundred rupees. Nanasaheb became restless as he had forgotten to bring the three hundred rupees that he had promised. He didn't know what to do. He got ashamed of facing Mahanta. Now what do I say to Mahanta...He started thinking. On noticing the discomfort on Nanasaheb's face Biniwale said, "Nana, you seem to have become restless suddenly..." Nana gave him an account of what happened at the previous visit...he said, "I told him that I will give money...But now I don't have anything to give him."

"Oh God...now if we tell him that we forgot then it will indicate our immaturity and also moreover it will appear as lying." Biniwale said.

"I don't understand what to do. We will do one thing...We will avoid the way near the temple and go by another path, then we won't meet Mahanta and there will be no topic of money." Nanasaheb said.

"Is there another way?"

"There is. But it is a little secluded path."

"Let it be, we will go..."

Leaving the temple behind in one side, avoiding the regular frequented road, both of them left on another bypath.

The way by which they were going could not be termed a road, a path. The wild thorny plants that had grown everywhere in the woods, boorish trees, the rites performed at various points by people; the thorns which were piercing straight into the legs without giving any heed to the footwear, since it was a river edge the marshes that trapped legs unexpectedly...such was that path! Both of them were making way in the thorns and walking. Just as dacoits stand in the way to assault travelers to rob them, just like that thorny trees were standing in the way and releasing the people coming there only after scratching them. At times in the form of a thorny forest a question would arise as to how do we go ahead? Pushing the branches of the trees in the side with their hands, both of them were moving ahead. Thorns had pierced into the body, legs of both of them. At a few places the thorns had ruthlessly pricked them and removed blood. When they would catch hold of any branch for support then suddenly thorns would pierce and enter their hands.

Nana in the front and Biniwale behind, a thorny journey continued. Just then Biniwale's shouting and screaming was heard. When Nana looked behind to find out what happened suddenly he saw that Biniwale had banged on a branch, don't know how...Nana trampled the path and again went behind. He saw that the stump of a tree which was cut had gone into such a part of Biniwale's body that it caused inconvenience to him...Pain created havoc in his body. He couldn't utter a word. Biniwale literally remembered the Universe. A diplomatic officer like Nana who used to find the right solutions for many tough problems also got baffled by this incident which arose in the dense path. Groaning Biniwale started getting up. Nana gave him support. Biniwale somehow got up. Biniwale's face had got distressed by pain. Tears were flowing from his eyes. In the confusion he somehow hurriedly tucked in the border of his dhoti which had come out. Nana held his hand. Biniwale somehow got up. His entire body was shivering. Nana removed the thorns that were hanging on his body. He dusted the dust on his coat and the blades of grass. "Oh God, what kind of a path is this!...", Biniwale said. What could Nanasaheb reply here. He was embarrassed. He only had found this path. "Have you got hurt a lot?" Nana asked. Biniwale said, "How much more do we have to walk?"

"We are almost there; once we reach the road we will get a tonga (horse-carriage)." Nana said.

Both of them started walking slowly. Just casually Nana happened to see behind. He noticed an orange festoon on the Datta temple...he had an illusion that it was looking at him and laughing.

Making way out of that difficult thorny forest, in a bruised and bleeding condition, Nanasaheb and Biniwale somehow reached the road. Thereafter they came to Shirdi by tonga. Both of them adjusted the clothes on their body and went to Dwarkamai without going to their place of stay so that they could give a passing visit first. Baba was sitting next to the railing. He was looking at the dhuni (pit containing smoke-fire) unintermittingly. Taty Patil was leaving to go somewhere. As soon as he saw Nanasaheb he politely greeted him.

"Hello Sir"

"Hello...How is the harvest?"

"Fine...how about yours..."

"By the grace of Baba..."

"Ok..ok...I'll just go to the Taluka and come back."

"Come Come..." Taty left.

Nanasaheb and Biniwale climbed the stairs of the Masjid and went upstairs. Nana prostrated before Baba. Biniwale's body was literally in fatigue but still he too bent down immediately after him. Both of them sat. Some time passed...pin-drop silence...Baba was not saying anything. His eyes were fixed unintermittingly on the dhuni. Nanasaheb and Biniwale were sitting with their necks facing downwards. Nothing like this had happened before. Whenever he went for darshan Baba would ask "How are you, how are the people-children at home, who all have come?" but today nothing of this sort happened. Nana could not understand what was going on. Masjid seemed like the kid who sits with complete silence under the strict discipline of a school-master. In between sparks were shooting out from the dhuni making a noise. Rest all was quiet. The mischievous kids who normally play in the premises of the Masjid and seize hold of the bell in the Masjid were not seen today. Even where did Bhagat Mhalsapati, who is always near Baba like his shadow, go; God knows! Nana was looking at Baba at intervals. When he saw that Baba did not look at him he used to look at Biniwale. All this was new for Biniwale. He had no idea of this situation. Nana felt like a thief. Nana's mind got vexed by the thought that Baba who used to affectionately make enquiries and speak every time was not speaking.

Nana felt weary. Finally Nana gathered courage and exclaimed "Baba".

Baba's eyes were still fixed on the dhuni. Nanasaheb looked at Biniwale. He was also sitting like a fool. The pains of the weird accident that took place in the thorny forest were still piercing in his body. Due to that his mind was not stable. Moreover he didn't know Baba also. The only person he knew was Nana...that is why Nanasaheb was more affected by Baba's silence than Biniwale. Nana again exclaimed "Baba". Baba spoke, "What happened?" There was anger in those words but tone of that anger was not of any unknown person, but was compassionate. Nanasaheb felt better. Baba's speechless anger had finally been expressed even though by a couple of words. Baba had spoken. "Baba, have I gone wrong anywhere?" Nana asked. "Baba if I have wronged then beat me, thrash me but please do not stop talking."

