

Sadguru Sai Baba's Boundless Glory

There is a saying in Marathi which says “It is futile to search for the origin of a river or a *Rishi*.” Because, it is impossible to find the starting point of a river as well as a *Sadguru*.

‘*Sadguru*’ is *Chaitanya Tatva* which is *Anant, Abadhith, Anirvachaneeya, Shuddha Satvatmak* and *Brahmaroop*. He is the *Dehadhari Avataar* (mortal form) of *Bhagavant* on this earth. However, he is not a mere human being like you and me. He is a *Sarvabhaum Shakti* which is *Adbhut, Avyakta* and *Adnyat*.

The efforts have been on to find out the *Mool* (origin) of Shri Sai Baba when He was *Dehadhari* and they are continuing even now.

The reason behind this, is the ‘peculiar nature’ of human beings. If they are have doubt or are curious about something, they try to go to the bottom of the matter. But unfortunately they do not succeed every time. In fact, in matters of Parmarth such efforts become all the more difficult.

However, a common man like you and me is not interested in going very deep in *Paramarthik* matters. If we hear about that a person has conducted ‘a research’ on some matter, we tend to blindly believe him to the core. The convenient escape route, generally, is “what is the harm in believing it?”. In reality, many of us – who fold hands before a divine being – are merely concerned about getting our wishes fulfilled. Otherwise, we move about unconcerned about the erstwhile life of that divinity.

Asa Ha Avatar Vilakshan (An amazing Incarnation)

What happened in the case of Shri Sai Baba was nothing different. From the day He first made His appearance in Shirdi, people of that time started asking – Who is He, Where from He has come, Is He a Hindu or a Muslim, Who and where are His parents, Who is His Guru ?

They went to the extent of asking questions about Baba’s birth to those devotees of Khandoba who went into a trance before the Deity. But, at that time also, Baba avoided the question by directing the people to the place pointed out by Khandoba and mysteriously saying that “This is the holy place of my *Guru*.”

Even ardent devotees - right from Bayjabai Kote Patil (whom Baba used to call ‘Mami’) and Mhalsapati to a learned researcher of that time Prof. Narke - pursued the issue. But, no one succeeded in their pursuit. Baba also did not unveil the secrets. He gave different answers to different people. Many times He just mumbled something in response to the questions posed to Him. Many times He behaved in a contradictory manner – because of which people got confused.

Ultimately, most of the people gave up their search and agreed that He was ‘*Ayonij*’ – without mortal birth. Those who differed from this view could not convince substantiate their stand. Kakasaheb Dixit – who is considered to be *Ayuttam* Shishya (finest disciple) of Shri Sai Baba – has also agreed in Shri Sai Satcharita that Baba was *Ayonij*. He writes -

“It cannot be positively confirmed whether Maharaj was of Brahmin or Muslim origin. Many devotees may find it difficult to believe that He was *Ayonij*. However, the writer believes so.”

While this is the belief of Kakasaheb Dixit, Hemadpant has also concurred with these thoughts.

In the 1951-52 issue of Shri Saileela, its then editor Dr. K. B. Gavhankar has published similar thoughts of many prominent and learned personalities. They include (1) Shri Balasaheb Rege, B.A., LL.B., Ex-judge, Indore High Court (2) Prof. G. G.

Narke, M.A., M.Sc., Professor – Engineering College, Pune (3) Advocate Dadasaheb Khaparde, Amravati (4) Shri Das Ganu Maharaj (5) Shri G. R. alias Annasaheb Dabholkar. They have concurred that “Shri Baba is *Parmatma* Himself.”

A disciple who was very close to Baba was Shri Madhavrao Deshpande (Shama). He and many other devotees referred Baba as ‘Dev’. The then editor of Shri Saileela – Dr. Gavhankar - states -

“We had attended last year’s Death Anniversary (September 1952). We were fortunate enough to meet Smt. Laxmibai. She was the privileged lady to whom Baba gave $5 + 4 = 9$ (indicating *Navavidha Bhakti*) rupee coins at the time of leaving His mortal body. We touched those nine coins. The lady had become quite advanced in age. However, her constitution was very strong. We experienced that her speech was clear and lucid. She narrated, how she was giving *Bhakari* and milk to Baba. Our friend from Thane Shri Vaidya asked her sarcastically, ‘While putting the *Doodh-Bhakar* in His mouth, Baba used to utter the name of which God?’ The lady promptly retorted, ‘He Himself was a God. Which God’s name a God will utter?’ Therefore, you should consider Baba as ‘*Poorna Brahma, Sanatan, Swayam Jyoti, Niranjana, Sakshat Bhagvan*’.

In the circulars issued by the Sai Sansthan Committee it avers at the end that ‘Shri Sai is the Sarvashreshtha Parmatma’.

The incident relating to Baba’s appearance in court may also be kept in mind. He was giving evidence in the magistrate’s court at Dhule. He was asked His caste or family background. Baba replied, ‘*Parvardigar (Allah or Ishwar)*!’”

