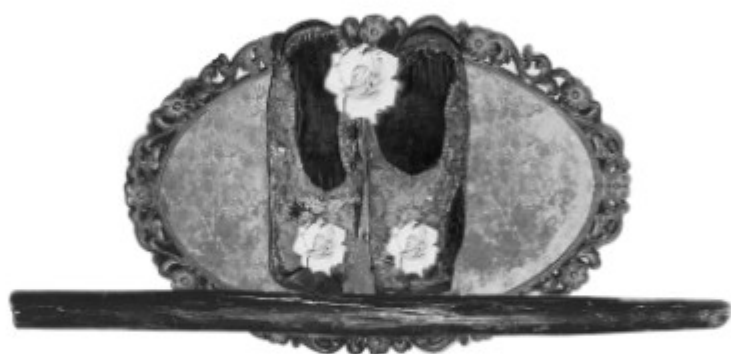


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DEDICATION

“Whosoever offers to Me, with love or devotion, a leaf, a flower , a fruit or water, that offering of love of the pure and self-controlled man is willingly and readily accepted by me.”

- Lord Shree Krishna
in Bhagwad Gita , IX-26

TO
SHREE SAI BABA
THE ANTARYAMI
This work with myself



Life of Shri N.V. Gunaji

(1876-1963)

Shri N.V. Gunaji was an eminent scholar who wrote over twenty eight books on various people and issues. He was avidly interested in the spiritual teachings of Sai Baba, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa. He wrote and translated the Bhagwad Gita, the Bhagwat, etc. He has written the life of Sri Paramhans Ramakrishna as well as that of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Marathi and several books on the teaching of Swami Ramtirth. He also translated Booker T. Washington's biography which he called "Atmoddhar".

Born in Belgaum in July 1873 in a Saraswat Brahmin family he did his school education in Belgaum, in Sardar High School and later graduated from Mumbai's Wilson College. He studied in the Government Law College in Mumbai and passed his LLB examination. Soon after, he returned to Belgaum to take up the practice of law. After practising law for several years Shri N.V. Gunaji also joined the Belgaum Municipality as Chief Executive Officer. Throughout his life he was an avid reader and translated several books in English or Marathi. Shri Gunaji was also keenly interested in naturopathy and published two books on "Scientific and Efficient Breathing" and "Anti T.B. & Anti Heart Failure". He would treat patients through naturopathy and scientific massage. He also had the good fortune of treating Mahatma Gandhi by his scientific massage techniques when Gandhiji visited Belgaum several times. Shri Gunaji also treated Sri Ramana Maharshi when he visited the spiritual leader in Arunachalam.

Shri N.V. Gunaji adapted and translated Shri Hemand Pant Dabholkar's "Sri Sai Satcharita" into English and donated the entire proceeds to the Sai Sansthan Trust. The book has reached out to thousands of devotees and people over the last forty five years who have read it and have had their faith and Shraddha in Baba reinforced. Many devotees use this book to read it as a 'Saptah'. Shri N.V. Gunaji passed away in 1963, a few months before his ninetieth year.

SHRI SAI SATCHARITA

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SHRI SAI SATCHARITA

CHAPTER I

Obeisances — The story of grinding wheat and its philosophical significance.

According to the ancient and revered custom, Hemadpant begins the work, Shri Sai Satcharita, with various salutations.

(1) First, he makes obeisance to the God Ganesh¹ to remove all obstacles and make the work a success, and says that Sri Sai is God Ganesh Himself.

(2) Then, to goddess Saraswati² to inspire him to write the work and says that Shri Sai is one with this Goddess, and that He is Himself singing His own life.

(3) Then, to the Gods; Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar – the Creating, Preserving and Destroying deities respectively, and says that Sainath is one with them and He, the great teacher, will carry us across the river of worldly existence.

(4) Then, to his tutelary deity Narayan Adinath, who manifested himself in Konkan – the land reclaimed by Parashurama³, (Ram in the Hindi version) from the sea; and to the Adi (Original) Purush⁴ of the family.

(5) Then, to Bharadwaj Muni, into whose gotra (clan) he was born and also to various Rishis, Yagnyavalkya, Bhṛugu, Parashar, Narad, Vedavyas, Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatkumar, Shuka, Shounak, Vishwamitra, Vasishtha, Valmiki, Vamadev, Jaimini, Vaishampayan, Nava Yogindra etc; and also modern saints, such as Nivrutti, Dnyanadev, Sopan, Muktabai, Janardan, Eknath, Namdev, Tukaram, Kanha, and Narahari etc.

1. God Ganesh, a son of Lord Shiva, bears the head of an elephant and the body of a human being. When starting anything, He is worshipped by the Hindu.

2. Saraswati – Goddess of Learning

3. Parashuram – One of the Avatars or Incarnations of God (before Lord Ram)

4. Purush – Man

(6) Then, to his grandfather, Sadashiv, father Raghunath, his mother, who left him in his infancy; to his paternal aunt, who brought him up, and to his loving elder brother.

(7) Then, to the readers and prays to them to give their whole and undivided attention to his work.

(8) And lastly, to his Guru Shri Sainath – an Incarnation of Shri Dattatreya, Who is his sole refuge and Who will make him realize, that Brahma is the reality and the world an illusion; and incidentally, to all beings, in whom the Lord God dwells.

After describing in brief the various modes of devotion according to Parashar, Vyasa and Shandilya etc., the author goes on to relate the following story:

"It was some time after 1910 that I went, one fine morning, to the Masjid in Shirdi to have darshan of Sai Baba. I was wonder-struck to see the following phenomenon. After washing His mouth and face, Sai Baba began to make preparations for grinding wheat. He spread a sack on the floor, and thereon set a hand-mill. He took some quantity of wheat in a winnowing fan, and then, drawing up the sleeves of His kafni (robe), and taking hold of the peg of the hand-mill, started grinding the wheat, by putting a few handfuls of wheat in the upper opening of the mill and rotated it. I thought, "What business Baba had with the grinding of wheat, when He possessed nothing and stored nothing, and as He lived on alms!" Some people who had come there thought likewise, but none had the courage to ask Baba, what He was doing. Immediately, this news of Baba grinding wheat spread into the village, and at once men and women ran to the Masjid and flocked there to see Baba's act. Four bold women, from the crowd, forced their way up and pushing Baba aside, forcibly took the peg or handle into their hands, and singing Baba's Leelas started grinding. At first, Baba was enraged, but on seeing the women's love and devotion, He was much pleased and began to smile. While they were grinding, they began to think that Baba had no house, no property, no children, none to look after and He lived on alms, and therefore, He did not require any wheat-flour for making bread or roti, what will He do with this large quantity of flour? Perhaps, as Baba is very kind, He will distribute the flour amongst us. Thinking in this way and while singing, they finished the grinding and

after putting the hand-mill aside, they divided the flour into four portions and began to remove them by taking one portion per head. Baba, Who was calm and quiet up till now, got wild and started abusing them saying, "Ladies, have you gone mad? Whose father's property are you looting away? Have I borrowed any wheat from you, so that you can safely take the flour? Now, do this! Take the flour and throw it on the village borders!" On hearing this, the women felt abashed and whispering amongst themselves, went to the outskirts of the village and spread the flour, as directed by Baba.

I asked the Shirdi people, "What was this that Baba did?" They replied that, as cholera epidemic was spreading in the village this was Baba's remedy for the same; it was not wheat, that was ground, but cholera itself was ground to pieces and pushed out of the village. From this time onward, the cholera epidemic subsided and the people of the village were happy. I was much pleased to know all this, but at the same time my curiosity was also aroused. I began to ask myself ... What earthly connection was there between wheat flour and cholera? What was the causal relation between the two, and how to reconcile them? The incident seems to be inexplicable. I should write something on this and sing to my heart's content Baba's sweet leelas, thinking in this way about this leela, my heart was filled with joy and I was thus, inspired to write Baba's life – The Sai Satcharita.

And as we know, with Baba's grace and blessings this work was successfully accomplished.

Philosophical Significance of Grinding

Apart from the meaning, which the people of Shirdi put on this incident of grinding wheat, there is, we think, a philosophical significance too. Baba lived in Shirdi for about sixty years and during this long period, He did the business of grinding almost every day – not, however, wheat alone, but the sins, the mental and physical afflictions and the miseries of His innumerable devotees. The two stones of His mill consisted of karma and bhakti; the former being the lower one and the latter, the upper one. The handle, with which Baba worked the mill, consisted of dhyān. It was the firm conviction of Baba that, knowledge or self-realization is not possible, unless there is the prior act of grinding of all our impulses, desires, sins; and of three gunas, viz.

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, and the Ahankar, which is so subtle and therefore, so difficult to get rid of.

This reminds us of a similar story of Kabir, who seeing a woman grinding corn, said to his Guru, Nipatniranjan, "I am weeping, because I feel the agony of being crushed under this wheel of worldly existence, like the corn in the hand-mill." Nipatniranjan replied, **"Do not be afraid, hold fast to the handle of knowledge of this mill, as I do, and do not wander far away from the same, but turn inward to the centre, and you are sure to be saved."**

Bow to Shri Sai — Peace be to all



CHAPTER II

Object of Writing the Work – Incapacity and Boldness in the Undertaking – Hot Discussion – Conferring Significant and Prophetic Title of 'Hemadpant' – Necessity of a Guru.

In the last chapter, the author mentioned in the original Marathi book that he would state the reason that led him to undertake the work, and about the persons qualified to read the same, and such other points. Now, in this chapter, he narrates the same.

The Object of Writing this Work

In the first chapter, I described Sai Baba's miracle of checking and destroying the cholera epidemic by grinding wheat and throwing the flour on the outskirts of the village. I heard other miracles of Sai Baba to my great delight, and this delight burst forth into this poetic work. I also thought that, the description of these miracles of Sai Baba would be interesting and instructive to His devotees, and would remove their sins, and so I began to write the sacred life and teachings of Sai Baba. The life of the saint is neither logical nor dialectical. It shows us the true and great path.

Incapacity and Boldness in Undertaking the Work

Hemadpant thought that, he was not a fit person to undertake the work. He said, "I do not know the life of my intimate friend nor do I know my own mind, then, how can I write the life of a saint or describe the nature of Incarnations, which even the Vedas were unable to do? One must be a saint himself before he could know other saints, otherwise, how can I describe their glory? To write the life of a saint is most difficult, one may as well be able to measure the depth of the seven seas or enclose the sky with cloth-trappings. I knew, this was the most venturesome undertaking, which might expose me to ridicule. I, therefore, invoked Sai Baba's grace.

The premier poet – saint of Maharashtra, Shri Dnyaneshwar Maharaj has stated that, the Lord loves those who write the lives of

saints, and the saints also have their own peculiar method of assigning the service, which the devotees long for. The saint inspires the work, the devotee becomes only an indirect cause or an instrument in achieving the end. For instance, in 1700 Shaka year¹, the poet Mahipati aspired to write the lives of saints. Saints inspired him, and got the work done, so also, in 1800 Shaka year² Das Ganu's service was accepted. The former wrote 4 works – Bhakta Vijay, Sant Vijay, Bhakta Leelamrut and Sant Leelamrut, while the latter wrote two – 'Bhakta Leelamrut and Sant Kathamrut', in which the lives of modern saints were described. In chapters 31, 32, 33 of Bhakta Leelamrut and in chapter 57 of Sant Kathamrut, the life and teachings of Sai Baba are very well depicted. These have been separately published in Sai Leela Magazine, Nos. 11 and 12, Vol. 17; the readers are advised to read these chapters. So also, Sai Baba's wonderful Leelas are described by Mrs. Savitribai Raghunath Tendulkar of Bandra in a small book, named Sri Sainath Bhajan Mala. Das Ganu Maharaj also has composed various sweet poems on Sai Baba. A devotee, named Amidas Bhavani Mehta, has also published some stories of Sai Baba in Gujarati; some nos. of Sainath Prabha, a magazine published by Dakshina Bhiksha Sanstha of Shirdi, are also published. Then, the question of objection comes in, that while so many works regarding Sai Baba are extant, why should this (Satcharita) be written; and where is its necessity?

The answer is plain and simple. The life of Sai Baba is as wide and deep as the infinite ocean, and all can dive deep into the same and take out precious gems (of knowledge and bhakti) and distribute them among the aspiring people. The stories, parables and teachings of Sai Baba are very wonderful. They will give peace and happiness to the people, who are afflicted with sorrows and heavily loaded with miseries of this worldly existence, and also bestow knowledge and wisdom, both in worldly and in spiritual domains. **If these teachings of Sai Baba, which are as interesting and instructive as the Vedic lore, are listened to and meditated upon, the devotees will get what they long for, viz., union with Brahma, mastery in eight-fold Yoga, bliss of meditation etc.** So, I thought that I should call these stories together, that would be my best Upasana. This collection would be most delightful to those simple

1. 1700 Shaka year – 1700 SA + 78 – 1778 A.D.

A.D. + – Vikrami year

2. 1800 Shaka year – 1878 A.D.

souls, whose eyes were not blessed with Sai Baba's darshan. So, I set about collecting Sai Baba's teachings and expressions – the outcome of His boundless self-realization. It was Sai Baba, Who inspired me in this matter, in fact, I surrendered my ego at His feet and thought that, my path was clear; and that He would make me quite happy here, and in the next world.

I could not myself ask Sai Baba to give me permission for this work, so I requested Mr. Madhavrao Deshpande alias Shama, Baba's most intimate devotee, to speak to Him for me. He pleaded my cause and said to Sai Baba, "This Annasaheb wishes to write Your biography, don't say that You are a poor Fakir, and there is no necessity to write it; but if You agree and help him, he will write or rather, Your grace will accomplish the work. Without Your consent and blessing, nothing can be done successfully." When Sai Baba heard this request, He was moved and blessed me by giving me His Udi (sacred ash) and placing His boon-bestowing hand on my head said, "Let him make a collection of stories and experiences, keep notes and memos, I will help him. **He is only an outward instrument. I should write My autobiography Myself and satisfy the wishes of My devotees.** He should get rid of his ego, surrender it at My feet. He, who acts like this in life, him I help the most. What of My life-stories? I serve him in his house in all possible ways. When his ego is completely annihilated and there is left no trace of it, **I Myself shall enter into him and shall Myself write My own life. Hearing my stories and teachings will create faith in devotees' hearts and they will easily get self-realization and bliss;** let there be no insistence on establishing one's own view, no attempt to refute other's opinions, no discussion of pros and cons of any subject."

Significant and Prophetic Title

The word 'discussion' put me in mind of my promise to explain the story of my getting the title of 'Hemadpant' and now, I begin to relate the same. I was on close friendly terms with Kakasaheb Dixit and Nanasaheb Chandorkar. They pressed me to go to Shirdi and have Baba's darshan, and I promised them to do so. But, something in the meanwhile turned up, which prevented me from going to Shirdi. The son of a friend of mine at Lonavala fell ill. My friend tried all possible means, physical and spiritual, but the fever would not abate. At length, he got his Guru to sit by the bed-side of his son, but this too was of no avail. Hearing this, I

thought... "What was the utility of the Guru, if he could not save my friend's son? If the Guru can't do anything for us, why should I go to Shirdi at all?" Thinking this way, I postponed my Shirdi-trip, but the inevitable must happen, and it happened in my case as follows ... Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar, who was a Divisional officer, was going on tour to Bassein. From Thana he came to Dadar and was waiting for a train bound for Bassein. Meanwhile, a Bandra Local turned up. He sat in it and came to Bandra, and sent for me and took me to task for putting off my Shirdi trip. Nana's argument for my Shirdi trip was convincing and delightful, and so I decided to start for Shirdi the same night. I packed up my luggage and started for Shirdi. I planned to go to Dadar and from there to catch the train for Manmad and so, I booked myself for Dadar and sat in the train. While the train was to start, a Mohammedan came hastily to my compartment and seeing all my paraphernalia, asked me where I was bound to. I told him about my plan. He, then, suggested that I should go straight to Boribunder, and not to wait at Dadar, as the Manmad Mail did not stop at Dadar. If this little miracle or Leela had not happened, I would not have reached Shirdi the next day, as settled, and many doubts would have assailed me. But, that was not to be. As fortune favoured me I reached Shirdi the next day before 9 or 10 a.m. Bhausaheb (Kaka) Dixit was waiting for me there. This was in 1910, when there was only one place, viz., Sathe's Wada, for lodging pilgrim devotees. After alighting from the tonga I was anxious to have darshan, when the great devotee, Tatyasaheb Noolkar returned from the Masjid and said that Sai Baba was at the corner of the Wada and that, I should first get the preliminary darshan and then, after bath see Him at leisure. Hearing this I ran and prostrated before Baba and my joy knew no bounds. I found more than what Nana Chandorkar had told me. All my senses were satisfied and I forgot my thirst and hunger. The moment I touched Sai Baba's feet, I began a new lease of life. I felt myself much obliged to those, who spurred and helped me to get the darshan, and I considered them as my real relatives, and I cannot repay their debt. I only remember them and prostrate (mentally) before them. The peculiarity of Sai Baba's darshan, as I found it, is that by His darshan our thoughts are changed, the force of previous actions is abated and gradually non-attachment or dispassion towards worldly objects grows up. It is by the merit of actions in many past births, that such darshan is got; and if only you see Sai Baba, all the world assumes the form of Sai Baba.

Hot Discussion

On the first day of my arrival in Shirdi, there was a discussion between me and Balasaheb Bhate regarding the necessity of a Guru, I contended, "Why should we lose our freedom and submit to others? When we have to do our duty, why a Guru is necessary? One must try his best and save himself. What can the Guru do to a man, who does nothing but sleeps indolently?" Thus, I pleaded free will, while Mr. Bhate took up the other side, viz. destiny, and said, "Whatever is bound to happen, must happen, even great men have failed; man proposes one way, but God disposes the other way. Brush aside your cleverness, pride or egoism won't help you." This discussion, with all its pros and cons went on for an hour or so, and as usual, no conclusion was arrived at. We had to stop the discussion ultimately, as we were exhausted. The net result of this was, that I lost my peace of mind and found that, unless there is strong body consciousness and egoism, there would be no discussion, in other words, it is egoism that breeds discussion.

Then, when we went to the Masjid with others, Baba asked Kakasaheb Dixit the following:

"What was going on in the (Sathe's) Wada? What was the discussion about?", and staring at me, Baba further added, "What did this 'Hemadpant' say?"

Hearing these words, I was much surprised. The Masjid was at a considerable distance from Sathe Wada, where I was staying and where the discussion was going on. How could Baba know our discussion, unless, He be Omniscient and Inner Ruler of us all?

I began to think, why Sai Baba should call me by the name 'Hemadpant'. This word is a distorted form of 'Hemadripant'. This Hemadripant was a well known minister of the kings, Mahadev and Ramdev of Devgiri of the Yadav dynasty. He was very learned, good-natured and the author of works, such as Chaturvarga Chintamani (dealing with spiritual subjects) and Rajprashasti. He invented and started new methods of accounts and was the originator of the Moodhi (Marathi shorthand) script. But, I was quite the opposite, an ignoramus and of mediocre intellect. So, I could not understand, why the name or title was conferred upon me, but thinking seriously upon it, I thought that, the title was a dart to destroy my ego, so that, I should always remain meek and humble. It was also a compliment paid to me for the cleverness in the discussion.

Looking into history, we think that, Baba's word (calling Mr. Dabholkar by the name 'Hemadpant') was significant and prophetic, as we find that, he looked after the management of Sai Sansthan very intelligently, kept all the accounts properly and was also the author of such a good work 'Sai Satcharita', which deals with such important and spiritual subjects as Dhyan, Bhakti, dispassion, self-surrender and self-realization.

About the Necessity of a Guru

Hemadpant has left no note, no memo about what Baba said regarding this subject, but Kakasaheb Dixit has published his notes regarding this matter. The next day, after Hemadpant's meeting with Sai Baba, Kakasaheb went to Baba and asked, "Baba, where to go?" Baba said, "High up." Then, the man said, "Where is the way?" Baba said, "There are many ways leading there; there is one way from here (Shirdi) also. The way is difficult. There are tigers and wolves in the jungles on the way." I (Kakasaheb) asked, "But, Baba, what, if we take a guide with us?" Baba answered, "Then, there is no difficulty. The guide will take you straight to your destination, avoiding wolves, tigers and ditches etc., on the way. If there be no guide, there is the danger of your being lost in the jungles or falling into ditches." Mr. Dabholkar was present on this occasion and he thought that, this was the answer Baba gave to the question, whether Guru was a necessity (Vide Sai Leela, Vol. I, No. 5, page 47); and he, thereupon took the hint that, no discussion whether man is free or bound, is of any use in spiritual matters, but on the contrary real Paramartha is possible, only as the result of the teachings of the Guru; as is illustrated in this chapter of the original work, in the instances of great Avatars like Ram and Krishna, who had to submit themselves to their Gurus, Vasishtha and Sandipani respectively, for getting self-realization and that, the only virtues necessary for such progress are faith and patience. (vide Sai Satcharita, Ch. II, 191-92)

Bow to Shri Sai — Peace be to all



CHAPTER III

Sai Baba's Sanction and Promise – Assignment of Work to Devotees – Baba's Stories as Beacon Light – His Motherly Love – Rohila's Story – His Sweet and Nectar-like Words

Sai Baba's Sanction and Promise

As described in the previous chapter, Sai Baba gave His complete assent to the writing of the Satcharita and said, "I fully agree with you regarding the writing of Satcharita. You do your duty, don't be afraid in the least, steady your mind and have faith in My words. If My Leelas are written, the Avidya (nescience) will vanish and if they are attentively and devoutly listened to, the consciousness of the worldly existence will abate and strong waves of devotion and love will rise up and if one dives deep into My Leelas, he would get precious jewels of knowledge."

Hearing this, the author was much pleased, and he, at once, became fearless and confident, and thought that the work was bound to be a success. Then, turning to Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande) Sai Baba said, "If a man utters My name with love, I shall fulfill all his wishes, increase his devotion. And if he sings earnestly My life and My deeds, him I shall beset in front and back and on all sides. **Those devotees, who are attached to Me, heart and soul, will naturally feel happiness, when they hear these stories. Believe Me that, if anybody sings My Leelas, I will give him infinite joy and ever-lasting contentment. It is My special characteristic to free any person, who surrenders completely to Me, and who worships Me faithfully, and who remembers Me, and meditates on Me constantly. How can they be conscious of worldly objects and sensations, who utter My name, who worship Me, who think of My stories and My life, and who thus, always remember Me! I shall draw out My devotees from the jaws of death. If My stories are listened to, all the diseases will be got rid of. So, hear My stories with respect, and think and meditate on them, assimilate them.** This is the way of happiness and contentment. The pride and egoism of My devotees will vanish, the mind of the hearers will be set at rest; and if he has wholehearted and complete faith, he will be one with Supreme Consciousness. The simple remembrance of My name as "Sai, Sai" will do away with sins of speech and hearing."

Different Works Assigned to Devotees

The Lord entrusts different works to different devotees. Some are given the work of building temples and Maths, or Ghats (flight of steps) on rivers; some are made to sing the glories of God, some are sent on pilgrimages, but to me was allotted the work of writing the Sai Satcharita. Being a jack of all trades, but master of none, I was quite unqualified for this job. Then, why should I undertake such a difficult task? Who can describe the true life of Sai Baba? Sai Baba's grace alone can enable one to accomplish this difficult work. So, when I took the pen in my hand, **Sai Baba took away my egoism and Himself wrote His stories. The credit of relating these stories, therefore, goes to Him and not to me.** Though, Brahmin by birth, I lacked the two eyes (i.e.; the sight or vision) of Shruti and Smruti and therefore, was not at all capable of writing the Satcharita, but the grace of the Lord makes a dumb man talk, enables a lame man to cross a mountain. He alone knows the ways of getting things done, as He likes. Neither the flute, nor the harmonium knows, how the sounds are produced. This is the concern of the player. The oozing of Chandrakant jewel and the surging of the sea are not, due to the jewel and the sea, but due to the rising of the moon.

Baba's Stories as Beacon Light

Light-houses are constructed at various places in the sea, to enable the boatmen to avoid rocks and dangers, and make them sail safely. Sai Baba's stories serve a similar purpose in the ocean of worldly existence. They surpass nectar in sweetness, and make our worldly path smooth and easy to traverse. Blessed are the stories of the saints. When they enter our hearts through the ears, the body-consciousness or egoism and the sense of duality vanish; and when they are stored in the heart, doubts will evade, pride of the body will fall, and wisdom will be stored in abundance. **The description of Baba's pure fame, and the hearing of the same with love, will destroy the sins of the devotee and, therefore, this is the simple Sadhana for attaining salvation.** The Sadhana for Krita Age was Sama-dama (tranquility of mind and body); for Treta Age, sacrifice; for Dwapar worship; and for Kali (present) Age, it is singing of the name and glory of the Lord. This last Sadhana is open to all the people of the four Varnas (Brahmins, etc.). The other Sadhanas, viz. Yoga Tyaga (sacrifice), Dhyan (meditation) and Dhyandharana (concentration) are very difficult to practice, but singing and hearing the stories and the glory of the Lord (Sai Baba) is very easy. We

have only to turn our attention towards them. The listening to and singing of the stories will remove the attachment to the senses and their objects, and will make the devotees dispassionate, and will ultimately lead them to self-realization. With this end in view, Sai Baba made me write His stories, as Satcharita. The devotees may now easily read and hear these stories of Sai Baba and while doing so, meditate on Him, His form and thus, attain devotion to Guru and God (Sai Baba), get dispassion and self-realization. In the preparation and writing of this work, Satcharita, it is Sai Baba's grace, which has accomplished everything, making use of me as a mere instrument.

Motherly Love of Sai Baba

Everybody knows, how a cow loves her infant calf. Her udder is always full and when the calf wants milk and dashes at the udder, out comes the milk in an unceasing flow. Similarly, a human mother knows the wants of her child before-hand and feeds him, at her breast in time. In case of dressing and adorning the child, the mother takes particular care to see that, this is well done. The child knows or cares nothing about this, but the mother's joy knows no bounds, when she sees her child well dressed and adorned. The love of the mother is peculiar, extraordinary and disinterested, and has no parallel. Sadgurus feel this motherly love towards their disciples. Sai Baba had the same love towards me, and I give an instance of it below:

In 1916 I retired from Government service. The pension, that was settled in my case, was not sufficient to maintain my family decently. On Guru Pournima (15th of Ashadha) day of that year, I went to Shirdi with other devotees. There, Mr. Anna Chincharikar, of his own accord, prayed to Baba for me as follows: "Please, look kindly at him, the pension he gets is quite insufficient, his family is growing. Give him some other appointment, remove his anxiety and make him happy!" Baba replied, "He will get some other job, but now, he should serve Me and be happy! His plates will be ever full and never empty. **He should turn all his attention towards Me and avoid the company of atheists, irreligious and wicked people.** He should be modest and humble towards all, and worship Me with heart and soul. If he does this, he will get eternal happiness."

The question, who is this He, Whose worship is advocated, is already answered in a note on "Who is Sai Baba" in the prologue, at

the beginning of this work.

Rohila's Story

The story of the Rohila illustrates Sai Baba's all embracing love. One Rohila, tall and well-built, strong as a bull, came to Shirdi, wearing a long Kafni (robe) and was enamored of the Sai, Who stayed there. Day and night, he used to recite, in a loud and harsh tone the Kalma (verses from Holy Quran) and shout "ALLAH HO AKBAR" (God is Great). Most people of Shirdi, were working in their fields during the day and when they returned to their homes at night, they were welcomed with Rohila's harsh cries and shouts. They could get no sleep and felt much trouble and inconvenience. They suffered this nuisance for some days in silence, and when they could stand it no longer, they approached Baba and requested Him to check the Rohila and stop the nuisance. Baba did not attend to their complaint. On the contrary, Baba took the villagers to task and asked them to mind their own business. He said to them that the Rohila had got a very bad wife, who tried to trouble the Rohila and Himself; but hearing the Rohila's prayers, she dared not enter and they were at peace. In fact, the Rohila had no wife and by his wife Baba meant Durbuddhi, i.e. evil thoughts. As Baba liked prayers and cries to God better than anything else, He took the side of the Rohila, and asked the villagers to wait and bear with the nuisance, which would abate in due course.

