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**Main**



## The Knowledge University

(*'Dnyanpeeth'*)

of

various Saints,

Where the Sai Baba *Samadhi*

still speaks with the voice of teachings of  
generations of Saints...



The state of Maharashtra in India has a glorious history. It has produced or been closely associated with many Saints. The banks of the Godavari river, in the Ahmednagar district, are very fortunate for they gave birth and refuge to many a Saint. These have risen from all across the several castes. Some of the very revered examples of *Bhakti* Saints are Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram (a More Maratha - *Kunbi*), Namdev (*Shimpi* or tailor), Samarth Ramdas, Chokhamela (*Mahar*) and Savata Mali (*Mali* or gardener). There have also been several other *Harijan* Saints such as Banka Mahar, Bhagu, Damaji Pant, Kanhopatra, Nirmala, Sadhna, Sakhubai, Satyakam Jabali, Soyarabai.

It has also been the birthplace and home of world-reputed Saints like Gajanan Maharaj of Shegaon in Buldhana district, Swami Shukadas Maharaj from Hiwara *Ashram* of Buldhana district and Swami Samarth Maharaj of Akkalkot in Solapur district. Maharashtra is also equally famous for ardent devotees (or *Bhaktas*), for example, Namdev Mahar and his wife Bhagubai from Kharagpur.

And, needless to say, the liquid essence of Pure Self was poured into the mould of *Brahman* and out of this has emerged the form of the crest jewel of the Saints – Shirdi Sai

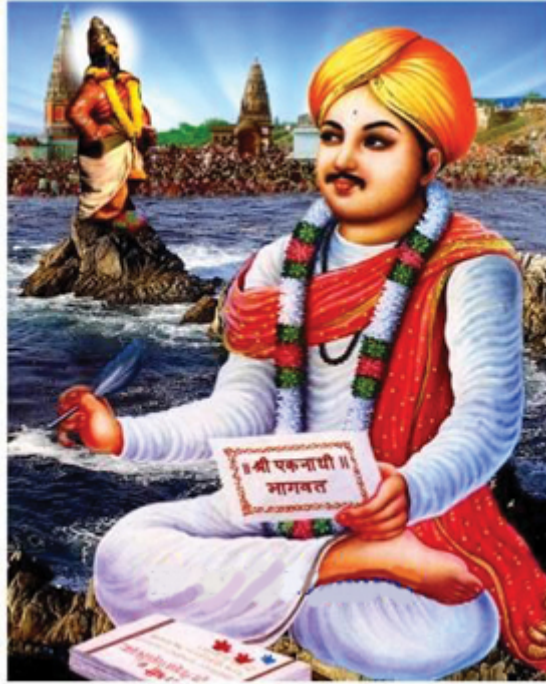
Baba. Shirdi is indeed a holy place. Streams of people flow in and out, day and night.



Shirdi falls in the Rahata *Taluka* of the Ahmednagar district. After crossing the Godavari river there, one gets the way to Shirdi. When one goes 14 km., one comes to Nimgaon, from whence, Shirdi is visible. Shirdi is as famous and well-known as other holy places like Gangapur, Narsinhwadi, Audumbar on the banks of the Krishna river. As the devotee Damaji flourished in and blessed Mangalvedha (near Pandharpur), as Samarth Ramdas at Sajjangad, as Shri Narasimha Saraswati at Saraswatiwadi, so Sai Baba descended on the soil of Shirdi to lead mankind to the realm of eternity. As the divine mother, He gave His immense love and as the divine father, He gave direction to the devotee's search for Truth. His mission was to make people conscious of their divine nature. Baba sowed the seeds of spiritual inspiration in the hearts of devotees who knew of Him. This divine inspiration was so instant and profound that they automatically took refuge in Him. The people who follow His teachings and preaching are indeed blessed souls given that

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

Among the life histories of the famous Saints of Maharashtra, the history of Eknath Maharaj is a very sacred one. Eknath was born at Paithan on the banks of the Godavari river around the year 1533. He studied all the scriptures when he was a young boy, barely twelve years old. By the virtues of his previous births he was very mature for his age and was always in the search of Truth. Having realized that there would be no chance of reaching the goal of life without the benevolence of the *Sadguru* (the master), Eknath longed for a *Sadguru* who could guide him. By the grace of God he met Janardan Swami. Janardan Swami was a self-realized man who had the *Darshan* of Lord Dattatreya.



Janardan Swami accepted

Eknath as his disciple as he was impressed by his virtue and piety. A keen servant of his *Guru*, Eknath became a close disciple of Janardan Swami in a short period of time. Janardan Swami took him to his place of penance on a hill named, Surya Kund near Daulatabad, with the intention of giving him the opportunity of having the *Darshan* of Lord Dattatreya. He told his disciple that that was the place where Dattatreya was physically present and might appear in any form, as He was a manifestation of all creatures. "Serve Him without any hesitation," he preached. Soon Janardan Swami went into deep meditation; and after a while a Muslim *Fakir* came with a dog in tow. Janardan Swami opened his eyes with a start and stood up and prostrated before him. The *Fakir* lifted him to his feet and warmly embraced him.