Baba’s birth, Birthplace and Parents

No one has clear answers to questions like – Where and when Baba was born, Who were His parents, What was His *Vansh*? Many devotees posed a lot of questions to Baba about these matters. But, they never got any clear and straight answers. If the disciples pestered too much, Baba finished the matter by retorting in one word ‘*Nasatya*’. Therefore, till His mortal end, no one had an iota of information about His religion, caste etc.

Now, let us go little deeper with the help of Shri Sai Satcharita and other available information. Whether Baba’s *Avataar* was Hindu or Muslim is indeed a very baffling question. Anyone will realize that it should be left a question and one should not try to seek its answers. This itself will be a homage to that great soul.

Arrival in Shirdi

As is well-known, Baba first arrived in Shirdi along with a marriage party. That party belonged to Chandbhai Patel who was a Muslim and held the post of Patil of Dhupkheda.

Attire

Baba wore a Muslim cap and *Kafni* – a dress worn by Muslims of that time. He also carried *Satka* and *Chillum* – articles carried by Muslims of that time. Seeing His attire and the things carried by Him, Chandbhai thought that He an *Avalia* – a sage and invited Him to his house.

It is said that when Baba first arrived in Shirdi, He wore a saffron or white *Kafni*. Later on Kashiram Shimpi (tailor) stitched a green coloured *Kafni* and cap for Him. However, most probably Baba may not have worn these for long. For most of the time, Baba wore a white *Kafni* and tied a *dhoti* around His head. His this attire continued in later days also. However, the green *Kafni* and cap were found bundled in a cloth after Baba left His mortal body. (Reference : Shri Saileela, Year 1, Issue 1, and ‘Baba – was He a Hindu or Muslim’ an article by Shri Balasaheb Deo)

“AAO SAI”

In Shirdi, there lived a Muslim named Aminbhai. In his farm there was a *Khale* - an open ground used for threshing the crop. It was in this *Khale* that Baba put His camp when He first came to Shirdi. Later on this *Khale* was bought by Mhalsapati.

Mhalsapati was the *Pujari* of Shirdi's Khandoba temple. He and his friends had lot of respect for saintly people. They had decided to greet the visiting *Gosavis* as “*Namo Narayan*”, *Bairagis* as “*Jay Ram*” and Muslim *Fakirs* as “*Jay Sai*”.

After His arrival in Shirdi, Sai Baba entered Khandoba temple and as per his practice, Mhalsapati greeted Him in *Yavani* language with “*Aao Sai*”. From that time, everyone began calling Him ‘Sai Baba’. In spite of best efforts, no one knew Sai Baba's earlier name. The Khandoba temple and Mhalsapati were both Hindu.

Stay (*Vastavya*)

After coming to Shirdi, Sai Baba stayed in *Takiya* (a place where Muslim *Fakirs* stay) for the first three years. Thereafter, Baba selected a dilapidated and run down *Masjid*. Mhalsapati and his friends made arrangements for His stay. Baba gave a Hindu name to this Muslim *Masjid* – ‘*Dwaravati*’ or ‘*Dwarkamai*’. He used to also call it affectionately “*Maazi Mashid Aai*”.

After Baba arrived in Shirdi, it was Aminbhai – a Muslim – started providing Him food. In the later period, Bayjabai Kote Patil looked after Him with the affection of a mother.

From certain practices followed by Baba, His behaviour appeared to be that of a Muslim *Fakir* – His attire, His selection of a *Masjid* for His stay, His going around with a *Katora* and asking for alms, His keeping of a beard and His lack of a *Shendi* (a bunch of long strands of hair at the back head).

On the other hand, His certain other practices, gave indication of His being a Hindu – His keeping of a grinding stone in the *Masjid*, His use of *Ghanta* (bell) and *Shankha* (conch shell), His homage to fire, His *Pooja* of *Agnihotri* and *Atithis*.

Hindus follow a practice of placing their Deities facing east – west. Muslims from Eastern Nations perform *Namaz* facing west while those belonging to Western Nations do so facing east. However, Baba sat facing south. Thus, He contradicted the practices of both the Hindus and Muslims.

Piercing of ears and *Sunta*

In the beginning, Baba was considered to be a *Mad Fakir*. However, several prominent people of that time (such as Dasganu Maharaj, Prof. Narke, Hemadpant, Chandorkar, Balasaheb Deo, Purandare and others) unanimously agree that the ears of this *Fakir* had been pierced according to Hindu religion. Muslims do not pierce their ears.

However, contradictory reports exist about, whether *Sunta* had been performed on Baba. Purandare, Chandorkar, Dasganu Maharaj, Balasaheb Deo state that *Sunta* had not been performed. However, Hemadpant writes clearly in *Shri Sai Satcharita* “Hindu Mhanata *Sunta Praman*” – if one says Baba was Hindu then unlike a Hindu, His *Sunta* had been performed.

Prof. Narke states in an article –

“In the year 1916 on the day of *Dassera*, Baba displayed His *Apoorva Leela* at the time of evening. He removed the cloth tied around His head, His *Kafni* and His loin cloth. He threw them in the *Dhuni* (holy fire). He took the *Roop* of Narasimha and roared, “Now decide, whether I am a Muslim or a Hindu !” He radiated even more than the fire before Him. At that time, myself, Chandorkar, Bhagoji, Taty and others

present, taxed our eyes and tried to look at Him closely. However, our eyes were dazzled with the radiance and we could not see anything.”