"What is wrong and what is right! You are good at copying in the kitta (practice books to learn good handwriting) that I told you. "

"kitta..." Nana got bewildered. He just couldn't understand, "Baba, I have not understood."

"What is the point? It is like pouring water into a pot that is turned upside down...Sit here and shaking your head say yes to everything I say and then after leaving this place again continue doing what you do."

Nana could not understand what Baba was saying. Now Biniwale also became alert and started listening to this altogether different conversation. "What did I tell you four months back? Did you forget?" Baba said. Nana just couldn't understand anything but he realized that he has done something terribly wrong. "Just because that priest near the edge of

the river will ask for three hundred rupees you avoided the darshan of Sarkar (of Shri Dattaguru)....and came by another secluded path? Which style is this of practising the lessons that I taught you? If you had told that priest that you have not brought the three hundred rupees with you then was he going to beat you? Nana did not say a word. The fact that Nana had come by a bypath to Shirdi just to avoid facing Mahanta as he had not brought the three hundred rupees had reached Baba. No, actually He came to know about it through intuition and Baba had not liked this behaviour of Nana.

"This time I could not arrange the money. I shall get it next time. Why didn't you tell this to the priest? If you would have told him that then was that priest going to eat you? What was the need to hide your face for that! Instead of explaining clearly what kind of an idea is this of avoiding Sarkar's darshan? What did you achieve by coming by another path? Thorns entered your feet and body, right? And this wise person with you...look at his condition...this is the punishment for avoiding Sarkar. What do I speak with such people? Now Nana started remembering everything clearly. "If anyone asks for money for social work from us we should help him with whatever we are capable of giving. However, if we are not able to provide such assistance then we should tell him so in sweet words. But we should never tease that person or should never scold him." He could now clearly remember that Baba had given his this advice. Nanasaheb had agreed to it but he had never thought that Baba shall test him in this manner to see whether His advice is being followed. "Baba, forgive me -I have committed a mistake. This will never happen again..." Nana said. Baba also forgave him. The story ends here.

This story shows us the Sai Baba whom we have never seen. The Sai Baba of our imagination is one who does miracles but in the Sai Baba of this story we can see a mother with strict discipline. If a son behaves wrongly then the mother does not speak to him. The son gets distressed on realizing that his mother is not speaking to him. Mother is just not talking inspite of trying so hard and hence the son starts crying and holds the hands of his mother and hugs her and says, "Mother, please talk to me...I will not behave like this again..." At the end of the day she is a mother...Her anger dissolves by the tears of her son and she speaks to her son. An exactly same picture, exactly same incident had taken place in Dwarkamai. Baba teaches us so many things in this one story that words are not sufficient to express them.

Baba says, "Why did you come by the bypath? If you had told that I have not got the money then was that priest going to eat you?" These words have the ability to develop even the minute facets of a man's personality...just notice such incidents happen many times in our life. We get scared of confronting few things without reason.

We don't gather the courage to speak clearly. Nanasaheb had promised that Mahanta of providing him assistance of three hundred rupees. He also had a will to help but he forgets to bring that amount. It's not that he does not bring it on purpose. He remembers it on reaching Kopargaon and a question arises that what reply would he give Mahanta when he meets him. If he says that he has not got the money then what will Mahanta say...It is not befitting for a rich person like me to make excuses. Unnecessarily it will create misunderstanding about me in Mahanta's mind. To sum it up just as a person who fails to repay money hides his face and vanishes even though he really wishes to repay the money just because he fears about what Mahanta may think, what Mahanta may say, Nanasaheb too goes away by another bypath in a similar way. Baba says if your intentions are pure...if you whole-heartedly have the wish to help then to forget to bring it does not make it a crime. Even though it is true that he should have brought it still what was the problem in telling "I could not bring, forgot, shall bring it next time" to the Mahanta! Why avoid people when we don't have any intention to cheat in our mind! What if the Mahanta had come to know that Nanasaheb has gone by a bypath! Then he would misunderstand that he did so because he didn't wish to give any assistance in building the ghat. As a consequence his image in the mind of Mahanta would have got tarnished even though his intentions were pure.

An imaginary fear of Mahanta had been formed in Nanasaheb's mind. He keeps it firm and comes to Shirdi by another secluded path. Baba does not approve of this bypath. This habit of hiding one's face is harmful and hence Baba makes a severe attack at the absolutely right time. Accept your mistakes. Confront the given situation. This is the great message that this story conveys. Even though there is a specific incident in this story even then this story throws a light on many things. We don't do many good things out of the embarrassment 'What will people say.' We create a misunderstanding about a certain individual unnecessarily and do not go close to him. We fail to meet people who are covered with the fabric of fame and reputation out of shyness and fear. Due to this many a times we miss out on good opportunities. We are therefore actually sleeping even when we are awake. We cause a loss to ourselves only due to meaningless diffidence like pure boredom, laziness, why unnecessarily...

This story gives a very precious advice even to those who give advice to others – Don't just give advice but also check whether it is being brought into action. It is not that our responsibility ends after advising. Some strict and serious teachers don't just stop at teaching but also take a review of how much of the teachings has been understood by the students. This is the same matter. Sai Baba is called the ParamSadguru (Supreme Spiritual Instructor) for this reason only...You will never know when He will take a test of the lessons that He has taught.