Baba's Sweet and Nectar-like Words

One day at noon, after Arati, devotees were returning to their lodgings, when Baba gave the following beautiful advice:

"Be wherever you like, do whatever you choose, remember this well that, all what you do is known to Me. **I am the Inner Ruler of all and seated in your hearts. I envelope all the creatures, the movable and immovable world.** I am the Controller – the Wire-puller of the show of this universe. I am the Mother – origin of all beings – the Harmony of three Gunas, the Propeller of all senses, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. Nothing will harm him, who turns his attention towards Me, but Maya will lash or whip him, who forgets Me. All the insects, ants, the visible, movable and immovable world, is My body or form".

Hearing these beautiful and precious words, I, at once, decided in my mind to serve no man henceforth but my Guru only; but the reply

of Baba to Anna Chinchani's query (which was really mine) that I would get some job, began to revolve in my mind, and I began to think, whether it would come to happen. As future events showed, Baba's words came true and I got a Government job, but that was of short duration. Then, I became free and devoted myself solely to the service of my Guru Sai Baba.

Before concluding this chapter, I request the readers to leave out the various hindrances, viz., indolence, sleep, wandering of mind, attachments to senses etc. and turn their whole and undivided attention to these stories of Sai Baba. Let their love be natural, let them know the secret of devotion, let them not exhaust themselves by other Sadhanas, let them stick to this simple remedy i.e., listening to Sai Baba's stories. This will destroy their ignorance and will secure for them salvation. A miser may stay at various places, but he constantly thinks of his buried treasure. So, let Sai Baba be enthroned in the hearts of all.

In the next chapter, I shall speak of Sai Baba's advent in Shirdi.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER IV

SAI BABA'S FIRST ADVENT IN SHIRDI

*Mission of the Saints – Shirdi a Holy Tirth –
Personality of Sai Baba – Dictum of Goulibua –
Appearance of Vitthal – Kshirsagar's Story – Das
Ganu's Bath in Prayag – Immaculate Conception of Sai Baba and His
First Advent in Shirdi – Three Wadas.*

In the last chapter, I described the circumstances, which led me to write Sai Satcharita. Let me now describe the first advent of Sai Baba in Shirdi.

Mission of the Saints

Lord Krishna says in Bhagvad Gita (Chapter IV, 7-8) that, "Whenever there is a decay of Dharma (righteousness) and an ascendancy of unrighteousness, I manifest Myself, for the protection of the virtuous and the destruction of the vicious; and for the establishment of righteousness, I manifest Myself Age after Age."

This is the mission of to Lord, and the sages and saints, who are His representatives, and who appear at appropriate times and work in their own way to fulfil that mission. For instance, when the twice-born, i.e. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas neglect their duties, and when the Shudras try to usurp the duties of other classes, when spiritual preceptors are not respected but humiliated, when nobody cares for religious instructions, when everybody thinks himself very learned, when people begin to partake of forbidden foods and intoxicating drinks, when under the cloak of religion people indulge in malpractices, when people belonging to different sects fight amongst themselves, when Brahmins fail to do Sandhya adoration, and the orthodox leave their religious practices, when Yogis neglect their meditation, when people begin to think that, wealth, progeny, wife are their sole concern; and thus, turn away from the true path of salvation then, saints appear and try to set matters right by their words and action. They serve us as beacon-lights, and show us the path, and the right way for us to follow. In this way, many saints viz., Nivrutti, Dnyandev, Muktabai, Namdev, Gora, Gonayi, Eknath, Tukaram, Narahari, Narsi Bhai, Sajan Kasai, Sawata,

Ramdas and various others did appear at various times to show the right path to the people, and so, the present advent came as Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi.

Shirdi – a Holy Tirth

The banks of the Godavari river, in the Ahmednagar district, are very fortunate for they gave birth and refuge to many a saint, prominent amongst them being Dnyaneshwar. Shirdi also falls in the Kopergaon Taluka or the Ahmednagar district. After crossing the Godavari river at Kopergaon, one gets on the way to Shirdi. When you go three Kos¹ (9 miles), you come to Nimgaon, from where, Shirdi is visible. Shirdi is, as famous and well-known as other holy places, like Gangapur, Nrisinhawadi, Audumbar, on the banks of Krishna river. As the devotee Damoji flourished, and blessed Mangalvedha (near Pandharpur), as Samarth Ramdas at Sajjangad, as Shri Nrisimha Saraswati at Saraswatiwadi, so, Sainath flourished at Shirdi and blessed it.

Personality of Sai Baba

It is on account of Shri Sai Baba that Shirdi grew into importance. Let us see, what sort of a personage Sai Baba was. He conquered this Sansar (worldly existence), which is very difficult and hard to cross. Peace or mental calm was His ornament, and He was the repository of wisdom. He was the home of Vaishnav devotees, most generous (like Karna) amongst all, the quint-essence of all essences. He had no love for perishable things, and was always engrossed in self-realization, which was His sole concern. He felt no pleasure in the things of this world or of the world beyond. His Antarang (heart) was as clear as a mirror, and His speech always rained nectar. The rich or poor people were the same to Him. He neither knew nor cared for honour or dishonour. He was the Lord of all beings. He spoke freely and mixed with all people, watched the actings and dances of nautch-girls and heard gazal songs. Still, He swerved not an inch from samadhi (mental equilibrium). The name of Allah was always on His lips. While the world awoke He slept, and while the world slept He was vigilant. His inner self was as calm as the deep sea, His Ashram could not be determined, nor His actions could be definitely determined; and though He sat (lived) in one place, He

1. Kos = 3 miles = 4.8 km.

knew all the transactions of the world. His Darbar was imposing. He told hundreds of stories daily, still He swerved not an inch from His vow of silence. He always leaned against the wall in the Masjid or walked morning, noon and evening towards Lendi (Nala) and Chavadi, still He at all times abided in the Self. Though a Siddha, He acted like a Sadhaka. He was meek, humble and egoless, and pleased all. Such was Sai Baba, and as the soil of Shirdi was trodden by Sai Baba's Feet, it attained extraordinary importance. As Dnyaneshwar elevated Alandi, Eknath did to Paithan, so Sai Baba raised Shirdi. Blessed are the grass-leaves and stones of Shirdi, for they could kiss the Holy Feet of Sai Baba, and take his dust on their head. Shirdi became to us devotees, another Pandharpur, Jagannath, Dwarka, Benaras (Kashi) and Rameshwar, Badrikedar, Nasik, Tryambakeshwar, Ujjain and Maha Kaleshwar or Mahabaleshwar Gokarn. Contact with Sai Baba in Shirdi was like our study of Veda and Tantra; it quietened our Sansar (world consciousness) and rendered self-realization. The darshan of Shri Sai was our Yoga-sadhana, and talk with Him removed our sins. Shampooing His Legs was our bath in Triveni Prayag, and drinking the holy water of His Feet destroyed our sins. To us, His commands were Vedas, and accepting (eating) His Udi (sacred ashes) and Prasad was all purifying. He was our Shri Krishna and Shri Ram, Who gave us solace, and He was our Para Brahma (Absolute Reality). He was Himself beyond the pair of Dwandwas (opposites), never dejected nor elated. He was always engrossed in His Self as 'Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.' Shirdi was His centre, but His field of action extended far beyond, to Punjab, Calcutta, North India, Gujarat, Dacca (now in Bangladesh) and Konkan. Thus, the fame of Sai Baba spread, far and wide, and people from all parts came to take His darshan and be blessed. By mere darshan, minds of people, whether pure or impure, would become quiet at once. They got here the same unparalleled joy that, devotees get at Pandharpur by seeing Vitthal Rakhumai. This is not an exaggeration. Consider, what a devotee says in this respect.

Dictum of Goulibua

An old devotee, by name Goulibua, aged about 95 years, was a Varkari of Pandhari. He stayed for 8 months at Pandharpur and for four months – Ashadha to Kartik (July – November) on the banks of the Ganges. He had a donkey with him for carrying his luggage, and a disciple as his companion. Every year he made his Vari or trip to

Pandharpur and came to Shirdi to see Sai baba, Whom he loved most. He used to gaze at Baba saying, "This is Pandharinath Vitthal incarnate, the merciful Lord of the poor and helpless." This Goulubua was an old devotee of Vitthoba, and had made many a trip to Pandhari; and he testified that Sai Baba was real Pandharinath.

Vitthal Himself Appeared

Sai Baba was very fond of remembering and singing God's name. He always uttered "Allah Malik" (God is Lord), and in His presence made others sing God's name continuously, day and night, for all 7 days of the week. This is called 'Naamsaptah'. Once He asked Das Ganu Maharaj to do the Naamsaptah. He replied that he would do it, provided he was assured that, Vitthal would appear at the end of the 7th day. Then, Baba placing His hand on His chest assured him that, certainly Vitthal would appear, but for that the devotee must be 'earnest and devout'. The Dankapuri (Takore) of Dakurnath, the Pandhari of Vitthal, the Dwarka of Ranchhod (Krishna) is here (Shirdi). One need not go far out to see Dwarka. Will Vitthal come here from some outside place? He is here! **Only when the devotee is bursting with love and devotion, Vitthal will manifest Himself here (Shirdi).***

After the Saptah was over, Vitthal did manifest Himself in the following manner. Kakasaheb Dixit was, as usual, sitting in meditation after his bath. He saw Vitthal in a vision. When he went at noon for Baba's darshan, Baba asked him point-blank, "Did Vitthal Patil come? Did you see Him? He is a very truant fellow, catch Him firmly, otherwise, He will escape if you are even a little inattentive". This

* Mr. B.V. Deo, retired Mamlatdar of Thana has proved by his research that, Shirdi comes in the limits of Pandharpur, which was the southern-most centre of Dwarka and, therefore, Shirdi was Dwarka itself. (Vide Sai Leela, Vol. 14, Nos. 1-2-3) I have come across another definition of Dwarka, quoted from Skanda Puran by K. Narayan Aiyar in his Permanent History of Bharatvarsha, Vol. 2, Part 1, Page 90, which runs thus:

चतुर्णामपि वर्णाणां यत्राद्वाराणि सर्वतः ।
अतो द्वारावतीत्युक्ता विद्वद्भिस्तत्त्ववेदिभिः ॥

The place, where doors are open for all people, of the four (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) classes, for accomplishing the four Purusharthas, viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, is called Dwarka by the wise philosophers. Baba's Masjid in Shirdi was not only open to the four classes, but to the oppressed, untouchables, lepers etc., like Bhagoji Shinde and, therefore, it is very appropriately styled as the Dwarka.

happened in the morning and at noon there was another Vitthal darshan. A hawker came there for selling 25 or 30 pictures of Vithoba. This picture exactly tallied with the figure that had appeared in Kakasaheb's vision. On seeing this and remembering Baba's words, Kakasaheb Dixit was much surprised and delighted. He bought one picture of Vithoba, and placed it in his shrine for worship.

Bhagwantrao Kshirsagar's Story

How fond was Baba for Vitthal worship was illustrated in Bhagwantrao Kshirsagar's story. The father of Bhagwantrao was a devotee of Vithoba, and used to make Varis (annual trips) to Pandharpur. He also had an image of Vithoba at home, which he worshipped. After his death, the son stopped everything – the Vari, the worship and Shraddha ceremony etc. When Bhagwantrao came to Shirdi, Baba on remembering his father, at once said, "His father was my friend, so I dragged him (the son) here. He never offered Naivaidya (offering of food) and so, he starved Vitthal and Me. So, I brought him here. I shall remonstrate him now and set him to worship."

Das Ganu's Bath in Prayag

The Hindus think that, a bath in the holy Tirth of Prayag¹, where the Ganga and Yamuna meet, is very meritorious and thousands of pilgrims go there periodically, to have the sacred bath there. Once, Das Ganu thought that, he should go to Prayag for a bath and came to Baba to get His permission for doing so. Baba replied to him, "**It is not necessary to go so far. Our Prayag is here, believe Me!**" Then, wonder of wonders! When Das Ganu placed his head on Baba's Feet, out flowed streams of Ganga-Yamuna water from both the toes of Baba. Seeing this miracle, Das Ganu was overwhelmed with feelings of love and adoration, and tears filled my eyes. Inwardly he felt inspired, and his speech burst forth into a song in praise of Baba and His Leelas.

Immaculate Conception of Sai Baba and His First Advent in Shirdi

Nobody knew the parents, birth or birth-place of Sai Baba. Many enquiries were made, many questions were put to Baba and others,

1. Prayag – Allahabad in U.P.

regarding these, but no satisfactory answer or information has yet been obtained. Practically, we know nothing about these matters. Namdev and Kabir were not born like ordinary mortals. They were found as infants in mother-of-pearls; Namdev being found on the bank Bhimrathi river by Gonayi, and Kabir on the bank Bhagirathi river by Tamal. Similar was the case with Sai Baba. He first manifested Himself as a young lad of sixteen years under a Neem tree in Shirdi, for the sake of Bhaktas. Even then, He seemed to be full of the knowledge of Brahma. He had no desire for worldly objects even in dreams. He kicked out Maya, and Mukti (deliverance) was serving at His feet. One old woman of Shirdi, the mother of Nana Chopdar, described Him thus; this young lad, fair, smart and very handsome, was first seen under the Neem tree, seated in an Asan. The people of the village were wonder-struck to see such a young lad practising hard penance, not minding heat and cold. By day he associated with none, by night he was afraid of nobody. People were wondering and asking, whence this young chap had turned up. His form and features were so beautiful that a mere look endeared Him to all. He went to nobody's door, and always sat near the Neem tree. Outwardly, he looked very young, but by His actions He was really a Great Soul. He was the embodiment of dispassion and was an enigma to all. One day, it so happened that God Khandoba possessed the body of some devotee and people began to ask him, "Deva (God), You please enquire, what blessed father's son is this lad and whence did He come." God Khandoba asked them to bring a pick-axe and dig in a particular place. When it was dug, bricks were found underneath a flat stone. When the stone was removed, a corridor was seen, in which four Samayis (lights) were burning. The corridor led to a cellar, where cow-mouth-shaped structures, wooden boards, rosaries were seen. Khandoba said, "This lad practiced penance here for 12 years." Then, the people began to question the lad about this. He put them off by telling them that, this was His Guru's place, His holy Watan, and requested them to guard this well. The people then closed the corridor as before. As Ashwattha and Audumbar trees are held sacred, Baba regarded this Neem tree equally sacred, and loved it most. Mhalsapati and other Shirdi devotees regard this site as the resting place (Samadhi-sthan) of Baba's Guru and prostrate before it.

Three Wadas

(1) The site, with the Neem tree and surrounding space was bought by Mr. Hari Vinayak Sathe, and on this site a big building styled Sathe's Wada was erected. This Wada was the sole resting place for pilgrims,

who flocked there. A platform was built around the Neem tree and lofts with steps were constructed. Under the steps, there is a niche facing south and devotees sit on the Par (platform) facing north. It is believed that, he, who burns incense there on Thursday and Friday evenings, will by God's grace, be happy. This Wada was old and dilapidated and needed repairs. The necessary repairs, additions and alterations have been made now by the Sansthan. (2) Then, after some years, another Wada, Dixit's Wada was constructed. Kakasaheb Dixit, Solicitor of Mumbai, had gone to England. He had injured his leg in an accident there. The injury could not be got rid of by any means. Nanasaheb Chandorkar advised him to see Sai Baba. So, he went to Sai Baba in 1909, and requested Him to cure the lameness of his mind rather than that of his leg. He was so much pleased with the darshan of Sai Baba, that he decided to reside in Shirdi. So, he built a Wada for himself and other devotees. The foundation of this building was laid on 10-12-1910. On this day, two other important events took place. (1) Mr. Dadasaheb Khaparde was given permission to return home, and (2) The night Arati at the chavadi was started. The Wada was completed and was inhabited on the Ram Navami day in 1911, with due rites and formalities. (3) Then, another Wada or palatial mansion was put up by the famous millionaire, Mr. Buti, of Nagpur. A lot of money was spent on this building, but it was all well utilized, as Sai Baba's Body is resting in this Wada, which is now called the 'Samadhi Mandir'. The site of this Mandir formerly had a garden, which was watered and looked after by Baba. Three Wadas thus came up, where there was none formerly. Of these Sathe's Wada was most useful to all, in the early days.

The story of the garden which was attended by Sai Baba with the help of Vaman Tatya, the temporary absence of Sai Baba from Shirdi, and His coming again to Shirdi with the marriage party of Chand Patil, the company of Devidas, Jankidas and Gangagir, Baba's wrestling match with Mohiddin Tamboli, residing in the Masjid, love of Mr. Denge and other devotees; and other incidents will be described in the next chapter.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER V

Baba's Return with Chand Patil's Marriage-party – Welcomed and Addressed as "Sai" – Contact with Other Saints – His Attire and Daily Routine – The Story of the Padukas – Wrestling Bout with Mohiddin and Change in Life – Turning Water into Oil – The Pseudo Guru Javhar Ali.

Return with Chand Patil's Marriage-party.

As hinted in the last chapter, I shall now describe first, how Sai Baba returned to Shirdi after His disappearance.

There lived in the Aurangabad district (Nizam state), in a village called 'Dhoop', a well-to-do Mohammeden gentleman by name Chand Patil. While He was making a trip to Aurangabad, he lost his mare. For two long months, he made a diligent search, but could get no trace of the lost mare. After being disappointed, he returned from Aurangabad with the saddle on his back. After travelling four Kos and a half, he came on the way, to a mango tree at the foot of which sat a fakir (queer fellow). He had a cap on His head, wore Kafni (long robe) and had a Satka (short stick) under His arm, and He was preparing to smoke a Chillim (pipe). On seeing Chand Patil pass by, He called out to him and asked him to have a smoke and to rest a little. The queer fellow or Fakir asked him about the saddle. Chand Patil replied that, it was of his mare, which was lost sometime back. The Fakir asked him to make a search in the Nala close by. He went and the wonder of wonders! He found the mare there. He thought that this Fakir was not an ordinary man, but an Avalia (a great saint). He returned to the Fakir with the mare. The Chillim was ready for being smoked, but two things were wanting : (1) fire to light the pipe, and (2) water to wet the Chhapi (piece of cloth, through which smoke is drawn up). The Fakir took His prong and thrust it forcibly into the ground and out came a live ember, which He put on the pipe. Then, He dashed the Satka on the ground, from where water began to ooze. The Chhapi was wetted with that water, then wrung out and wrapped round the pipe. Thus, everything being complete, the Fakir smoked the Chillim and then, gave it also to Chand Patil. On seeing all this, Chand Patil was wonder-struck. He requested the Fakir to come to his home and accept his hospitality. The next day, He

went to Patil's house and stayed there for some time. Patil was a village-officer of Dhoop. His wife's brother's son was to be married and the bride was from Shirdi. So, Patil made preparations to start for Shirdi for the marriage. The Fakir also accompanied the marriage-party. The marriage went off without any hitch, the party returned to Dhoop, except the Fakir who stayed back in Shirdi, and remained there forever.

How the Fakir Got the Name 'Sai'

When the marriage-party came to Shirdi, it alighted at the foot of a Banyan tree in Bhagat Mhalsapati's field, near Khandoba's temple. The carts were loosened in the open courtyard of Khandoba's temple, and the members of the party descended one by one, and the Fakir also got down. Bhagat Mhalsapati saw the young Fakir getting down and accosted Him "YA SAI" (Welcome Sai)! Others also addressed Him as "Sai" and thenceforth, He became 'Sai Baba'.

Contact with Other Saints

Sai Baba began to stay in a deserted Masjid¹. One saint, named Devidas had been living in Shirdi, for many years before Baba came there. Baba liked his company. He stayed with him in the Maruti temple, in the Chavadi, and for some time lived alone. Then, came another saint by name Jankidas. Baba spent most of His time in talking with him, or Jankidas went to Baba's residence. So also, one Vaishya house-holder saint, from Puntambe by name Gangagir, always frequented Shirdi. When he first saw Sai Baba, carrying pitchers of water in both hands, for watering the garden, he was amazed and said openly, **"Blessed is Shirdi, that, it got this Precious Jewel.** This man is carrying water to-day; but He is not an ordinary fellow. As this land (Shirdi) was fortunate and meritorious, it secured this Jewel." So also, one famous saint by name Anandnath of Yewala Math², a disciple of Akkalkot Maharaj, came to Shirdi with some people when he saw Sai Baba, he said openly, **"This is a Precious Diamond in reality. Though He looks like an ordinary man, He is not a 'Gar' (ordinary stone), but a Diamond.** You will realize this in the near future." Saying this he returned to Yewala. This was said, while Sai Baba was a youngster.

1. Masjid – Mosque

2. Math – Monastery

Baba's Dress and Daily Routine

In His young days, Sai Baba grew the hair on His head, never had His head shaved. He dressed like an athlete. When He went to Rahata (3 miles from Shirdi), He brought with Him small plants of Merrigold, Jai and Jui, and after cleaning them He planted and watered them. A devotee, by name Vaman Tatya, supplied Him daily with two unbaked earthen pitchers. With these Baba Himself used to water the plants. He drew water from the well and carried the pitchers on His shoulders. In the evening, the pitchers were kept at the foot of the Neem tree. As soon as they were placed there, they broke as they were made of mud and not baked. Next day, Tatya supplied two fresh pitchers. This course went on for 3 years, and with Sai Baba's toil and effort, there grew a garden. On this site, at present, stands the big mansion – Samadhi Mandir of Baba, which is now frequented by so many devotees.

The Story of Padukas (foot-prints) under the Neem Tree

A devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj, by name Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar, worshipped the photo of Akkalkot Maharaj. He once thought of going to Akkalkot (Solapur district), take the darshan of the Padukas (foot-prints) of the Maharaj and offer his sincere prayer there, but before he could go there, he got a vision in his dream. Akkalkot Maharaj appeared in the vision and said to him, "Now, Shirdi is my resting place, go there and offer your worship!" So, Bhai changed his plan and came to Shirdi, worshipped Baba, stayed there for six months and was happy. As a reminiscence of this vision etc., he prepared the Padukas and installed them on an auspicious day of Shravan, Shaka 1834 (1912 A.D.) under the Neem tree with due ceremonies and formalities, conducted by Dada Kelkar and Upasani. One Dixit Brahmin was appointed for worship, and the management was entrusted to devotee Sagun.

Complete Version of this Story

Mr. B.V. Dev, retired Mamlatdar of Thana, and a great devotee of Sai Baba, made enquiries about this matter with Sagun Meru Naik and Govind Kamlakar Dixit and has published a full version of the Padukas in Sai Leela, Vol. 11, No. 1, page 25. It runs as follows:

In 1834 Shaka (1912 A.D.) one Doctor Ramrao Kothare of Mumbai

came to Shirdi for Baba's darshan. His compounder and his friend, Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar, accompanied him. The compounder and Bhai became intimate with Sagun Meru Naik and G.K. Dixit. While discussing things, these persons thought that, there must be some memorial of Sai Baba's first advent at Shirdi and his sitting under the holy Neem tree. They thought of installing Baba's Padukas there, and were going to make them of some rough stone. Then, Bhai's friend, the compounder, suggested that, if this matter was made known to his master, Dr. Ramrao Kothare, he would prepare nice Padukas for this purpose. All liked this proposal and Dr. Kothare was informed of it. He came to Shirdi and drew a plan of the Padukas. He went to Upasani Maharaj in Khandoba's temple and showed him his plan. The latter made many improvements, drew lotus, flowers, conch, disc, mace etc. and suggested that, the following Shloka (verse), regarding Neem tree's greatness and Baba's Yogic powers be inscribed. The verse was as follows:

**"Sada Nimbavrikshasya mooladhiwasaat,
Sudhastravinam tiktamapi priyam tam,
Tarum Kalpavrikshadhikam sadhayantam
Namameeshwaram Sadgurum Sai Natham"***

Upasani's suggestions were accepted and carried out. The Padukas were made in Mumbai and sent to Shirdi with the compounder. Baba said that they should be installed on the Pournima (15th) of Shravan. On that day at 11 a.m., G.K. Dixit brought them on his head from Khandoba's temple to the Dwarkamai (Masjid) in a procession. Baba touched the Padukas, saying that, these are the Feet of the Lord, and asked the people to install them at foot of the Neem tree.

A day earlier, one Parsi devotee of Mumbai, named Pastha Sheth, sent Rs. 25/- by money order. Baba gave this sum for the installation

* सदा निंबवृक्षस्य मूलाधियासात् ।
सुधास्त्राविर्णं तिक्तमप्यप्रियं तम् ।
तरुं कल्पवृक्षाधिकं साधयन्तम् ।
नमामीश्वरं सद्गुरुं साईनाथम् ॥

Translation

I bow to the Lord Sai Nath, Who by His constant stay at the foot of the Neem tree, though bitter and unpleasant, made it was yet oozing nectar (the oozing of this tree is called 'Amrut', i.e., nectar, on account of its healing properties) – superior than the Kalpavruksha (wish – fulfilling tree).

of the Padukas. The total expense of installation came up to Rs. 100/-, out of which Rs. 75/- were collected by subscriptions. For the first 5 years, G.K. Dixit worshipped the Padukas daily and then, this was done by Laxman Kacheshwar Jakhadi. In the first five years, Dr. Kothare sent Rs. 2 per month for lighting the lamp and he also sent the railing round the Padukas. The expense of bringing the railing from the station to Shirdi (Rs. 7-8-0)¹ (presently Rs. 7.50 p.) and roofing was paid by Sagun Meru Naik. Now, Jakhadi (Nana Pujari) does the worship, and Sagun Meru Naik offers the Naivaidya and lights the evening lamps.

Bhai Krishnaji was originally a devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj. He had come to Shirdi at the installation of the Padukas, in Shaka 1834 on his way to Akkalkot. He wanted to go to Akkalkot, after taking the darshan of Baba. He asked Baba's permission for this. Baba said, "Oh, what is there in Akkalkot? Why do you go there? The Maharaj of that place is here, Myself." Hearing this, Bhai did not go to Akkalkot. He came to Shirdi off and on, after the installation of the Padukas.

Mr. B.V. Dev concluded that, Hemadpant did not know these details. Had he known them, he would not have failed to depict them in his Satcharita.

Wrestling Bout with Mohiddin Tamboli and Change in Life style

To return to other stories of Baba. There was a wrestler in Shirdi, by name Mohiddin Tamboli. Baba and he did not agree on some points, and both had a fight. In this Baba was defeated. Thenceforth, Baba changed His dress style and mode of living. He donned Kafni, wore a Langot (waist band) and covered His head with a piece of cloth. He took a piece of sack cloth for His bed, and was content with wearing torn and worn out rags. He always said that "Poverty is better than kingship, far better than Lordship. The Lord is always brother (befriender) of the poor." Gangagir was also very fond of wrestling. Once while he was wrestling, a similar feeling of dispassion descended over him, and at the proper time he heard the voice of an adept saying that he should wear out his body, playing with God. So, he too gave up Sansara and turned towards God-realization. He established a Math on the banks of the river, near Puntambe, and lived there with

1. (Rs. 7-8-0) - Prior to 1957, the Indian rupee was equal to 16 annas and 1 anna was equal to 4 paise.

his disciples.

Sai Baba did not mix and speak with the people. He only gave answers, when he was questioned. By day he always sat under the Neem tree, sometimes in the shade of a Babool tree, near the stream, on the outskirts of the village. In the afternoon, He used to walk at random and go at times to Nimgaon. There, He frequented the house of Balasaheb Dingle. Baba loved Mr. Balasaheb. His younger brother, named Nanasaheb had no son, though he married a second wife. Balasaheb sent Nanasaheb for taking darshan of Sai Baba, and after sometime with His grace Nanasaheb got a son. From that time onwards, people began to come in large numbers to see Sai Baba, and His fame began to spread and reached Ahmednagar, from thence, Nanasaheb Chandorkar and Keshav Chidamber, and many others began to come to Shirdi. Baba was surrounded by His devotees during day, and slept at night in an old and dilapidated Masjid. Baba's paraphernalia at this time, consisted of a Chillim, tobacco, a 'Tumrel' (tin pot), a long Kafni, a piece of cloth around His head, and a Satka (short stick), which He always kept with Him. The piece of white cloth on the head was twisted like matted hair, and flowed down from the left ear on the back. This was not washed for weeks. He wore no shoes, no sandals. A piece of sack-cloth was His seat for most of the day. He wore a coupin (waist-cloth-band) and for warding off cold, he always sat in front of a Dhuni (sacred fire) facing south, with His left hand resting on the wooden railing. In that Dhuni, He offered an oblation of egoism, desires and always uttered "Allah Malik" (God is the sole owner). The Masjid, in which He sat, was only of two room dimensions, where all devotees came and saw Him. After 1912, there was a change. The old Masjid was repaired and a pavement was constructed. Before Baba came to live in this Masjid, He lived for a long time in a place Takia, where with Ghungru (small bells) tied on His ankles, Baba danced beautifully and sang with tender love.