We get further evidence of this incident in *Adhyay* 42 of Shri Sai Satcharita.

The question had lingered for long in the minds of His devotees and they had felt that Baba should Himself clarify the doubt. However, Baba baffled them with His *Alaukik Leela* and allowed the secret to remain a secret only. He acted as if He is doing it only to provide answer to His devotees doubt.

He thus indicated that Dassera is the right *Muhurat* to cross over to the other side. Only two years after this, He laid down His mortal body on the Dassera Day.

Before Mahanirvan

In this discussion about, whether Baba was a Muslim or Hindu, it is necessary to take into consideration certain other events.

About four months prior to His Mahanirvan, Baba called Appa Bhill of Shirdi and told him “Bring 4 chicken. Guests are expected.” He brought the chicken. Baba cooked them with His own hands. He also prepared *Chapatis*. After sometime, Bade Baba’s son Kasim arrived there. He gave him Rs. 250 and the food cooked by Him and said, “Go to Aurangabad ! Meet Shamsuddin Miya there ! Perform Maulu and *Kawwali* ! Then go to Banne Miya ! Put garland of *Shevanti* around his neck ! Tell him, “Nine days. Ninth date. Allah Miya will take away His *Dhuni*. It is His wish.”

As told by Baba, Kasim met Shamsuddin Miya. A program of Maulu and *Kawwali* was performed. Then this group (Kasim, his servant and Imambhai Chhotekhan of Vajapur) went to Banne Miya.

Janab Banne Miya was a respected Sufi saint of Biyabani tradition. He had settled down at Khultabad near Werool, Aurangabad. He was fortunate to spend some time in the midst of Shri Baba. When the group neared Banne Miya, he was standing with one hand raised in the air. There were some Arabs who were standing around him. They requested the group not to go near him. However, after waiting for an hour, the group gathered courage, went near Banne Miya and conveyed Baba’s message. Imam Bhai writes, “Hearing the message, Banne Miya stared at the sky and tears welled in his eyes.” He further adds, Four months thereafter, Baba laid down His mortal body. According to Muslim calendar, that was the ninth day of the ninth month and the night was *Kattal Ki Raat*. (Sai Baba & His Devotees’ Experiences - by Narasimha Swami).

If you look back at the *Shake* 1840 Hindu calendar, we find that, when Baba left His *Sthool Deh* it was the *Pratham Maas* (first month) of *Dakshinayan* (southern phase of sun’s journey). At that time, *Dashmi* (first ten days) had passed and it was *Ekadashi* (11th day) and it was the day of Dassera. It was the ninth day of *Nav Ratra*, a day of Durga *Saptami Pooja* of Bengali folks. It was also the Birth Anniversary of *Bhagwan Gautam Buddha*.

Thus it was a holy day of many religions.

After Nirvan – a dispute : Was He a Muslim *Peer* or a Hindu *Sant* ?

On 15th October 1918, Baba told the people around Him to go and have their lunch. He then laid down His mortal body while He was sitting. The major dilemma before everyone now was – what next ? Muslims said, Baba is Muslim. So, according to our religion, He should be buried as per our religion.

Bade Baba, Ameer Shakkar, *Maulawis* and other Muslims from Shirdi held on to the body of Baba. In their eyes, He was a ‘*Mahan Aulia Peer*’. Ameer Shakkar used to very proudly declare, “*Sandal* cannot be taken out without a great *Peer*.” Therefore,

they intended keeping Baba's *Samadhi* under their control and build His *Kabar* (tomb) in a large place.

On the other hand, devotees like Kakasaheb Dixit averred that "Baba is a great saint. In case of such personalities, the question of religion – Hindu or Muslim – does not arise. Further, His last words were 'Take me to the *Wada*'. Therefore, His further arrangements must be befitting His greatness." The issue went up to the district collector. However, the Muslims conceded that they were in a minority as far as this issue was concerned. Till now Muslims and Hindus had lived harmoniously. Hence, Muslims should not be adamant now. It will spoil the atmosphere in the society. The Muslims thought wisely and joined the Hindu devotees. The love and affection continues between these communities till today in Baba's *Darbar*.

(Contd.)