After both of them had a heart to heart talk, the *Fakir* handed Janardan Swami a begging bowl and told him to collect milk from the dog that accompanied him. As Janardan Swami collected the milk, the *Fakir* took out a dried up *Roti* and put it into the bowl. Then both of them started eating the contents of the bowl. They beckoned to Eknath, who was standing at a distance astounded, watching the goings on, and told him to clean the bowl and return. Eknath went to a nearby pond and putting a little water into the bowl rinsed it and drank the contents without an iota of hesitation, as *Uchchhishta* (residue). Then he thoroughly cleaned the bowl and putting it in front of the *Fakir* he touched his feet. Lord Dattatreya was well content and gave His *Darshan*; and Janardan Swami and Eknath both prostrated before Him. The Lord looked affectionately at both of them, and blessed them. And then, addressing Janardan, He said, "Janardan, your disciple Eknath will lead the *Bhakti Marga* (path of devotion) in the near future and become *Bhagavotam* (one who



teaches about God). He may rest assured that he will always be blessed by me.” Thus saying Dattatreya disappeared.

The Sai devotees would be consequently delighted to find that the story narrated above has an astonishing match with the incidence that occurred in the life of one of Baba’s dedicated pupils, Hemadpant.

Sai Baba, like Lord Dattatreya Swami, too had offered His ardent devotee Hemadpant a glass of butter-milk and said, “Drink it all, you won’t get such opportunity again.” And, thus, on being ‘honey-dew’ fed and having drunk the ‘milk of paradise’, this passionate disciple turned into his Lord’s celebrated biographer, and gave the ‘Shri Sai Satcharita’ to the world. The ‘Shri Sai Satcharita’ is the sacred book that describes the Life History of Sai Baba. The spiritual essence contained in all the religious scriptures like the *Vedas*, the Bhagvad Gita, the Bhavarth Ramayan, the Eknathi (*Chatushloky*) Bhagwat, the Dnyaneshwari, the Panchratni Gita, the Nath Bhagwat, the Vishnu Sahasranam and the Yoga Vasishtha is found in this life-story of the Lord of Shirdi. That is why

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University (‘Dnyanpeeth’) of various Saints !**

Sai Baba favoured His devotees by granting them religious books after He had touched and consecrated them, for *Parayan* (reading regularly) and certain other matters.

Once, one of Baba’s devotees Kaka Mahajani, who liked reading the Nath Bhagwat, carried with him a copy of it and came to Shirdi. Madhavrao (Shama) came to meet him. He picked up the book to read it and went with it to the *Masjid*. Baba casually asked him, “Shama, what is this book in your hand ?” Shama told him about it. Baba took it in His hands and returned it after seeing it. “This book does not belong to me. It is Kaka Mahajani’s. I borrowed it as I desired to read it,” Shama clarified. Yet Baba said to him - “The fact is that I have given it to you. You keep it in your collection tied in a piece of cloth. It will be of use to you.” Be it so. After some time, Kaka came again to Shirdi and brought with him another copy of the Nath Bhagwat. He placed it in Baba’s hands. It was given back as *Prasad*. “Preserve it well,” Baba instructed. “This alone will stand in good stead for you,” Kaka was assured. “It will prove most useful to you. Do not give it to anyone !,” He said this with a lot of solicitude. Kaka bowed with love. That is the Nath Bhagwat, full of devotion to the *Guru*, which Sai has acknowledged. Thus, undoubtedly,

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University (‘Dnyanpeeth’) of various Saints !**

Once again, returning to the tale of Eknath, it would be interesting to recall that Eknath continued studying the scriptures under the guidance of his *Guru* and these special studies under the *Sadguru*’s personal guidance, coupled with the things learnt during his early years, helped him to achieve total proficiency in everything.

When Eknath had completed his education, the *Guru* and the disciple went on a pilgrimage. At Tryambakeshwar (near Nasik) they heard a discourse on the four fundamental *Shlokas* of the Bhagwat Mahapuram (Canto II, 9:32-9:35) given by *Pandit Chandroba* in Sanskrit. Janardan Swami asked his disciple Eknath to translate them into Marathi and to write his own commentary, so that ordinary people could enjoy it. Eknath complied with his *Guru*’s wish, and the outcome was the *Chatushloky Bhagwat*, his first important work. Eknath was a great *Guru-bhakta* and he attributed not just this first book, but all his works to his *Guru*’s inspiration, invariably writing *Eka-Janardan* (Eknath of Janardan) as his signature.

In his mature old age Eknath started writing the book Bhavarth Ramayan. He was going at a brisk speed and he completed forty-four chapters of the Yuddha Kanda. After this it was time for Eknath to take *Samadhi*; so he told people that one Gavba, who was staying with him for many years, will be completing the book. When people heard about this, they could not believe in it; because Gavba was an uneducated person. He resorted to Eknath’s house with the idea of getting good and wholesome food to eat. He was attending to some of Eknath’s domestic duties and was making merry for all the other time; but before his death, Eknath called him near his bed. He blessed him giving him his own pen and told him to complete his aforesaid book. Eknath’s blessings completely transformed Gavba

and he very soon started writing the later part of the book and it is really a wonder, how he could write as good as Eknath did.

The miracles that Saints perform are really beyond all reasoning !

It is well-known that Sai Baba used to ask His educated devotees like Hariprasad Dixit alias Kakasaheb Dixit and Bapusaheb Jog to read out Eknathi Bhagwat [Chatushloky Bhagwat] and Bhavarth Ramayan to fellow devotees. Baba also gave *Upadesh* to Kakasaheb Dixit to study Eknathi Bhagwat at dawn and Bhavarth Ramayan at bed time daily. Needless to mention, Kakasaheb devotedly complied with this command during Baba's lifetime, and followed this practice even after Baba's *Mahasamadhi*. Here, what one finds fascinating is the realization that

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

Recalling the miracle that Eknath performed in the case of Gavba, one is reminded of the great Saint Dnyaneshwar (1275-1296). Dnyaneshwar (also known as Dnyandev) remains one of India's most beloved Saints and his *Samadhi* (shrine) in Alandi (in which he was voluntarily entombed in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* while alive) is visited by thousands of people yearly. He is widely revered as an incarnation of Lord Krishna. Centuries later, *Sant* Eknath entered the tomb and saw a radiant youth seated in meditation. Dnyaneshwar is still believed to be alive, anchoring his light body as a crystal of enlightened energy radiating from Alandi to the entire world.