One more point has been brought forward in this story. Sarkar's darshan. Just like there are people who take darshan only because the temple is on their way there are some devotees who specially visit God. The 'Sarkar darshan' in this story makes us examine our dev darshan (visit to God) with respect to the category it fits into. Nana does not realize that in the chaos to avoid Mahanta he is also avoiding the darshan of Datta. Baba makes him realize that. This fact represents the tendency that we have to prostrate before God only on seeing Him. Nanasaheb used to go to the temple only because it was on his way to Shirdi. He does not go specially to visit the temple. If he had done so then he would not have made an issue of reputation out of the promise that he gave and would have visited the temple. But he gets so embarrassed and confused on forgetting the amount that was to be given to Mahanta that he even forgets Datta darshan. Baba has got annoyed because of this behaviour of Nana. Hence He very earnestly says..."You avoided Sarkar darshan?" Baba calls Datta Guru Sarkar. This earnestness of Baba, the concern, shows how profound the place of Datta Guru is in His heart. The anger he had for the fact that Nanasaheb had avoided the darshan of Datta God was more than the appreciation he had for the fact that he came to see Him.

The Mahatma (Supreme Soul) at whose place all the Gods reside and at whose feet Ganga-Yamuna (rivers) dwells, who even the fire, wind and rains fear, such a Mahatma should address Datta Prabhu as 'Sarkar'....What great modesty! We have not been able to know even an iota of Baba. The best of the best who tried to find his depth too surrendered saying 'Neti Neti' (there is no end, there is no end). When then would we understand His Sarkar!

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Personal experience

Agaadh Tava Karani! (Profound are your actions!)

Sickness, then be it small or serious....it creates various doubts in a man's mind. We start thinking that our entire life has gone into the control of this illness. Consequently a person starts thinking that he is lonely. The present article contains a story of such an illness. This story delightfully traces the journey right from the stage of detection of the illness which makes our mind go helter-skelter to the happy moments of recovery. In this story there is a portrayal of different kinds of emotions and thoughts like doubt, fear, insecurity, worries of the future etc. that go through the patient's mind. This is not just a story but a personal experience of the author. This story has a background of faith in Sai. It is true that the life of a man is short-lived....But how the firm faith in a God like Sai Baba creates unbroken moments of happiness in this transient life, this personal experience which tells us so....

This story of mine is of January of 1988. In 1987 my health had deteriorated a lot due to an illness of uterus. I had become extremely weak, feeble. Due to my timid nature I was even avoiding visiting my lady doctor. Finally one day due to weakness I felt giddy at home. I somehow helped myself back into consciousness. On the next day itself I went to my doctor – Dr. (Mrs.) Bhende at Mahim for a check-up. She did the check-up and immediately told me in a serious tone that, there were fibroids on my uterus so it was very important to remove the uterus immediately. If the fibroids keep increasing then it may reach a serious stage. Doctor also said that post uterus operation a fibroids test will have to be done. On listening about the detection which the doctor said so clearly to me, I started shivering with fear. Since I was so over-confident that there may be nothing wrong with me, on suddenly hearing about the decision of a major operation I was terrified. I somehow reached home. I conveyed the advice given by the doctor to my husband. He said, "Do not panic. Have patience." Later he told all these facts to his close friend Mr. Vallabh Parkar. Since his elder sister Dr. Indumati Vijaykar was an expert gynecologist it was decided that we would visit her for a second opinion. Dr. Vijaykar had a maternity hospital in Girgaon. I went to her for check-up. She also gave a similar advice that an operation was needed. I had become very weak at that time. The quantity of iron in my body had reduced a quite lot. Due to that I had to start a course of iron injections in December 1987 which ended in the first week of January 1988.

I was very paranoid about the operation. But it was inevitable. I used to constantly feel that the operation will be successful but will I come out of the influence of anesthesia and wake up? In the case of many patients it had so happened that they had not got up again due to the wrong dosage of the numbness medicine. Hence I wanted some such sign which would give me the confidence to go under the knife. But no such green signal was visible. I went to many Sai temples in the neighbourhood for my operation to be carried out successfully. But my mind just could not be at peace. My restlessness kept on increasing. On 22nd January 1988 it was decided that my operation would be done. As the day of operation kept coming closer my patience started giving up. Ultimately I decided to go to Shirdi and take the kaul (response of an idol to one's inquiry) of Sai Baba.

On 14th January 1988 all of us went to Shirdi. I prayed whole-heartedly to Sai Baba. I humbly requested Him. I took a navas (vow) and said that, "Oh Sai, Let my operation be carried out successfully, and let me be nice and healthy as before.

After that I shall come here again and organize a Satyanarayan puja. At home I shall worship Satyavinayak. But Oh Sai Baba please show me a sign that all will be well." After that all of us attended the aarti at Samadhi temple and returned to our hotel room. I was in a very disturbed state of mind. I was worried about my children. In such a dejected, depressed, despaired state of mind I was lying on my bed and thinking. I was speaking in my mind, "Oh Sai Baba, What will be my destiny? Will I be saved in this? Will both my children be orphaned? I am now feeling suffocated in this storm of thoughts. Sai Baba, give me the personal experience of some sign. By which my mind will be at peace. I have now realized completely, that what is left in this world if there is no peace of mind? Even if you spend lakhs of rupees peace of mind is not available in the market. We ourselves have to obtain it, but for that purpose oh Sadguru Sai Natha, I need your blessings. Need your mercy. I want to breathe freely Sai! My call has reached your ears for sure. You are merciful! So oh Almighty God, now show me some sign! Oh Sai Baba, save me! Save me!