Saisha

– Translated from original Marathi into
English by Sudhir

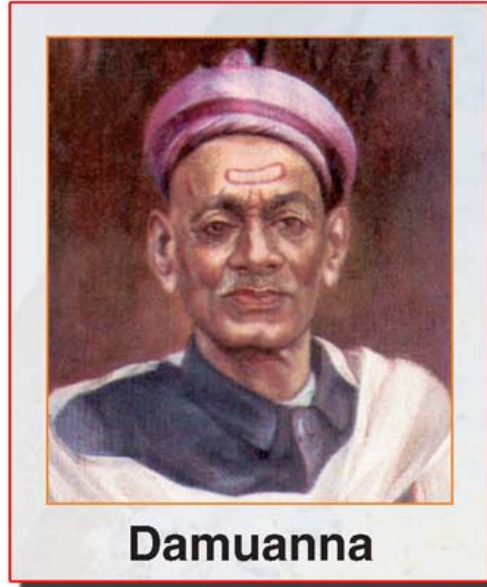


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In Sai's Proximity

– Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar

DAMUANNA & NANASAHEB RASANE – ANNASAHEB GADGIL – BALAJI PATIL NEVASKAR



Damuanna

DAMUANNA & NANASAHEB RASANE – ANNASAHEB GADGIL – BALAJI PATIL NEVASKAR



In Sai's Proximity

“I will carry your burden for ever !”

Baba had told Damuanna the names that were to be given to the first two sons and Damuanna had noted them down in his diary. One year passed thereafter and Damuanna's first son was born. When the boy was an infant, Damuanna took him to Shirdi and placed him at Baba's feet. He enquired, “Baba, what name shall I give him ?” Baba retorted, “Damya, did you forget, what I had told you in such a short time ? You have noted down the name on the third page of your diary. Have I not told you to name

him 'Daulatsha' ? As instructed by Baba, Damuanna named him as 'Daulatsha' (Dattatray Damodar alias Nanasaheb Rasane).

After a few years thereafter, the second son 'Tanashah' was born.

When Daulatshah became five year old, Damusheth took him to Shirdi for *Chaul Karma*. Baba held the boy's hand in His own hand and taught him to write the word 'Hari'.

Baba also gave guidance at the time of marriage of Daulatshah alias Nanasaheb Rasane. For this boy from a rich family, several proposals were coming from well-off families. One of the proposal was from his own maternal uncle who was offering a dowry of Rs. 2-3,000. There was also a proposal from a poor family from Pandharpur. Due to financial condition, the family could offer no dowry.

Damusheth took a bunch of horoscopes to Shirdi and along with Madhavrao went to see Baba. Madhavrao showed the horoscopes to Baba and enquired, "Which proposal should they accept ?" Baba held the papers in his hands and selected the one belonging to the girl from poor family. Accordingly, Damusheth went with the alliance of his son with that girl.

The marriage was held in Pandharpur. Damusheth also invited Baba for the marriage. Baba assured him - "I am always near you. Don't be afraid. Whenever you think of me, that every time I will be with you. Don't forget this." As Damushet repeatedly invited Him, Baba said, "Without *Allah's* permission, I cannot do anything. I will send Shamyia on my behalf."

Madhavrao alias Shama attended the marriage at Pandharpur.

The people criticized Damusheth for foregoing such large sum of dowry and having alliance with a poor family. However, without getting attracted towards any monetary matters, Damuanna followed Baba's instructions to the last word. Daulatshah's family life with his wife began on the path of happiness.

Inner Knowledgeable Baba

A Mumbai Broker and a friend of Damusheth once recommended a deal to him. He said, "If you purchase cotton now for Rs. 50-60,000, after some time it will fetch you at least Rs. 1 Lakh. However, you must not delay the matter."

Damusheth did not do anything without taking Baba's advice. On this occasion also he wrote a letter requesting Madhavrao to seek Baba's permission for the deal. But, Baba said, "Has he gone mad ? He thinks that with such a purchase he will reach the sky. But, tell him, not to run after Lakhs. And, what is he lacking at home that he is getting involved in such unnecessary matters ?"

Damusheth was little dejected on receiving such an answer from Baba. He decided to go to Shirdi and himself put the question to Baba. It was his practice to press Baba's legs after going to Shirdi. While pressing Baba's legs, an idea entered his mind – why not offer part of the profit to Baba. But, before he could utter a word, Baba retorted, "Damyia, I do not want to get involved in any transactions." Then Damusheth gave up the idea altogether.

On another occasion, he asked Baba's permission about trading in food provisions. Baba said, "The market rates will collapse and purchase prices will be higher than the selling prices." Damuanna told this to his business friends. They said, "Actually, the present situation is exactly opposite."

However, during that season the rains were very good and the crop was abundant. The result was – the prices came crashing down and the hoarders lost a lot of money.

Damusheth himself narrated these stories about his business to Narsinha Swamy.

Once, Damusheth's appeal was being heard in Mumbai High Court. The lawyer wanted him to come to Mumbai. Damusheth went to Shirdi to seek permission from Baba. However, Baba did not allow him to go to Mumbai. Not only that, He made him stay with Him. Here in Mumbai, Damusheth won the case.

When Damusheth first went to Shirdi, it was Balaji Patil of village Nevasa who used to sweep the *Masjid*, lit the lamps and do other such work. Damusheth obtained permission of Baba and started participating the chores.

While Baba was *Dehdhari*, Damuanna took his advice in person and after His *Samadhi* Damuanna put chits of paper with "yes" - "no" options before Baba's photo and picked one of them treating it as Baba's advice.