Turning Water into Oil

Sai Baba was very fond of lights. He used to borrow oil from shopkeepers, and keep lamps burning the whole night in the Masjid and temple. This went on for some time. The Baniyas¹, who supplied oil gratis, once met together and decided not to give Him oil. When, as

1. Baniyas - Shopkeepers

usual, Baba went to ask for oil, they all gave Him a distinct "No". Unperturbed, Baba returned to the Masjid and kept the dry wicks in the lamps. The Banias were watching Him with curiosity. Baba took the Tumrel (tin pot), which contained very little (a few drops) oil, put water into it and drank it, and then, forced it out to fall into the container. After consecrating the tin-pot in this way, He again took the water from the tin-pot and filled all the lamps with it and lighted them. To the surprise and dismay of the watching Banias, the lamps began to burn and kept burning the whole night. The Banias repented and apologized and Baba forgave them, and asked them to be more truthful in future.

The Pseudo Guru Javhar Ali

Five years after the wrestling bout above-mentioned, one Fakir from Ahmednagar, by name Javhar Ali, came to Rahata with his disciples and stayed in Bakhal (spacious room) near Virabhadra temple. The Fakir was learned, could repeat the whole Quran and had a sweet tongue. Many religious and devout people of the village came to him and began to respect him. With the help of the people, he started to build an Idgah (a walled enclosure, in which Mohammedans pray on Id day), near the Virabhadra temple. There was some quarrel about this affair, on account of which Javhar Ali had to leave Rahata. Then, he came to Shirdi and lived in the Masjid with Baba. People were captured by his sweet talk, and he began to call Baba his disciple. Baba did not object and consented to be his Chela (disciple). Then, both Guru and Chela decided to return to Rahata and live there. The Guru (teacher) never knew his Disciple's worth, but the Disciple knew the shortcomings of the Guru, still He never disrespected him, observing carefully his duties. He even served the master in various ways. They used to come to Shirdi off and on, but their main stay was in Rahata. The loving devotees of Baba in Shirdi did not like that Baba should stay away from them in Rahata. So they went in a deputation to bring Baba back to Shirdi. When they met Baba near the Idgah and told the purpose for which they came, Baba said to them that the Fakir was an angry, ill-tempered fellow, he would not leave Him and that, they should better go back to Shirdi without Him before the Fakir returned. While they were thus talking, the Fakir turned up and was very angry with them for trying to take away his Disciple. There was some hot discussion and altercation, and it was finally decided that both the Guru and Chela should return to Shirdi. And so, they returned and lived in Shirdi. But,

after a few days, the Guru was tested by Devidas and he was found wanting. Twelve years before Baba arrived in Shirdi with the marriage-party, this Devidas, aged about 10 or 11 years, came to Shirdi and lived in the Maruti temple. Devidas had fine features and brilliant eyes, and he was dispassion incarnate and a Dhyani¹. Many people, namely Taty Kote, Kashinath and others regarded him as their Guru. They brought Javhar Ali in his presence, and in the discussion that followed, Javhar was worsted and fled from Shirdi. He went and stayed in Bijapur and returned after many years to Shirdi, and prostrated himself before Sai Baba. The delusion, that, he was Guru and Sai Baba, his Chela, was cleared away and as he repented, Sai Baba treated him with respect. In this case Sai Baba showed by His conduct, how one should get rid of egoism and do the duties of a disciple to attain the highest end, viz., self-realization. This story is told here according to the version given by Mhalsapati (a great devotee of Baba).

In the next chapter Ram Navami Festival², the Masjid, its former condition and later improvement in it etc. will be described.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

1. Dhyani – Learned

2. Ram Navami Festival – This festival is celebrated in the honour of Lord Ram.



CHAPTER VI

RAM NAVAMI FESTIVAL AND MASJID REPAIRS

Efficacy of the Touch of the Guru's Hand – Ram Navami Festival – Its Origin, Transformation etc. Repairs of the Masjid.

Before describing Ram Navami Festival and Masjid repairs, the author makes some preliminary remarks about Sadguru as follows:

Efficacy of the Touch of the Guru's Hand

When Sadguru is the helmsman, he is sure to carry us safely and easily beyond the worldly ocean. The word Sadguru brings to mind Sai Baba, the Perfect Master. He appears to me, as if standing before me and applying Udi (sacred ashes) to my forehead and placing his hand of blessing on my head. Then joy fills my heart and love overflows my eyes. Wonderful is the power of the touch of Guru's hand. The subtle-body (consisting of thoughts and desires) which cannot be burnt by the gross fire, is destroyed by the mere touch of the Guru's hand, and the sins of many past births are cleaned and washed away. Even the speech of those, who feel agitated, when they hear religious and Godly talks, attain calmness. The sight of Sai Baba's handsome form chokes our throat with joy, makes the eyes overflow with tears and overwhelms the heart with emotions. It awakens in us "I am He" (Soham) Brahma consciousness, manifests the joy of self-realization and dissolving the distinction of I and Thou, makes us one with the Supreme (One Reality). When I begin to read scriptures, at every step I am reminded of my Sadguru, Sai Baba, Who assumes the form of Rama or Krishna and makes me listen to His Life. For instance, when I sit to listen to Bhagwat, Sai becomes Krishna from top to toe, and I think He sings the Bhagwat or Uddhav Gita (song of teachings by Lord Shri Krishna to His disciple, Uddhav) for the welfare of the devotees. When I myself start to write anything, I cannot compose a few words or sentences; but when He of His own accord makes me write, I go on writing... and there is no end to it. When the disciple's egoism props up, He presses it down with His hand and gives him His own power, makes him achieve His object and thus, satisfies and blesses him. **If anyone prostrates before Sai and**

surrenders his heart and soul to Him, then all the chief objects of life, viz., Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (Desire) and Moksha (Deliverance), are attained easily and unsolicitedly. Four paths, viz., of Karma, Dnyan, Yoga and Bhakti lead us separately to God. Of these, the path of Bhakti is thorny and full of pits and ditches and thus, difficult to traverse; but if you, relying on your Sadguru avoid the pits and thorns and walk straight, it will take you to your destination (God), so says Sai Baba.

After philosophising about the self-existent Brahma, His power (Maya) to create this world and the world created, and stating that all these three are ultimately one and the same, the author quotes Sai Baba's words guaranteeing the welfare of the Bhaktas:

"There will never be any dearth or scarcity, regarding food and clothes in My devotee's home. It is my special characteristic, that I always look to and provide for, the welfare of those devotees, who worship Me wholeheartedly with their minds ever fixed on Me. Lord Krishna has also said the same in the Gita. Therefore, strive not much for food and clothes. If you want anything, beg of the Lord, renounce worldly honours, try to get Lord's grace and blessings and be honoured in His court. Do not be deluded by worldly honour. The form of the Deity should be firmly fixed in the mind. Let all the senses and mind be ever devoted to the worship of the Lord, let there be no attraction for any other thing. Fix the mind in remembering Me always, so that it will not wander elsewhere, towards body, wealth and home. Then it will be calm, peaceful and carefree. This is the sign of the mind being well engaged in good company. If the mind is vagrant, it cannot be called well-merged in Him."

After quoting these words, the author goes on to relate the story of Ram Navami festival in Shirdi. As Ram Navami is the most celebrated festival at Shirdi, another fuller account, as published in Sri Sai Leela Magazine of 1925, page 197, is also referred to and a summary of the festival, as related in both these accounts is attempted here.

Origin

One Mr. Gopalrao Gund, was a surveyor in Survey dept. at Kopergaon. He was a great devotee of Baba. He had three wives but had

no issue. With Sai Baba's blessings, a son was born to him. In the joy that he felt due to this, an idea of celebrating a fair or 'Urus'¹ occurred to him in the year 1897, and he placed it for consideration before other Shirdi devotees, viz. Tatyapa Patil, Dada Kote Patil and Madhavrao Deshpande (Shama). They all approved of the idea, and obtained Sai Baba's permission and blessings for it. Then an application was made to get the Collector's² sanction for celebrating the Urus, but as the village Kulkarni held against holding the fair the sanction was refused. But, as Sai Baba had blessed it, they tried again and ultimately succeeded in getting the Collector's sanction. The day for the Urus was fixed on Ram Navami, after having a consultation with Sai Baba. It seems He had some purpose behind this, viz. the unification of the two festivals, the Urus and the Ram Navami and the unification of the two communities – the Hindus and the Mohammedans. As future events showed, this end or object was duly achieved.

Though the permission was obtained, but other difficulties cropped up. Shirdi was a village and there was scarcity of water. There were two wells in the village, the one in use dried up soon and the water from the second was brackish. This brackish water was turned into sweet water by Sai Baba, by putting flowers into it. As the water of this well was insufficient, so Tatyapa Patil had to arrange to get water from outside. Temporary shops were to be constructed and wrestling bouts arranged. Gopalrao Gund had a friend by name Damu Anna Kasar of Ahmednagar. He also was similarly unhappy in the matter of progeny, though he had two wives. He too was blessed by Sai Baba with sons and Mr. Gund prevailed upon his friend to prepare and supply one flag for the procession of the fair. He also succeeded in inducing Mr. Nanasaheb Nimonkar to supply another flag. Both these flags were taken in procession through the village and finally, fixed at the two corners of the Masjid, which is called by Sai Baba as 'Dwarkamai'. This is being done even now.

The 'Sandal' Procession

There was another procession which was started in this fair. The

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1. Urus are celebrated at the tombs of Muslim Holy men. It is surprising that how Mr. Gund, a Hindu got this idea.
 2. District Magistrate. Since, he is responsible for the collection of land revenues, he is also called the Collector.

idea of 'Sandal' procession originated with one Mr. Amir Shakkar Dalal, a Mohammedan Bhakta from Korhla. This procession is held in honour of great Muslim Saints. Sandal i.e., Chandan paste and scrappings are put in the Thali (flat dishes) with incense burning before them and carried in procession to the accompaniment of band and music through the village and then, after returning to the Masjid, the contents of the dishes are thrown on the 'Nimbar' (niche) and walls of the Masjid. This work was managed by Mr. Amir Shakkar for the first three years and then afterwards, by his wife. So, on the same day the two processions, the 'Flags' by the Hindus and 'Sandal' by the Muslims, went on side by side and are still going on without any problem.

Arrangement

This day was very dear and sacred to the devotees of Sai Baba. Most of them turned up for the occasion and took part in the management of the fair. Tatyia Kote Patil looked to all outward affairs, while the internal management was entirely left to Radhakrishnamai, a female devotee of Baba. Her residence was full of guests on the occasion, and she had to look after their needs, and also arrange for all the paraphernalia of the fair. Another work, which she willingly did, was to clean and white-wash the entire Masjid, its walls and floor, which were blackened and were full of soot on account of the perpetual Dhuni (sacred fire) of Sai Baba. This she did during the night, when Sai Baba had gone to sleep every alternate night in the Chavadi. She had to take out all the things, including the Dhuni, and after thorough cleaning and white-washing replace them, as they were before. Feeding the poor, which was so dear to Sai Baba, was also an important item in this fair. For this purpose, cooking on a grand scale and preparing various sweet dishes, was done in Radhakrishnamai's lodging, and various rich and wealthy devotees took a leading part in this.

Transformation of Urus into Ram Navami Festival

Things were going on in this way and the fair was gradually increasing in importance till 1912, when a change took place. That year one devotee, Mr. Krishnarao Jogeshwar Bhishm (the author of 'Sai Sagunopasana'), came for the fair with Dadasaheb Khaparde of Amaravati and was staying (on the previous day) in the Dixit Wada. While he was lying in the verandah, and while Mr. Laxmanrao alias

Kaka Mahajani was going with Puja materials to the Masjid, a thought arose in his mind and he accosted the latter thus – There is some providential arrangement in the fact that the Urus or fair is celebrated in Shirdi on Ram Navami; Ram Navami is very dear to all the Hindus, then why not begin the Ram Navami festival – the celebration of the birth of Shri Ram on this day here? Kaka Mahajani liked the idea, and it was arranged to get Baba's permission in this matter. The main difficulty was how to secure a Haridas who would do 'Kirtan' and sing the glories of the Lord on the occasion. But, Bhishm solved the difficulty by saying that his 'Ram Akhyan', the composition on Rama's birth was ready and he would do the 'Kirtan' himself, while Kaka Mahajani should play on the harmonium. It was also arranged to get the 'Sunthavada' (ginger powder mixed with sugar) as Prasad, prepared by Radhakrishnamai. So they immediately went to the Masjid to get Baba's permission. Baba who knew everything and aware of what was happening there, asked Mahajani, as to what was going on in the Wada. Being rather perturbed Mahajani could not catch the purpose of the question and remained silent. Then Baba asked Bhishm what he had to say. He explained the idea of celebrating Ram Navami festival and asked for Baba's permission and Baba gladly gave it. All rejoiced and made preparations for the Jayanti¹-festival. Next day the Masjid was decorated with buntings etc., a cradle was supplied by Radhakrishnamai and placed in front of Baba's seat and the proceedings started. Bhishm stood up for Kirtan and Mahajani began to play on the harmonium. Sai Baba sent a man to call Mahajani. He was hesitating to go, doubtful whether Baba would allow the festival to go on but when he went to Baba, the latter asked him as to what was going on and why the cradle was placed there. He answered that the Ram Navami festival had commenced and the cradle was put out for that purpose. Then Baba took a garland from the 'Nimbar' (niche) and placed it around his neck and sent another garland for Bhishm. Then the Kirtan commenced. When it came to a close, loud sounds of "Victory to Ram" went up and Gulal (colour-powder) was thrown up all around, amidst band and music. Everybody was overjoyed, when suddenly a roar was heard. The red powder thrown promiscuously, went up and somehow fell into Baba's eyes. Baba got wild and began to scold and abuse loudly. People got frightened and took to their heels. The intimate devotees who knew Baba well, took these scoldings and outpourings of

1. Jayanti – Birthday of Lord Ram

Baba, as blessings in disguise. They thought that when Ram was born, it was proper for Baba to get wild and enraged to kill Ravan and his demons, in the form of egoism and wicked thoughts etc. Besides they knew that, whenever a new thing was undertaken at Shirdi, it was usual with Baba to get wild and angry and so they kept quiet. Radhakrishnamai was rather afraid and thought that Baba might break her cradle and she asked Mahajani to pull the cradle back. When he went to loosen and unfasten the cradle, Baba went to him and asked him not to remove it. Then after some time Baba became calm and that day's programme, including Mahapuja and Arati was finished. Later on Mr. Mahajani asked Baba for permission to remove the cradle, Baba refused the same saying that, the festival was not yet over. Next day another 'Kirtan' and Gopal-kala ceremony [an earthen pot containing parched rice mixed with curd is hung, to be broken after the 'Kirtan', and the contents distributed to all, as was done by Lord Krishna amongst His cow-herd (friends)], was performed and then, Baba allowed the cradle to be removed. While the Ram Navami festival was thus going on, the procession of the two flags by day and that of the 'Sandal' by night, went off with the usual pomp and show. From this time onwards, the 'Urus of Baba' was transformed into the Ram Navami festival.

From next year (1913), the items in the programme of Ram Navami began to increase. Radhakrishnamai started a 'Naam-saptah' (singing the glory of God's name continuously day and night for seven days), from (eleventh) day of Chaitra. For this all devotees took part by turns and she also joined it sometimes early in the morning. As Ram Navami festival is celebrated in many places all over the country, the difficulty of getting a Haridas was felt again. But 5 or 6 days before the festival, Mahajani incidentally met Balabua who was known as modern Tukaram and got him to do the 'Kirtan' that year. The next year (1914), another Balabua Satarkar of Birhad Siddha-kavathe, district Satara, could not act as a Haridas in his own town, as plague was prevailing there and so he came to Shirdi. With Baba's permission, which was secured through Kakasaheb Dixit, he did the Kirtan and was sufficiently recompensed for his labor. The difficulty of getting a new Haridas every year was finally solved from 1914 by Sai Baba, as He entrusted this function to Das Ganu Maharaj permanently and since that time he has been successfully and creditably conducting that function until now.

Since 1912, this festival began to grow gradually year by year. From the 8th to 12th of Chaitra, Shirdi looked like a bee-hive of men. Shops began to increase. Celebrated wrestlers took part in wrestling bouts. Feeding of the poor was done on a grander scale. Hard work and sincere efforts of Radhakrishnamai turned Shirdi into a Sansthan. (State) Paraphernalia increased. A beautiful horse, a palanquin, a chariot and many silver items, utensils, pots, buckets, pictures, mirrors etc. were presented. Elephants were also sent for the procession. Though, all this paraphernalia increased enormously, Sai Baba ignored all these things and maintained His simplicity and modesty as before. It is to be noted that both the Hindus and Mohammedans have been working in unison, in both the processions during the entire festival, and there has been no confrontation or quarrel between them at all so far. First about 5000-7000 people used to gather, but that figure went up to 75,000 in some years, still, there was no outbreak of any epidemic disease nor any riots worth the name during past so many years.

Repairs to the Masjid

Another important idea occurred to Gopal Gund. Just as he started the Urus or fair, he thought that he should repair and renovate the Masjid. So in order to carry out the repairs, he collected stones and got them dressed. But this work was not assigned to him. This was reserved for Nanasaheb Chandorkar and the pavement-work for Kakasaheb Dixit. Initially Baba was unwilling to allow them to have work done, but with the intervention of Mhalsapati, a local devotee of Baba, His permission was secured. Baba took a small Gadi for His seat, discarding the usual piece of sack cloth, used till then. In 1911, the Sabha Mandap (court-yard) was also put in order with great labor and effort. The open space in front of the Masjid was very small and inconvenient. Kakasaheb Dixit wanted to extend it and put a roofing on it. At great expense, he got iron-posts, pillars and trusses and started the work. At night all the devotees worked hard and fixed the posts; but Baba when he returned from Chavadi next morning, uprooted them all and threw them out. Once it so happened that Baba got very excited, caught a pole with one hand and began to shake and uproot it and with the other hand caught Tatyapa's neck. He took by force Tatyapa's Pheta, struck a match, set it on fire and threw it, in a pit. At that time, Baba's eyes flashed like burning embers. None dared to look at Him. All got terribly frightened. Baba took out a rupee from his pocket and threw it there, as if it were

an offering on an auspicious occasion. Tatyā was also much frightened. None knew, what was going to happen to Tatyā and none dared to interfere. Bhagoji Shinde, the leper devotee of Baba, made a bold advance, but he was pushed aside by Baba. Madhavrao was also similarly treated, pelted with brick-pieces. So all those who went to intercede were similarly dealt with. But, after some time, Baba's anger cooled down. He sent for a shop-keeper, got from him an embroidered Pheta and Himself tied it on Tatyā's head, as if he was being given a special honour. All the people were wonderstruck to see this strange behaviour of Baba. They were at a loss to know, what enraged Baba so suddenly and what led Him to assault Tatyā Patil, and why His anger cooled down the next moment. Baba was sometimes very calm and quiet and talked sweet things with love, but suddenly, with or without any reason, got enraged. Many such incidents may be related; but I do not know which to choose and which to omit. I therefore, refer them as they occur to me.

In the next chapter the question, whether Baba was a Hindu or a Mohammedan will be taken up and His Yogic practices and powers and other matters will also be dealt with.

Bow to Shri Sai Baba – Peace be to all



CHAPTER VII

Wonderful Incarnation – Behaviour of Sai Baba – His Yogic practices – His All-pervasiveness and Mercy – Leper Devotee's service – Master Khaparde's plague case – Going to Pandharpur

Wonderful Incarnation

Sai Baba knew all Yogic practices. He was well-versed in the six processes including Dhauti (stomach-cleaning, by a moistened piece of linen 3' in breadth and 22½' in length), Khandayog, i.e., separating His limbs and joining them again and Samadhi etc. If you thought that He was a Hindu, He looked like a Yavan. If you thought Him to be a Yavan, He looked like a pious Hindu. No one definitely knew whether He was a Hindu or a Mohammedan. He celebrated the Hindu festival of Ram Navami with all due formalities, and at the same time permitted the 'Sandal' procession of the Mohammedans. He encouraged wrestling bouts in this festival. When the Gokul Ashtami came, He got the 'Gopal-kala' ceremony duly performed, and on festivals, Baba never restricted the Mohammedans, to say their prayers (Namaz) in Eid Masjid. Once, during a Moharrum festival, some Mohammedans proposed to construct a Taziya or Tabut in the Masjid, keep it there for some days and afterwards take it in procession through village. Sai Baba allowed the keeping of the Tabut for four days and on the fifth day got it removed from the Masjid, without the least compunction. If we say that He was a Mohammedan, His ears were pierced (i.e., had holes, according to Hindu custom). If you think that He was a Hindu, circumcision was the proof (though, according to Mr Nanasaheb Chandorkar, who observed Him closely, He was not Himself circumcised. Vide article in Sai Leela on "Baba Hindu ki Yavan", by B.V. Dev, page 562). If you call Him Hindu, He always lived in the Masjid; if Mohammedan, He had always the Dhuni-sacred fire there, and the following things, which are contrary to Mohammedan religion, i.e., grinding on the hand mill, blowing of the conch and bells, oblation in the fire, Bhajan, giving of food and worship of Baba's Feet by means of Arghya (water), were allowed there. If you think that He was a Mohammedan, the best of Brahmins and Agnihotris, leaving aside their orthodox ways, fell prostrate at His Feet. Those who went to make enquiries about His caste, were dumb-founded and were captured by

Foot Note :-

R.B. Purandhare also Certified that baba did not Undergo "SUNTHI"

His darshan. So, none could definitely decide, whether Sai Baba was a Hindu or a Mohammedan*. This is no wonder for he who completely surrenders himself to the Lord, by getting rid of his egoism and body-consciousness, thus becomes one with Him, and has nothing to do with any questions of caste or nationality. Baba saw no difference between any two castes and even between beings. He took meat and fish with Fakirs but did not grumble, when dogs touched the dishes with their mouths.

Such a unique and wonderful incarnation was Sai Baba. On account of the merits in my past birth, I had the good fortune to sit at His Feet and enjoy His blessed company. The joy and delight I derived therefrom, was incomparable. In fact, Sai Baba was pure Anand and consciousness. I cannot sufficiently describe Him, His greatness and uniqueness. He who took delight at His Feet, was established in His own self. Many Sanyaasis, Sadhaks and all sorts of men aspiring for salvation came to Sai Baba. He always walked, talked and laughed with them and always uttered "Allah Malik" (God is the sole owner). He never liked discussion or disputation. He was always calm and controlled, though irritable at times, always preached Vedanta and nobody knew till the last, Who was Baba? Princes and poor people were treated alike by Him. He knew the inmost secrets of all and when He gave expression to them, all were surprised. He was the repository of all knowledge, still He feigned ignorance. He also disliked honour. Such were the characteristics of Sai Baba. Though He had a human body, His deeds testified to His Godhood. All people considered Him as the God in Shirdi.

Behaviour of Sai Baba

Ignorant that I am, I cannot describe Baba's miracles. He got almost all the temples in Shirdi repaired. Through Tatya Patil, the temples of Shani, Ganapati, Shankar-Parvati, Village Diety and Maruti were put in order. His charity was also remarkable. The money He used to collect as Dakshina, was freely distributed, Rs. 20 to some, Rs. 15 or 50 to others, every day. The recipients thought that this was 'pure' charity money; and Baba wished that it should be usefully employed.

People benefitted immensely by having Baba's darshan. Some became hale and hearty, wicked people were turned into good ones.

Leprosy was cured in some cases, many got their desires fulfilled, without any medicine being put in the eyes, some blind men got back their sight and some lame ones got their limbs. Nobody could see the end of His extraordinary greatness. His fame spread far and wide, and pilgrims from all sides flocked to Shirdi. Baba had his 'Asan' near the Dhuni and always rested there. He sat there in meditation, sometimes without a bath.

He used to tie a small white turban on His head and wear a clean Dhotar round His waist, and a shirt on His body. This was His attire in the beginning. He first practiced medicine in the village, He examined patients and gave medicines. He was always successful and He became famous as a Hakim (doctor). A curious case may be narrated here. One devotee had his eyes quite red and swollen. No doctor was available in Shirdi. The other devotees took him to Baba. In such cases other doctors would use ointments, Anjans, cow's milk and camphorated drugs etc. Baba's remedy was quite unique. He pounded some 'Beeba' (some *Carpus Ana Cardium*, i.e. marking nuts) and made two balls of them and thrust them on in each eye of the patient and wrapped a cloth – bandage round them. Next day the bandage was removed and water was poured over them. The inflammation subsided and the pupils became white and clear. Though, the eyes are very delicate, the Beeba caused no hurt but removed the disease of the eyes. Many such cases were cured, this is only one instance in this regard.

Baba's Yogic Practices

Baba knew all the processes and practices of Yoga. Two of them will be described here :

(1) **DHAUTI KRIYA or CLEANSING PROCESS** : Every third day, Baba went to the well near Banyan tree, at a considerable distance from the Masjid washed His mouth and had a bath. On one occasion, He was seen throwing up His intestines, clean them inside outside and place them on a Jamb tree for drying. There are people in Shirdi, who have actually seen this and who have testified to this fact. Ordinary Dhauti is done by a moistened piece of linen, 3 inches broad 22½ ft. long. This piece is gulped down the throat and allowed to remain in the stomach for about half an hour for being reacted there and then taken out. But Baba's Dhauti was quite unique and extraordinary. (2)

KHANDA YOGA : In this practice Baba extracted the limbs from His body and left them separately at different places in the Masjid. Once a gentleman went to the Masjid and saw the limbs of Baba lying in separate places. He was terrified, he first thought of running to the village officers and informing them of Baba being hacked to pieces and murdered. He thought that perhaps he would be held responsible, as he was the first informant and knew something of the affair. So he kept silent. But, next day, when he went to the Masjid, he was very much surprised to see Baba, hale and hearty as before. He thought that what he had seen the previous day, was only a dream.

Baba practised Yoga since His infancy and nobody knew or guessed the proficiency He had attained in it. He charged no fees for His cures, became renowned and famous by virtue of His merits, gave health to many a poor and suffering person. This famous Doctor of doctors cared not for His interests, but always worked for the good and welfare of others, Himself suffering unbearable and terrible pain many a time in the process. One such instance I will relate now, which will show the all-pervasive and the most merciful character of Sai Baba.

Baba's All-pervasiveness and Mercy

In the year 1910, Baba was sitting near the Dhuni on Diwali and warming Himself. He was putting fire-wood into the Dhuni, which was burning brightly. A little later instead of pushing logs of wood, Baba pushed His arm into the Dhuni, His arm was scorched and burnt. This was noticed by the errand boy Madhav and also by Madhavrao Deshpande (Shama). They, at once, ran to Baba and Madhavrao clasped Baba, by His waist from behind and dragged Him forcibly backward and asked, "Deva, why You done this?" Then Baba came to His senses and replied, "The wife of a blacksmith at some distant place was working the bellows of a furnace, her husband called her, forgetting that her child was on her lap, she got up hastily and the child slipped into the furnace. I immediately thrust My hand into the furnace and saved the child. I do not mind My arm being burnt but, I am glad that the life of the child is saved."

Leper Devotee's Service

On hearing the news of Baba's hand being burnt from (Shama)

Madhavrao Deshpande, Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar accompanied by the famous doctor Parmanand of Mumbai with his medical outfit, consisting of ointments, lint and bandages etc. rushed to Shirdi and requested Baba to allow Dr. Parmanand to examine the arm and dress the wound, caused by the burn. This was refused. Ever since the burnt arm was dressed by Bhagoji Shinde, a leper devotee. His treatment consisted in massaging the burnt part with Ghee¹ and then, placing a leaf over it and bandaging it tightly. Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar solicited Baba many a time to unfasten the bandages, get the wound examined, dressed and treated by Dr. Parmanand, with the object that it may heal fast. Dr. Parmanand himself made similar requests but Baba postponed it by saying that Allah was His Doctor and did not allow His arm to be examined. Dr. Parmanand's medicines were not exposed to the air of Shirdi and they remained intact, but he had the good fortune of getting a darshan of Baba. Bhagoji was allowed to treat the hand daily. After some days, the arm healed and all were happy. Still, we do not know whether any trace of pain was left or not. Every morning, Bhagoji went through his programme of untying the bandages, massaging the arm with ghee and tightly bandaging it again. This went on till Sai Baba's Samadhi (death). Sai Baba a perfect Siddha as He was did not really want this treatment, but out of love for His devotee, He allowed the 'Upasana' – service of Bhagoji to go on uninterrupted all along. When Baba started for Lendi, Bhagoji held an umbrella over Him and accompanied Him. Every morning when Baba sat near the post close to the Dhuni, Bhagoji was present and started his service. Bhagoji was a sinner in his past birth. He was suffering from leprosy, his fingers had shrunk, his body was full of pus and smelling badly. Though outwardly he seemed so unfortunate, he was really very lucky and happy, for he was the premier servant of Baba, and got the benefit of His company.