In this way I was seeking the mercy of Sai Baba, was earnestly calling Him, my intestines were twisted, there were vibrations in my body, I kept crying and finally slept. But before that I had put some of Sai's udi (sacred ashes) in my mouth. I applied the remaining udi on my stomach and only then I slept. Early morning at dawn I saw that I am looking very refreshed, lively and very delighted. I am touching my stomach everywhere. I can't feel that callus at all. I exclaim, Oh! I can't feel anything here! The fibroids seem to have got destroyed! What a relief from this danger! And then I woke up and suddenly stood up. I realise that Sai Baba gave me an indication through this scene that everything is going to be successful. I again went to the Samadhi temple happily and with a satisfied mind put my head on His feet. Now I can assure and say that the one who gives in abundance is only Sainath, we only need to have the intelligence to recognize what He gives. So in this way we all took the blessings of Sai Baba and came to Mumbai with a carefree mind. I made a polite request to Dr. Vijaykar to conduct the operation on Thursday instead of Wednesday. And she also readily agreed. My operation was done successfully. Even the fibroids test was done. No danger was found in it. After the operation my health improved. After then the anxiousness was to fulfill the navas (Vow).

I told my husband that the vow needs to be fulfilled on time. So then now we will go to Shirdi and perform the Satyanarayan puja (worship) as promised by me. Again then with the excuse of fulfilling the vow we went to Shirdi after few months. In those times satyanarayan pujas were performed in groups in a joint manner on the first floor of the Samadhi temple. When we made enquiries at the office of the Sansthan, we got to know that, there was so much of rush to perform satyanarayan pujas on that day that it was impossible that we would get the turn to do it. My mind got disappointed. My husband said "Look, don't feel bad. We shall give the money required for performing the satyanarayan puja over here." I agreed. That was all that I could do. But my mind was saying that this was a shortcut. What did you vow, that we will come here and personally perform the satyanarayan puja. Once we pay the money it's over, it's a shortcut. I said, All that is okay but now what else can we do in the given situation? Finally the other couples started making preparations for the puja and I returned to our hotel room in a distressed state of mind. After finishing meals with the family we again went to the temple premises to roam. We again took darshan of the sacred places like Gurustan, Chavdi, Dwarkamai etc. We took a glance at the books in the bookstall there. It was one o'clock in the afternoon by then.

We were standing casually near the office of the Sansthan. Just then one person came and said, "You want to perform satyanarayan puja, right? One place is vacant. That is because one couple who had registered their names has not turned up." I kept looking at him with surprise. Then I said, "Yes, yes, we want to perform the puja." And in this way both of us sat for the puja happily, with a satisfied mind. Sainath got my vow fulfilled, but that too how by a revelation! By giving corroborative evidence, I am there! By giving happiness to His devotee! Behind every incident Sai has a purpose. There is some intention. We then experience from this that the doer is only Sai. How sweet is this incident, this experience, this personal experience! On unexpectedly hearing that we had got a place for puja my eyes were filled with tears of joy at that moment! That moment of revelation! How do I express its greatness, its experience in words! It is to be experienced by us on our own. There was just one thought in my mind at that time, "Sai Baba, you love me so much!" Each one has to experience this miraculous experience of God's love by himself. Readers, tell me one thing, when we went to the office of Shirdi for the purpose of making enquiries of performing puja we were told there is no booking available, all the seats have been occupied. I was very disappointed. I felt, what we can do! We should accept it as Sai's wish. At the very next moment I used to feel, but when this clairvoyant Sai Maharaj knows my emotions, my wish, then why should we not get the bliss of performing the puja personally. I felt very bad. I also thought, my religious merits only are falling short somewhere. After that we went to have breakfast and all. Because how do we eat and perform the satyanarayan puja? Hence we had come after having only a cup of tea. What happened after that? Some devotee approached us and said that one couple which was supposed to come for the puja has not arrived; you both come and perform the puja. Wow! How do I express how I felt on hearing that! This is like first saying that you have failed in the examination and then suddenly declaring that you have stood first in the merit list. 'Anandache Dohe Anand Tarang' (God is a pond of ultimate bliss with ripples of pure joy on the surface), these words are sufficient to express my state of mind. Look the number of things that Sai told me due to this incident. First of all I can't cope with a fast. I feel giddiness if my stomach is empty. Moreover Baba Himself never used to fast anytime; He used to never tell others also to fast. In Chapter 32 of Sai Satcharita written by Sai devotee Dabholkar we can see the reasoning behind Sai Baba's disapproval of fasting. In it Hemadpant says –

'A guide is always necessary to show the right way in small or great matters.

No quest can be successfully carried out on an empty stomach.

The flaws of the intellect are strange. - 56

Unless God wills it, no one meets us on the way.

Do not refuse offers of food or thrust away a platter of food. - 57

Believe it to be very auspicious, if someone gives food and urges you to eat.

It will help you to succeed in your undertaking'- 58

To have the energy to be able to do any work there has to be food in the stomach. Also, refusing a morsel forwarded by anyone with love amounts to hurting the feelings of that person and leaving for the work and this is not good anytime. We also experienced this. Who else would care for us other than Sai? That is why He gave the news of a place being vacant for Satyanarayan puja to us only after we had a stomach full of breakfast. Really, how the heart gets filled with emotions of love for Sai, tears of happiness fill the eyes, vibrations of an ineffable, remarkable enlightenment are felt in the entire body and yes, the mind attains faith! Sai Baba is with you only.

"Nitya me jivant jana, jana hechi satya. Nitya ghaya prachit anubhave!" (I am always alive, know this truth. Always experience it!) this is the assurance of Sai Baba to his devotees. We experienced it completely. Now while writing about this experience I feel that really, operation was just an excuse. I had to go through it only so that I could personally experience these sweet games of Sai.