Supreme Guru - Shri Sai Baba

In the year 1926, Damusheth's senior son – Dattatray alias Nanasahab went to Kedgaon to avail the *Darshan* of Shri Narayan Maharaj. The moment Maharaj spotted him, he said, "Your *Guru* is *Param Guru*. He is several levels above me. Why did you come here ? Your fate is safe in the hands of Baba. You have chosen rightly. You go to Him and yours shall be accomplished."

"I will only fulfil wishes of my devotees !"

Nanasahab was childless for a long time. Earlier he lost three children due to epilepsy. His wife, therefore, tried to persuade him to get married for a second time. He was depressed and sad. He lost interest in family matters.

In such a frame of mind, once sat in front of Baba's *Samadhi* in Shirdi and began pleading - "Baba, bless me either with a child or show me the path to *Atma Kalyan*." While appealing thus, his eyes welled with tears. Just then he heard a faint voice from the *Samadhi* – "*Santati Ho Jayegi* (You shall be blessed with a child) !" Nanasahab's joy did not know any bounds. He prostrated before the *Samadhi*. He was amazed and ecstatic – not because he was going to be blessed with a child but with realization that his *Sadguru* responded to his prayers. In 1928, he bore a son.

As Nanasahab had only one son, his father Damusheth prayed in front of the *Samadhi* and Nanasahab was blessed with a second son in 1931.

Damuanna said, "I incessantly think of Baba. He sometimes gives me *Darshan*, sometimes even abuses me and on occasions even thrashes me. It is said that devotees of Akkalkot Swami benefited from abuses and beatings sometimes showered upon them. So is the case of Baba. Therefore, I was never hurt with his bad words or thrashings. Nor did my devotion and affection get any less."

A theft was committed at the Ahmednagar house of Damuanna. The startling fact was it was committed by a person who served in the home for as many as 33 years. With the help of keys, he opened the cupboard and took away the box containing family ornaments. It included a very old nose-ring which is priceless for a married lady. The loss of the nose-ring hurt everyone more than anything else.

After the name of the thief was revealed, Damuanna was very much disheartened. He was unable to understand the reasons which tempted the servant to commit such a deed. In turn, the man was threatened with dire consequences and offered various enticements, but to no avail. He did not disclose anything. A police enquiry commenced. But, in his heart Damuanna repeatedly felt that the matter should not be dragged to court.

Ultimately, he sat in front of Baba's photo and began praying. He placed the matter before Baba. Baba was his ultimate court. The very next day, the servant produced the stolen box of ornaments – intact with all its contents – before Damusheth and sought forgiveness.

Clearance of doubts

This is an event which took place sometime in 1910-11. Once, as usual, Damusheth was sitting at the feet of Baba. There, two questions going around in his mind. One was – “So many devotees come every day to Baba. Do they all benefit from coming here ?” The moment the question was formed, Baba replied, “See ! You must have observed the *Mohor* that a mango tree gets ? But, some of it gets drained before conversion into fruit. Even all fruits do not reach the stage of ripening. Ultimately, only mangoes become ripe.”

The second question was, “What will happen to me, when Baba is no more ?” Baba immediately replied, “Damya, whenever and wherever you think of me, I will be always there with you.”

Before his demise, Damusheth called his sons near him and earnestly told them, “From time to time my Baba has given me money – totaling now to Rs 31. Take care of them even more than your life. These are not simple Rupee coins – they are *Saakshaat Kamdhenu*. Make sure that nothing is left wanting in your service to Shri Sai Baba.”

Damusheth breathed his last at the ripe old age of 89 on 20th January 1941. His successive generations hold only Baba in esteem as their *Param Aaradhya Daivat*. The young and old from their household, even today follow Sai Baba’s teachings. As directed by Damuanna, the senior son – Nanasaheb – gave more importance to serving Sai Baba than looking after his own family. Baba also helped him in his *Parmarthik* progress. He spent major portion of his life in propagating the teachings of Shri Sai Baba. He was a trustee of Shirdi Sai Sansthan.

DATTATRAY DAMODAR *alias* NANASAHEB RASANE

After the passing away of Damuanna, when Nanasaheb went to Shirdi, he became inconsolable and began crying. At the *Samadhi Sthan* he heard Baba’s words, “Are Nana, the rites of fourteenth day have been performed and the mourning period has ended. Isn’t it ? You have eaten sweets now. Now don’t shed tears any more”.

Nanasaheb was a *Punyatma*. He was a good orator and a social worker. He had relinquished his entire life at the feet of Baba. He had no attraction towards his family life. His every act and deed was connected to Baba. He was drenched in the shower of Baba’s *Krupa*.

Since childhood his mind was getting prepared in devotion to Baba. Gradually, his *Virakti* grew. Simultaneously, his desires towards materialistic things and pleasures got destroyed automatically. In his heart, he believed that “It is the *Sadguru* who is the *Karta* and it is He who runs our lives.” He was a divine soul. He had excellent *Vachasiddhi*.

He was known for his very stern nature. However, at heart, he was equally kind. He hated devotees who gossiped and behaved carelessly. He despised cheating and deceit.