Master Khaparde's Plague Case

I shall now relate another instance of Baba's wonderful Leela. Mrs. Khaparde, the wife of Mr. Dadasaheb Khaparde of Amaravati, was staying at Shirdi with her young son for some days. One day the son got high fever, which further developed into bubonic plague. The mother was frightened and felt most uneasy. She thought of leaving the place

1. Ghee – It is prepared by melting the butter and boiling it for sometime and then filtering it.

for Amaravati and went near Baba in the evening, when He was coming near the Wada (now Samadhi Mandir) in His evening rounds, for asking His permission. She informed Him in a trembling tone, that her dear young son was down with plague. Baba spoke kindly and softly to her, saying that the sky is beset with clouds; but they will melt and pass off and everything will be smooth and clear. So saying He lifted up His Kafni up to the waist and showed to all present, four fully developed bubos, as big as eggs and added, "See, how I have to suffer for My devotees, their difficulties are Mine." Seeing this unique and extraordinary deed (Leela), the people were convinced as to how the saints suffer pains for their devotees. The hearts of the saints is softer than wax, it is soft in and out as butter. They love their devotees without any idea of gain, and regard them as their true relatives.

Going to Pandharpur

I shall now close this chapter, after relating a story illustrating how Sai Baba loved His devotees and anticipated their wishes and movements. Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar, who was a great devotee of Baba, was Mamlatdar¹ at Nandurbar in Khandesh. He got an order of transfer to Pandharpur. His devotion to Sai Baba bore fruit, as he got an order to go and stay at Pandharpur which is regarded as the 'Bhuvaikuntha' – Heaven on the earth. Nanasaheb had to take immediate charge, so he left for the place without even writing or informing anybody at Shirdi. He wanted to give a surprise visit at Shirdi – his Pandharpur, see and salute his Vithoba (Baba) and then proceed further. Nobody knew of Nanasaheb's departure for Shirdi but Sai Baba knew all about this, as His eyes were everywhere (omniscient). As soon as Nanasaheb approached Nimgaon, a few miles from Shirdi, there was a stir in the masjid at Shirdi. Baba was sitting and talking with Mhalsapati, Appa Shinde and Kashiram, when He at once said, "Let us all four do some Bhajan, the doors of Pandhari are open, let us sing merrily!" Then they began to sing in chorus, the bhava of the song being "I have to go to Pandharpur and I have to stay on there, for it is the house of my Lord."

Baba sang and the devotees followed Him. After a short while Nanasaheb came there with his family, prostrated before Baba and requested Him to accompany them to Pandharpur and stay with them

1. Mamlatdar – Revenue Officer

there. This solicitation was not necessary, as the devotees told Nanasaheb that Baba was already in the mood of going to Pandharpur and staying there. Hearing this Nanasaheb was moved and fell at Baba's Feet. Then after getting Baba's permission, Udi (sacred ash) and blessings, Nanasaheb left for Pandharpur.

There is no end to Baba's stories; but let me now stop here, reserving for the next chapter other topics, such as importance of human life, Baba's living on alms, Baijabai's service and other stories.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER VIII

Importance of Human Birth – Sai Baba begging Food – Baijabai's Service – Sai Baba's Dormitory – His Affection for Khushalchand.

As hinted in the last chapter, Hemadpant now explains at length in his preliminary remarks, the importance of human birth and then proceeds to relate, how Sai Baba begged His food; how Baijabai served Him; how He slept in the Masjid, with Taty Kote Patil and Mhalsapati and how He loved Khushalchand of Rahata.

Importance of Human Birth

In this wonderful universe, God has created millions (84 lakhs¹ according to Hindu shastra calculation) of creatures (including Gods, demi-gods, insects, beasts and men) inhabiting heaven, hell, earth, ocean, sky and other intermediate regions. Of these, those creatures or souls, whose merits preponderate, go to heaven and live there till they enjoy the fruits of their actions and when this is done, they are cast down; while those souls, whose sins or demerits preponderate, go down to hell and suffer the consequences of their misdeeds for as long as they deserve it. When their merits and demerits balance each other, they are born on earth as human beings and are given a chance to work out their salvation. Ultimately, when their merits and demerits both are worked out completely, they get their deliverance and become free. To put the matter in a nutshell, souls get their birth or transmigration according to their deeds and evolvement.

Special Value of the Human Body

As we all know, four things are common to all the creatures, viz., food, sleep, fear and sexual union. In the case of man, he is endowed with a special faculty, viz, knowledge, with the help of which he can attain God-vision, which is impossible in any other species. It is for this reason that gods envy the human species and aspire to be born as men on earth, so as to get their final deliverance.

Some say that there is nothing worse than the human body, which is full of filth, mucus, phlegm and dirt and which is subject to decay,

1. 10 Lakhs = 1 million

disease and death. This is true to a certain extent, but inspite of these drawbacks and defects, the special value of the human body is – that man has got the capacity to acquire knowledge. It is only due to the human body or on account of it, that one can think of the perishable and transitory nature of the body itself and of the world, and have an aversion for sense-enjoyments, and can discriminate between the unreal and the real, and thus attain God-vision. So, if we reject or neglect the body, because it is filthy, we lose the chance of God-vision and if we indulge it and run after sense-enjoyments, because it is precious, we go to hell. The proper course, therefore, for us to pursue, is the following; that the body should neither be neglected nor fondled, but should be properly cared for, just as a traveller on horse-back takes care of his horse on the way, till he reaches his destination and returns home. Thus, the body should ever be used or engaged to attain God-vision or self-realization, which is the supreme end of life.

It is said that, though God created various kinds of creatures, He was not satisfied, for none of them was able to know and appreciate His work. So he had to create a special being – man, and endow him with a special faculty, viz, Knowledge; and when He saw that man was able to appreciate His Leela, marvellous work and intelligence, He was highly pleased and satisfied. (Vide, Bhagawat, 11-9-28) So really, it is fortunate to get a human body, better still to be born in a Brahmin family and best, to get an opportunity of being close to Sai Baba's Feet and surrendering to Him.

Man's Endeavour

Realizing how precious human life is and knowing that death is certain and may snatch us at any time, we should be ever alert to achieve the object of our lives, we should not make the least delay, but make every possible haste to gain our object, just as a king leaves no stone unturned to seek his lost son. So with all earnestness, we should strive to attain our end, i.e. self-realization. Casting aside laziness, warding off drowsiness, we should day and night meditate on the self. If we fail to do this, we reduce ourselves to the level of beasts.

How to Proceed?

The most effective and speedy way to gain our object is to approach a worthy saint or sage – Sadguru, who has himself attained God-vision. What cannot be achieved by hearing religious discourses and study of

religious texts is easily obtained in the company of such worthy souls. Just as the sun only gives light, which all the stars put together cannot do, so the Sadguru alone imparts spiritual wisdom, which all the sacred books and sermons cannot do. His movements and simple talks give us 'silent' advice. The virtues of forgiveness, calmness, disinterestedness, charity, benevolence, control of mind and body, egolessness etc. are observed by the disciples, as they are being practiced in such pure and holy company. This enlightens their minds and lifts them up spiritually. Sai Baba was such a Sage or Sadguru. Though He acted as a Fakir (mendicant), He was always engrossed in Self. He always loved all beings, in whom He saw God or Divinity. By pleasures He was not elated. He was not depressed by misfortunes. A king and a pauper were the same to Him. He Whose glance would turn a beggar into a king, used to go begging food from door to door in Shirdi, and let us now see how He did it.

Baba Begging Food

Blessed are the people of Shirdi, in front of whose houses, Baba stood as a beggar and called out, "Oh Mai, give Me a piece of bread!" and spread out His hand to receive the same. In one hand He carried a Tumrel (tinpot) and in the other a Zoli or Choupadari, i.e., a rectangular piece of cloth. He visited certain houses daily. Liquid or semi-liquid things, such as soup, vegetables, milk or butter milk, were received in the tinpot, while cooked rice, bread and such solid things were taken in the Zoli. Baba's tongue knew no taste, as He had acquired control over it. So how could He care for the taste of different things mixed up together? Whatever things He got in His Zoli and in the tinpot, were mixed together and partaken by Baba to His heart's content. Whether particular things were tasty or otherwise, was never noticed by Baba, as His tongue was devoid of the sense of taste altogether. Baba begged till noon, but His begging was very irregular. Some days He went a few rounds on other days up to twelve noon. The food thus collected was kept in a Kundi, i.e., earthen pot. Dogs, cats and crows freely ate from it and Baba never drove them away. The woman who swept the floor of the Masjid, took some 10 or 12 pieces of bread to her house and nobody prevented her from doing so. How could He, Who, even in dreams never warded off cats and dogs by harsh words and signs, refuse food to poor helpless people? Blessed indeed is the life of such a Noble Person! People in Shirdi took Him in the beginning for a mad Fakir. He was known in the village by this name. How could one, who lived on alms by begging a few crumbs of bread, be revered and

worshipped? But this Fakir was very liberal of heart, detached and charitable. Though He looked restless from outside, He was firm and steady inside. His way was inscrutable. Still in that small village, there were a few kind and blessed people, who recognized and regarded Him as a Great Soul. One such person's account is given below.

Baijabai's Brilliant Service

Tatya Kote's mother, Baijabai, used to go to the woods every after noon with a basket on her head containing bread and vegetables. She roamed in the jungles *kos* (about 3 miles) after *kos*, trampling bushes and shrubs in search of the mad Fakir and after finding Him, fell at His Feet. The Fakir sat calm and motionless in meditation, while she placed a leaf before Him, spread her things-eatables, bread, vegetables etc. thereon, and fed Him. Wonderful was her faith and service. Every day she roamed at noon in the jungles and insisted upon Baba to partake of the lunch. Her service, *Upasana* or penance, by whatever name we call it, was never forgotten by Baba till the end. Remembering fully what service she rendered, Baba benefitted her son significantly. Both the son and the mother, had great faith in the Fakir, Who was their God. Baba often said to them that "Fakiri (mendicacy) is real, Lordship (riches) is transient." After some years Baba stopped going into the woods and began to live in the village, and take His food in the Masjid thus, Baijabai's troubles of roaming in the jungles ended.

Dormitory of Trio

Ever blessed are the saints, in whose heart Lord Vasudeva dwells and fortunate indeed are the devotees, who get the benefit of the company of such saints. Two such fortunate fellows, Tatya Kote Patil and Bhagat Mhalsapati, equally shared the company of Sai Baba. Baba also loved them both. These three persons slept in the Masjid with their heads towards the east, west and north, and with their feet touching one another's at the centre. After spreading their beds, they lay on them, chitchatting and gossiping till late at night. If any one of them showed any signs of sleep, others would wake him up. For instance, if Tatya began to snore, Baba at once got up and shook him from side to side and pressed his head. If it was Mhalsapati, He pulled him close, stroked his legs and patted his back. In this way for a period of 14 years, Tatya, leaving his parents at home, slept in the Masjid on account of his deep love for Baba. How happy and never to be forgotten were those days! How to measure that love and how to value the grace of Baba! After the

passing away of his father, Tatya took charge of the household affairs and began to sleep at home.

Khushalchand of Rahata

Baba loved Ganpat Kote Patil of Shirdi. He loved Chandrabhansheth Marwadi of Rahata equally. After the demise of this Sheth, Baba loved his nephew Khushalchand equally or perhaps more, and looked after his welfare, day and night. Some times in a bullock cart, at other times in a tonga¹, with intimate devotees Baba went to Rahata. People of that village would come out with band and music and receive Baba at the gate of the village and prostrate before Him. Then He was taken into the village with great honour and ceremony. Khushalchand took Baba to his house, seated Him on a comfortable seat and gave Him a good meal. Then they talked freely and merrily for some time, after which Baba returned to Shirdi, giving delight and blessings to all.

Shirdi is midway and equi-distant from Rahata on one side (south) and Nimgaon on the other (north). Baba never went beyond these places during His life time. He never saw any train nor travelled by it. Still He knew exactly the timings of arrivals and departures of all trains. Devotees who acted according to Baba's instructions given at the time of taking His leave, fared well, while those who disregarded them, suffered many a mishap and accident. More about this and other matters will be told in the next chapter.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

NOTE – An incident, given at the end of this chapter, showing Baba's love for Khushalchand, how He asked one afternoon Kakasaheb Dixit to go to Rahata and fetch Khushalchand to Him, and at the same time appeared before Khushalchand in his noon-nap asking him to come to Shirdi, is not given here as it is described in the book (Sat Charita) later on (chapter 30).

1. Tonga is a horse pulled coach used in India.



CHAPTER IX

*Effect of Compliance and Non-compliance with
Baba's Orders at the Time of Taking Leave – A few
Instances – Mendicancy and its Necessity –
Devotees' (Tarkhad family's) Experiences – Baba fed
sumptuously*

At the end of the last chapter, it was briefly stated that the Bhaktas, who obeyed Baba's orders at the time of taking leave, fared well and those, who disobeyed them, suffered many a mishap. This statement will be amplified and illustrated, with a few striking instances, and by other matters dealt with in this chapter.

Characteristic of Shirdi – Pilgrimage

One special peculiarity of Shirdi-pilgrimage was, that none could leave Shirdi, without Baba's permission and if he did, he invited troubles; but if anyone was asked to quit Shirdi, he could stay there no longer. Baba gave certain suggestions or hints, when devotees went to bid goodbye and take leave. These suggestions had to be followed. If they were not followed or were departed from, accidents were sure to befall them. We give below a few instances.

Tatya Kote Patil

Tatya Kote was once going in a tonga to Kopargaon bazaar. He came in haste to the Masjid, saluted Baba, and said that he would go to Kopargaon bazaar. Baba said, "Don't make haste, stop a little, forget the bazaar, don't go out of the village". On seeing his anxiousness to go, Baba asked him to take Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande), with him. Not minding this direction, Tatya Kote immediately drove off his tonga. Of the two horses, one, which cost Rs. 300/-, was very active and restless. After passing Sawli Vihir, it began to run rashly, got a sprain in its waist and fell down. Tatya was not much hurt but, was reminded of Mother Sai's direction. On another occasion, while proceeding to Kolhar village, he disregarded Baba's direction and drove in a tonga, which met with a similar accident.

European Gentleman

One European gentleman of Mumbai once came to Shirdi, with an

introductory note from Nanasaheb Chandorkar, and with some object in view. He was comfortably accommodated in a tent. He wanted to kneel before Baba and kiss His hand. Therefore, he tried thrice to step into the Masjid but Baba prevented him from doing so. He was asked to sit in the open courtyard below and take Baba's darshan from there. Not pleased with the reception he got, he wanted to leave Shirdi at once and came to bid goodbye. Baba asked him to go the next day and not to hurry. People also requested him to abide by Baba's instructions. Not listening to all this he left Shirdi in a tonga. The horses ran all right but when Sawli Vahir was passed, a bicycle came in front, on seeing which the horses were frightened and ran fast. The tonga turned topsy-turvy and the gentleman fell down, and was dragged over some distance. He was immediately rescued, but had to go and lie in Kopargaon hospital, for the treatment of his injuries. Such experiences were legion, and people learnt the lesson, that those who disobeyed Baba's instructions, met with accidents in one way or the other, and those who obeyed them, were safe and happy.

The Necessity of Mendicancy

Now to return to the question of mendicancy. A question may arise in the minds of some that, if Baba was such a great personage-God manifest, why should He have taken recourse to begging bowl throughout His life? This question may be considered and replied from two standpoints. (1) Who are the people, who have a right to live by the begging bowl? Our Shastras say that those persons, who, after getting rid of or becoming free from the three main desires, viz. (1) for progeny, (2) for wealth, (3) for fame, and accept Sanyaas, are the fit persons to live by begging alms. They cannot make cooking arrangements and dine at their home. The duty of feeding them is laid on the shoulders of house holders. Sai Baba was neither a house-holder nor Vanaprastha. He was a celibate Sanyaasi, i.e. Sanyaasi from boy-hood. His firm conviction was that the universe was His home. He was the Lord Vasudeva – the Supporter of the universe and the Imperishable Brahma. So, He had full right to take recourse to begging. (2) Now, from the standpoint of *Panchasoonas – five sins and their atonement. We all know that in order to prepare food-stuffs and meals, the house-holders have to go through five actions or processes, viz. (1) Kandani – Pounding, (2) Peshani – Grinding, (3) Udakumbhi – Washing pots, (4) Marjani – Sweeping and Cleaning, (5) Chulli – Lighting hearths. These processes

* पंचसूना – (1) कंडणी (2) पेषणी (3) उदकुंबी (4) मार्जनी (5) चुल्ली

involve destruction of a lot of small insects and creatures; and thus, the house-holders incur sin. In order to atone for his sins, our Shastras prescribe six kinds of sacrifices,* viz., (1) Brahma Yagnya, (2) Vedadhyayan – offerings to Brahman or the study of the Vedas, (3) Pitri Yagnya – offerings to the ancestors, (4) Dev Yagnya – offerings to the Gods, (5) Bhoota Yagnya – offerings to the beings, (6) Manushya Atithi Yagnya – offerings to men or uninvited guests. If these sacrifices, enjoined by the Shastras, are duly performed, the purification of their minds is effected and this helps them to get knowledge and self-realization. Baba, in going from house to house, reminded the inmates of their sacred duty, and fortunate were the people who got the lesson at their homes from Baba.

Devotees' Experiences

Now to return to the other more interesting subject ... Lord Krishna has said in the Bhagvad Gita (9-26), **"Whosoever devoutly offers to Me a leaf, a flower or a fruit or water, of that pure-hearted man, I accept that pious offering."** In the case of Sai Baba, if a devotee intended really to offer anything to Sai Baba, and if he afterwards forgot to offer the same, Baba reminded him or his friend about the offering, and made him bring it to Him and then accepted it, and blessed the devotee. A few instances are given below.

Tarkhad Family (father and son)

Mr. Ramachandra Atmaram alias Babasaheb Tarkhad, formerly a Prarthana Samajist, was a staunch devotee of Sai Baba. His wife and son loved Baba equally or perhaps more. It was once proposed that Master Tarkhad should go with his mother to Shirdi and spend his summer vacation there; but the son was unwilling to go, as he thought that, in case, he left his home in Bandra, the worship of Sai Baba in the house would not be properly attended to as his father, being a Prarthana Samajist, would not care to worship Sai Baba's picture. However, on his father's giving an assurance under oath that, he would perform the worship exactly as his son was doing, the mother and the son left for Shirdi on a Friday night.

Next day (Saturday) Mr. Tarkhad got up early, took his bath and before proceeding with the Puja, prostrated himself before the Shrine

* (1) ब्रह्मयज्ञ (2) वेदाध्ययन (3) पितृयज्ञ (4) देवयज्ञ (5) भूतयज्ञ (6) मनुष्य (अतिथि) यज्ञ

and said, "Baba, I am going to perform the Puja exactly as my son has been doing but please, let it not be a formal drill." Saying so, he performed the Puja and offered a few pieces of lump-sugar as Naivaidya (offering). The sugar was distributed at lunch time.

That evening and next day-Sunday, everything went on well. The following Monday was a working day and it also passed well. Mr. Tarkhad, who had never performed Puja like this in all his life, felt great confidence within himself, that everything was passing on quite satisfactorily, as per the promise given to the son. Next Tuesday, he performed the morning Puja as usual and left for his work. Coming home at noon, he found that, there was no Prasad (sugar) to partake of, when the meal was served. He asked the servant-cook, who told him that there was no offering made that morning, and that he had completely forgotten to perform that part of the Puja (offering Naivaidya). At this, he left his seat and prostrated himself before the Shrine, expressed his regret at the same time chiding Baba for the want of guidance in making the whole affair a matter of mere drill. Then, he wrote a letter to his son, stating the facts and requested him to lay it at Baba's Feet, and ask His pardon for his neglect.

This happened in Bandra at about Tuesday noon.

At about the same time, when the noon Arati was about to commence in Shirdi, Baba said to Mrs. Tarkhad, "Mother, I had been to your house in Bandra, with a view to have something to eat. I found the door locked. I, somehow, got an entry and found to My regret that Bhau (Mr. Tarkhad) had left nothing to eat for Me. So, I have returned with my hunger unappeased".

The lady did not understand this but the son, who was close – by, understood the whole thing that there was something wrong with the Puja in Bandra and he therefore, requested Baba to permit him to go home. Baba refused this, but allowed him to perform Puja there. Then, the son wrote a letter to his father stating all that took place at Shirdi and implored his father not to neglect the Puja at home.

Both these letters crossed each other and were delivered to the respective parties the next day. Is this not wonderful?

Mrs. Tarkhad

Let us now take up the case of Mrs. Tarkhad herself. She offered three things, viz. (1) Bharit (roasted brinjal mixed with curds and spice), (2) Kacharya (circular pieces of brinjal fried in ghee), (3) Pedha (sweetmeat ball). Let us see, how Baba accepted these.

Once Mr. Raghuvir Bhaskar Purandare of Bandra, a great devotee of Baba started for Shirdi with family. Mrs. Tarkhad went to Mrs. Purandare and gave her two brinjals and requested her to prepare Bharit of one brinjal and Kacharya of the other, when she went to Shirdi and serve Baba with them. After reaching Shirdi, Mrs. Purandare went with her dish of Bharit to the Masjid, when Baba was just sitting for meals. Baba found the Bharit very tasty. So, He distributed it to all and said that, He wanted Kacharya now. A word was sent to Radhakrishnamai that, Baba wanted Kacharya. She was in a fix, as that was no season of brinjals. How to get brinjals was the question? When an enquiry was made as to who brought the Bharit, it was found that Mrs. Purandare was entrusted with the duty of serving Kacharya. Everybody then came to know the significance of Baba's enquiry regarding Kacharya and was wonder-struck at Baba's all-pervasive knowledge.

In December, 1915, one Govind Balaram Mankar wanted to go to Shirdi to perform the obsequies of his father. Before he left, he came to see Mr. Tarkhad. Then Mrs. Tarkhad wanted to send something with him to Baba. She searched the whole house, but found nothing except a Pedha, which had already been offered as Naivaidya. The boy Govind was in mourning. Out of great devotion to Baba, she sent the Pedha with him, hoping that Baba would accept and eat it. Govind went to Shirdi and saw Baba but forgot to take the Pedha with him. Baba simply waited. When again he went to Baba in the afternoon, he went empty-handed, without the Pedha. Baba could wait no longer and did ask him straight, "What did you bring for Me?" "Nothing" was the reply. Baba asked him again. The same reply came forth again. Then, Baba asked him the question, "Did not the mother (Mrs. Tarkhad) give some sweetmeat to you for Me, at the time of your starting?" The boy then remembered the whole thing. He felt abashed, asked Baba's pardon, ran to his lodging, brought the Pedha and gave it to Baba. As soon as Baba got it in His hand, He put it into His mouth and gulped it down. Thus, the devotion of Mrs. Tarkhad was recognized and accepted. "As men

believe in Me, so do I accept them" (Gita, 4-11) was proved in this case.

Baba Fed Sumptuously, How?

Once, Mrs. Tarkhad was staying in a certain house in Shirdi. At noon meals were ready and being served, when a hungry dog turned up there and began to bark. Mrs. Tarkhad got up at once and threw a piece of bread which the dog gulped with great relish. In the afternoon when she went to the Masjid and sat at some distance, Sai Baba said to her, "Mother, you have fed Me sumptuously, My famished Pranas (life-forces) have been satisfied. Ever act like this, and this will stand you in good stead. Sitting in this Masjid I shall never, never speak untruth. Take pity on Me like this! First give bread to the hungry and then, eat yourself. Note this well!" She could not understand at first the meaning of what Baba said. So, she replied, "Baba, how could I feed You? I am myself dependent on others and take my food from them on payment." Then, Baba replied, "Eating that lovely bread I am heartily contented and I am still belching. **The dog, which you saw before meals and to which you gave the piece of bread, is one with Me, so also other creatures (cats, pigs, flies, cows etc.) are one with Me. I am roaming in their forms. He, who sees Me in all these creatures, is My beloved. So, abandon the sense of duality and distinction, and serve Me as you did today.**" Drinking these nectar-like words she was moved, her eyes were brimmed with tears, her throat was choked and her joy knew no bounds.

Moral

"**See God in all beings!**" is the moral of this chapter. The Upanishads, the Gita and the Bhagawat, all exhort us to perceive God or Divinity in all the creatures. By the instance, given at the end of this chapter and other numerous to mention, Sai Baba has practically demonstrated to us, how to put the Upanishadic teachings into practice. In this way Sai Baba stands as the best Exponent or Teacher of the Upanishadic doctrines.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER X

Sai Baba's Mode of Life – His Sleeping-plank – His Stay in Shirdi – His Teachings – His Humility – Nanavali – The Easiest Path

Remember Him (Sai Baba) always with love, for He was ever engrossed in doing good to all, and always abided in His Self. To remember Him only, is to solve the riddle of life and death. This is the best and easiest of Sadhanas, as it involves no expenditure. A little exertion here brings great rewards. So, as long as our senses are sound, we should, minute by minute, practice this Sadhana. All other Gods are illusory, Guru is the only God. If we believe in Sadguru's holy feet, He can change our fortune for the better. If we serve him sincerely, we get rid of our worldly afflictions. **We need not study any philosophy, like the Nyaya¹ and the Mimansa. As we trust the helmsman in crossing rivers and seas, so, we have to trust our Sadguru in getting over the ocean of worldly existence.** The Sadguru looks to the intense feeling and devotion of his devotees, endows them with knowledge and eternal bliss.

In the last chapter, Baba's mendicancy and devotees' experiences and other subjects are dealt with. Let the readers now read, where and how Baba lived, how He slept and how He taught etc.

Baba's Wonderful Bedstead

Let us first see where and how Baba slept, Mr. Nanasaheb Dingle brought for Sai Baba, a wooden plank, about 4 arms in length and only a span in breadth, for sleeping upon. Instead of keeping the plank on the floor and then sleeping on it, Baba tied it like a swing to the rafters of the Masjid with old shreds or rags and commenced to sleep upon it. The rags were so thin and worn out that it was a wonder, how they could bear or support the weight of the plank itself, let alone the weight of Baba. But, somehow or other it was Baba's sheer Leela that the worn out rags did sustain the plank, along with the weight of Baba on it. On the four corners of this plank, Baba lighted Panatis (earthen lamps), one at each corner and kept them burning the whole night. It was a sight for the gods to see Baba sitting or sleeping on this plank! It was a wonder to all, how Baba got up and down the plank. Out of curiosity,

1. Nyaya – Justice

many observers kept watching the process of mounting and dismounting, but none succeeded. As crowds began to swell, so as to detect this wonderful feat, Baba one day broke the plank into pieces and threw it away. Baba had all the eight Maha Siddhis (powers) at His command. He neither practiced nor craved for them. They came to Him naturally, as a result of His spiritual perfection.

Manifestation of Brahma

Though, Sai Baba looked like a man, three cubits and a half in length, still He dwelt in the hearts of all. Inwardly, He was unattached and indifferent but outwardly, He longed for mass welfare. Though, inwardly, an abode of peace, He looked outwardly restless. Inwardly, He had the state of Brahma, outwardly he seemed engrossed in the world. Sometimes He looked on all with affection and at times He threw stones at them; sometimes He scolded them, while at times He embraced them and was calm, composed, tolerant and well-balanced. He always abided and was engrossed in the Self, and was well-disposed towards His Bhaktas. He always sat on one Asan and never travelled. His 'satka' was a small stick, which He always carried in His hand. He was calm and thought-free. He never cared for wealth and fame, and lived on alms. Such a life He led. He always uttered "Allah Malik" (God is the real owner). Entire and unbroken was His love for the Bhaktas. He was the mine or storehouse for self-knowledge and full of Divine Bliss. Such was the Divine Form of Sai Baba, boundless, endless and undifferentiated. One principle, which envelopes the whole universe (from a stone to Brahma), incarnated in Sai Baba. The really meritorious and fortunate people got this treasure grove in their hands, while those people, who not knowing the real worth of Sai Baba, took Him to be a mere human being, were indeed unfortunate.