The Dnyaneshwari is the commentary on Bhagvad Gita, written by Dnyaneshwar. This is not only a scholarly work, but also has great aesthetic value. It gave a philosophical base for the movement of *Bhagwat Dharma*, a *Bhakti* sect which created a lasting effect on the history of Maharashtra. The Dnyaneshwari became one of the sacred books, along with Eknathi Bhagwat and Tukaram Gatha. It is one of the great foundations of the Marathi language and literature, and is widely read all over the country even to this date. The *Pasayadan* or the nine ending verses of the Dnyaneshwari are also popular with the masses.

Once, Dnyaneshwar had performed the miracle of making a buffalo recite the *Vedas*. It is widely known that he just smiled at the buffalo standing before him and touched its forehead. Immediately the buffalo started reciting the *Vedas*, and continued to recite the *Vedas* for hours together. (Today, there is even a *Samadhi* site for this buffalo in the village of Ale in Pune district.)

It is said that when Lord Dattatreya put His hand on someone's head, even that of an idiot, then that person instantly acquired the knowledge of the *Vedas* and the *Shastras*. One day, His hand inadvertently touched the head of a milkmaid who used to come to His residence. On her way home, she was taunted by some *Pandits*, 'O milkmaid ! What do you learn there ?' She replied, 'I learned *Brahmadnyan*.' They asked, 'What is *Brahmadnyan*?' She replied, 'It is the same as separating pieces of stone from rice with the help of a winnowing basket. You throw away the stones and keep the rice to use.' The *Pandits* were taken aback by the milkmaid's reply. She answered all their questions with understanding.

Isn't this story analogous to the one related with Kakasaheb Dixit's maidservant ! (Shri Sai Satcharita, chapter 20) Dasganu once started to write a Marathi commentary on the Ishavasya Upanishad. It was really a difficult task to translate it in a vernacular language, and brief out its exact meaning. Dasganu translated it in Marathi 'Ovi' metre, verse by verse; but as he did not comprehend the gist or essence of the Upanishad, he was not satisfied with his performance. He, therefore, consulted some scholars. But, they failed to satisfy Dasganu. When nobody could satisfy Dasganu, he resolved to consult his Lord Sai. Then, Baba blessed him and said, "You need not be anxious, there is no difficulty about the matter; the maidservant of Kakasaheb Dixit will solve your doubts at Vile Parle (a suburb of Mumbai). The devotees, who were present there and heard that, thought that Baba was just joking. They whispered, 'How could an illiterate maidservant solve the difficulties of this nature'; but Dasganu thought otherwise. He was sure, that whatever the

*Dwarkamaidhish* spoke, must come true. The words of the *Rajadhiraja Yogiraj* were the decree of the *Brahma* (Almighty). Dasganu's firm belief was that

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

Armed with full faith in Baba's words, Dasganu left Shirdi and came to Vile Parle, and stayed with Kakasaheb Dixit. There the next morning, while Dasganu was still half-awaken, he heard a girl singing a song in clear and melodious tones. The subject matter of the song was a crimson colored *Sari*, how nice it was, how fine was its embroidery, how beautiful were its ends and borders etc. He loved the song so much that he came out, and found that it was being sung by the maidservant of Kakasaheb. The maid was cleaning utensils, and had only a torn rag on her person. On seeing her impoverished condition, and her jovial temperament, Dasganu felt pity for her. Next day he gifted her *Sari*. Like a starving person getting luckily good dishes to eat, her joy knew no bounds. Next day she wore the new *Sari*, and out of great joy and merriment, whirled, danced round and played '*Fugadi*' with other girls and excelled them all. The day after she kept the new *Sari* in her box at home and came with the old and torn rags; but she looked as merry as she did the previous day. On seeing this, Dasganu's pity was turned into amazement. He thought that the girl being poor had to wear a torn rag, but now she had a new *Sari* which she kept in reserve and putting on the old rag, strutted herself, showing no trace of sorrow or dejection. Thus he realized that all our feelings of pain and pleasure depend upon the attitude of our mind.

On thinking deeply over this incident, he realized that a man ought to enjoy whatever God has bestowed on him in the firm conviction that He besets every thing, from behind and before, and on all sides and that whatever is bestowed on him by God must be for his good. In this particular case, the impoverished condition of the poor girl, her torn rag and the new *Sari*, the donor, the dance and the acceptance were all parts of the Lord's *Leela* and pervaded by Him. Hence, Dasganu got a practical demonstration of the lesson of the Upanishad - the lesson of contentment with one's own lot in the belief that whatever happens is ordained by God, and is ultimately good for us. Thus, he very well understood the lesson taught by the Lord of Shirdi as

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

B. V. Dev, an ardent devotee of Sai Baba, had a desire to read Dnyaneshwari. But, whenever Dev started to do *Parayan* some obstacles came and he had to stop in the middle. The main reason for this was that he could not fully comprehend the inner meanings. He went to Shirdi determined to complete the *Parayan*; and no sooner did he sit before Baba than he started reading the Dnyaneshwari and completed the *Parayan* without any obstacles. It is because