He always referred Baba as “My Baba.” He used to say, “People pester and harass my Baba. Everyone is scheming to loot my Baba. Don’t try to fool or annoy my Baba. **HE IS A FIRE INCARNATE.**”

He said, “It was never in the nature of my Baba to sit in a *Devhara* (small temple in a house). My Baba behaved like a common man. He used a lot of Urdu words in his conversation.”

There was a reason for Nanasaheb referred Baba with such close familiarity. It was Baba who had asked Damuanna to give his first son to Him.

Once, on the occasion of Guru Poornima, a coin of one *Naya Paisa* dropped from Baba’s garland into Nanasaheb’s hands. He preserved it with great devotion throughout all his life. He carried it in the *Button Patti* of his shirt. He said, “My annual income is

about Rs 5,000. Even then no coin in the world can match this *Naya Paisa*. And no value can be attached to it – it is valueless.”

Nanasaheb had expressed a desire that the coin should be cremated along with his body. And so was done.

He had another fervent wish. Most of the *Jyeshtha* and *Shreshtha* devotees of Baba had coincidentally passed away on the auspicious day of *Ekadashi*. Nanasaheb wished that the day - on which he would breath his last – should be also *Ekadashi*.

In his last days, he moved his residence to Shirdi. On the day of *Ashadhi Ekadashi*, there was a small reason for his suffering an injury. He fell down on his shoulder. His collar bone was damaged. He was admitted to the Sai Hospital and passed away on the same day.

ANNASAHEB ALIAS CHIDAMBAR KESHAV GADGIL

“I am a Muslim !”

He was prominent amongst those fortunate persons who were brought to Baba by Nanasaheb Denge. At that time, Annasaheb was the secretary to the collector of Ahmednagar, while Nanasaheb was a well-known *Inamdar* of the city. Nanasaheb carried lot of influence in the Govt. offices. He was a close friend of Annasaheb as both were pious by nature.

Nanasaheb was dazzled by the divine experiences given by Shri Sai Baba. Even he had got a son by Baba’s grace Annasaheb had heard several such experiences narrated by Nanasaheb. Impressed by the same, Annasaheb took his *Munsaf* Vamanrao and senior officer from the Education Dept. Sitaram Patwardhan along with him and went in a for tonga to avail *Darshan* of Baba.

At that time, Madhavrao Despande was a school teacher. Annasaheb asked Madhavrao, “I have heard a lot about the *Sadhu* who resides here. Where is he ?” Like many other people, at that time, Madhavrao was considering Baba to be a mad *Fakir*. He was yet to realize the divinity of Baba. Moreover, he was forthright in his speech. Pointing to the *Masjid*, he said, “No. There is no *Mahan Sadhu*. But, a mad *Fakir* stays in that *Masjid*.”

The moment Gadgil appeared before Baba, choicest abuses got showered on him. However, as the abuses went on increasing, Annasaheb go more and more pleased... And an old incident was responsible for this.

Prior to his this visit to Shirdi, Annasaheb had gone to avail *Darshan* of a *Sadhu* in a temple at Bhimashankar near Pune. The *Sadhu* had ordered him to go for Baba’s *Darshan*. While showering him with abuses, Baba made a mention of the *Sadhu*. Annasaheb was taken aback with this. He developed full faith in Baba. Annasaheb started climbing the steps of the *Masjid* along with Patwardhan, Vamanrao and the *Tongawalla* (who brought them to Shirdi). However, from where he was sitting, Baba shouted, “Don’t climb ! I am a Muslim.. Go and prostrate before the Bhimashankar *Sadhu*. !” Hearing this, Gadgil bowed down before Baba.

From the description of Baba given by various people, Annasaheb had started believing that Baba was a Muslim. However, at the time of the *Darshan*, Baba eradicated the misconception.

Darshan in the form of Ganpati

Baba ensured with a kin eye that each follower followed the path of devotion chosen by the devotee, Baba made sure of this by fulfilling the wishes of the devotees and allowing them to do as they wished. Annasaheb was an ardent follower of Shri Ganpati.

Now, he started seeing Ganpati in Baba. He even started performing Baba's *Pooja* in the manner in which one worships Ganpati.

Once, when he was performing *Pooja* in this manner, Baba remarked to one of the gentlemen sitting nearby, "This old man is very cunning. He says, I am sitting on top of mice." (It is well-known that Shri Ganpati's vehicle is a mice and he sits on top of that.) Gadgil was delighted that Baba had guessed, what was in his mind.

"I am always with you !"

Later on, Annasaheb was promoted and he became *Mamledar* of Sinnar. The place being close to Shirdi, he used to frequently avail Baba's *Darshan*. However, after some period, he was transferred to a distant place. He had to immediately report at the new place. He did not have enough time to go for Baba's *Darshan* before his departure. He was in turmoil because of this and his eyes brimmed with tears. With a heavy heart he boarded the train. His mind was full of Baba's thoughts. Suddenly, a packet of the *Udi* dropped on him from the compartment's window. Curiously he opened the packet and found that it contained *Udi*. He preserved the packet carefully. He placed the packet in a *Tait* (locket) and it remained with him till end.