His Stay in Shirdi and Probable Birth-date

None knew or knows the parents and the exact date of birth of Sai Baba; but it can be approximately determined by His stay in Shirdi. Baba first came to Shirdi when he was a young lad of sixteen and stayed there for three years. Then, all of a sudden, He disappeared for some time. After some time, He reappeared in the Nizam state, near Aurangabad and again came to Shirdi, with the marriage party of Chand Patil, when He was about twenty years old. Thence, He stayed in Shirdi for an unbroken period of sixty years, after which Baba took His Maha-samadhi in the year 1918. From this, we can say that the year

of Baba's birth is approximately 1838 A.D.

Baba's Mission and Advice

Saint Ramdas (1608-1681) flourished in the 17th century, and fulfilled to a great extent his mission of protecting cows and Brahmins against the Yavanas (Mohammedans); but within two centuries after him, the split between the two communities – Hindus and Mohammedans widened up and Sai Baba came to bridge that gulf. His constant advice to all was to this effect. "Ram (the God of the Hindus) and Rahim (the God of the Mohammedans) were one and the same; there was not the slightest difference between them then, why should their devotees fall out and quarrel among themselves? You ignorant folk, join hands and bring both the communities together, act sanely and thus, you will gain your object of national unity. It is not good to dispute and argue. So, don't argue, don't emulate others. Always consider your interest and welfare. The Lord will protect you. Yoga, sacrifice, penance and knowledge are the means to attain God. If you do not succeed in this by any means, in vain is your birth. If anyone does any evil unto you, do not retaliate. If you can do anything, do some good unto others." This in short was Sai Baba's advice to all, and this will stand us in good stead both in material and spiritual matters.

Sai Baba as Sadguru

There are many so-called Gurus, who go about from house to house with cymbals and Vina in their hands, and make a show of their spirituality. They blow Mantras into the ears of their disciples and extract money from them. They profess to teach piety and religion to their disciples, but are themselves impious and irreligious. Sai Baba never thought of making the least show of His worth (piety). He had no Body-consciousness but He had great love for His disciples. There are two kinds of Gurus (1) 'Niyat' (appointed or fixed) and (2) 'Aniyat' (unappointed or general). The latter by their advice develop the good qualities in us, purify our hearts and set us on the path of salvation; but contact with the former, dispels our sense of dualities (sense of difference), and establishes us in Unity by making us realize "Thou art that". There are various Gurus imparting to us various kinds of worldly knowledge but he, who fixes us in our Nature (Self) and carries us beyond the ocean of worldly existence, is the Sadguru. Sai Baba was

* (1) नियत (2) अनियत

such a Sadguru. His greatness is indescribable. If anybody went to take His darshan, He, without being asked, would give every detail of his past, present and future. He saw Divinity in all beings. Friends and foes were alike to Him. Disinterested and balanced, He obliged the evil-doers as well as the pious. He was the same in prosperity and adversity. No doubt ever touched Him. Though, He acted through the body He was, not in the least, attached to His body or house. Though, He looked embodied, He was really unembodied, i.e., free from gross existence.

Blessed are the people of Shirdi, who worshipped Sai as their God. While eating, drinking, working in their backyards and fields, and doing various household works, they always remembered Sai and sang His glory. They knew no other God except Sai. What to speak of the sweetness of the love of the women of Shirdi! They were quite ignorant but their pure love inspired them to compose poems or songs in their simple rustic language. Letters of learning they had none, still one can discern real poetry in their simple songs. It is not intelligence, but love, that inspires real poetry as such. Real poetry is the manifestation of true love, and this can be seen and appreciated by intelligent listeners. Collection of these folksongs is desirable and by Baba's wish some fortunate devotee may undertake the task of compiling and publishing these folk-songs, either in the Sai Leela magazine or separately in a book.

Baba's Humility

Lord or Bhagwan is said to have six qualities, viz. (1) Fame, (2) Wealth, (3) Non-attachment, (4) Knowledge, (5) Grandeur and (6) Liberality. Baba had all these in Him. He incarnated in flesh, for the sake of Bhaktas. Wonderful was His grace and kindness, for He drew the devotees to Him, or how else could one have known Him. For the sake of His Bhaktas Baba spoke such words, the Goddess of Speech could not utter. Here is a specimen. Baba spoke very humbly as follows : "Slave of slaves I am your debtor. I am satisfied at your darshan. It is a great favour that I saw your feet. I am an insect in your excreta. I consider Myself blessed thereby." What humility is this!

Though, outwardly Baba seemed to enjoy sense-objects, He had not the least flavour in them, nor even the consciousness of enjoying them. Though, He ate, He had no taste and though, He saw, He never

felt any interest in what He saw. Regarding passion, He was as perfect a celibate as Hanuman. He was not attached to anything. He was pure consciousness, the resting place of desire, anger, envy and other feelings. In short, He was disinterested, free and perfect. A striking instance may be cited in illustration of this statement.

Nanavali

There was in Shirdi, a very quaint and queer fellow, by name Nanavali. He looked to Baba's work and affairs. He once approached Baba, Who was seated on His Gadi (seat) and asked Him to get up, as he wanted to occupy the same. Baba, at once got up and left the seat, which he had occupied. After sitting there a while Nanavali got up, and asked Baba to resume His seat. Then, Baba sat down and Nanavali fell at His feet. Baba did not show the slightest displeasure in being dictated to or ousted.

This Nanavali loved Baba so much that, he breathed his last, on the thirteenth day of Baba's Maha-samadhi.

The Easiest Path : Hearing the stories of the saints and being in their company

Though, Sai Baba acted outwardly like an ordinary man, His action showed extraordinary wisdom and skill. Whatever He did, was done for the good of His devotees. He never prescribed any Asan, regulation of breathing or any rites to His Bhaktas, nor did He blow any Mantra into their ears. **He told them to leave off all cleverness, and always remember "Sai" "Sai". If you did that, He said, all your shackles would be removed and you would be free.** Sitting through five fires, sacrifices, chantings, eightfold Yoga are possible for the Brahmins only, they are of no use to the other classes. The function of the mind is to think, it cannot remain without thinking for a minute. If you give it a sense-object, it will think about it. If you give it Guru, it will think about Guru. You have heard most attentively the grandeur of Sai. This is the natural remembrance of Sai. Hearing the stories of the saints is not so difficult, as the other Sadhanas, mentioned above. They (stories) remove all fear of this Sansar (worldly existence) and take you on to the spiritual path. So, listen to these stories, meditate on them and assimilate them. You may attend to your worldly duties, but give your mind to Sai and His stories, and then, He is sure to bless you. This is the easiest path, but why do not all take to it? The reason is that

without God's grace, we do not get the desire to listen to the stories of saints. With God's grace everything is smooth and easy. Hearing the stories of the saints is, in a way, keeping their company. The importance of the company of the saints is very great. It removes our body-consciousness and egoism, destroys completely the chain of our birth and death, cuts asunder all the knots of the mind and takes us to God, Who is pure consciousness. It certainly increases our non-attachment to sense objects and makes us quite indifferent to pleasures and pains, and leads us onward on the spiritual path. If you have no other Sadhana, such as uttering God's name, worship or devotion etc. but if you take refuge in them (saints) whole-heartedly, they will carry you off safely across the ocean of worldly existence. It is for this reason that the saints manifest themselves in this world. Even sacred rivers such as the Ganges, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri etc., which wash away the sins of the world, desire that the saints should come to them, for a bath and purify them. Such is the grandeur of the Saint. It is on account of the store of merit in past births that we have attained the feet of Sai Baba.

We conclude this chapter with meditation on Sai's Form. He, the graceful and handsome Sai, standing on the edge of the Masjid and distributing Udi to each and every Bhakta, with a view to his welfare, He, Who thinks of the world as an illusion and Who is ever engrossed in Supreme Bliss – before Him, we humbly prostrate ourselves.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XI

*Sai as Sagun Brahma – Dr. Pandit's Worship – Haji
Siddik Falke – Control over the Elements*

Let us now, in this chapter, describe the manifested (Sagun) Brahma Sai, as to how He was worshipped and how He controlled the elements.

Sai as Sagun Brahma

There are two aspects of God or Brahma : (1) the Unmanifested (Nirgun) and (2) the Manifested (Sagun). The Nirgun is formless, while the Sagun is with form, though, both denote the same Brahma. Some prefer to worship the former, some the latter. As stated in the Gita (chapter XIII) the worship of the latter is easy and preferable. As man has got a form (body, senses, etc.), it is natural and easy for him to worship the God with form. Our love and devotion do not develop, unless we worship Sagun Brahma, for a certain period of time, and as we advance, it leads us to the worship (meditation) of Nirgun Brahma. So, let us start with Sagun worship. Image, altar, fire, light, sun, water, Brahma are the seven objects of worship; but Sadguru is better than all these. Let us, on this occasion, bring to our mind the form of Sai, Who was non-attachment Incarnate, and Who was a resting-place for His devotees. Our faith in His words is the Asan; and our Sankalpa (determination to accomplish the Puja) is the abandonment of all our desires. Some say that Sai was a Bhagwad-bhakta (devotee of the Lord), others say He was a Maha-bhagwat (a great devotee); but to us He is God Incarnate. He was ever forgiving, never irritable, straight, soft, tolerant and content beyond comparison. Though, He looked embodied (as having the form), He was really dis-embodied, emotionless, unattached and internally free. The Ganges on its way to the sea, cools and refreshes the creatures affected with heat, gives life to the crops and trees, and quenches the thirst of many. Similarly, saints (Souls) like Sai, while they live their own, give solace and comfort to all. Lord Krishna has said that the saint is My soul, My living image, I am He or He is My pure form (Being). This in-describable Shakti or Power of God, known as Pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, incarnated in the form of Sai in Shirdi. The Shruti (Taittiriya Upanishad) describes Brahma as Pure Bliss. This, we read or hear daily in the books, but the devout people experienced this Brahma or Bliss in Shirdi. Baba, the Support of all, required no prop or Asan from anybody. He always used a piece

of sack cloth for His seat, which was covered with a small mattress by His bhaktas and had a bolster, placed by them, rest as His back. Baba respected the feelings of His devotees and allowed them to worship Him as they liked. Some waved Chamar or fans before Him, some played on musical instruments, some washed His hands and Feet, some others applied scent and Chandan, some gave betel nut with leaves, and some others offered Naivaidya. Though, He looked like living in Shirdi, He was present everywhere. This all-pervasiveness of His was daily experienced by His devotees. Our humble prostration to this all-pervasive Sadguru.

Dr. Pandit's Worship

One Dr. Pandit, a friend of Tatyasaheb Noolkar, once came to Shirdi for Baba's darshan. After saluting Baba, he sat in the Masjid for some time. Baba asked him to go to Dadabhat Kelkar. He went to Dadabhat, by whom he was well received. Then, Dadabhat left his house for Puja and Dr. Pandit accompanied him. Dadabhat worshipped Baba. Nobody, until then, dared to apply sandal paste to Baba's forehead. Only Mhalsapati used to apply it to His neck. But, this simple-hearted, Dr. Pandit, took Dadabhat's dish containing Puja-materials and taking sandal-paste out of it, drew a Tripund, i.e., three horizontal lines on Baba's forehead. To the surprise of all, Baba kept silent, not uttering a single word. Then, Dadabhat, that evening, asked Baba, "How is it, that, though You object to the sandal-paste, being applied by others to Your forehead; You allowed Dr. Pandit to do so?" Baba replied that Dr. Pandit believed Him to be the same as his Guru, Raghunath Maharaj of Dhopeswar, known as Kaka Puranik and he applied the paste to His forehead, as he was doing to his Guru. Hence, He could not object. On enquiry, Dr. Pandit told Dadabhat that he took Baba as his Guru Kaka Puranik and realized Him as the same hence, he marked the Tripund on Baba's forehead, as he did on his Guru's.

Though, Baba allowed the devotee to worship Him as they pleased, still sometimes, He acted in a strange way. Sometimes, He threw away the Puja-dish and was wrath Incarnate, then, who could approach Him? Some times, He scolded the devotees; at times, He looked softer than wax, a statue of peace and forgiveness. Though, He seemed to shake with anger and His red eyes rolled round, still, He was internally, an ocean of affection and motherly love. He would call out His devotees and say, that He never knew, when He was ever angry with them. If it was possible that mothers could kick their children and the sea turn

back the river He too could neglect the devotees' welfare; that He, the Slave of His devotees, always stood by them, and responded to them, whenever they called upon Him and that, He always longed for their love.

Haji Siddik Falke

There was no knowing, as to when Baba would accept a devotee. That depended on His will. Siddik Falke's story is to the point. One Mohammedan gentleman, by name Siddik Falke of Kalyan, after making pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina, came to Shirdi. He lived in the Chavadi, facing north and sat in the open court-yard of the Masjid. For nine months, Baba ignored him and did not allow him to step into the Masjid. Falke felt disconsolate and did not know, what to do. Somebody advised him not to be disappointed but to try to approach Baba through Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande), a close and intimate devotee of Baba. He told him that as they approach the Lord Shiva through his servant and devotee, Nandi, so should Baba be approached through Shama. Falke liked the idea and implored Shama to intercede for him. Shama agreed and on a convenient occasion spoke to Baba about him thus, "Baba, why don't You allow the old Haji to step into the Masjid, while so many persons freely come and go, after taking Your darshan; why not bless him once?" Baba replied, "Shama, you are immature to understand things. If the Fakir (Allah) does not allow, what can I do? Without His grace, who will climb into the Masjid? Well, go to him and ask him, whether he will come to the narrow footpath near the Barvi well." Shama went and returned with an affirmative answer. Again Baba said to Shama, "Ask him, whether he is willing to pay Me the sum of Rs. 40,000/- in four instalments". Shama went and returned with the answer, that he was willing to pay even forty lacs. Again Baba said to Shama, "We are going to cut a goat in the Masjid, so, ask him, whether he would like to have its meat haunch or testicles of the goat." Shama returned with the answer that the Haji would be happy to receive a small crumb from Baba's Kolamba (mudpot). Hearing this, Baba got excited and with His hands threw away the earthen jars and Kolamba, and straightway advanced to the Haji and lifting His Kafni up in arms said, "Why do you brag and pose yourself as an old Haji? Do you read Quran like this? You are proud of your a pilgrimage to Mecca; but you do not know Me." Being thus scolded, the Haji was confounded. Baba, then, went back to the Masjid, purchased a basket of mangoes and sent them to the Haji. Then again, Baba went to the Haji, and taking out Rs. 55/- from His pocket, gave them in Haji's hand. Thenceforth, Baba

loved the Haji, invited him for meals and the Haji, thereafter, came into the Masjid, whenever he liked. Baba gave him at times some rupees and thus, the Haji was enrolled in Baba's Darbar.

Baba's Control over the Elements

We shall close this chapter, after describing two incidents, showing Baba's control over the elements. (1) Once, at evening time, there was a terrible storm at Shirdi. The sky was overcast with thick black clouds. Winds began to blow with great force, clouds roared and lightening began to flash and rains started pouring in torrents. In a short time, the whole place was flooded with water. All creatures, birds, beasts and men got terribly frightened, and they all flocked to the Masjid for shelter. There are many local Deities in Shirdi but none of them came to their rescue. So, they all prayed to Baba – their God, Who was fond of their devotion, to intercede and quell the storm. Baba was much moved. He came out and standing at the edge of the Masjid, addressed the storm in a loud and thunderous voice, "Stop, stop your fury and be calm!" In a few minutes, the rains subsided, the winds ceased to blow, and the storm came to a stop. Then, the moon rose in the sky and people went back home well-pleased. (2) On another occasion at noon the fire in the Dhuni began to burn brightly, its flames were seen to be reaching the rafters above. The people who were sitting in the Masjid, did not know, what do do. They dared not to ask Baba to pour water or do anything to quench the flames. But Baba soon came to realize, what was happening. He took up His Satka (short stick) and dashed it against a pillar in front, saying, "Get down, Be calm". At each stroke of the Satka, the flames began to slow down, and in a few minutes the Dhuni became calm and normal.

This is our Sai, an Incarnation of God. He will bless any man, who will prostrate and surrender himself to Him. He, who will read the stories of this chapter daily, with faith and devotion, will soon be free from all calamities not only this, but always attached and devoted to Sai, he will get very soon God-vision, all his desires will be fulfilled and being ultimately desireless, he will attain the Supreme. Amen!

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XII

Sai Leelas – Experiences of (1) Kaka Mahajani (2) Dhumal Pleader (3) Mrs. Nimonkar (4) Mule Shastri (5) A Doctor

Now, let us see in this chapter, how devotees were received and treated by Baba.

Saints' Mission

We have seen before, that the purpose or object of Divine Incarnation is to protect the good and destroy the wicked. But, the mission of the saints is quite different. To them the good and the wicked are the same. First they draw the evil-doers and set them on the right path. They are the Agasti¹ to destroy the Bhava-sagar (the ocean of worldly existence) or the sun to destroy the darkness of ignorance. The God dwells in the saints. In fact, they are not different from Him. Our Sai is One of these, Who incarnated for the welfare of the devotees. Supreme in knowledge and surrounded with divine aura, He loved all beings equally. He was unattached. Foes and friends, kings and paupers, all were same to Him. Hear His Leelas! For the sake of devotees, He gave His stock of merits and was ever alert to help them. But, the devotees could never approach Him, unless He meant to receive them. If their appointed time did not come, they did not remember Baba, and His Leelas could not reach their ears. Then, how could they think of seeing Him? Some men desired to see Sai Baba, but they did not get any opportunity of taking His darshan, till His Mahasamadhi. **There are many such persons, whose desire for Baba's darshan was not thus satisfied. If these persons, believing in Him, listen to His Leelas, there quest for darshan will be, to a great extent, satisfied by the Leelas.** Even if some persons went there by sheer luck and took Baba's darshan, were they able to stay there longer? No. Nobody could go there of his own accord and nobody could stay there longer if Baba did not wish so. They could stay there, so long as Baba permitted them to stay, and had to leave the place, when asked to do so by Him so, everything depended on Baba's divine will.

1. Agasti – A renowned Hindu saint

Kaka Mahajani

Once, Kaka Mahajani went to Shirdi from Mumbai. He wanted to stay there for one week and enjoy the Gokul Ashtami festival. As soon as he took Baba's darshan, Baba asked him, "When are you returning home?" He was rather surprised at this question, but he had to give an answer. He said that he would go home, when He ordered him to do so. Then, Baba said, "Go tomorrow!" Baba's word was law and had to be obeyed. Kaka Mahajani, therefore, left Shirdi, immediately. When he went to his office in Mumbai, he found his employer anxiously waiting for him. His Munim, i.e. the manager, suddenly fell ill, hence, Kaka's presence was absolutely necessary. He had sent a letter to Kaka at Shirdi, which was redirected to him at Mumbai.

Bhausahab Dhumal

Now, listen to another story. Once, Bhausahab Dhumal was going to Niphad for a case. On the way, he came to Shirdi, took Baba's darshan and wanted to proceed to Niphad immediately. But, Baba did not permit him to do so. He made him stay at Shirdi, for a week or more. In the meanwhile, the magistrate at Niphad suffered intensely from pain in his abdomen and the case was adjourned. Mr. Dhumal was then, allowed to go and attend to his case. It went on for some months and was tried by four magistrates. Ultimately, Mr. Dhumal won the case and his client was acquitted.

Mrs. Nimonkar

Mr. Nanasaheb Nimonkar, Watandar of Nimon and Honorary magistrate, was staying at Shirdi with his wife. Mr. and Mrs. Nimonkar were spending most of their time in the Masjid with Baba and serving Him. It so happened, that their son fell ill at Belapur and the mother decided, with Baba's consent, to go to Belapur and see her son and other relatives, and stay there for a few days, but Mr. Nanasaheb asked her to return the next day. The lady was in a fix and did not know, what to do, but her God Sai came to her help. While leaving Shirdi, she went to Baba, Who was standing in front of Sathe's wada, with Mr. Nanasaheb and others, and prostrated at His Feet and asked His permission to go. Baba said to her, "Go, go quickly, be calm and unperturbed. Stay comfortably at Belapur for four days! See all your relatives and then

return to Shirdi!" How opportune were Baba's words! Mr. Nanasaheb's proposal was overruled by Baba's decree.

Mule Shastri of Nasik

An orthodox Agnihotri Brahmin of Nasik, Mule Shastri, who had studied the six Shastras and was well-versed in astrology and palmistry, once came to Shirdi to see Mr. Bapusaheb Buti, the famous millionaire of Nagpur. After seeing him, he and others, went to see Baba in the Masjid. Baba bought various fruits and other things from vendors with His own money and distributed them to the people present in the Masjid. Baba used to press the mango on all sides so skillfully that when Baba sucked it, he got all the pulp at once in his mouth and could throw away the seed. Plantains were peeled off by Baba and the pulp was distributed to the devotees, while the skins were retained by Baba for Himself. Mule Shastri, as a palmist, wanted to examine Baba's palm and asked Him to extend His hand. Baba ignored his request and gave four plantains to him. Then, they all returned to the Wada and Mule Shastri bathed, wore fresh clothes and started his routine duties, viz. Agnihotra etc. Then, Baba as usual started for Lendi and said, "Take some Geru (i.e., a red miry substance, used to dye clothes in saffron-colour), we shall today don saffron-coloured cloth. None understood, what Baba meant. Then after some time, when Baba returned and preparations for the noon-Arati¹ were being made, Bapusaheb Jog asked Mule Shastri, whether he would accompany him for the Arati. He replied that he would see Baba in the afternoon. Baba sat on his seat, was worshipped by the devotees and Arati commenced. Then, Baba said, "Get some Dakshina from the new (Nasik) Brahmin." Buti himself went to the Wada to get the Dakshina and when he gave Baba's message to Mule Shastri, he was sorely perplexed. He thought in his mind thus, "I am a pure Agnihotri Brahmin, why should I pay Dakshina? Baba may be a great Saint. I am not His dependent." But, since a great Saint, like Sai baba was asking for Dakshina through a millionaire like Buti, he could not refuse. So, leaving his routine unfinished, he started with Buti for Masjid. Thinking himself holy and the Masjid otherwise, he remained at a distance, and after joining his palms threw flowers at Baba from there. Then, lo! all of a sudden, he saw not Baba but his late Guru Gholap Swami there. He was wonder-struck. Could this be a

1. Arati - Prayer

dream? No, it was not, as he was wide awake, but how could his late Guru Gholap be there? He was speechless for some time. He pinched himself and thought again, but could not reconcile to the fact of his late Guru Gholap being in the Masjid. Ultimately, leaving aside all doubt, he went up, fell at his Guru's feet and then, stood there with folded hands. Other people sang Baba's Arati, while Mule Shastri chanted loudly his Guru's name. Then, casting off all pride of caste and sacredness, he fell at his Guru's feet and closed his eyes. When he got up and opened his eyes, he saw Baba asking for Dakshina. Seeing Baba's blissful form and His inconceivable power, Mule Shastri forgot himself. He was extremely pleased, his eyes were full of tears of joy. He again saluted Baba and gave the Dakshina. He said that his doubt was removed and he saw his own Guru. On seeing this wonderful Leela of Baba all the people, including Mule Shastri, were much moved and they realized the meaning of Baba's words, "Bring Geru, we shall don saffron-coloured clothes." Such is the wonderful Leela of Baba.

A Doctor

Once a Mamlatdar¹ came to Shirdi, with a doctor friend of his. The doctor said that his Deity was Ram and that, he would not bow before a Mohammedan and so, he was unwilling to go to Shirdi. The Mamlatdar replied, that nobody would press him to bow down. So, he should come and give the pleasure of his company. Accordingly, they reached Shirdi and went to the Masjid for Baba's darshan. All were wonder-struck to see, the doctor going ahead and saluting Baba. They asked him, how he forgot his resolve and bowed down to a Mussalman. Then, the doctor replied that, he saw his beloved Deity, Ram, on the seat and he therefore, prostrated himself before Him. Then, as he was saying this, he again saw, Sai Baba there. Being dismayed, he again said, "Is this a dream? How could He be a Mohammedan? He is a great Yogasampanna (full of Yoga) Avatar."

Next day, he made a vow and began to fast. He absented himself from the Masjid, resolving not to go there, until Baba blessed him. Three days passed and on the fourth day, a close friend of his, from Khandesh, turned up; and with him, he went to the Masjid for Baba's darshan. After the salutation, Baba asked him, whether anybody had gone to call

1. Mamlatdar – Revenue Officer

him that he had come. Hearing this vital question, the doctor was moved. The same night he was blessed by Baba and he experienced Bliss Supreme, in his sleep. Then, he left for his town where he remained in the same state for a fortnight. Thus, his devotion for Sai Baba increased manifold.

The moral of all the stories mentioned above, specially, that of Mule Shastri, is that, we should have firm faith in our Guru and on none else.

More Leelas of Sai Baba will be described in the next chapter.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XIII

*More Sai Leelas – Diseases cured (1) Bhimaji Patil
(2) Bala Shimpi (3) Bapusaheb Buti (4) Alandi
Swami (5) Kaka Mahajani (6) Dattopant of Harda*

The Inscrutable Power of Maya

Baba's words were always short, deep, full of meaning, effective and well-balanced. He was ever content and never cared for anything. He said, "Though I am a Fakir, have no house or wife, and though, leaving all care, I stay at one place, the inevitable Maya teases Me often. Though, I forgot Myself but she cannot forget Me. She always envelops Me. This Maya (illusive power) of the Lord (Shri Hari) harasses even Lord Brahma and others, then, what to speak of a poor Fakir, like Me? Those, who take refuge in God, will be freed from Her clutches with His grace."

In such terms Baba spoke about the power of Maya. Lord Shri Krishna has said to Uddhava in the Bhagwat that the saints are His living forms and see, what Baba has said for the welfare of His devotees, **"Those, who are fortunate and whose demerits have vanished, take to My worship. If you always say "Sai, Sai", I shall take you over the seven seas believe in these words, and you will be certainly benefitted. I do not need any paraphernalia of worship – either eight-fold or sixteen-fold. I rest there, where there is full devotion."** Now, read, what Sai did for the welfare of those who surrendered themselves to Him.

Bhimaji Patil

One Bhimaji Patil of Narayangaon, Taluka Junnar, Distt. Poona,¹ suffered in the year 1909 from a severe and chronic chest disease, which ultimately developed into tuberculosis. He tried all sorts of pathies (remedies) but to no effect. Losing all hopes, he ultimately prayed to God, "Oh Lord Narayan, help me now!" It is a well-known fact that, when our circumstances are well, we do not remember God but when calamities and adversities overtake us, we are reminded of Him. So,

1. Poona – Now Pune

Bhimaji now turned to God. It occurred to him that, he should consult Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar, a great devotee of Baba, in this respect. So, he wrote to him a letter, giving all details of his malady and asking for his opinion. In reply, Mr. Nanasaheb wrote to him that, there was only one remedy left; and that was to take recourse to Baba's Feet. Relying on Mr. Nanasaheb's advice, he made preparations for going to Shirdi. He was brought to Shirdi and taken to the Masjid and placed before Baba. Mr Nanasaheb and Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande) were present there. Baba pointed out that, the disease was due to the previous evil Karma and was not disposed to interfere. But the patient cried out in despair that, he was helpless and, sought refuge in Him, as He was his last hope and prayed for mercy. Baba's heart melted and He said, "Stay, cast off your anxiety, your sufferings have come to an end. **However, oppressed and troubled one may be, as soon as he steps in the Masjid, he is on the pathway to happiness.** The Fakir here is very kind and He will cure the disease and protect all with love and kindness." The patient used to vomit blood every five minutes, but there was no vomiting in the presence of Baba. From the time, Baba uttered the words of mercy, the malady took a favourable turn. Baba asked him to stay in Bhimabai's house, which was not a convenient and fit place but Baba's order had to be obeyed. While he was staying there, Baba cured him by two dreams. In the first dream, he saw himself as a boy, suffering the severe pain of a flogging, which he received for not reciting his poetry lesson before his class master. In the second dream, someone caused him intense pain by rolling a stone up and down over his chest. With the pain, thus suffered in dream, his cure was complete and he went home. He then, often came to Shirdi, gratefully remembering what Baba did for him and prostrated before Him. Baba also did not expect anything from devotees but remembrance, unswerving faith and devotion. People in Maharashtra always celebrate Satya-Narayan Puja in their homes every fortnight or month but, it was this Bhimaji Patil, who started a new Sai Satya-vrata Puja, instead of Satya-Narayan-vrata Puja, in his house, when he returned to his village.