### **Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

Once again returning to the fascinating story of the life events of Eknath, one fondly recollects the following breathtaking episode :-

When Eknath's son, Hari Pandit came from Kashi, he had brought with him holy water from the river Ganga. The custom and belief of the pilgrims is that the water from the river Ganga is to be brought when one goes on a pilgrimage to Banaras and one has to bathe Rameshwar at Kanyakumari with that holy water. While returning one has to carry the *Setu* and offer it to Kashi Vishweshwar at Banaras, - and then only, one acquires full merit of the pilgrimage. According to this traditional belief, Hari Pandit was to carry this water to Rameshwar; but when Eknath found that one ass was restless in the sandy bank of the Godavari river, being oppressed by the scorching sun, he poured that water on the dying animal and relieved that ass from the heat of the sun. Hari Pandit naturally was upset at this behaviour of his father; but on the same night Lord Rameshwar Himself appeared in his dream to tell him that he would get the full merit of the water of the Ganga brought by him for the purpose of the pilgrimage. After seeing the dream, Hari Pandit realized the real value of his father, and his mind calmed down.



The above dream makes the Sai devotees comprehensible and believable that they too would get the full merit of the bath in the holy waters at various holy places once they put their head on Lord Sai's lotus feet with utter *Shraddha* and unqualified *Saburi*. The following happening illustrates this point :-

Prayag is one of the holy places in India, situated on the banks of the river Ganga in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is the point where the waters of the three holy rivers, viz., the Ganga, the Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati merge into one. Numerous people go to Prayag to have a bath in the holy union of the waters. Dasganu, an ardent devotee of Baba, decided that he too should go to Prayag to have a bath in the holy waters. Before leaving, he went to Baba to seek His permission to leave. Baba in His soft and meaningful words told Ganu that he needn't go that far, "Our Prayag is here, believe me". Baba's words were enough for Ganu and he humbly put his head on Baba's feet and wonder of wonders ! The holy Ganga and the holy Yamuna started flowing from Baba's toes.

*Tad Ejati Tan Naijati*

*Tad Dure Tad Vantike*

*Tad Antarasya Sarvasya*

*Tad Y Sarvasyasya Bahyataha*

(Shri Isha Upanishad, *Shloka* 5)

[The Supreme Lord Sai walks and does not walk. He is far away; but He is very near as well. He is within everything, and again He is outside of everything.]

The Saints of Maharashtra brought about a powerful renaissance of the path of devotion; but Sai Baba gave the whole movement a definite orientation. Shirdi creates Sai-consciousness all over the globe, and, thus

**Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

Samarth Ramdas Swami was a great Saint from Maharashtra. He was the *Guru* of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, a great and pious king of 17<sup>th</sup> century in Maharashtra. One day, as the king and his *Guru* were inspecting some construction in the royal palace, the king thought, 'Indeed I am a great king, how well I take care of all my subjects !' The *Guru*, in his omniscience, read his disciple's thoughts and decided to correct his thinking immediately.

There was a huge boulder nearby. Ramdas Swami asked some of Shivaji's soldiers to break it into two. When his request was carried out, all present witnessed an incredible sight. They saw that the rock had a small water-filled cavity with a little frog in it ! As soon as the boulder was split into two, the encaged frog jumped out, breaking free. Samarth Ramdas Swami now turned to Shivaji and asked, "If you feel that you are taking care of every-body in this kingdom, pray, tell me who was taking care of the frog trapped in the rock ?" The king rea-lized his mistake and felt remorse for his egotistical thinking. He realized that it was God Who had created everything and took care of all His creation.

The lesson that Samarth Ramdas Swami taught Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was that one should do everything, including spiritual practice, with humility. Spiritual practice done with an attitude of surrender would eventually give the experience of Truth, and God alone is Almighty and creator/caretaker of all.

An incident analogous to the one illustrated above is given below :-

Once, Vasudevanand Saraswati, known as Tembye Swami encamped, at Rajamahendri (Andhra country), on the banks of Godavari river in Andhra Pradesh. He was a *Bhakta* of Lord Dattatreya. One, Pundalikrao of Nanded (Nizam state) went to see him, with some of his friends. While they were talking with him, the names of Shirdi and Sai Baba were casually mentioned. Hearing Baba's name, the Swami bowed with his hands and gave a

coconut to Pundalikrao with the request - "Offer this gift to my brother Sai, with my *Pranam* and request Him not to forget me, but ever love me." Pundalikrao consented to take the responsibility.

After one month Pundalikrao and co. left for Shirdi, taking the coconut with them, and reached Manmad; and as they felt thirsty they went to a rivulet for drinking water. As water should not be drunk on an empty stomach, they took out some refreshments, i.e., *Chivda* (flattened rice mixed with spice). The *Chivda* tasted bitter; and in order to soften it, the coconut was broken and its scrapings were mixed with the *Chivda*. Thus they made the *Chivda* tasty and palatable. Unfortunately the fruit broken, turned out to be the same, which was entrusted to Pundalikrao. As they neared Shirdi, Pundalikrao remembered the trust. He was very sorry to learn that it was broken and utilized. Fearing and trembling, he came to Shirdi and saw Baba.

The omnipresent and omniscient Sai Baba knew all the developments. He Himself asked Pundalikrao first to give the things sent by His brother. He held fast Baba's Feet, confessed his guilt and negligence, repented and asked for Baba's pardon. He offered to give another fruit as a substitute; but Baba refused to accept it saying that the worth of that coconut was by far, many times more, than an ordinary one and that it could not be replaced by another one. Baba also added - "Now you need not worry yourself any more about the matter. It was on account of my wish that the coconut was entrusted to you, and ultimately broken on the way; why should you take the responsibility of the actions on you ? Do not entertain the sense of doer in doing good, as well as for bad deeds; be entirely free from pride and ego in all things and thus your spiritual progress will be rapid."