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Shirdi News

94th Punyatithi Festival of Shri

In the spiritual province many devotees keep taking an account of the progress of their spiritual journey on the birth anniversary or death anniversary of their Sadguru (Spiritual Instructor). These two days are only for taking a stock of how honestly and consistently we have been able to perform the religious duties advised by our Sadguru or the clan deity of the family. In a way it is essential for each one of us to do it. Probably the birth-death anniversaries are mainly for the purpose of remembering Sadguru with gratitude and to strengthen the focus on the penance.

The Punyatithi (the day on which Baba consciously left His mortal body at the time of complete enlightenment) of universal Sai Baba was recently celebrated. Sai devotees must have definitely got engrossed and thought about how much of the script of happiness taught by Sai Baba to his devotees had been assimilated by them. This is a report of the celebrations that took place in Shirdi...

The 94th Punyatithi festival of Shri organized during the period 23.10.2012 to 26.10.2012 on behalf of Shri Sai Baba Sansthan Vishwastavyavastha (Shirdi) was celebrated in a joyful, lively and enthusiastic atmosphere.

On the first day of the festival i.e. on Tuesday 23rd October, there was kakad (morning) aarti at dawn 4.30 am. After the kakad aarti Shri's photo and pothi (holy book) were taken out in a grand procession. In this procession the member and Executive officer of the three-member committee of the Sansthan Shri. Kishore More held the pothi, Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane and the Temple Chief Shri. Ramdev Shelke carried the image and the priest of the Sansthan Narayan Bhise held the Veena (a kind of lute) and recorded their participation. After the procession reached Dwarkamai Temple from Samadhi Temple via Gurusthan the Akhand Parayan (continuous and thorough reading and narration of any scripture) was commenced. Executive officer Shri. Kishore More and Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane gave a ceremonial start to the Parayan by reading the First Chapter and Second Chapter respectively. At early morning 5.20 am the program of Shri's Mangalsnan (ceremonial auspicious ablution) was carried out in a devotional atmosphere. Thereafter, Executive officer Shri. Kishore More along with his wife performed the Padya (water for washing feet) puja in the Samadhi Temple. At that time Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane was present. The Abhishek (consecration by sprinkling water) puja was done at 7.30 am in the morning. The Madhyanha (mid-day) aarti was done at afternoon 12.30 pm. The names of the Bhiksha jholi (cloth bag for collecting alms) holders were announced from among the names of Sai devotees who had registered for Bhiksha jholi after randomly picking chits by lottery method at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. At 4.00 pm in the afternoon there was kirtan (religious narrations) by Kirtankar Manohar Koklegaonkar. At 6 o'clock in the evening the dhuparti (aarti done with incense) of Shri was performed. At 7.30 pm in the evening there was a Kathak dance performance and musical program by Shrimati Jayantimala, Mumbai and a program of Sai stories and Bhajans (devotional songs) by Shri. Sai Krutiji, Manish Sharma, Shirdi was conducted at 9 pm in the night at the musical performances stage on Sainagar ground. At 9.15 pm in the night Shri's palanquin was taken out in a grand procession from Samadhi temple to Dwarkamai and from there at Shirdi village. Different kinds of musical instruments, cymbals troupe, lejhim (a musical instrument with jingling cymbals) units, and bands joined the procession. After the palanquin entered the premises of the temple Shri Subhash Jakhadi, Shri Ulhas Walunjkar, Shri Kailas Kunjir etc., presented a performance of Bharud (a kind of folk song) before the palanquin. The Dwarkamai temple was kept open all night for the Shri Sai Satcharit Parayan.

On the main day of the festivity i.e. on Wednesday, 24th October at dawn 4.30 am a kakad aarti of Shri was performed. This was followed by Akhanda Parayan and then Shri's ceremonial auspicious bath was done. On the main day of the event a grand procession of Shri's photo and pothi was taken out. In this procession Chairman Shri Jayant Kulkarni held the pothi, Executive officer Shri. Kishore More and Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane carried Sai's image in their hands and the priest of the Sansthan Ulhas Walunjkar held the Veena and recorded their participation. Later, Chairman Shri Jayant Kulkarni and Mrs. Anuradha Kulkarni did the Padya Puja at the Samadhi Temple. At 9 am in the morning the program of Bhiksha Jholi began. Executive officer Shri. Kishore More, Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane, villagers and Sai devotees along with Chairman Shri Jayant Kulkarni participated in it. Villagers and Sai devotees contributed in abundance to the Bhiksha Jholi. From 10 o'clock in the morning to afternoon 12 o'clock there was a kirtan by Kirtankar Manohar Koklegaonkar to commemorate the Punyatithi on the stage next to the Samadhi Temple, which was very pleasant to hear.