Bala Ganpat Shimpi

Another devotee of Baba, by name Bala Ganpat Shimpi, suffered much from a malignant type of malaria. He tried all sorts of medicines and decoctions, but in vain. The fever did not abate a jot and so, he ran to Shirdi and fell at Baba's Feet. Baba gave him a strange recipe, in this

case as follows: "Give a black dog some morsels of rice mixed with curd in front of the Laxmi temple!" Bala did not know, how to execute this recipe but no sooner he went home, then, he found rice and curd. After mixing them together, he brought the mixture near the Laxmi temple, where he found a black dog waving its tail. He placed the curd and rice before the dog. The dog ate it and, strange to say, Bala got rid of his malaria.

Bapusaheb Buti

Shriman Bapusaheb Buti suffered, once from dysentery and vomiting. His cupboard was full of patent drugs and medicines; but none of them had any effect. Bapusaheb got very weak, on account of purgings and vomitings and therefore, was not able to go to the Masjid for Baba's darshan. Baba then, sent for him and made him sit before Him and said, "Now, take care, you should not purge any more," and gestured with His index-finger, "The vomiting must also stop." Now, look at the power of Baba's words. Both the maladies disappeared and Buti felt well.

On another occasion, he had an attack of cholera and suffered from severe thirst. Dr. Pillai tried all sorts of remedies, but could give him no relief. Then, he went to Baba and consulted Him as, to what to drink, that would allay his thirst and cure the disease. Baba prescribed an infusion of almonds, walnuts, pistachio (a kind of dry fruit), boiled in sugared milk. This would be considered a cause for fatal aggravation of the disease by any other doctor or physician, but in implicit obedience to Baba's order, the infusion was administered and strange to say, the disease was cured.

Alandi Swami

A Swami from Alandi, with a desire for Baba's darshan, came to Shirdi. He suffered from severe pain in his ear, which prevented him from getting sleep. He was operated for this, but it served no purpose. The pain was severe and he did not know what to do. While he was returning, he came to take Baba's leave, when Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande) requested Baba to do something for the pain in the Swami's ear. Baba comforted him saying, "Allah Accha Karega (God will do good)!" The Swami, then, returned to Poona, and after a week sent a

letter to Shirdi, stating that the pain in his ear had subsided, though the swelling was there and in order to get the swelling removed, he went to Mumbai for operation but the surgeon on examining the ear said that, no operation was necessary. Such was the wonderful and potent effect of Baba's words!

Kaka Mahajani

Another devotee, named Kaka Mahajani, suffered once from diarrhoea. In order that, there should be no break in his services to Baba, Kaka kept a Tambya (pot) with water in some corner of the Masjid and whenever there was a call, he would go out. As Sai Baba knew everything, Kaka did not inform Him of his disease, thinking that, Baba would of His own cure it soon. The work of constructing the pavement in front of the Masjid was permitted by Baba but when the actual work began, Baba got wild and shouted out loudly. Everybody ran away and as Kaka was also doing the same, Baba caught hold of him and made him sit there. In the confusion that followed, somebody left a small pouch of groundnuts there. Baba took a handful of groundnuts, rubbed them in His hands, blew away the skins and gave the clean nuts to Kaka and made him eat them. Scolding and cleaning the nuts and making Kaka eat them, went on simultaneously. Baba Himself ate some of them. Then, when the nuts were finished, Baba asked him to fetch water, as He felt thirsty. Kaka brought a pitcher full of water. Then, Baba drank some water and made Kaka also drink it. Baba declared, "Now, your diarrhoea has stopped and you may attend to the work of the pavement." In the meanwhile, other people, who had run away, returned and started the work, and Kaka, whose motions had stopped, also joined them. Are groundnuts medicine for diarrhoea? According to current medical opinion, groundnuts would aggravate the disease and not cure it. The true medicine, in this, as in other cases, was Baba's word.

Dattopant of Harda

A gentleman from Harda, by name Dattopant, suffered from stomach-ache for about fourteen years. None of the remedies gave him any relief. Then, on hearing Baba's fame, that He cures diseases by sight, he ran to Shirdi and fell at Baba's Feet. Baba looked at him kindly and gave him blessings. When Baba placed His hand on his head and

gave him udi with blessings, he felt relieved and there was no further trouble about the malady.

Towards the end of this chapter, three cases are cited in footnotes :

1. Madhavrao Deshpande suffered from piles. Baba gave him decoction of Sonamukhi (senna pods). This relieved him. Then, after two years the trouble reoccurred and Madhavrao took the same decoction without consulting Baba. The result was that, the disease aggravated, but later on it was cured by Baba's grace.
2. Kaka Mahajani's elder brother, Gangadharpan, suffered for many years from stomach-pain. Hearing Baba's fame he came to Shirdi and requested Baba to cure him. Baba touched his belly and said, "God will cure." From that time, there was, no stomach-pain and he was completely cured.
3. Nanasaheb Chandorkar also once suffered from acute stomach-pain, he was restless the whole day and night. Doctors administered injections, which produced no effect. Then he approached Baba, Who told him to eat burfi (a kind of sweetmeat) mixed with ghee. This recipe gave him complete relief.

All these stories show that, the real medicine that cured the various diseases permanently, was Baba's word and grace, and not any medicines or drugs.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XIV

Ratanji Wadia of Nanded – Saint Moulisaheb – Dakshina

In the last chapter, we described, how Baba's word and grace cured many incurable diseases. Now we shall describe, how Baba blessed Mr. Ratanji Wadia and gave him an issue.

The life of this Saint is naturally sweet. His various doings, eating, walking and His natural sayings are also sweet. His life is Bliss Incarnate. Sai gave bliss to His devotees as a means of remembrance. He gave them various stories of duty and action, which ultimately led them to true religion. His object may be, that people should live happily in this world but they should be ever cautious, and achieve the object of their life, viz. self-realization. We get human body as a result of merits in past births and it is worth-while that, with its aid, we should attain devotion and liberation in this life. So, we should never be lazy but always be on the alert to gain our goal of life.

If you hear the Leelas (stories) of Sai daily, you will always see Him. Day and night you will remember Him in your mind. When you assimilate Sai in this way, your mind will lose its fickleness, and if you go on in this manner, it will finally be merged in Pure Consciousness.

Ratanji of Nanded:

Now, let us come to the main story of this chapter. In Nanded, in the Nizam state, there lived a Parsi mill-contractor and trader, by name Ratanji Shapurji Wadia. He had amassed a large amount of money and had acquired fields and lands. He had cattle, horses and conveyance, and was very prosperous. In all outward appearances, he looked very happy and contented but inwardly he was not so. Providential dispensation is such that, no one in this world is completely happy, and rich Ratanji was no exception to this. He was liberal and charitable, gave food and clothing to the poor and helped all in various ways. The people took him to be a good and happy man but Ratanji thought himself miserable, as he had no issue, male or female, for a long time. Just as Kirtan (singing glories of the Lord) without love or devotion, song without rhythmical accompaniments, Brahmin without the sacred thread, proficiency in all arts without commonsense, pilgrimage without

repentance and ornamentation without a necklace, are futile and useless, so is a house-holder without an issue. Ratanji always brooded on this matter and said in his mind, "Would God be ever pleased to grant me a son?" He, thus, looked morose, and did not relish his food. Day and night, he was enveloped with anxiety, as to whether he would ever be blessed with a son. He had a great regard for Das Ganu Maharaj. He saw him and opened his heart before him. Das Ganu advised him to go to Shirdi, take Baba's darshan, fall at His Feet and seek His blessing and pray for an issue. Ratanji liked the idea, and decided to go to Shirdi. After some days, he went to Shirdi, took Baba's darshan and fell at His Feet. Then opening a basket, he took out a beautiful garland of flowers and placed it around Baba's neck and offered Him a basket of fruits. With reverence he then, sat near Baba, and prayed to Him saying, "Many persons, who find themselves in difficult situations come to You, and You relieve them immediately. Hearing this, I have anxiously sought Your Feet, please do not disappoint me." Sai Baba, then, asked him for Dakshina of Rs. five, which Ratanji intended to give, but added that, He had already received Rs. 3-14-0* from him and that, he should pay the balance only. Hearing this, Ratanji was rather puzzled. He could not make out, as to what Baba meant. That was the first time, he thought that, he had come to Shirdi and how was it that, Baba said that He had earlier got Rs. 3-14-0 from him? He could not solve the riddle. But he sat at Baba's Feet and gave the balance of the Dakshina asked for, explained to Baba fully, as to why he came and sought His help and prayed that Baba should bless him with a son. Baba was moved and told him not to worry, and that thence onward his bad days had ended. He then, gave him Udi, placed His hand on his head and blessed him saying that, Allah (God) would satisfy his heart's desire.

Then after taking Baba's leave, Ratanji returned to Nanded and told Das Ganu everything, that took place at Shirdi. He said that everything went on well there, that he got Baba's darshan and blessing with Prasad, but there was one thing, which he could not understand. Baba said to him that he had got Rs. 3-14-0 before. Please explain, as to what Baba meant by this remark. He said to Das Ganu, "I never went to Shirdi before, and how could I give Him the sum, to which Baba referred?" To Das Ganu too, it was a puzzle and he thought much over it for a long time. Sometime afterwards, it struck him that, Ratanji had received some days ago a Mohammedan saint, by name Moulishaheb in

* In those days, the currency was Rupees, Annas and Paise. Re 1 = 16 Annas = 64 Paise

his house and had spent some money for his reception. This Moulisaheb, was a well-known saint of Nanded and worked as a porter. When Ratanji decided to go to Shirdi, this Moulisaheb turned up at Ratanji's house. Ratanji knew him and loved him. So, he gave a small party in his honour. Das Ganu got from Ratanji, the memo of expenses of this reception, and everybody was wonderstruck to see that, the expenses amounted to exactly Rs. 3-14-0, nothing more, nothing less. They all came to know that, Baba was Omniscient, that though, He lived in Shirdi, He knew what happened outside, far away from Shirdi. In fact, He knew the past, present and future, and could identify Himself with anybody. In this particular instance, how could He know, the reception given to Moulisaheb and the amount spent therefore, unless, He could identify Himself with him and be one with him?

Ratanji was satisfied with this explanation and his faith in Baba was confirmed and increased. In due time, he was blessed with a son and his joy knew no bounds. It is said that he had in all a dozen issues, out of which only four survived.

In a foot-note towards the end of this chapter, it is stated that, Baba told Rao Bahadur Hari Vinayak Sathe, after the death of his first wife, to remarry and that, he would get a son. R.B. Sathe married second time. The first two issues, by this wife were daughters and he therefore, felt very despondent. But, the third issue was a son. Baba's word did come true and he was satisfied.

Dakshina

Now, we shall close this chapter with a few points about Dakshina. It is a well-known fact that, Baba always asked for Dakshina from people, who went to see Him. Somebody may ask a question, "If Baba was a Fakir and perfectly non-attached, why should He ask for Dakshina and care for money?" We shall consider this question broadly now.

First, for a long time, Baba did not take anything, He stored burnt matches and filled His pocket with them. He never asked anybody for anything, whether he be a devotee or otherwise. If anybody placed before Him a paisa or two, He purchased oil or tobacco. He was fond of tobacco, for He always smoked a Bidi or Chillim (an earthen pipe). Then, some persons thought that, they should not go to saints empty-handed and therefore, placed some copper coins before Baba. If a paisa was placed before Him, He used to pocket it, if it was a two paise coin,

it was returned immediately. Then, after Baba's fame had spread far and wide, people began to flock in numbers and Baba began to ask Dakshina from them. It is said in the Shruti (Veda) that Puja of the gods is not complete, unless a golden coin was offered. If a coin was necessary in the Puja of the gods, why should it be not so in the Puja of the saints also? Ultimately, the Shastras laid it down that, when one goes to see god, king, saint or guru, he should not go empty-handed. He should offer something, preferably, money. In this connection we may notice the precepts, recommended by the Upanishads. The Brihadaranyak Upanishad says that the Lord Prajapati advised the gods, men and demons by one letter 'Da'. The gods understood by this letter that, they should practise 'Dama'¹, i.e. self-control; the men thought or understood that, they should practise 'Dana'², i.e. charity; the demons understood that they should practise 'Daya'³, i.e. compassion. To men, charity or giving was recommended. The teacher, in the Taittiriya Upanishad, exhorts his pupils, to practise charity and other virtues. Regarding charity, he says, "Give with faith, or even without it give with magnanimity, i.e. liberally, give with modesty, awe and sympathy. In order to teach the devotees the lesson of charity and to remove their attachment to money and thus, to purify their minds, Baba extracted Dakshina from them but there was this peculiarity, as Baba said that He had to give back hundred times more of what He received. There are many instances, in which this has happened. To quote an instance, Mr. Ganpatrao Bodas, the famous actor, says in his Marathi autobiography that, on Baba's pressing him often for Dakshina, he emptied his money-bag before Him. The result of this was, as Mr. Bodas says that, in later life he never lacked money, as it came to him abundantly.

There were also secondary meanings of Dakshina, in many cases, in which Baba did not want any pecuniary amount. To quote two instances: (1) Baba asked Rs. 15/-, as Dakshina from Prof. G.G. Narke, who replied that, he did not have any money. Then, Baba said, "I know, you have no money but you are reading Yoga Vasishtha. Give Me Dakshina from that". Giving Dakshina in this case meant, "Deriving lessons from the book and lodging them in the heart, where Baba resides." (2) In the second case, Baba asked a certain lady (Mrs. R. A. Tarkhad), to give Rs. 6/-, as Dakshina. The lady felt pained, as she had nothing to give. Then, her husband explained to her that, Baba wanted six inner enemies (lust, anger, avarice etc.), to be surrendered to Him.

* द (1) दम (2) दान (3) दया

Baba agreed with this explanation.

It is to be noted that, though, Baba collected a lot of money by Dakshina, He would distribute the whole amount the same day and the next morning He would become a poor Fakir as usual. When Baba took His Mahasamadhi, even after receiving thousands and thousands of Rupees as Dakshina, for about ten years, He had only a few Rupees in His possession.

In short, Baba's main object in taking Dakshina, from His devotees, was to teach them the lessons of Renunciation and Purification.

Post-script

Mr. B.V. Dev of Thana, retired Mamlatdar, and a great devotee of Baba, has written an article on this subject (Dakshina) in 'Shri Sai Leela' magazine, Vol. II, P. 6-26, in which he says as follows :

"Baba did not ask Dakshina of all. If some gave Dakshina unasked, He sometimes accepted it and at other times refused it. He asked it of certain devotees only. He never demanded it, from those devotees, who thought in their minds that Baba should ask for it and then they should pay it. If anybody offered it against His wish, He never touched it and if he kept it there, He asked him to take it away. He asked for small or big amounts from devotees, according to their wish, devotion and convenience. He asked it, even of women and children. He never asked of all the rich for it, nor of all the poor.

"Baba never got angry with those, of whom He asked Dakshina and who did not give it. If any Dakshina was sent, through some friend, who forgot to hand-over the same to Baba, He reminded him of it and made him pay it. On some occasions, Baba used to return some sum, from the amount tendered as Dakshina and ask the donor to guard it or keep it in his shrine for worship. This procedure benefitted the donor or devotee immensely. If anybody offered more than he originally intended to give, He returned the extra amount. Sometimes, He asked of some more Dakshina than, what they originally intended to give and if they had no money, asked them to beg or borrow from others. Of some, He demanded Dakshina three or four times a day."

"Out of the amount collected as Dakshina, Baba spent very little for His own sake, viz. for buying Chillim (smoking pipe) and fuel for His Dhuni (sacred fire), and all the rest He distributed as charity in

varying proportions to various persons. All the paraphernalia of the Shirdi Sansthan was brought by various rich devotees at the instance and suggestion of Radhakrishnamai. Baba always used to get wild and scolded those, who brought any costly and rich articles. He said to Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar that all His property consisted of one Koupin (codpiece), one stray piece of cloth, one Kafni and a Tumrel (tinpot) and that, all the people troubled Him with bringing all these unnecessary costly articles."

Mr. Dev has also quoted passages from the Gita and Upanishads and shown that charity, given in a holy place or to a holy personage, conduces to the donors' welfare. What is more holy than Shirdi and its Presiding Deity – Sai Baba!

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XV

Naradiya Kirtan Paddhati¹ – Mr. Cholkar's Sugarless Tea – Two Lizards

The readers may remember that mention was made in the 6th chapter regarding the Ram-Navami Festival in Shirdi; how the festival originated and how in the early years there was great difficulty in getting a good Haridas for doing Kirtan on those occasions and how Baba permanently entrusted this function (Kirtan) to Das Ganu and how he has been doing it successfully, ever since. Now, in this chapter we shall describe the manner in which Das Ganu has been doing the Kirtan.

Naradiya Kirtan Paddhati¹

Generally our Haridas², while doing the Kirtan, wear a Gala and full dress. They put on a head-dress either a Pheta or a turban, a long flowing coat with a shirt inside, an Uparani (short Dhotar) on the shoulders and the usual long Dhotar from the waist below. After dressing himself in this fashion for some Kirtan in the Shirdi village, Das Ganu once went to Baba for prostrating before Him. Baba asked him, "Well, bridegroom! Where are you going dressed so beautifully like this?" "For doing a Kirtan", came the reply. Then Baba said, "Why do you want all this paraphernalia-coat, Uparani and Pheta etc. lay off all that before Me, why wear them on the body?" Das Ganu immediately took them off and placed them at Baba's Feet. Thenceforth Das Ganu never wore these things, while doing the Kirtan. He was always bare from waist upwards, a pair of 'Chiplis' was in his hand and a garland around his neck. This is not in consonance with the practice generally, followed by all the Haridas, but this is the best and the purest method. The sage Narada from whom the Kirtan Paddhati originated, wore nothing on his torso and head. He carried a 'Vina' in his hand and wandered from place to place, singing the glory of the Lord.

Mr. Cholkar's Sugarless Tea

Initially Baba was known in Poona and Ahmednagar districts but Nanasaheb Chandorkar, by his word of mouth and Das Ganu by his

1. Paddhati – Ritual or Procedure

2. Haridas – The person who conducts the Kirtan

splendid Kirtans spread the fame of Baba in the Konkan (Mumbai Presidency). In fact, it was Das Ganu – May God bless him – who, by his beautiful and inimitable Kirtans, made Baba available to so many people there. The audience, who come to hear the Kirtans, have different tastes. Some like the erudition or learning of the Haridas, some his gestures, some his singing, some his wit and humour, some his preliminary dissertation on Vedanta and some his main theme and so on; but among them there are very few, who, by hearing the Kirtan get faith and devotion or love for God or saints. The effect of hearing Das Ganu's Kirtan on the minds of audience was, however, electric, as it were. We give an instance here:

Das Ganu was once doing his Kirtan and singing the glory of Sai Baba, in the Koupineshwar temple in Thana. One Mr. Cholkar a poor man, serving as a temporary employee in the civil courts in Thana, was amongst the audience. He heard Das Ganu's Kirtan most attentively and was much moved. He there and then, mentally bowed and vowed to Baba saying, "Baba, I am a poor man, unable to support my family. If by Your grace, I pass the departmental examination and get a permanent post, I shall go to Shirdi, fall at Your Feet and distribute sugar-candy in Your name." As luck would have it, Mr. Cholkar did pass the examination and did get the permanent post, and now it remained for him to fulfill his vow, the sooner the better. Mr. Cholkar was a poor man with a large family to support and he could not afford to pay for the expenses of a Shirdi trip. As is well said, one can easily cross over Nahne Ghat¹ in Thana district or even the Sahyadri range² but it is very difficult for a poor man to cross Umbar Ghat, i.e., the threshold of his house. As Mr. Cholkar was anxious to fulfill his vow as early as possible, he resolved to cut down his expenses and save money. He determined not to use sugar in his diet and began to take his tea without it. After he was able to save some money in this way, he came to Shirdi, took Baba's darshan, fell at His Feet, offered a coconut, distributed it with a clean conscience along with sugar-candy, as per his vow and said to Baba that he was much pleased with His darshan and that his desires were fulfilled that day. Mr. Cholkar was in the Masjid with his host Bapusaheb Jog. When the host and the guest both got up and were about to leave the Masjid, Baba spoke to Jog as follows, "Give him (your guest) cup of tea fully saturated with sugar." Hearing these significant words Mr. Cholkar was much moved, he was

1, 2. Highest range in the Western Ghats near Thana

wonderstruck, his eyes were bedewed with tears and he fell at Baba's Feet again. Mr. Jog was also curious about this direction. Baba wanted by His words to create faith and devotion in Cholkar's mind. He hinted as it were that, He got the sugar-candy as per his vow and that He knew fully well his secret determination not to use sugar in his diet. Baba meant to say, **"If you spread your palms with devotion before Me, I am immediately with you, day and night. Though, I am here physically, still I know what you do beyond the seven seas. Go wherever you wish, over the wide world, I am with you. My abode is in your heart and I am within you. Always worship Me, Who is seated in your heart as well as in the hearts of all beings. Blessed and fortunate indeed is he, who knows Me thus."**

What a beautiful and important lesson Baba had, thus imparted to Mr. Cholkar!

Two Lizards

Now we close this chapter with a story of two little lizards. Once Baba was sitting in the Masjid. A devotee sat in front of Him, when a lizard tick-ticked. Out of curiosity the devotee asked Baba, whether this tick-ticking of the lizard signified anything good or was it a bad omen? Baba said that the lizard was overjoyed as her sister from Aurangabad was coming to see her. The devotee sat silent not making out the meaning of Baba's words. Immediately a gentleman from Aurangabad came on horse-back to see Baba. He wanted to proceed further, but his horse would not go as it was hungry and wanted grams. He took out a bag of grams from his shoulders to bring grams and dashed it on the ground to remove dirt. A lizard came out from there and in the presence of all, climbed up the wall. Baba asked the questioner devotee to mark her well. She at once, went strutting to her sister. Both sisters met each other after a long time, kissed and embraced each other, whirled round and danced with love! Where is Shirdi and where is Aurangabad for the lizard? How should the man on horseback come there from Aurangabad with the lizard? And how should Baba make the prophecy of the meeting of the two sisters? All this is really very wonderful and proves the omniscience – the all-knowing nature of Baba.

Post Script

He, who respectfully reads this chapter or studies it daily, will get all his miseries removed by the grace of the Sadguru Sai Baba.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XVI & XVII

Quick Brahma-gnyan

These two chapters relate the story of a rich gentleman, who wanted Brahma-gnyan, quickly from Sai Baba.

Preliminary

The last chapter described, how Mr. Cholkar's vow of small offering was completed and accepted. In that story Sai Baba showed that, He would accept with appreciation any small thing, offered with love and devotion but if the same thing was offered with pride and haughtiness, He would reject it. Being Himself full of Sat Chit Anand (Pure Consciousness, Knowledge and Bliss) He did not care much for mere outward formalities, but if an offering was made in a humble spirit, the same was welcome and He accepted it with pleasure and avidity. In fact, there is no person more generous and benevolent than a Sadguru, like Sai Baba. He cannot be compared to the Chintamani jewel, the Kalpataru (the celestial tree which fulfills our desires) or the Kamadhenu (the celestial cow which yields, what we desire), they give us only what we desire, but the Sadguru gives us the most precious thing, that is inconceivable and inscrutable the reality. Now let us hear, how Sai Baba disposed of a rich man, who came to Him and implored Him to give him Brahma-gnyan.

There was a rich gentleman (unfortunately his name and whereabouts are not mentioned), who was very prosperous in his life. He had amassed a large quantity of wealth, houses, and lands, and had many servants and dependents. When Baba's fame reached his ears he said to a friend of his that he was not in want of anything, and so, he would go to Shirdi and ask Baba to give him Brahma-gnyan, which if he got, would certainly make him more happy. His friend dissuaded him, saying, "It is not easy to know Brahma and especially so for an avaricious man like you, who is always engrossed in wealth, wife and children. Who will in your quest of Brahma-gnyan satisfy you, who does not give away even a paisa in charity?"

Not minding his friend's advice, the fellow engaged a return journey Tonga¹ and came to Shirdi. He went to the Masjid, saw Sai

1. Tonga – Horse-drawn carriage

Baba, fell at His Feet and said, "Baba, hearing that, You show Brahma to all who come to you, I too have come here all the way from my distant place. I am much fatigued by the journey and if I get Brahma-gnyan from You, my troubles will be well-paid and rewarded." Baba, then, replied, "Oh, My dear friend do not be anxious, I shall show you Brahma. Many people come to Me and ask for wealth, health, power, honour, position, cure of diseases and other temporal matters. Rare is the person who comes to Me and asks for Brahma-gnyan. There is no dearth of people asking for worldly things but people interested in spiritual matters are very rare, I think, it is a fortunate and auspicious moment, when persons like you, come and ask Me for Brahma-gnyan. So forthwith, I show to you with pleasure, Brahma, with all its accompaniments and complexities."

Saying this, Baba started to show him Brahma. He made him sit there and engaged him in some other talk and thus, made him forget his question for the time-being. Then He called a boy and told him to go to one Nandu Marwadi and get from him a loan of Rs. five. The boy left and returned immediately, saying that Nandu was absent and his house was locked. Then, Baba asked him to go to Bala grocer and get from him the said loan. This time also the boy was unsuccessful. This experiment was repeated again twice or thrice, with the same result.

Sai Baba was, as we know, the living and moving Brahma Incarnate. Then, some-one may ask, "Why did He want the paltry sum of five rupees, and why did He try hard to get it? In reality He did not want this sum at all. He must have known fully that Nandu and Bala were absent, and He seemed to have adopted this procedure as a test for the seeker of Brahma. That gentleman had a roll or bundle of currency notes in his pocket and if he was really earnest, he would not have sat quiet and be a mere onlooker when Baba was frantically trying to get a paltry sum of Rs. five. He knew that Baba would keep His word and repay the debt, and that the sum wanted was insignificant. Still he could not make up his mind and advance the sum. Such a man wanted from Baba, the greatest thing in the world, viz. the Brahma-gnyan! Any other man who really loved Baba would have given to him Rs. five at once, instead of being a mere onlooker. It was otherwise with this man. He advanced no money nor did he sit silent but began to be impatient, as he was in a haste to return and implored Baba, saying, "Oh Baba, please, give me Brahma-gnyan soon!" Baba replied, "Oh my dear friend did you not understand all the procedure that I went through, sitting

in this place, for enabling you to see Brahma? It is in short this: For seeing Brahma, one has to give five things, i.e., surrender five things, viz. (1) **five Pranas (vital forces)**, (2) **five senses**, (3) **mind**, (4) **intellect** and (5) **ego**. This path of Brahma-gnyan or self-realization is as hard as treading on the edge of a razor.

Sai Baba then gave a rather long discourse on the subject, the purport of which, is given below:

Qualifications for Brahma-gnyan or Self-realization

All persons do not see or realize the Brahma in their life-time. Certain qualifications are absolutely necessary.

1. **Mumukshu** or intense desire to get free. He who thinks that, he is bound and that, he should get free from bondage and works earnestly and resolutely to that end and does not care for any other thing, is qualified for the spiritual life.
2. **Virakti** or a feeling of non-attachment with the things of this world and the next. Unless a man feels disgusted with the things, emoluments and honours, which his actions would bring in this world and the next, he has no right to enter into the spiritual realm.
3. **Antarmukha** (introversion) Our senses have been created by God with a tendency to move outward and so, man always looks outward and not inward. He, who wants self-realization and immortal life, must turn his gaze inwards and look to his inner self.
4. **Catharsis** – (eliminating all base ideas and emotions) – Unless a man has turned away from wickedness and stopped from doing wrong, and has entirely composed himself, and unless his mind is at rest, he cannot gain self-realization even by means of knowledge.
5. **Right conduct** – Unless a man leads a life of truth, penance and insight, a life of celibacy, he cannot get God-realization.
6. Preferring **Shreyas** (the good), to **Preyas** (the pleasant) – There are two sorts of things, viz. the good and the pleasant; the former deals with spiritual affairs, and the latter with mundane matters. Both these are open to man for acceptance. He has to think and choose one of them. The wise man prefers the good to the pleasant, but the unwise, through greed and attachment chooses the pleasant.
7. **Control of the mind** and the senses – The body is the chariot and

the self is its master, intellect is the charioteer and the mind is the reins, the senses are the horses and sense-objects are their paths. He who has no understanding and whose mind is unrestrained, has his senses unmanageable, like the stray horse of a charioteer, does not reach his destination (get self - realization), but goes through the round of births and deaths; but he who has understanding and whose mind is restrained, has his senses under control, like the good obedient horse of a charioteer, reaches the destination, i.e. the state of self-realization, whence he is not born again. The man, who has understanding as his charioteer (guide) and is able to rein his mind, reaches the end of the journey, which is the supreme abode of the all-pervading, Vishnu (Lord).