What a beautiful spiritual instruction Baba gave ! After all

**Shirdi is the Knowledge University ('Dnyanpeeth') of various Saints !**

**Here the Sai Baba *Samadhi***

**still speaks with**

**the voice of teachings**

**of generations of Saints :**

- 1. No harm shall befall him who sets his feet on the soil of Shirdi.**
- 2. He who cometh to my *Samadhi*, his sorrow and suffering shall cease.**
- 3. Though I be no more in flesh and blood, I shall ever protect my devotees.**
- 4. Trust in me and your prayer shall be answered.**
- 5. Know that my spirit is immortal. Know this for yourself.**
- 6. Show unto me he who sought refuge and been turned away.**
- 7. In whatever faith men worship me, even so do I render to them.**
- 8. Not in vain is my promise that I shall ever lighten your burden.**
- 9. Knock, and the door shall open. Ask and ye shall be granted.**
- 10. To him who surrenders unto me totally I shall be ever indebted.**
- 11. Blessed is he who has become one with me.**

**- Dr. Subodh Agarwal**  
*'Shirdi Sai Dham'*

**They lose the highest good because of the decline of *Dharma*. In order to bring about a revival of *Dharma* the saints appear. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 4, Verse 11)**

**When people, to the detriment of their health, longevity and prosperity, go astray in pursuing their sexual needs, and completely miss the chance of their upliftment, at such times saints take birth. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 4, Verse 12)**

**To protect the religion of *Vedic Sanatan Dharma*, to annihilate the sinfulness and to protect the down-trodden, poor and weak, the saints incarnate on this earth. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 4, Verse 13)**

**The saints themselves are liberated souls and are always ready for the betterment of the weak. They take birth only for the sake of others and have no self-interest. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 4, Verse 14)**

**The purpose of manifestations of such merciful saints is none other than to grant favours to others (to oblige others) for their welfare. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 10, Verse 108)**

**For the sake of the devotees He took form. His emotions and passions were also for them. Such is the popular behaviour of the saints. All of you should realise this as the truth (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 10, Verse 115)**

**Similar is the manifestation of the saints. They appear and disappear. But, their behaviour purifies the world. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 11, Verse 27)**

**Krishna Who is Himself God, says - 'A saint is as it were, my soul, my living image and a saint is my beloved and is myself.' (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 11, Verse 30)**

**'It is not befitting to call saints as my images. Saints are undoubtedly my own self. Therefore, for their sake, I shoulder the burdens of the devotees.' (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 11, Verse 31)**

**'One who completely surrenders to the saints, I also bow down to his feet.' So said Shri Krishna to Uddhava while describing the greatness of the saints. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 11, Verse 32)**

## In Sai's Proximity

– Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar

**DASGANU MAHARAJ**

(Contd. from last issue)

Dasganu was transferred from Shrigonda to Jamkhed. An incident took place there. A programme of *Keertan* had been organized, at which Dasganu was present in the audience. However, the *Haridas* who was to deliver the *Keertan* did not arrive. After waiting for him for a long time, the *Mamledar* Shri Shetphalkar directed Dasganu to deliver the *Keertan*. This was the first *Keertan* of Dasganu ! After listening to it, the *Mamledar* commented, "Are Ganpat, you should not have wasted your time and talent in composing *Lavnya* and *Powade*. Instead, you should have utilized it for penning down *Akhyans* !" These words touched Dasganu's heart and he presented his first *Keertan* composed independently by himself on the next *Ekadashi*. He was accompanied by a Muslim constable named Hayyat Khan (who had shaved off his beard for the occasion and had appeared in a Hindu garb complete with a *Tilak* on his forehead.) Initially, some of the people from the audience made fun of the duo; but soon they were mesmerized and moved to tears. The *Keertan* was on the life of *Sant Damajee*.

Shri Anantrao Athavale alias Vardanand Bharati (writer of biography of Shri Dasganu Maharaj) writes -

"His *Keertan* had a kind of an aura. He never resorted to cheap jokes, fake emotions or acting, nor did he make a display of his scholarly knowledge. His simplicity was heartfelt. His subject was uncomplicated. The language used by him was simple and touched the hearts of the audience. His voice was slightly gruff; but it was impressive and commanded respect. The combined effect of all this and his poetry used to be heart rendering."

He had all the qualities required to become an excellent *Keertankar*. Therefore, very soon he got recognition as an outstanding *Keertankar*.

### The story regarding Kanha Bhilla

This incident transformed Dasganu's life completely. He developed a liking for spiritual matters and became a Sai devotee. Therefore, the Kanha Bhilla incident assumes a lot of importance in Dasganu's life.

Around the year 1898, there was a dacoit named Kanha Bhilla who had gained in notoriety. The police from Nizam, as well as British regimes had done their best to arrest him; but to no avail. He was known to be extremely cruel. He had killed many common men, as well as policemen. It was, therefore, decided by the police officials that a squad of plain clothes policemen should be formed to keep a secret watch on the activities of the dacoit. A policeman - who had enmity with Dasganu on some issue - manipulated things and ensured that Dasganu (who was serving as a *Hawaldar* at that time) was included in the dangerous squad. He even created a bogus certificate extolling Dasganu's bravery and placed it before the high officials. Dasganu tried to wriggle out of this matter. However, his efforts were useless and ultimately had to report for his duty in the squad.