From morning 10.45 to 12.15 Shri's propitiation rites were performed in a traditional manner on the first floor of the Samadhi temple. Chairman Shri Jayant Kulkarni and Mrs. Anuradha Kulkarni were present as hosts for the puja. At that time, clothes were donated to Brahmins and married women through Shri Jayant Kulkarni and Mrs. Anuradha Kulkarni. At 12.30 in the afternoon a mid-day aarti was performed. After that a program of Prasad meals was carried out at the venue of Shri Sai Satyavrat Hall on the occasion of propitiation rites. At 5 o'clock in the evening a procession started from Samadhi Temple to Khandoba Temple for the purpose of Seemolanghan (festival of dasara). At 6 o'clock in the evening there was a Dhupaarti. There was a Sai Qawwali (a form of Sufi devotional music) performance by Shri Manohar Ajmeri, Pune at 7.30 pm in the evening and at 9 o'clock in the night there was a Swaranjali Geet-Sangeet musical performance by Shri Maheshprasad Ramkrishna Limaye, Mumbai at the musical stage on Sainagar ground. At 9.15 in the night Shri's Rath (chariot) was brought out in the village in a musical procession. Local bhajan groups, cymbals troupes, Lejhim units and bands had participated in the Rath procession. After the Rath entered the premises of the temple Shri Subhash Jakhadi, Shri Ulhas Walunjkar, Shri Sonyabapu Jagtap etc., presented a performance of Bharud before the Rath. Artists adorned the stage next to the Samadhi Temple from night 11 pm onwards. This program continued till next day early morning 5 am. Since this was the main day of the event the Samadhi Temple was kept open the whole night for darshan. On the main day of the festival State Agriculture & Marketing minister Shri Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil and Mrs. Shalinitai Vikhe Patil took the darshan of Shri.

Since the Samadhi temple was kept open the whole night on the main day of the festival there was no kakad aarti on the third day of the event i.e. on Thursday, 25th October. At 5.05 am early morning Shri's mangalsnan was done. After that a small aarti 'Shirdi Majhe Pandharpur' was performed. At 12.30 pm in the afternoon there was mid-day aarti and the dhupaarti was at 6 o'clock in the evening. At 7.30 in the evening there was a performance of Sai devotional songs by Shri Madhukar Bhuvad and at 9 pm in the night there was a Kuchipudi dance performance by Shri K.V. Satyanarayan, Breedhvan, Gandhinagar, Elaru at the stage on Sainagar ground. At 8 pm in the night there was a melodious kirtan by Kirtankar Manohar Koklegaonkar on the occasion of Ekadashi on the stage near Samadhi Temple. Since it was a Thursday there was a palanquin procession of Sai at 9.15 pm in the night and later there was a Shejarti (a lullaby sung to the deity) of Shri at 10.30 pm. On this day, Dr. Sanjiv Kumar, a member of the three-member

committee of the Sansthan and District Collector, Ahmednagar, took the darshan of Shri's Samadhi.

On the concluding day of the festival Friday, 26th October at dawn 4.30 am there was a kakad aarti of Shri. After the kakad aarti at 5.05 am early morning the program of Shri's mangalsnan was done. After the mangalsnan padya puja was done by Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane and Mrs. Daivshala Mane. Also, at Gurusthan temple Executive officer Shri. Kishore More along with his wife did the Rudrabhishek puja. At 10 o'clock in the morning there was a kala kirtan by Kirtankar Manohar Koklegaonkar. After the Gopalkala kirtan a dahihandi program was organized at Samadhi temple at 12 o'clock in the afternoon as per the practice every year. The mid-day aarti took place at 12.30 in the afternoon. At 7.30 pm in the evening there was a Saibhajan Sandhya (evening of devotional songs of Sai) performance by well-known playback singer Shri Suresh Wadkar, Mumbai and at 9 pm in the night there was a pravachan (discourse) and bhajan program, 'Leela of Shri Sai' by Shri Shubhram Behl, Kanpur at the musical stage on Sainagar ground. Since there was a lot of crowd of Sai devotees during the final four days of festive period between 23.10.2012 to 26.10.2012 darshan/aarti passes, bhakta abhishek puja and Shri Sai Satyavrat Mahapuja were cancelled. This year too, a beautiful landscape 'Garudjhep' (Eagle leap) built by Dwarkamai Mandal of Mumbai at the main entrance of the pavilion and the electrical illumination done in the Sansthan premises were the main attractions of the festival like every year. The arrangements of accomodation and Prasad meals of the Dwarkamai mandal and also the invited artists were done by the Sansthan.

Additional planning had been done for the Shri Sai Baba Punyatithi. An additional voluntary meal facility was arranged at the car parking of Sai Baba Bhakt Niwas apart from that at Sai Prasadalya so that no inconvenience is cause to the devotees in having Prasad meals. In the festival, the Prasad meals consisted of Puri/rotis, cereal, rice, two types of vegetables, and Bundi as a sweet dish. Additional arrangements for tea, coffee and milk were made at the venues of first floor of the darshan queue at Bhakta Niwas building, Sai Udyan premises etc. apart from the regular canteen in the building Saiprasad No. 1 so that the devotees get access to tea, coffee and milk conveniently.

Along with this additional accomodation arrangements were made at places like Sai Udyan building, car parking adjacent to old Prasadalya, Sai Baba Bhakta Niwas sthan, Sai Prasad building, Sai Nagar ground etc. by erected a huge pavilion of size 56 thousand square feet so that the accommodation arrangements of the devotees coming for the festival are properly done. Likewise, pavilions were also erected in the temple and premises. Keeping in mind the possibility of rains plastic tarpaulins were spread on the erected pavilion. 24 hours drinking water, arrangement of lights and fans, security guards, helpers and employees of health department etc. facilities were provided over here. A 24 hours bus service was arranged from Bhakta Niwassthan to the temple premises and also bus service from 10 am in the morning onwards was arranged from Sai Prasad building to Prasadalya. First Aid centres were arranged at the places of darshan queue, temple premises and Sai Baba Niwas sthaan etc. to facilitate the devotees in the festive period. An ambulance was kept in the temple premises for emergency services. Tight arrangements were made by the Security department considering the crowd of Sai devotees. Various television channels and newspapers did the news reporting of all the four days of the festival.