8. **Purification of the mind** – Unless a man discharges satisfactorily and dis-interestedly the duties of his station in life, his mind will not be purified and unless his mind is purified, he cannot get self-realization. It is only in the purified mind that, Vivek (dis-attachment to the unreal) crop up and lead on to self-realization. **Unegoism** is dropped, avarice got rid of and the mind made desireless (pure), self-realization is not possible. The idea that "I am the body" is a great delusion and attachment to this idea is the cause of bondage. Leave off this idea and attachment therefore, if you want to reach the goal of self-realization.

9. **The necessity of a Guru** – The knowledge of the self is so subtle and mystic that, no one can, by his own individual effort ever hope to attain it. So the help of another person – teacher, who has himself got self-realization, is absolutely necessary. What others cannot give with great effort and pains, can be easily gained with the help of such a teacher; for he has walked on the path himself and can easily take the disciple, step by step on the ladder of spiritual progress.

10. And lastly, **grace** of the Lord is the most essential thing. When the Lord is pleased with anybody, He gives him Viveka and Vairagya and takes him safe beyond the ocean of mundane existence, "The Self cannot be gained by the study of Vedas, nor by intellect, nor by learning. He whom the Self chooses, gains it. To him the Self reveals its nature," says the Katha Upanishad.

After the dissertation was over, Baba turned to the gentleman and said, "Well sir, there is in your pocket the Brahma in form of fifty-times of five (Rs. 250/-) rupees, please, take that out." The gentleman took out from his pocket the bundle of currency notes, and to his great surprise, found on counting them, that, there were 25 notes of 10 rupees each.

Seeing this omniscience of Baba, he was moved and fell at Baba's Feet and craved for His blessings. Then Baba said to him, "Roll up your bundle of Brahma*, viz. currency notes. Unless, you completely get rid of your avarice or greed you will not get the real Brahma. How can he whose mind is engrossed in wealth, progeny and prosperity, expect to know the Brahma without removing his attachment for them? The illusion of attachment or the love for money is a deep eddy (whirlpool) of pain, full of crocodiles in the form of conceit and jealousy. He who is desireless, can alone cross this whirlpool. Greed and Brahma are asunder as poles, they are eternally opposed to each other. Where there is greed there is no room for thought or meditation of the Brahma. Then how can a greedy man, get dispassion and salvation? For a greedy man there is no peace, neither contentment, nor steadiness. If there be even a little trace of greed in mind, all the Sadhanas (spiritual endeavours) are of no avail. Even the knowledge of a well-read man, who is not free from the desire of the fruit or reward of his actions, is futile and can't help him in getting self-realization. The teachings of a Guru are of no use to a man who is full of egoism and who always thinks about the sense-objects. Purification of mind is absolutely necessary, without it all our spiritual endeavours are nothing, but useless show and pomp. It is therefore, better for one to take only what he can digest and assimilate. **My treasury is full and I can give anyone, what he wants, but I have to see, whether he is qualified to receive My gift. If you listen to Me carefully, you will be certainly benefitted. While sitting in this Masjid I never speak any untruth.**"

When a guest is invited to a house all the members of the household and other friends and relations, that happen to be present are entertained along with the guest. So all those, that were present in the Masjid at that time could partake of the spiritual feast, that was served by Baba for the rich gentleman. After getting Baba's blessings, one and all, including the gentleman, left the place quite happy and contented.

Special Characteristics of Baba

There are many saints, who leaving their houses, stay in forest, caves or hermitages and in solitude, in order to get liberation or salvation for themselves. They do not care for other people and are always self-absorbed. Sai Baba was not of such a type. He had no home, no wife,

* ब्रह्मगुंडाळे

no progeny, nor any relations, near or distant. Still He lived in the world (society). He begged His bread from four or five houses, always lived at the foot of the (Neem) tree, carried on worldly dealings and taught all the people how to act and behave living in this world. Rare are the sadhus and saints, who, after attaining God-vision, strive for the welfare of the people. Sai Baba was the foremost of these and, therefore, says Hemadpant:

“Blessed is the country, blessed is the family and blessed are the chaste parents, where this Extraordinary, Transcendent, Precious and Pure Jewel (Sai Baba) was born.”

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XVIII & XIX

*How Hemadpant was accepted and blessed –
Stories of Mr. Sathe and Mrs. Deshmukh –
Encouraging Good Thoughts to Fruition – Variety in
Upadesh – Teachings regarding Slander and
remuneration for Labour*

In the last two chapters Hemadpant described how a rich gentleman, aspiring for quick Brahma-gnyan, was treated by Baba and now in these two chapters, he describes how Hemadpant, himself, was accepted and blessed by Baba, how Baba encouraged good thoughts and fructified them, and His teachings regarding self-improvement, slander and remuneration for labour.

Preliminary

It is a well-known fact that, the Sadguru looks first to the qualification of his disciples and then gives them suitable instructions, without unsettling their minds in the least, and leads them on towards the goal of self-realization. In this respect some say that, what the Sadguru teaches or instructs should not be divulged to others. They think that their instructions, become useless if they are published. This view is not correct. The Sadguru is like a monsoon cloud. He pours down profusely, i.e. scatters widely his nectar-like teachings. These we should enjoy and assimilate to our heart's content and then, serve others with them without any reservation. This rule should apply, not only to what he teaches in our waking state but to the visions he gives us in our dreams. To quote an instance, Budhakaushik Rishi¹ published his celebrated Ram-raksha Stotra², which he had seen in his dream.

Like a loving mother forcing bitter, but beneficial medicines down the throats of her children for the sake of their health, Sai Baba imparted spiritual instructions to His devotees. His method was not veiled or secret but quite open. The devotees who followed His instructions, got their object. **Sadgurus, like Sai Baba open our (eyes of the) intellect and show us the divine beauty of the self, and fulfil our tender longings of devotion.** When this is done our desire for sense objects vanishes, twin fruits of Vivek (discrimination) and Vairagya (dispassion or non-attachment) come to our hands and knowledge sprouts up even

1. Sage

2. Collection of couplets to invoke protection from Lord Ram.

in the sleep. All this we get when we come in contact with saints (Sadguru), serve them and secure their love. The Lord, Who fulfils the desires of His devotees comes to our aid, removes our troubles and sufferings, and makes us happy. This progress or development is entirely due to the help of the Sadguru, who is regarded as the Lord Himself. Therefore, we should always be after the Sadguru, hear His stories, fall at His Feet and serve Him. Now, we come to our main story.

Mr. Sathe

There was a gentleman, named Mr. Sathe, who had attained some publicity many years ago during Crawford Regime, which was put down by Lord Reay, the Governor of Mumbai. He suffered severe losses in trade. Other adverse circumstances gave him much trouble and made him sad and dejected. Being restless, he thought of leaving home and going out to a distant place. Man does not generally think of God, but when difficulties and calamities overtake him, he turns to Him and prays for relief. If his demerits have come to an end, God arranges his meeting with a saint, who gives him proper directions regarding his welfare. Mr. Sathe had similar experience. His friends advised him to go to Shirdi, where so many people were flocking to get Sai Baba's darshan, for getting peace of mind and the satisfaction of their wants. He liked the idea and at once came to Shirdi in 1917. Seeing Baba's form, which was like Eternal Brahma, Self-luminous, Peerless and Pure, his mind lost its restlessness and became calm and composed. He thought that it was the accumulation of merits in his former births, that brought him to the Holy Feet of Baba. He was a man of strong will. He at once, started to make a Parayan (study) of Guru Charitra. When the reading was finished in the Saptah (seven days), Baba gave him a vision that night. It was to this effect : Baba, with Guru Charitra in His hand was explaining its contents to Mr. Sathe, who was sitting in front and listening carefully. When he woke up he remembered the dream and felt very happy. He thought that, it was extremely kind of Baba, Who awakens souls, like his, that are snoring in ignorance and makes them taste the nectar of Guru Charitra. Next day, he informed Kakasaheb Dixit of this vision and requested him to consult Sai Baba, regarding its meaning or significance – whether one Saptah (week's) reading was sufficient or whether he should begin again. Kakasaheb Dixit, when got a suitable opportunity, asked Baba, "Deva, what did you suggest to Mr. Sathe by this vision? Whether he should stop or continue the Saptah? He is a simple devotee, his desire should be fulfilled" Then Baba replied, "He should make one more Saptah of the book, if the work be

studied carefully the devotee will become pure and will be benefitted, the Lord will be pleased and will rescue him from the bondage of the mundane existence."

At this time Hemadpant was present there. He was shampooing Baba's Legs. When he heard Baba's word he thought in his mind, "What! Mr. Sathe read for a week only and got a reward and I am reading it for forty years with no result! His seven days' stay here becomes fruitful, while my seven years' stay (1910 to 1917) goes for nothing. Like a Chatak bird I am ever waiting for the Merciful cloud (Baba) to pour its nectar on me and bless me with His instruction." No sooner did this thought cross his mind, Baba knew it then and there. It was the experience of the Bhaktas that Baba understood all their thoughts, and that He suppressed the evil thoughts and encouraged the good ones. Reading Hemadpant's mind, Baba at once asked him to get up, go to Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande), get from him Rs. 15/- as Dakshina, sit and chitchat with him for a while and then return. Mercy dawned in Baba's mind and so he issued this order. And who could disobey Baba's order?

Hemadpant immediately left the Masjid and came to Shama's house. He had just bathed and was wearing a Dholar. He came out and asked Hemadpant, "How is it that you are here now? It seems that you have come from the Masjid. Why do you look restless and dejected? Why are you alone? Please sit and rest, while I shall do my worship and return. In the meanwhile you please take Paan-Bida(leaves and betal nuts etc.), let us then, have a pleasant chat." After saying this he went inside and Hemadpant sat alone in the verandah. He saw in the window a well-known Marathi book, named 'Nath Bhagwat.' This is a commentary by the saint Eknath on the eleventh Skandha (chapter) of the bigger Sanskrit work, the Bhagwat. At the suggestion or recommendation of Sai Baba, Messrs. Bapusaheb Jog and Kakasaheb Dixit read Bhagwad Gita daily, with its Marathi commentary named Bhavartha Deepika or Dnyaneshwari (A dialogue between Krishna and His friend-devotee Arjun) and Nath Bhagwat (A dialogue between Krishna and His servant devotee Uddhav) and also Eknath's other big work, viz., Bhavartha Ramayan. When devotees came to Baba and asked Him certain questions, He some times answered them in part and asked them to go and listen to the readings of the above-mentioned works, which are the main treatises of Bhagwat Dharma. When the devotees went and listened, they got full and satisfactory replies to their questions. Hemadpant also used to read daily some portions of Nath

Bhagwat.

That day he did not complete the daily portion of his reading, but had left it unfinished in order to accompany certain devotees who were going to the Masjid. When he took up the book from Shama's window and casually opened it, he found to his surprise, that the unfinished portion opened up. He thought that Baba sent him very kindly to Shama's house for enabling him to complete his daily reading. So, he went through the unfinished portion and completed it. As soon as this was over, Shama, after doing his worship came out and the following conversation took place between them.

Hemadpant : I have come with a message from Baba. He has asked me to return with Rs. 15/- as Dakshina from you, also to sit with you for a while and have a pleasant chitchat and then, return to the Masjid with you.

Shama (with surprise) : I have no money to give. Take my 15 Namaskars (prostrations) in lieu of rupees as Dakshina to Baba.

Hemadpant : Alright, your Namaskars are accepted. Now let us have some chitchat. Tell me some stories and Leelas of Baba, which will destroy our sins.

Shama : Then sit here for a while! Wonderful is the sport (Leela) of this God (Baba). You know it already. I am a village rustic, while you are an enlightened citizen. You have seen some more Leelas, since your coming over here. How should I describe them before you? Well, take these leaves, betel nut and chuna and have the Paan-Bida, while I go in, dress myself and come out.

In a few minutes Shama came out and sat talking with Hemadpant. He said, "The Leela of this God (Baba) is inscrutable; there is no end to His Leelas. Who can see them? He plays or sports with His Leelas, still He is beyond (unaffected by) them. What do we rustics know? Why does not Baba Himself tell stories? Why does He send learned men like you to fools like me? His ways are inconceivable. I can only say that they are not human." With this preface Shama added, "I now remember a story, which I shall relate to you. I know it personally. **As a devotee is resolute and determined, so, is Baba's immediate response. Some times Baba puts the devotees to severe test and then, gives them 'Upadesh' (instructions)''.**

As soon as Hemadpant heard the word 'Upadesh', a flash of lightning crossed through his mind. He at once, remembered the story

of Mr. Sathe's Guru Charitra reading and thought that, Baba might have sent him to Shama in order to give peace to his restless mind. However, he curbed this feeling and began to listen to Shama's stories. They all showed, how kind and affectionate Baba was to His devotees. Hemadpant began to feel joy, on hearing all these. Then, Shama began to tell the following story :

Mrs. Radhabai Deshmukh

There was an old woman, by the name Radhabai. She was the mother of one Khashaba Deshmukh. Hearing Baba's fame she came to Shirdi with the people of Sangamner. She took Baba's darshan and was much satisfied. She loved Baba intimately and resolved in her mind that, she should accept Baba as her Guru and take some Upadesh from Him. She determined to fast herself unto death, so long as Baba did not accept her and give her any Upadesh or Mantra. She stayed in her lodging and stopped taking any food or water for three days. I was frightened by this ordeal of the old woman and interceded with Baba on her behalf. I said, "Deva, what is this You have started? You drag so many persons here. You know that old lady. She is very obstinate and depends on You. She has resolved to fast unto death, if You don't accept and instruct her. If anything worse happens, people will blame You and say that Baba did not instruct her and as a consequence, she met her death. So take some mercy on her, bless her and instruct her." On seeing her determination Baba sent for her, and made her change her mind, by addressing as follows :

"Oh mother¹, why do you have to subject yourself to unnecessary tortures? You are My mother and I am your child. Take pity on Me and hear Me through. I tell you My own story, which if you listen carefully, will do you good. I had a Guru. He was a great saint and most merciful. I served him long, very long, still he would not blow any Mantra² into My ears. I had keen desire, never to leave him, but to stay with and serve him, and at all costs receive some instructions from him. But he had his own way. He first got my head shaved and asked Me for two paise³ as Dakshina⁴. I gave the same at once. You may say that, as My Guru was perfect, why should he ask for money and how should he be called desireless? The reply is that, he never cared for coins. What had he to do with them? His two paise were (1) Firm faith and (2) Patience or

1. Baba always lovingly addressed women as 'mother' and men as 'Kaka, Bapu' etc.

2. ~~Mantra~~ — ~~1500~~ ~~1000~~ ~~1000~~ Rupee in those days

4. Dakshina - Remuneration or fees

perseverance. I gave these two paise to him and he was pleased."

"I resorted to My Guru for 12 years. He brought Me up. There was no dearth of food and clothing. He was full of love or say, he was love incarnate. How can I describe it? He loved Me most. Rare is a Guru like him. When I looked at him, he seemed as if he was in deep meditation and then, we both were filled with bliss. Night and day, I gazed at him, with no thought of hunger and thirst. Without him, I felt restless. I had no other subject to meditate upon, nor any other thing than My Guru to attend. He was My sole refuge. My mind was always fixed on him. This Nishtha (firm faith) is one paisa of Dakshina. Saburi (Patience or perseverance) is the other paisa. I waited patiently and served My Guru. **This Saburi will ferry you across the sea of this mundane existence. Saburi removes all sins and afflictions, gets rid of calamities in various ways, and casts aside all fear, and ultimately, gives you success.** Saburi is the mine of virtues, consort of good thought". Nishtha (faith) and Saburi (patience) are like twin sisters, loving each other very intimately.

"My Guru never expected any other thing from Me. He never neglected Me, but protected Me at all times. I lived with him and was sometimes away from him still I never felt the absence of his love. He always protected Me by his glance, just as the tortoise feeds her young ones, whether they are near her or away from her on the other side of the bank, by her loving glances. Oh mother, My Guru never taught Me any Mantra then, how shall I blow any Mantra in your ears? Just remember that Guru's tortoise-like loving glance gives us happiness. **Do not try to get Mantra or Upadesh from anybody. Make Me the sole object of your thoughts and actions and you will, no doubt, attain Paramartha (the spiritual goal of life). Look at Me whole-heartedly and I, in turn, look at you. Sitting in this Masjid, I speak the truth, nothing but the truth. No Sadhana or proficiency in the six Shastras, is necessary. Have faith and confidence in your Guru. Believe that, Guru is the sole Actor or Doer. Blessed is he, who knows the greatness of his Guru and thinks him to be Hari¹, Hara² and Brahma³ (Trimurti) Incarnate".**

Instructed in this way, the old lady was convinced she bowed to Baba and gave up her fast.

1. Hari – Lord Vishnu

2. Hara – Lord Shiva

3. Brahma – Lord Brahma

Hearing this story carefully and attentively, and marking its significance and appropriateness, Hemadpant was most agreeably surprised. On seeing this wonderful Leela of Baba, he was moved from top to toe, he was overflowing with joy, his throat was choked and he was not able to utter a single word. Shama, on seeing him in this condition, asked him, "What is the matter with you, why are you silent? How shall I describe the innumerable leelas of Baba?"

Just at this time the bell in the Masjid began to ring, proclaiming that, the noon-worship and Arati ceremony had begun. Therefore, Shama and Hemadpant hurried to the Masjid. Bapusaheb Jog had just started the worship. Women were up in the Masjid and men were standing below in the open courtyard, and they were all singing the Arati in chorus to the accompaniment of drums. Shama went up, pulling Hemadpant with him. He sat to the right and Hemadpant in front of Baba. On seeing them, Baba asked Hemadpant to give the Dakshina brought from Shama. He replied that Shama gave Namaskars in lieu of Rupees, and that he was there in person. Baba said, "Alright, now let Me know whether you both had a chitchat, and if so, tell Me all that you talked about." Not minding the sounds of the bell, the drum and the chorus songs, Hemadpant was eager to tell Baba what they had talked about and started to narrate it. Baba was also anxious to hear and so, He left the bolster and leaned forward. Hemadpant said all that they talked about, was very pleasant specially, the story of the old lady was most wonderful and that, on hearing it, he thought that, His Leela was inexplicable and under the guise of that story, He really blessed him. Baba then said, "Wonderful is the story. How were you blessed? I would like to know everything in detail from you, so, tell Me all about it!" Then, Hemadpant related in full, the story, which he had heard a little while before and which had made a lasting impression on his mind. Hearing this, Baba was much pleased and asked him, "Did the story strike you and did you catch its significance?" He replied, "Yes Baba, the restlessness of my mind has vanished and I have got true peace and rest, and come to know the true path."

Then Baba spoke as follows, "My method is quite unique. Remember well, this one story and it will be very useful. To get the knowledge (realization) of the self, Dhyan (meditation) is necessary. If you practise it continuously, the Vrittis (subtle thoughts) will be pacified. Being quite desireless, you should meditate on God, who is in all the creatures and when the mind is concentrated, the goal will be achieved. Meditate always on My Formless Nature, which is knowledge incarnate, consciousness and bliss. If you cannot do this, meditate on My Form

from top to toe, as you see here night and day. As you go on doing this, your Vrittis will be single-pointed, and the distinction between the Dhyata (meditator), Dhyana (act of meditation), Dhyeya (thing meditated upon) will be lost, and the meditator will be one with the consciousness and be merged in the Brahma. The (mother) tortoise is on one bank of the river and her young ones are on the other. She gives neither milk, nor warmth to them. Her mere loving glance gives them nutrition. The young ones do nothing but remember (meditate upon) their mother. The tortoise glance is to the young ones, the only source of sustenance and happiness. Similar is the relation between the Guru and disciples."

When Baba uttered these words, the chorus of the Arati songs was over and all cried out loudly in unison, "Victory be to our Sadguru Sai Maharaj, Who is Pure Consciousness, Knowledge and Bliss."* Dear readers let us imagine that we are at this time standing amongst the crowd in the Masjid and let us join them in this Jai Jai Kaar.

After the Arati ceremony was over Prasad was distributed. Bapusaheb Jog came forward as usual and after saluting Baba, gave into His palm a handful of sugarcandy. Baba pushed all this into the hands of Hemadpant and said to him, "If you take this story to heart and remember it well, your state will be sweet as the sugarcandy, all your desires will be fulfilled and you will be happy." Hemadpant bowed down to Baba, and implored, "Do favour me like this, bless and protect me always!" Baba replied, "Hear this story, meditate on it and assimilate its spirit. Then you will always remember and meditate on the Lord, Who will manifest Himself to you."

Dear readers! Hemadpant got Prasad of sugarcandy, and we now get the Prasad of sugarcandy or nectar of this story. Let us drink it to our heart's content, meditate on it and assimilate it, and be strong and happy by Baba's grace. Amen!

Towards the end of the 19th chapter Hemadpant had dealt with some other matters, which are given below.

Baba's Advice regarding our Behaviour

The following words of Baba are of general welfare and invaluable. If they are kept in mind and acted upon, they will always do you good. "Unless there is some relationship or connection, nobody goes anywhere. If any men or creatures come to you, do not discourteously drive them

* 'श्री सच्चिदानंद सद्गुरु साईनाथ महाराज की जय'

away but receive them well, and treat them with due respect. Shri Hari (God) will be certainly pleased, if you give water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked and your Verandah to strangers for resting. If anybody wants any money from you and you are not inclined to give, do not give but do not bark at him like a dog. Let anybody speak hundreds of things against you, do not resent by giving any bitter reply. If you tolerate such things you will certainly be happy. Let the world go topsy-turvy, you remain where you are. Standing in your own place look on calmly at the show of all things passing before you. Demolish the wall of difference that separates you from Me, and then the road for our meeting will be clear and open. The sense of differentiation as I and thou, is the barrier, that keeps away the disciple from his Master and unless that is destroyed the state of union is not possible, "Allah Malik", i.e. God is the sole Proprietor, nobody else is our Protector. His method of work is extra-ordinary, invaluable and inscrutable. His Will be done and He will show us the way, and satisfy our heart's desires. It is on account of Rinanubandh (former relationship) that we have come together, let us love and serve each other and be happy. He who attains the supreme goal of life is immortal and happy, all others merely exist, i.e. live so long as they breathe."

Encouraging Good Thoughts to Fruition

It is interesting to note how Sai Baba encouraged good thoughts. You have to surrender yourself completely to Him with love and devotion and then you will see how He helps you, through out. Some saint has said that, when you get a good thought, immediately after awakening from sleep, and if you develop the same afterwards during the day, your intellect will be unfolded and your mind will attain calmness. Hemadpant wanted to try this. One Wednesday night before going to bed, he thought "Tomorrow is Thursday – an auspicious day and the place, viz. Shirdi is so holy; so, let me pass the whole day in remembering and celebrating Ram-naam", and then, he slept off. Next morning when he got up he remembered without any effort, the name of Ram and was much pleased. After finishing his morning duties, he went to see Baba with flowers. When he left Dixit Wada and was passing by Buti Wada (present Samadhi Mandir) he heard a beautiful song, that was being sung nicely by one Aurangabadkar in the Masjid, before Baba. The song was "*Guru-kripanjan payo mere bhai*" etc. by Eknath, in which he says that 'he got collyrium in the form of his Guru's grace which opened his vision and made him see Ram, in and out, in sleep, dream and waking state and everywhere'. There were so many songs but why was this

song particularly chosen by Aurangabadkar, a devotee of Baba? Is this not a curious coincidence arranged by Baba to amplify the determination of Hemadpant to sing unceasingly Ram-naam during the day?

All saints agree and lay stress upon the efficacy of uttering Ram's (God's) name, in fulfilling the ambitions of the Bhaktas and in protecting and saving them from all calamities.

Variety in Upadesh – Slanderer Condemned

Sai Baba required no special place nor any special time for giving instructions. Whenever any occasion demanded, He gave them freely. Once it so happened that, a Bhakta of Baba, reviled someone behind his back before other people. On leaving aside merits he dwelt on the faults of his brother and spoke so sarcastically that, the hearers were disgusted. Generally we see that, people have a tendency to scandalize others unnecessarily and this brings on ill feelings. Saints see scandal in another light. They say that there are various ways of cleansing or removing dirt, viz. by means of water and soap etc. but a scandal-monger has got a way of his own. He removes the dirt (faults) of others by his tongue, so in a way, he obliges the person, whom he reviles and for this he is to be thanked. Sai Baba had His own method of correcting the scandal-monger. He knew by His omniscience what the slanderer had done and when He met him at noon, near the Lendi, Baba pointed out to him a pig, that was eating filth near the fence and said to him, "Behold, how, with what relish it is gulping filth. Your conduct is similar. You go on reviling your own brethren to your heart's content. **After performing many deeds of merit you are born as a human and if you act like this, how can Shirdi help you in any way?**" Needless to say that the Bhakta took the lesson to his heart and went away.

In this way Baba went on giving instructions, whenever necessary. If these are borne in our minds and acted upon, the spiritual goal (realization) is not far off. There is a proverb, which says, "If there be my Hari (Lord), He will feed me on my cot." This proverb is only true in respect of food and clothing, but if anyone believing this, sits idle and does nothing in spiritual matters, he will be ruined. One has to exert himself to his utmost for attaining self-realization. The more he endeavours, the better for him.

Baba said that He was Omnipresent, transcending land, air, world, light and heaven, and that He was not localised. To remove the misunderstanding of those who thought that, Baba was only His body

— three cubits and a half in length, He Incarnated Himself in this Form, and if any devotee meditated on Him, day and night, with complete self-surrender, he experienced complete union with Him, like sweetness and sugar, waves and sea, eye and its sight. He who wants to get rid of the cycle of births and deaths, should lead a righteous life with his mind calm and composed. He should not speak harshly to anyone, so as to hurt him. He should always engage himself in good actions, should do his duties and surrender himself, heart and soul, to Him. He need not then be afraid of anything. He, who trusts Him entirely, hears and expounds His Leelas and does not think of anything else, is sure to attain self-realization. Baba asked many to remember His name and to surrender to Him but to those, who wanted to know, who they were ("Who am I"), He advised Shravan (study) and Manan (contemplation). To some, He advised remembering God's name, to others, hearing His Leelas; to some, worship of His Feet to others, reading and studying Adhyatma Ramayan, Dnyaneshwari and other sacred scriptures. Some, He made sit near His Feet; some, He sent to Khandoba's temple and some, He advised the repetition of the thousand names of Vishnu, and some, the study of Chhandogya Upanishad and Gita. There was neither any limit, nor any restriction to His instructions. He gave in person or by visions and dreams. To someone addicted to drink, He appeared in his dream, sat on his chest, pressed it and left him after he gave a promise, not to touch liquor anymore. To some He explained some Mantras, like "Gurur Brahma" in dreams. To some devotee, who was practising Hath Yoga, He sent word that, he should leave off Hath Yoga practices, sit quiet and wait (Saburi)! It is impossible to describe all His ways and methods. In ordinary worldly dealings, He set examples by His actions, one of which is given below.

Remuneration for Labour

One day at noon, Baba came near Radhakrishnamai's house and said, "Bring Me a ladder!" Some men brought it and set it against the wall of a house, as directed by Baba. He climbed up on the roof of Vaman Gondkar's house, passed over the roof of Radhakrishnamai's house and then, got down from the other corner. What object Baba had none could know. Radhakrishnamai was at that time, shivering with malaria. It may be to drive off that fever, that He may have gone up there. Immediately after getting down, Baba paid two Rupees to the persons who brought the ladder. Somebody asked Baba, why he paid so much for this. He replied that, **nobody should take the labour of others in vain. The worker should be paid his dues promptly and**

liberally. If the principle taught by Baba, be followed, i.e., if the remuneration for labour be paid promptly and satisfactorily, the labourers will turn out better and both the labourers and their employers will be profited.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XX

Das Ganu's Problem solved by Kaka's Maid-servant

In this chapter, Hemadpant describes, how Das Ganu's problem was solved by Kakasaheb Dixit's maid-servant.