He adopted the garb of a *Ramdasi* and arrived at village Loni - about 20 - 22 miles from Pathardi. He camped in the local Ram temple which was very old, neglected and in a dilapidated condition. He cleaned it thoroughly and changed its appearance altogether. His daily routine consisted of performing *Pooja-Archa*, recite Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam twelve times every day, reading of Dasbodh and Dnyaneshwari.

He did not maintain any personal contacts with any of the villagers. His days passed rapidly in the thoughts of the Almighty.

Gradually, devotees started gathering for *Bhajan*, *Keertan* and *Dev-darshan*. More and more people started feeling love and affection towards this holy man. The Patil of the village also developed a faith in him. The Patil had good relations with Kanha Bhilla. Therefore, the news of arrival of a holy man (Dasganu) soon reached him and he personally came to find out more particulars of the man. When Bhilla began questioning in a stern voice, Dasganu got scared and said, "I don't know anything about the police. I had gone to Jambgaon to avail *Darshan* of the place where Samarth was born. On returning to my village, I understood that there was an epidemic of plague. Therefore, I decided to stay here. If you are going to kill me, let me first place my head at the feet of *Bhagvan* Shri Ram." Saying thus, he went inside the temple. On placing his head on the feet of the idol he became unconscious. Kanha Bhilla saw this and went away.

Dasganu sent a message to his superiors that the villagers are growing suspicious and it is necessary to allay their doubts tactfully.

Once, Gangaram Patil had his fields (where he used to make jaggery) near the village Loni and Kanha Bhilla was to visit the place. Dasganu passed on this information to his superiors and the police invaded the place. Patil was scared of retribution from the police as well as the Bhilla. He pleaded with folded hands to Dasganu that "Please pray to Lord Ram and save the life of the Bhilla. Without your blessings this will not be possible."

As soon as the Bhilla saw the police, he climbed on a hillock and set grass on fire. He managed to escape from the place; but in the melee 4 out of 50 policemen lost their lives. Patil informed Bhilla that "You were saved only because of the blessings of this holy man. Don't express doubts about him time and again." Bhilla's heart melted and his suspicions were laid at rest. He took Patil along with him and came to meet Dasganu. He took out the 16 *Tola* gold necklace that he was wearing and placed it at the feet of Dasganu who donated it for the restoration of the Ram temple.

After knowing that Kanha Bhilla was coming to see Dasganu, the police officials gave him a pistol and instructed him to first injure and then arrest the Bhilla. He was also assured of a promotion in the police force after accomplishing the task. However, Dasganu was hesitant in going ahead with the proposal as he did not want a promotion which would have been secured after taking someone's life. He faced another problem. If the bullet fired by him failed to take the Bhilla's life, then his accomplices were sure to take Dasganu's life in revenge. Therefore, he wanted to avoid both the possibilities.

He, therefore, took all his belongings and came to Miraj. On the suggestion of a doctor friend, he got himself admitted as a heart patient. This had the desired effect on his superiors and they shifted him to Nagar. Dr. Bose - an acquaintance of Nanasaheb Chandorkar - gave him a health certificate to that effect.

### **Nanasaheb was a mere medium**

Nanasaheb Chandorkar was fond of *Tamasha* and he was a fan of *Lavnya* composed by Dasganu. This was the first link that brought them together. Later on they set aside the differences in their social status and became very close friends.

In the year 1893, at the insistence of Nanasaheb, Dasganu visited Shirdi for the first time. It was Dasganu's nature not to get carried away by anything. He would not act on any impulse, but would study and test any matter from all the angles and only then, take a decision about it. Accordingly, initially, Dasganu did not have much faith towards Baba. However, very soon he was convinced about Baba's greatness.

It said that 'If one devotes oneself whole-heartedly to the Almighty, the God does not turn him back.' Dasganu experienced this and it became the guiding principle of his life.



Once, Baba told Nanasaheb, “Nana, call all the saints to have meals ! Make good preparations. But, leave the work of inviting the saints to this Dasganu. He will accomplish that task. Ganu, make sure you do this one thing ! The Almighty will take care of your welfare and well-being.”

Taking a cue from this, Dasganu began writing biographies of various saints.

Now, he began going to Baba frequently. Baba never expressed any anger towards him under any circumstances. It was only Dasganu who dared to go up the steps of the *Masjid* and seek Baba’s blessings - even when Baba had assumed the *Avatar* of Lord Narasimha (was extremely furious).

Time and again Baba began telling him - “Leave your job. Are we born to wipe someone’s shoes ? Don’t be a slave of someone.” Ultimately, Dasganu replied, “Baba, I don’t have financial support from anyone. I am able to have two square meals only because I am having a job. You should give me your blessings and say that, I will pass my exam and secure a promotion. Instead, why are you insisting me to give up the job ?” Baba retorted, “You passing an exam ? It will never happen. Listen to me. Give up the job. The Almighty will look after you.” Dasganu enquired, “Will my meals be taken care of ?” Baba replied, “I will myself make the arrangements.” And He added, “You go and get settled down at Nanded. ‘Nanded’ of the Mughal era - understood ?”

Even after all this conversation got repeated several times, Dasganu did not heed to Baba’s advice. Moreover, he secured very good marks in the exam. He conveyed this good news to Chandorkar and requested him to convey it to Baba. But, Baba was not pleased. He reacted, “What is the point in passing merely on paper ? Let him secure the post of a *Faujdar*. Only that will be real success.”