Later on Annasaheb got the opportunity to take Baba's *Darshan*. He rushed to the *Masjid* and fell down at Baba's fit. Before he could apologize, Baba said to him, "Are, you could not come. Hence, I sent you *Udi*. Did you get it ?"

The moment Gadgil heard these words, tears streamed from his eyes.

An old Sai devotee – Shri Laxman Govind Munge – narrates a beautiful story related to this incident. He says...

"Shri Chidambar Keshav Gadgil was a senior *Mamledar* and I assisted him as a clerk. When the *Mamledar* and Nanasaheb Nimonkar went to avail Baba's *Darshan*, I also accompanied them. We prostrated before Baba. A thought entered my mind 'Why these Hindus perform *Pooja* of a Muslim like Baba ?' Just then, Baba said to Gadgil, 'Give me my *Kharka* (dried dates), packet of Incense and my *Dakshina* of Re. 1 !' I was surprised to hear this. Because, the previous night, Gadgil had set aside these three articles saying 'I am going to place these as offering before my *Sadguru* – Baba.' And, Baba now was demanding exactly the same three things. I was, therefore, convinced about Baba's power of *Antardhyan*. Baba accepted the offering with pleasure."

Annasaheb had dip knowledge about *Paramarthik* matters. He had realized that the ultimate destination of this mortal body was '*Paramatmaprapti*'. He lived accordingly. He introduced several people to the divinity of Sai Baba with the intention of spreading the joy of being in *Sadguru*'s company and turning them to the path of *Satkarya*. One such person was the manager of Satyanaratyan Co. Shri W. S. Joshi.

In the course of his life, Annasaheb retired and settled down at Ghodnadi. He followed the practice of *Annachhatra* (distribution of food) at *Shri Kshetra* Gangapur. Due to this, he came frequently in contact with the *Bazar* at Solapur. Thus, he met Shri Wasudeo Sadashiv Joshi who had turned to the path of *Virakti* from the young age of 16 years. Annasaheb was similarly enfolded in Sai devotion. Therefore, this contact through a mere commercial transaction developed into a thick friendship.

Annasaheb had similar close relations with Raobahadur Sathe alias Tatyasaheb. This is an incident of 1913...

Annasaheb wrote a letter to Shri Joshi from Shirdi informing him that "I am at Shirdi and a *Namsaptah* is going on here. Please do come and avail Baba's *Darshan* ! You will need Rs. 10 for expenses. Don't worry. Shri Narayan will give it at any place. But, don't allow this opportunity to pass."

Joshi read the letter with great joy. He took permission of his wife, arranged for the money and arrived at the Sathe *Wada* where Gadgil used to stay. He carried *Pooja Sahitya* and went with Annasaheb to avail Baba's *Darshan*. Seeing the radiant figure of Baba, he was amazed. Tears filled his eyes.

At the time of evening *Aarati*, he continued to stare at the *Mukhakamal* of Baba. He was unable to regain his normal senses. Noticing this, Annasaheb said, "Joshibua, the *Aarati* is over; Come !" Only then, he came out of the trance.

Joshi asked the meaning of his trance. Annasaheb replied, "Joshibua, Baba does lot of such *Gamati-Jamati* (tricks). Only watch them !"

After spending a few days in the *Namsaptah*, he broached upon the subject (with Tatyasaheb Sathe) of returning home. Tatyasaheb informed him, "It is not possible to go without obtaining Baba's permission." Thereafter, a *Sevekari* pleaded the case of this guest of Annasaheb Gadgil. Baba replied, "Has the Lord not given him enough *Chatni* – *Bhakri* (food) during your stay here ? Why are you forcing him against his own wishes ?"

The day on which Joshi left Shirdi was Thursday. Gadgil told him, "Joshibua, take the *Prasad* from here with you." Joshi went to Bapusaheb Jog to ask for *Prasad*. Bapusaheb placed one piece of *Barfi* on everyone's hand. Annasaheb said to Joshi, "Bua, this much *Prasad* will not be sufficient for everyone at your home. Go and buy some more *Barfi* from these 8 *Annas* !" Thinking that any sweet from Shirdi is Baba's *Prasad*, Joshi was proceeding to the *Bazaar*. However, he met a person on the way who was hurrying towards him. He was carrying a *Thali* full of *Barfi*. He said, "Baba has asked me to give this to the guest of Gadgil !"

In the meantime, Gadgil had sent a person to fetch groundnuts. He wanted to give them to Joshi. However, just then Raobahadur Sathe said, "Baba has received gunny bags of groundnuts from some devotee. He has issued orders to give two baskets full to Gadgil and his guest and distribute the rest amongst the devotees who have gathered here. Therefore, it is not necessary to buy groundnuts."

From these two instances, the people who had gathered there realized, how Baba performs miracles sitting at one place and how He is omnipresent.

On his return to Solapur, Joshi gave some amount to Shri Govind Dhondo Pansare and sent him to Shirdi for availing Baba's *Darshan* and also to take Baba's photos. The duo of Gadgil and Sathe welcomed Pansare and took good care of him. He stayed there for four days and with Baba's permission took His two photographs – one while He was sitting on the *Shila* and the other while he was reclining against the pillar. Pansare returned home a happy man.