To commemorate the festival during the period from 23rd to 25th October free Prasad meals were provided to the devotees in Sai Prasadalya out of the donations made by the Sai devotees, all Shri Motilal Bhanushali- Palghar, Natwarbhai Patel- Surat, Achyutrao Galbe-

Devgaon, Mayeti Rathod-Hyderabad, Shirdi Sai Charitable Trust- Karur, Karnam Narayana-Hyderabad, Milind Sukale-Kalyan, Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan Trust-Barabanki, Mathu Export House-Karur, Smt. Sita Hariharan, America, Shrinivas Shrirangkar and Mrs. Bharti Shrirangkar, Bangalore, Umeshbhai Patel-Surat and Uputuri Shrinu-Orangal.

In Sai Prasadalya on the first day 46 thousand 459, on the second day 55 thousand 504 and on the third day 54 thousand 289 devotees took the Prasad meals. On the last day of the festival i.e. on 26th October, all the villagers and Sai devotees were given Sahbhajan/ Gaavjevan (Having meals together/ meals for villagers) in the Prasadalya on behalf of the Sansthan. Sai devotees were also given around 2 lakhs laddoo packets in the form of Prasad.

In order to carry out the festival successfully Deputy Executive officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane, all the administration officials, all the special task officers, department heads and employees took special efforts under the guidance of the Chairman of the three-member committee of the Sansthan and Principal District Judge Shri Jayant Kulkarni, member and District Collector Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, member and Executive officer Shri Kishore More.

Aradhana Vidhi (Propitiation Rites)

In the case of worldly people a Shradha is done after their death while in the case of ascetics, hermits their Punyatithi is celebrated after they leave their mortal bodies to merge with Supreme consciousness and propitiation rites are performed on that day. On 15th October 1918 Baba left his mortal body for heavenly abode. It was Vijaydashmi on that day. That is the reason every year on the day of Vijaydashmi Baba's Punyatithi is celebrated by performing propitiation rites. In the year 1919 the first Punyatithi of Baba was celebrated. Since then propitiation rites are performed. This year also these rites were carried out with deep continuous sounds of mantras (incantation). What is the meaning of propitiation rites?...How are the propitiation rites of Baba done? These rites begin with the Abhishek of Baba's idol. After that the abhishek water i.e. holy water which has been poured on the idol is worshipped. Then Vishnu tarpan (a ritual in which holy water is offered) is done and 16 Chat (image of darbha grass at a Shradha ceremony) Brahmins are worshipped. The rites are then concluded with an aarti. In the aartis are included the aartis of the Gods Shri Ganpati, Shri Durga along with the aartis 'Aarti Sai Baba' and 'Shirdi Majhe Pandharpur' of Sai Baba. Later, Brahmins and married women are gifted clothes.

...what kind of person is He!

When a human being leaves humanity we say 'Oh, what kind of a man is He!' But we never say this in the case of animals. We don't look at a cow and say 'Oh, what kind of a cow is that!' or we don't look at a horse and say 'Oh, what kind of a horse is that!' This is because animals never forget their righteousness, their job but a human does. That's the reason then we are forced to say 'Oh, what kind of a man is He!' The life sketches and teachings of saints are to be studied so that we are not forced to say or hear this. They need to be heard. This is because the teachings of saints have the power to awaken the humanity in a human being. The life sketches of saints are the lighthouse of the roads that go the world of human beings.

From the kirtan dated 23rd October of Kirtankar Manohar Koklegaonkar.

Shower of grains in the Bhiksha Jholi

Baba used to ask for alms in five houses everyday when He was alive. To commemorate this Yatidharma (religious duty of a monk) of Baba trustees and Sai devotees take a cloth bag

and ask for alms on the day of Baba's Punyatithi.

This year too Shri's Bhiksha Jholi program received a huge response from Sai devotees and villagers. 69 bags (gunny bags) of wheat, 2 bags millet, 3.5 bags rice, 50 kg jowar were collected in the bhiksha jholi. Taking the opportunity of the Punyatithi festival and to commemorate the occasion of bhiksha jholi program Sai devotee Shri Ravindra Jain of Gaziabad gave 68 bags of wheat as donation. Similarly, a sum of 65 thousand 718 rupees was collected in the form of cash as donation at the feet of Sai in bhiksha jholi.

The shower of grains that took place in just a matter of few hours time is definitely a beam of Sai Nath's unimaginable power that flashed in a fraction of second.

Transfer of Sai Ashram to the Sansthan with Baba as a witness

'Sai Ashram' a Bhakta Niwas (residence of devotees) project being constructed by Shirdi Sai Trust of Chennai on the plot of land given by Shri Sai Baba Sansthan has been completed with the blessings of Shri Sai Baba. On the day of Baba's Punyatithi, at Samadhi temple, before the mid-day aarti, Shri K.V. Ramani, founder and Executive trustee of the Shirdi Sai Trust, Chennai handed over the documents of the projects to the Chairman of the Sansthan Shri Jayant Kulkarni and transferred this project to Sai Sansthan. At that time Executive officer Shri Kishore More, past Chairman of the Sansthan Shri Jayant Sasane and Member of Parliament Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure were present. Shirdi Sai Trust, Chennai, this institution had undertaken the construction of this project with the objective of providing accommodation facilities to Sai devotees coming to Shirdi for Baba's darshan at moderate rates. On 4th February, 2006 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Shri Sai Baba Sansthan Vishwastavyavastha (Shirdi) and Shirdi Sai Trust, Chennai for this project. As per this contract it was decided to complete this project for 10 thousand devotees with a cost of Rupees 25 crores rupees on a land of 6 lakhs square feet within a period of 18 months. Accordingly Sansthan provided plots of land at two places in July 2007. Shirdi Sai Trust, Chennai started the construction of this project in January 2008. It was planned to complete this project within a period of 18 months. However, since the steel, sand, bricks, skilled labour etc. required for the purpose of construction were not found in time and the increase in the construction area to 9.60 lakhs square feet from 6 lakhs square feet, etc. the completion of this project got delayed. Also, around Rupees 110 crores were spent by Shirdi Sai Trust, Chennai in order to complete the project which was to have a cost of Rupees 25 crores construction cost in the beginning. Construction materials of excellent quality have been used for the purpose of this project. No compromise of any kind was made with respect to the quality of the construction. Shri Sai Baba Sansthan has spent a sum of around Rupees 45 crores to provide facilities like roads, footpaths, electricity, street lights, water supply etc. for the purpose of development of premises of the project.