Dasganu had not understood that the ‘exam’ and post of *Faujdar* referred to by Baba had no connection with the police dept. Baba was referring to the various tests of life and hinting that Dasganu would pass the tests only by devoting himself to spirituality.

(Contd.)

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

**Just as a wick soaked in oil when joined to a flame of light, becomes itself a bright light, in the same way a person reaches the status of a sage at the feet of the sage (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 3, Verse 100)**

**Even casual words uttered by the saints break the bonds of false knowledge and save us in times of calamities. So, let us all assimilate these stories. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 3, Verse 171)**

**Whatever services devotees think of rendering of saints, it is the saints themselves who get it done. The devotees are merely the ordained instruments. The real inspiration comes from the saints. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 2, Verse 19)**

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## f Sai Experiences f

**'Completely obey the *Guru's* order is the true discipleship of a disciple. This alone is our adornment.'**

**Dr. Pitale : Service oriented**

**Sai Devotee Doctor Couple**

We often meet people who say 'I am a devotee of this God or that *Guru*'. But, how many of them understand the implication of being a devotee or disciple ?

One, who lives by the tenet of his God's or *Guru's* teachings, reflects his surrender and discipleship. Following a *Guru's* teachings is the true discipleship. (Shri Sai Satcharita, chap. 23, verse 172, 189) One such true devotee of Sai Baba is Dr. Amol Pitale, resident of Vile Parle, Mumbai and a member of Gurusthan Trust.

Chapter 32 of Shri Sai Satcharita states the body which is completely given to the service of others has truly served the purpose for which it was created. According to this teaching Dr. Pitale is truly serving others for a decade by rendering free medical service to pilgrims walking from various places to Shirdi. He provides medical service to the pilgrims from Nasik to Shirdi from Gudipadva to Ramnavami. In this service he is supported by his wife Dr. Anita, his sister Dr. Shraddha, and sister's husband Dr. Ujjwal Bhure and mother Shaila Pitale. In these eight days while going from one group of pilgrims to another, he travels an estimated 4,500 km.

After learning about Dr. Pitale from renowned Singer Anupama Deshpande, we decided to meet him. After fixing appointment with him we headed for his residence at Vile Parle. We were elated to meet a family which was blissfully drenched in Sai devotion. The most touching sight at their residence was the two and half feet brass statue of Baba in the hall. This statue was sculpted by Dr. Pitale's father Late Manohar Pitale. While the sublimely smiling statue of Baba was holding our attention, Dr. Pitale's one year four month old, Nishtha came running into the room. We were touched by not only the devotion of all the adult's in the family, but also the tiny tot, who chanting 'Baba... Baba' was busy lighting the lamps in front of Baba.

Dr. Pitale said, "Nishtha is devoted to Baba, every morning when she wakes up, she comes to the hall, and ask us to lift her, then she kisses Baba. When we do *Pooja* since, she can't say *Aarati*, she simply chants 'Baba... Baba'."

Dr. Pitale then showed us a photo. We were shocked and the first thought to cross our mind was, 'Is this possible ?' This was a photograph, where Nishtha was giving a kiss to Baba and it looked Baba too was responding to her. Actually, in the statue Baba's lips are closed; but in the photo they are together as if about to kiss.

While recalling the incident Dr. Pitale said, "It was her first birthday, as usual I lifted Nishtha in my arm and she kissed Baba, in that moment the picture was taken. That day we didn't notice anything unusual, nor did we when the photo prints came and we hung it in the hall. It was only when a friend of mine who was visiting us, brought it to our notice."

Dr. Pitale while stating this was feeling overwhelmed. He added, "Shri Sai has blessed five generations of the Pitale family, and this is a clear sign of it." We asked,

“Five generations ?”

Dr. Pitale explained, “Yes. Nishtha is the fifth generation of the Pitale family to be blessed by Baba. My great grandfather Late Vishnupant Pitale had the privilege of taking Baba’s *Darshan* in 1916. In that first *Darshan* Baba’s love attracted my great grandfather. That time my great grandfather took a picture of Baba and gave it in Dwarkamai, which was blessed by Baba. Even today that picture is with us. From that day to this day Baba is with our family, and we are experiencing His blessings bestowed on us.”

When queried, “How did you think of providing free medical facilities to the pilgrims?” He replied, “In 2001, my father had asked Baba for something (vow), when the request was fulfilled, he promised to come to Shirdi.

“His wish was fulfilled; so we left for Shirdi the next day, and it was Gudi Padva. We had also taken with us first aid box and some medicines. We had halted our vehicle near Bhiwandi Bypass for a while. We saw *Shraddha Saburi Mandal’s Sai Palkhi* (palanquin carrying Sai Baba’s picture), they too had halted. We saw a boy vomiting; he too also had pain in his stomach. My father asked him if he needed any help, he told my father to meet the *Mandal’s* chairman. At the same time the chairman was coming towards them. When my father said that my son is a doctor and do you want any help, the chairman said, ‘You have arrived like God in this moment of distress, there are 25- 30 pilgrims who are unwell.’

“We treated them with our medicines and moved ahead. On the way we spoke to 2-3 more *Mandals*, and while treating the pilgrims, the medicines, we were carrying got exhausted. We bought some medicines in Nasik and treated a few more pilgrims. We reached Shirdi, took Baba’s *Darshan* and returned to Mumbai. My father took a decision that from Gudi Padva to Ramnavami, eight days in all we will provide free medical services to the pilgrims on the way to Shirdi; and from that day to this day, the services are provided every year without a hitch.”