Baba appreciated the devotion of Annasaheb and hence, He showered Gadgil's guests – Joshi and Pansare – with love and affection. He also granted permission to take His photographs and guided them in the direction of *Atmaunnati*.

BALAJI PATIL NEVASKAR

There is a couplet which reads – Place your *Tan-Man-Dhan* (body-soul-wealth) at the feet of your *Sadguru* and spend your entire life in *Guru* (devotion of *Guru*).

Balaji Patil of Nevasa truly lived this couplet. He was born in lower cast family. However, through his *Bhakti* of *Sadguru*, he traversed the *Bhavsagar*.

A long time back, the pious Balaji came for the first time to avail *Darshan* of Baba. The moment he took *Darshan* he decided to reside permanently at Shirdi. For sometime Baba tried to convince him to return back to his family. However, till the end he was unable to find solace in family life.

Damuanna Kasar came to Shirdi for the first time in 1892. While narrating his experience he writes...

"When I first came to Shirdi, I saw Bala Patil of Nevasa doing all types of chores to serve Baba. He used to clean the *Masjid* and look after its lights. He also cleaned the *Chavadi* and the path on which Baba went to Lendi Baug."

The villagers used to defecate on the path to Lendi Baug and also threw garbage. Balaji used to get up early morning and clean the mess. He started this practice which was later on followed first by Radhakrishnamai and thereafter by Abdul Baba. Balaji also put soil over the places where Baba used to spit His cough.

While narrating his Sai experience, Shri Saisharananand says - "The life of this Nevaskar is worth following. He was an ardent devotee of Baba"

Balaji carried the entire crop from his farm in bullock carts and considering Baba to be its rightful owner, placed the crop at His feet. He took home only that much portion which was given to him by Baba. He managed to run his household within that. Balaji drank the water which was left over by Baba or even that water in which Baba had taken His bath. After Balaji, his son followed both these practices relating to the crop and water.

Every day about four times, Baba ate *Bhakri* made from Balaji's milo.

Balaji never did anything without seeking Baba's permission. He even sought Baba's permission for stitching clothes for his family members. He had two wives. However, he had few children. Sometimes, the family came from Nevasa to Shirdi to avail Baba's *Darshan*. On such occasions, Baba purchased *Choli-Lugadi* for Balaji's wives and placed them in their *Oti* with blessings.

Once, Raghuji Patil of Shirdi (elder brother of Bhagoji Shinde) went to Nevasa. He stayed at Balaji's home. One day a snake entered the stable of Balaji. The livestock was tied there, got scared and tried to come loose. Everyone was at their wits end as to how to set free the cows etc. and save them. However, the snake was had raised his hood and was sitting quietly.

While this havoc taking place, Balaji was overjoyed. He said, "Baba has arrived in the guise of the snake. He is no one else but my Sai." He immediately went inside his house and fetched a dish full of milk. He placed the dish before the snake and said, "What is this Baba ? Are you trying to scare us ? Have this milk ! Finish it completely !! This is my *Seva*. Please accept it !" Then he thought, the quantity of milk offered may not be sufficient. So, he brought the full pot of milk, placed it before the snake and returned to his place.

Everyone was flabbergasted. They were keeping a watch to ensure that the snake should not enter the house ! Here, the snake drank milk and went away as quietly as he had come. Nobody had seen him coming and no one saw him departing. Everyone could not locate in spite of great efforts. All felt relieved; but Balaji was sad. He had seen the snake entering the stable. He wished, he should have witnessed his departure.

Balaji saw Sai everywhere. For him, Sai existed everywhere. Baba also showered this blessed soul with His *Krupa*.

It was the first death anniversary of Balaji. At that time, his mother was alive. For the anniversary feast, the number of people who had gathered was almost 3 times the expectation. Balaji's wife panicked on seeing the huge gathering. She informed her mother-in-law. She said, "Why do you panic when our Baba is behind us ? Bring that *Udi* !" Balaji's wife brought *Udi*. Balaji's mother to fistful of *Udi*, put it in all the vessels containing food and covered them with cloth. Thereafter she directed her daughter-in-law, "Now take as much food out of these vessels as you want and serve it to the people. But, ensure that the vessels remain covered with cloth ! Sai Baba will protect our reputation. Don't worry." Balaji's wife followed her mother-in-law's directions and Baba also protected their reputation.

The above incident was narrated by Balaji's mother to Kakasaheb Dixit. This is a fine example which illustrates, how Baba looks after those devotees who devote themselves with *Shraddha* and *Saburi*.

Shri Saisharananand writes about the last days of Balaji thus :-

"Leaving everything, Balaji came to Shirdi once again. However, Baba persuaded him to return to his home. In his last days he gave up food and water. He only ate the *Prasad* of *Bhakri* sent by Baba and drank only water which was touched by Baba's feet."

In this manner, the unique Sai Seva of Balaji bore fruits.

(contd.)

– Translated from original Marathi into

English by **Sudhir**



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