In Sai Ashram – 1 there are 1536 rooms with facility of attached toilets out of which 384 rooms are air conditioned. Here accommodation of almost 6 thousand devotees can be facilitated. Also, there are separate toilets and canteens for public purposes. An independent open air theatre with a seating capacity of 2 thousand devotees is available for kirtan, bhajan and other cultural programmes. Also, it is possible to provide for the accommodation of devotees who come walking with the palanquin over here. Similarly even in Sai Ashram -2 there are toilets,

192 dormitory halls and there can be an accommodation facility for 3,500 devotees at a time. There also public utilities and canteens have been provided. In order to enable the devotees to enjoy a beautiful pleasant environment at Sai Ashram-1 and Sai Ashram-2 attractive landscaping has been done and around 1,350 various trees and 50 thousand different small plants have been planted there Also at both the places arrangements have been made for parking of buses, cars and two-wheelers. For the conservation of natural resources like water Waste water purification and recycling system has been installed. To enable warm water supply for bathing at all the rooms a solar energy water heater has been installed. Sai Ashram shall be opened for the devotees after authorized inauguration. After the inaugural, devotees shall be able to make reservations for the rooms in these buildings from the Sansthan offices at Shirdi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Shirdi Sai Trust, Chennai has not reserved any authority or ownership rights in this project and has offered it at the feet of Shri Sai Baba. This project has been accomplished with the objective of service to Sai Baba.

Kalash (a water pitcher) Pujan at Sai Ashram Complex

On the auspicious occasion of Vijayadashmi and of Baba's Punyatithi a kalash puja was organized at the new Bhakta Niwas Complexes Sai Ashram-1 and Sai Ashram-2. On Wednesday 24th October, 2012 from morning 6.30 am to 7.30 am Kalash puja rites were performed by the Executive officer of the Sansthan Kishore More and the donor for this project Shri K.V. Ramani in the complex Sai Ashram-1. After that from morning 7.45 am to 8.45 am Kalash puja rites were performed by the Executive officer of the Sansthan Kishore More and Shri K.V. Ramani in Sai Ashram-2. The officers and employees of the Sansthan were present at this event. The religious duties at both the rites were performed by the priest of the Sansthan Shri Balasaheb Joshi, a learned Brahmin well-versed in Shastras and Vedas.

Who is Mr. Ramani...!

62 year old Shri K.V. Ramani has been a Sai devotee for more than 35 years. He has established the Shirdi Sai Trust in 1996 for propagating and spreading the work of Sai Baba. Various activities of social importance are executed by this Trust. Just as he is known as a 'Sai Devotee' he also has another unique identity of a successful entrepreneur in the Software business. In the year 1985 he started the companies Future Software and Telecom Software in Chennai while in 1990 he started a joint venture with Huges Software Systems. Ramani who is a past Chairman of NASSCOM is a Hon. Chairman of the I.T. committee of Shri Sai Baba Sansthan since October 2008.

Sai Ashram Special

1 The construction of Sai Ashram on a land of total 20 acres. 1 The division of the project in two parts Sai Ashram 1 and Sai Ashram 2 1 1536 rooms in Sai Ashram 1 and 192 dormitories in Sai Ashram 2 1 There will be facilities for 9,500 devotees at one time. 1 Canteens, an open air theatre with a seating capacity of 2 thousand devotees for kirtan, bhajan, pravachan (religious narrations, devotional songs, discourses) parking slots for two-wheeler and four-wheeler vehicles, attractive landscaping and various attractive trees included in the project. 1 Commencement of the construction in January 2008 while transfer of the project to the Sansthan on the day of Vijayadashmi in the year 2012. 1 Construction cost of the project around 155 crores.

Kojagiri Poornima

On Monday dt. 29.10.2012 Kojagiri Poornima (the full moon day of the month of Ashwin) was celebrated by the Shri Sai Baba Sansthan. There was chanting of mantras from 11 o'clock to 12 o'clock on the night of Kojagiri and at 12 o'clock in the night Sai Samadhi's puja was done with all the rituals and formalities. At that time Shri Lakshmi and Indra were worshipped. At 12 o'clock in the night the moon was worshipped by Executive Officer Shri Kishore More near Shri Gurusthan Temple. The Executive Officer saw the image of the moon in milk. Later on there was Shejarti in the Samadhi Temple after which milk was distributed to the villagers and Sai devotees. At that time Deputy Executive Officer Dr. Yashwantrao Mane and Sai devotees were present. On the night of Kojagiri there was an event of attendance of artists from 7 pm in the evening to 11 pm at night on the ground next to the Samadhi temple after which a drama 'Darling Darling' was presented by Dr. Annasaheb Gavankar, Saiseva Trust, Kurla-Mumbai.