When queried, “Where do you get the necessary fund for this.” He replied, “Initially, we spent approximately Rs. 25,000 on the medicines. Under this building the Sai temple, that you see was constructed by my father. The money from the donation box was collected once a year and that would help us buy the requisite amount of medicines. But, as the years rolled by, the number of pilgrims increased and the total cost of the medicines spiraled, this year it is Rs.4,42,614 (if we were to consider the retail price, the cost will be higher). As our service increased, so did the help; today, the pharmaceutical companies help us with the medicines. Besides, the Gurusthan Trust of this Sai temple also bears a part of the cost. There are some generous donors who support us whole heartedly. We have never experienced a lack, with Baba’s grace, somehow or the other help has always come. Initially our group had 14 people in this voluntary service, now we have 72. This is all Baba’s *Leela*.”

Again we enquired, “In eight days, many pilgrims were likely to feel unwell, so a large amount of medicines is required to deal with the situation. How do you manage it ?”

Dr. Pitale replied, “We keep all the medicines before Sai Baba and then put *Udi* on them. Then we make packets of them to treat body ache, fever, loose motion and vomiting. Each packet has four dosages; some packets are handed to the *chairmen* of the *Mandals*. At the moment there are 81 *Palkhis* in touch with us. We require about one lakh such packets. The Sai devotees are experiencing great results from these packets; so they have started calling it ‘Sai Dose’.

We enquired, "In those eight days, do you experience Baba's *Leelas* ?"

Dr. Pitale replied, "We experience many; but if you listen to the experiences of the Sai devotees, you will be pleasantly shocked. Once, I got a call from the chairman of the *Mandal* at around 12.30 p.m. asking me to treat a patient, who was shivering with very high fever. I asked him to give 'Sai Dose'; he said all the packets were exhausted.

"At that time I was on *Kasara Ghat* and he was at Wasim, the distance was too much. The chairman of the *Mandal* said, 'Let me see what I can do.' The chairman at that time, had tablets of Gelusil (one given for acidity), he took it, kept it in front of the *Palkhi*, applied *Udi* to it and gave it to the patient, in no time the patient's fever subsided and the next day, he was ready to walk !

"There are times when the condition of the patient is critical and he has to be hospitalized; but 'Sai Dose' is enough to treat the patient, isn't it Baba's *Leela* ?

"Once, a 62-years old man who walked to Shirdi every year, met us at our Igatpuri camp. His legs were operated upon and screws were fitted on them. One of the screws had come off and there was pus formation. I gave him a T.T. injection and told him that he needs to get the screw fitted and asked him to return home. He didn't listen to me and started arguing, 'I am on my pilgrimage to Shirdi. I can't leave it half way. Treat me if you wish, before I leave'. I beseeched him that he had a grave health hazard and he should return home. To this, he responded slightly with anger, 'If you want to treat me, please do it. Otherwise, even if all the three screws come out, I will continue my journey to Shirdi.'

"I saluted his Sai devotion and dressed his wounds. His dressing took about 30 minutes. This will give you an idea of the extent of his wound the pus formation. For the next three days I went to all the places where he was journeying and dressed his wounds. And, the most astonishing thing was, on the third day, the pus had totally disappeared from his wound. He reached Shirdi, had Baba's *Darshan* and returned to Mumbai, he sought surgical attention and his leg is fine; we met him this year in the pilgrimage.

"Once, some devotees brought a patient to our medical camp. I asked what had happened, they said, 'This man has been hit by a running truck and the impact was such that the headlight of the truck broke.' But, when I examined the patient, he had minor scratches on his back !

"The *Mandals* who get to hear of us have come and voluntarily helped us. One came and gave us a generator, some others donate food packets and water bottles, and some give voluntary service, like in helping fill medicines in the packets, etc. This is the service that Baba has asked us to do, it is so touching to meet these kind souls. Some devotees from these *Mandals* now are a part of our extended family, and they keep in touch with us round the year.

"Once, when my father was ill, he needed 2-3 bottles of blood. When I called one Sai devotee, 27 devotees came forward to donate blood !

"By giving medical assistance we feel very happy and satisfied. Every year people go on vacation and return with renewed vigour. For us those eight days rejuvenate us, we get energy for the entire one year, other than this we do not go for any outings in the year.

“In 2005 my Dr. Ujjwal had gone to Switzerland for some study. Hence, we were finding ourselves short of one doctor. With this niggling thought we left for Seva; but the next day, Dr. Ujjwal joined us in this trip ! My sister had taken a loan for his travel, the moment we completed the camp he returned to Switzerland. The satisfaction we get while serving is incomparable to anything and it seems like Baba’s doing to get this done by us.

“Even my wife’s parents are blessed by Baba. Her mother’s great grandfather is the self same Pitale, to whom Baba had given the blessed two rupees, which are still with the family.

“Let Baba forever bless us all. Let Him get the service done through us, this is the only earnest prayer at His Feet.”

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**‘Paris’ turns iron into gold. Similar are the saints to the ‘Paris’. The deeds of the saints are out-of-the-ordinary. They give their own image to the devotees. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 4, Verse 39)**

**By listening and reflecting over the stories of the saints, by their studious application and intent contemplation, the *Brahmins*, the low-castes and the women are purified. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 10, Verse 125)**

**The nescience of the ignorant disappears and the problems arising from doubts of those proud of their learning will be removed and purity of mind will be born, if they place their faith in saints and surrender. (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 12, Verse 19)**

**Such are the words of saints which are never futile. They are full of deep meaning. Who can evaluate them ? (Shri Sai Sat Charita, Chapter 12, Verse 112)**

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