Preliminary

God was originally formless. He assumed a form for the sake of Bhaktas. With the help of Maya, He played the part of an Actor in the big drama of the universe. Let us remember and visualize Shri Sai. Let us go to Shirdi and see carefully the programme after the noon-Arati. After the Arati ceremony was over, Sai used to come out of the Masjid and standing on its edge, distribute Udi to the devotees with very kind, gracious and loving looks. The Bhaktas also got up with equal fervour, clasped His Feet and had the bliss of Udi. Baba passed handfuls of Udi into the palms of the devotees and marked their foreheads with Udi with His own hands. The love He bore for them in His heart, was boundless. Then He addressed the Bhaktas, "Oh Bhau, go home to take your lunch, you Anna, go to your lodgings, you Bapu, enjoy your meal". In this way, He accosted each and every devotee and sent them home. Even now you can have the pleasure of these sights, if you bring into play your imagination. Now, bringing Sai in our mental vision, let us meditate on Him, from His Feet upwards to His face, prostrating before Him humbly, lovingly and reverentially.

Isha Upanishad

Das Ganu once started to write a Marathi commentary on the Isha Upanishad. Let us first give a brief idea of this Upanishad, before proceeding further. It is called 'Mantropanishad', as it is embodied in the Mantras of the Vedic Sanhita. It constitutes the last or the 40th chapter of the Vajasaneyi Sanhita (Yajurveda) and it is therefore, called Vajasaneyi Sanhitopanishad. Being embodied in Vedic Sanhitas, this is regarded as superior to all other Upanishads, which are in the Brahmanyaks and Aranyakas (explanatory treaties on Mantras and rituals). Not only this, other Upanishads are considered to be commentaries on the truths, mentioned briefly in the Isha Upanishad. For instance, the biggest of the Upanishads, viz. the Brihadaranyaka

Upanishad, is considered by Pandit Satawalekar to be a running commentary on the Isha Upanishad.

Professor R.D. Ranade says, "The Ishopanishad is quite a small Upanishad and yet it contains many facts, which show an extraordinarily piercing insight. Within the short compass of 18 verses it gives a valuable mystical description of the Atma, a description of the ideal sage who stands unruffled in the midst of temptations and sorrows, an adumbration of the doctrine or Karma Yoga, as later formulated. The most valuable idea, that lies at the root of the Upanishad, is that of a logical synthesis between the two opposites of knowledge and work, which are both required according to the Upanishad to be annulled in a higher synthesis." (Page 24 of the Constructive Survey of the Upanishadic Philosophy). In another place he says that "The poetry of the Ishopanishad is a co-mixture of moral, mystical and metaphysical knowledge (ibid, page 41)."

From the brief description given above, about this Upanishad, one can see how difficult it is to translate this Upanishad in a vernacular language and bring out its exact meaning. Das Ganu 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. On being dis-satisfied he consulted some learned men, regarding his doubts and difficulties, and discussed it with them at great length. They did not solve them nor did they give him any rational and satisfactory explanation. So Das Ganu was a little restless over this matter.

Sadguru only Competent and Qualified to Explain

As we have seen this Upanishad is the quint-essence of the Vedas. It is the science of self-realization, it is the scythe or weapon which can rend asunder the bondage of life and death and make us free. Therefore, he thought that, he, who has himself attained self-realization, can only give him the true or correct interpretation of the Upanishad. When nobody could satisfy Das Ganu, he resolved to consult Sai Baba about this. When he got an opportunity to go to Shirdi, he saw Sai Baba, prostrated himself before Him, and mentioned his difficulties about the Isha Upanishad, and requested Him to give the correct solution. Sai Baba blessed him and said, "You need not be anxious, there is no

difficulty about the matter, the maid-servant of Kaka (Kakasaheb Dixit) will solve your doubts at Ville Parle on your way home." The people who were present there and heard this, thought that Baba was joking, and said, "How could an illiterate maid-servant solve difficulties of this mystic nature;" but Das Ganu thought otherwise. He was sure that, whatever Baba spoke must come true, as Baba's word was the decree of Brahma (Almighty).

Kaka's Maid-servant

Fully believing Baba's words, he left Shirdi and came to Ville Parle (a suburb of Mumbai), and stayed with Kakasaheb Dixit. There the next day, when Das Ganu was enjoying his morning nap (some say, when he was engaged in worship), he heard a poor girl singing a beautiful song in clear and melodious tone. The theme of the song was a crimson coloured Sari, how nice it was, how fine was its embroidery, how beautiful were its borders etc. He liked the song so much that he came out and saw that, it was being sung by a young girl, the sister of Namya, who was a servant of Kakasaheb. The girl was cleaning vessels and had only a torn rag on her person. On seeing her impoverished condition and her happy temperament, Das Ganu felt pity for her; and when Rao Bahadur M.V. Pradhan, gave him a pair of Dhotars the next day, he requested him to give a Sari to the poor little girl also. Rao Bahadur bought a good Chirdi (small Sari) and presented it to her. Like a starved person getting delicious dishes to eat, her joy knew no bounds. Next day she wore the new Sari and out of great joy and merriment, whirled and danced around and played 'Fugadi' with other girls. The following day she kept the new Sari in her box at home and came in the old and torn rags but she looked as merry as she was the previous day. On seeing this Das Ganu's pity transformed into admiration. 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 everything from 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 donee and the deal were all parts of

the Lord and pervaded by Him. Here, Das Ganu got a practical demonstration of the lesson of the Upanishad – the lesson of contentment with one's own lot with the belief that whatever happens, is ordained by God, and is ultimately good for us.

Unique Method of Teaching

From the above incident the reader will see that, Baba's method was unique and varied. Though Baba never left Shirdi, He sent some to Machchindragad, some to Kolhapur or Solapur, for practising Sadhanas. To some He appeared in His usual form, to some He appeared in waking or dream states, day or night, and satisfied their desires. It is impossible to describe all the methods, that Baba used in imparting instructions to His Bhaktas. In this particular case, He sent Das Ganu to Ville Parle, where he got his problem solved, through the maid-servant. To those who say that it was not necessary to send away Das Ganu and that, Baba could have personally taught him; we say that Baba followed the right or best course, or how else could Das Ganu learn a great lesson, that the poor maid-servant and her sari were pervaded by the Lord.

Now we close the chapter with another beautiful extract about this Upanishad.

The Ethics of the Isha

"One of the main features of the Isha Upanishad, is the ethical advice it offers and it is interesting to note that, the ethics of the Upanishad are definitely based upon the metaphysical position, given in it. The very opening words of the Upanishad tell us that, God pervades everything. As a corollary, from this metaphysical position the ethical advice it offers is that, a man ought to enjoy whatever God bestows on him in the firm belief, that, as He pervades everything, whatever is bestowed on him by God, must be good. It follows naturally that, the Upanishad forbids us from coveting another man's property. In fact, we are fittingly taught here a lesson of contentment with one's own lot in the belief that, whatever happens, is divinely ordained and hence, it is good for us. Another moral advice is that, man must spend his life-time always in doing action, specifically the Karmas enjoined in the Shastras, with resignation to His will. Inactivity, according to this

Upanishad, would be the canker of the soul. It is only when a man spends his life-time in doing actions in this manner, that, he can hope to attain the ideal of Naishkarmya. Finally, the text goes on to say that a man, who sees all beings in the self and sees the self as existing in all beings in fact, for whom all beings and everything that exists have become the Self – how can such a man suffer infatuation? What ground would such a man have for grief? Loathfulness, infatuation and grief verily proceed from our not being able to see the Atma in all things. But, a man who realizes the oneness of all things, for whom everything has become the Self must ipso facto, cease to be affected by the common foibles of humanity." (Page 169-170 of The Creative Period by Messrs. Belvalkar and Ranade).

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXI

*Stories of (1) V.H. Thakur (2) Anantrao Patankar
and (3) Pandharpur Pleader*

In this chapter, Hemadpant relates the stories of Vinayak Harishchandra Thakur, B.A., Anantrao Patankar of Poona and a pleader from Pandharpur. All these stories are very interesting, which, if very carefully read and grasped, will lead the readers on to the spiritual path.

Preliminary

It is a general rule that, it is our good luck in the form of accumulation of merits of past births, that enables us to seek the company of saints and benefit thereby. As an illustration of this rule, Hemadpant gives his own instance. He was a resident magistrate of Bandra, a suburb of Mumbai, for many years. A famous Mohammedan saint, named Pir Moulana, was living there and many Hindus, Parsis and many others, who followed different religion used to go to him and take his darshan. His Mujavar (priest), by name Yunus, pressed Hemadpant many a time, for going to see him; but for one reason or the other, he was not able to see him. After many years, his turn came and he was called to Shirdi, where he was permanently enrolled in Sai Baba's Darbar. Unfortunate fellows do not get such contact of the saints. It is only the fortunate ones that get it.

Institution of Saints

There have been institutions of saints in this world, from time immemorial. Various saints appear (incarnate) themselves in various places to carry out the missions allotted to them, but though they work in different places they are, as it were one. They work in unison under the common authority of the Almighty Lord, and know fully well, what each of them is doing in his place and supplement his work where necessary. An instance illustrating this is given below.

Mr. Thakur

Mr. V.H. Thakur, B.A., was a clerk in the Revenue Department

and he once came to a town, named Vadgaon, near Belgaon (South Mysore country) along with a survey party. There he saw a Kanarese saint (Appa) and bowed before him. The saint was explaining a portion from the book 'Vichar Sagar' of Nischal Das (a standard work on Vedanta) to the audience. When Thakur was taking his leave to go he said to him, "You should study this book and if you do so, your desires will be fulfilled and when you go to the north in the discharge of your duties in future, you will come across a great Saint by your fortune, and then he will show you the future path and give rest to your mind and make you happy."

Then he was transferred to Junnar, where he had to go by crossing Nhane Ghat. This Ghat was very steep and difficult, and no other conveyance, other than a buffalo, was of use in crossing it. So he had to take a buffalo-ride through the Ghat, which was much inconvenient to him. Thence he was transferred on promotion to Kalyan and there, he got acquainted with Nanasaheb Chandorkar. He heard much about Sai Baba from him and wished to see Him. Next day, Nanasaheb had to go to Shirdi and he asked Thakur to accompany him. He could not do so, as he had to attend the Thana Civil Court for a civil case. So Nanasaheb went alone. Thakur went to Thana, but there the case was postponed. Then he repented for not accompanying Nanasaheb. Still he left for Shirdi and when he reached there, he found that Nanasaheb had left the place the previous day. Some of his other friends, whom he met there, took him to Baba. He saw Baba, fell at His Feet and was overjoyed. His eyes were full of tears and his hair stood on end. Then after a while, the omniscient Baba said to him, "The path of this place is not so easy as the teachings of the Kanarese saint Appa, or even as the buffalo-ride in the Nhane Ghat. In this spiritual path you have to put in your best exertion, it is very difficult." When Thakur heard these significant words, which only he knew, he was overwhelmed with joy. He came to know that, the word of the Kanarese saint had turned true. Then joining both hands and placing his head on Baba's Feet, he prayed that, he should be accepted and blessed. Then, Baba said, "What Appa told you was all right but these things have to be practised and lived. Mere reading won't do. You have to think and carry out what you read, otherwise it is of no use. Mere book-learning, without the grace of the Guru and self-realization is of no avail." The theoretical portion was read from the work 'Vichar Sagar' by Thakur but the practical way was shown to him at Shirdi. Another story given below,

will bring out this truth more forcibly.

Anantrao Patankar

One gentleman from Poona by name Anantrao Patankar, wished to see Baba. He came to Shirdi and took Baba's darshan. His eyes were satisfied and he was much pleased. He fell at Baba's Feet and after performing proper worship said to Baba, "I have read a lot, studied Vedas, Vedants and Upanishads, and heard all the Puranas but still, I have not got any peace of mind so I think all my reading was useless. Simple ignorant devout persons are better than myself. Unless the mind becomes calm, book learning is of no avail. I have heard from many people that, You easily give peace of mind to so many people by Your mere glance and potent word so I have come here, please take pity on me and bless me." Then Baba told him a parable, which was as follows:

Parable of Nine Balls of Stool (Nava-vidha Bhakti)

'Once a merchant came here. Before him a mare passed her stool (nine balls of stool). The merchant intent on his quest, spread the end of his Dhotar and gathered all the nine balls in it, and thus he got concentration (peace) of mind.'

Mr. Patankar could not make out the meaning of this story so, he asked Ganesh Damodar alias Dada Kelkar, "What does Baba mean by this?" He replied, "I too do not know all that Baba says and means but at His inspiration I say what I come to know. The mare is God's grace and the nine balls excreted are the nine forms or types of Bhakti, viz. (1) Shravan (hearing); (2) Kirtan (praying); (3) Smaran (remembering); (4) Padasevan (resorting to the feet); (5) Archan (worship); (6) Namaskar (bowing); (7) Dasya (service); (8) Sakhyam (friendship); (9) Atmanivedan (surrender of the self). These are the nine types of Bhakti. If any of these is faithfully followed, Lord Hari will be pleased and manifest Himself in the home of the devotee. All the Sadhanas, viz. Japa (vocal worship), Tapa (penance), Yoga practice and studying the scriptures and expounding them are quite useless, unless they are accompanied by Bhakti, i.e., devotion. Knowledge of the Vedas or fame as a great Dnyani and mere formal Bhajan (worship) are of no avail. What is wanted is full devotion. Consider yourself as the merchant or seeker after the truth, and be anxious and eager like him to collect or cultivate the nine

types of devotion. Then, you will attain stability and peace of mind."

Next day when Patankar went to Baba for salutation, he was asked whether he collected the 'nine balls of stool.' Then he said that he being a poor fellow, should first be graced by Baba and he would be able to collect them. Then Baba blessed and comforted him, saying that he would attain peace and welfare. After hearing this, Patankar became overjoyed and happy.

The Pandharpur Pleader

We shall close this chapter with a short story showing Baba's omniscience and His using it for correcting people and setting them on the right path. Once a pleader from Pandharpur came to Shirdi, went to the Masjid, saw Sai Baba, fell at His Feet and without being asked offered some Dakshina and sat in a corner, eager to hear the talk, that was going on. Then Baba turned His face towards him and said, "How cunning the people are! They fall at the Feet, offer Dakshina, but abuse behind me. Is it not amazing?" This cap (remark) fitted the pleader and he had to wear (take) it. None understood the remark. The pleader grasped it but kept silent. When they returned to the Wada, the pleader said to Kakasaheb Dixit, "What Baba remarked was perfectly right. The dart (remark) was aimed at me, it was a hint to me, that I should not indulge in reviling or scandalizing others (calling names). When the sub-judge or munsiff of Pandharpur (Mr. Noolkar) came and stayed here for the improvement of his health, a discussion about this matter was going on in the bar-room at Pandharpur. It was said or discussed there, whether the ailments from which the sub-judge suffered were, ever likely to be got rid of without medicines, by merely going after Sai Baba, and whether it was proper for an educated man like the sub-judge to take recourse to such methods. The sub-judge was taken to task, i.e. he was criticised, as also Sai Baba. I also took part in this affair and now, Sai Baba showed the impropriety of my conduct. This is not a rebuke to me but a favour, a lesson, that I should not indulge in any scandal or slander of others, and not interfere unnecessarily in others' affairs."

Shirdi is about 50 Kos (Kos = 3 miles = 4.8 km) from Pandharpur

still Baba, by His omniscience, knew what transpired there in the bar-room. The intervening places – rivers, jungles and mountains – were no bar to His all-perceiving sight and He could see or read the hearts of all, and there was nothing secret or veiled from Him. Everything, far or near, was open and clear to Him as broad as daylight. Let a man be far or near, he cannot avoid the all-pervading gaze of Sai Baba. From this incident, the pleader took the lesson that, he should never speak ill of others or unnecessarily criticise. Thus, his evil tendency was completely got rid of and he was set on the right path.

Though, the story refers to a pleader, still it is applicable to all. All should therefore, take this lesson to heart and benefit thereby.

Sai Baba's greatness is unfathomable, so are His wonderful Leelas. His life is also such, for He is Para-Brahma (Almighty God) Incarnate.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXII

Rescues from Serpent-bites (1) Balasaheb Mirikar (2) Bapusaheb Buti (3) Amir Shakkar (4) Hemadpant – Baba's Opinion regarding Killing of Serpents

Preliminary

How to meditate on Baba? No one has been able to fathom the nature or the form of Almighty. Even the Vedas and the thousand-tongued Shesha¹ are not able to describe it fully, the devotees also cannot know but only look at the form of the Lord, for they know that, His Feet are their only refuge. They know no other method of attaining the supreme goal of life, except meditating on the Holy Feet. Hemadpant suggests an easy way of devotion and meditation as follows:

As the dark fortnight of every month wears out gradually, the moonlight also wanes in the same degree and on the new-moon day, we do not see the moon at all. Therefore, when the bright fortnight begins, people are very anxious to see the moon. On the first day the moon is not seen and on the second day she emerges as a thin crescent. Then the people are asked to see the moon through the opening, between the two branches of a tree; and when they begin to see through this aperture eagerly, the distant small crescent of the moon comes to their sight. Following this instance, let us see Baba's form. Look at Baba's posture, how fine it is! He is sitting with His legs folded, the right leg held across the left knee. The fingers of His left hand are spread on the right foot. On the toe are spread His two fingers – the index and middle ones. By this posture Baba seems to say – if you want to see My true form, be egoless and most humble, and meditate on My toe through the opening between – index and middle fingers – and then you will be able to see My Light.

Now let us turn to Baba's life. Shirdi had become a place of pilgrimage, on account of Baba's stay there. People from all quarters began to flock there and both the rich and the poor, began to be benefitted in more ways than one. Who can describe Baba's boundless love and His wonderful knowledge and His all-pervasiveness? Blessed is he, who could experience these. Sometimes Baba observed long silence, which was in a way, His dissertation on Brahma; at other times, He was Pure Consciousness – Bliss Incarnate, surrounded by His devotees.

1. According to the Hinduism, the earth rests on the head of the Serpent Sheshnag. Who has 1000 heads.

Sometimes He spoke in parables and at other times, indulged in wit and humour. At times He was quite calm and at times He seemed enraged. Sometimes He gave His teachings in a nut-shell, at other times, He argued at length. Many a time, He was very direct. In this way He gave varied instructions to many, according to their requirements. His life was therefore, inscrutable, beyond the ken of our mind, intellect and speech. Our longing to see His face, to talk with Him and hear His Leelas, was never satisfied, still we were overflowing with joy. We can gauge the showers of rain, capture the wind in a leather bag but who can measure His Leelas? Now, we deal here with one aspect of them, viz. how He anticipated or forestalled the calamities of His devotees and warned them in time.

Balasaheb Mirikar

Balasaheb Mirikar, son of Sardar Kakasaheb Mirikar, was Mamlatdar of Kopergaon. He was going on tour to Chitali. On the way he came to Shirdi, to see Sai Baba. When he went to the Masjid and prostrated himself before Baba, the usual conversation, regarding health and other matters commenced, when Baba sounded a note of warning, "Do you know our Dwarakamai?" As Balasaheb did not understand, he kept quiet Baba continued, "This is our Dwarakamai, where you are sitting. She wards off all dangers and anxieties of the children, who sit on her lap. This Masjidmai (its presiding Deity) is very merciful, she is the merciful mother of the simple devotees, whom she will save in calamities. Once a person sits on her lap, all his troubles are over. He who rests in her shade, gets Bliss." Then Baba gave him Udi and placed His hand on his head. When Balasaheb was about to depart, He again said, "Do you know the 'Lamba Baba' (long gentleman), viz. serpent?" And then, closing the left fist He brought it under the right elbow and moving His left arm like the hood of a serpent, said, "He is so terrible, but what can he do to the children of Dwarakamai! When the Dwarakamai (its presiding Deity) protects, what can the serpent do?"

All who were present there, were curious to know the meaning of all this and its reference to Mirikar, but none had the courage to ask Baba about this. Then Balasaheb saluted Baba and left the Masjid with Shama. Baba called Shama back, and asked him to accompany Balasaheb and enjoy the Chitali trip. Shama came to Balasaheb and told him that he would go with him, according to Baba's wish. Balasaheb replied that he need not come, as it would be inconvenient. Shama returned to Baba and told Him what Balasaheb said to him. Baba said, "Alright, do not go. We should mean well and do well. Whatever is destined to happen, will happen."

In the meanwhile, Balasaheb thought it over again and calling Shama, asked him to accompany him. Then Shama went again to Baba and after taking His leave started with Balasaheb in the tonga. They reached Chitali at 9 P.M. and encamped in the Maruti temple. The office-people had not come so they sat in the temple, talking and chitchatting. Balasaheb was sitting on a mat, reading a newspaper. His Uparani (upper Dhotar) was spread across his waist and on it a snake was sitting unnoticed. It began to move with a hissing sound, which was heard by the peon. He brought a lantern, saw the snake and raised an alarm, "serpent, serpent." Balasaheb was frightened and began to quiver. Shama was also stunned. Then, he and others moved quietly and took sticks and clubs in their hands. The snake slowly came down the waist and moved away from Balasaheb and it was immediately done to death. Thus this calamity, which was prophesied by Baba, was averted and Balasaheb's devotion in Baba was confirmed.

Bapusaheb Buti

A great astrologer, named Nanasaheb Dengle, told Bapusaheb Buti, who was then in Shirdi, "Today is an inauspicious day for you, there is danger to your life." This made Bapusaheb restless. When they as usual came to Masjid, Baba said to Bapusaheb, "What does this Nana say? He foretells death for you. Well, you need not be afraid. Tell him, "Let us see, how death kills." Then, later in the evening Bapusaheb went to his privy, for easing himself, where he saw a snake. His servant saw it and lifted a stone to strike at it. Bapusaheb asked him to get a big stick, but before the servant returned with the stick, the snake was seen moving away and soon disappeared. Bapusaheb remembered Baba's words of fearlessness.

Amir Shakkar

Amir Shakkar was a native of the village Korhale, in Kopergaon Taluka. He belonged to the butcher caste. He worked as a commission agent in Bandra (Mumbai) and was well-known there. He once suffered from rheumatism, which gave him much pain. He then remembered Allah (God), left his business and went to Shirdi and prayed to Baba to relieve him from his malady. Baba then stationed him in the Chavadi. The Chavadi was then a damp unhealthy place, unfit for such a patient. Any other place in the village or Korhale itself would have been better for Amir, but Baba's word was the command the chief medicine. Baba did not allow him to come to the Masjid, but fixed him in the Chavadi every morning and evening; every alternate day Baba went to the Chavadi in a procession and slept there, so, Amir got Baba's contact

very often. Amir stayed there for full nine months and then, he got a disgust for the place. So one night he stealthily left the place and came to Kopergaon and stayed in a dharmashala. There he saw an old dying Fakir, who asked him for water. Amir brought it and gave it to him. As soon as he drank it, he passed away. Now Amir was in a fix. He thought that, if he went and informed the authorities, he would be held responsible for the death, as he was the first and sole informant and knew something about it. He repented for his action, viz. leaving Shirdi without Baba's permission and prayed to Baba. He then determined to return to Shirdi and same night he retreated, remembering and muttering Baba's name all the way and reached Shirdi before day-break, and became free from anxiety. Then he lived in the Chavadi in perfect accordance with Baba's wishes and orders, and got himself cured. One night it so happened that, Baba cried at midnight. "Oh Abdul, some devilish creature is dashing against the side of my bed." Abdul came with a lantern, examined Baba's bed but found nothing. Baba asked him to examine carefully all the place and began to strike the ground with His Satka. Seeing this Leela of Baba, Amir thought that, Baba might have suspected some serpent there. Amir could know by close contact with Baba, the meaning of His words and actions. Baba then saw near Amir's cushion, something moving. He asked Abdul to bring in the light and when he brought it, he saw the serpent coiled up there, moving its head up and down. Thereupon, the serpent was immediately beaten to death. Thus, Baba gave timely warning and saved Amir's life.

Hemadpant (Scorpion and Serpent)

(1) At Baba's recommendation Kaksahab Dixit was daily reading the two works of Shri Eknath Maharaj, viz. Bhagwat and Bhavartha Ramayan and Hemadpant had the good fortune to be one of the audience, when the reading of the works was going on. Once, when a portion from the Ramayan relating to Hanuman's testing Rama's greatness according to his mother's instructions, was being read, all the listeners were spell-bound. Hemadpant was one of them. A big scorpion (none knew, where it came from), jumped and sat on the right shoulder of Hemadpant, on his Uparani (upper Dhotar). First it was not noticed, but as the Lord protects those who are intent on hearing His stories, he casually cast a glance over his right shoulder and noticed it. It was dead silence not a bit moving here or there. It seemed as if, it also enjoyed the reading. Then by the Lord's grace, Hemadpant, without disturbing the audience, took the two ends of his Dhotar, folded them and brought them together enclosing the scorpion within. Then he went out and threw it in the garden. (2) On another occasion, some persons were sitting in the upper floor of Kakasaheb's Wada, just before nightfall,

when a serpent crept through a hole in the window-frame and sat coiled up. A light was brought. Though it was first dazzled, yet it sat still and moved its head up and down. Then many persons rushed there with sticks and cudgels, but as it sat in an awkward place, no blow could be dealt. But hearing the noises of men, the serpent went out hastily through the same hole. Then all the persons present there felt relieved.

Baba's Opinion

One devotee, named Muktaram, then said that it was good that the poor creature escaped. Hemadpant challenged him, saying that serpents should better be killed. There was a hot discussion between them – the former contending that serpents and such creatures, should not be killed, the latter that they should be. As night came on, the discussion came to an end without any decision being arrived at. Next day, the question was referred to Baba, Who gave His settled opinion as follows, "God lives in all beings and creatures, whether they be serpents or scorpions. He is the Great Wirepuller of the world, and all beings, serpents, scorpions etc. obey His command! Unless He wills it nobody can do any harm to others. The world is all dependent on Him and no one is independent. So we should take pity and love all creatures, leave off killings and be patient. The Lord (God) is the Protector of all.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXIII

*Yoga and Onion – Shama cured of Snake-bite –
Cholera Ordinance broken – Ordeal of Guru-bhakti*

Preliminary

In Reality this Jiva (human soul) transcends the three qualities, viz. Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas; but being deluded by Maya, he forgets his nature which is 'Pure Consciousness-knowledge-bliss' and thinks that, he is the doer and thus, entangles himself in endless miseries, and does not know the way of deliverance. **The only way of deliverance is the loving devotion towards the Guru's feet.** The great Player or Actor, Lord Sai, has delighted His Bhaktas and transformed them into Himself (His nature).

We regard Sai Baba as an Incarnation of God, for reasons already stated but He always said that, He was an obedient servant of God. Though an Incarnation, He showed people the way to behave satisfactorily and to carry out the duties of their respective stations (Varnas) in this life. He never emulated others in any way, nor asked others to have something done for Him. For Him Who saw the God in all movable and immovable things of this world, humility was the virtue. None, He disregarded or disrespected, for He saw Narayan (Lord) in all beings, He never said, "I am God;" but that, He was a humble servant, and He always remembered Him and always uttered, "Allah Malik" (God is the Sole Proprietor or Owner).

We do not know the various kinds of saints, how they behave, what they do etc. We only know that, by God's grace they manifest themselves in this world, to liberate the ignorant and bound souls. If there be any store of merits in our account, we get a desire or interest, in listening to the stories and Leelas of the saints, otherwise not. Let us now turn to the main stories of this chapter.

Yoga and Onion

Once it so happened that, a Sadhak of Yoga came to Shirdi with Nanasaheb Chandorkar. He had studied all the works on Yoga, including the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali, but had no practical experience.

He could not concentrate his mind and attain Samadhi even for a short time. He thought that if Sai Baba will be pleased with him, He will show him, the way to attain Samadhi, for a longer time. With this object in view, he came to Shirdi and when he went to the Masjid he saw Sai Baba eating chapati with onion. On seeing this, a thought crossed his mind : 'How can this man, eating stale bread with raw onion, solve my difficulties and help me?' Sai Baba read his mind and said to Nanasaheb, "Oh Nana, he, who has the power to digest onion, should eat it and none else," Hearing this remark, the yogi was wonder-struck and, he fell at Baba's Feet with complete surrender. With pure and open mind, he asked his difficulties and got their solution from Baba. Thus, being satisfied and happy, he left Shirdi with Baba's Udi and blessings.

Shama cured of Snake-bite

Before Hemadpant begins the story, he says about the Jiva that it can be very well compared with a parrot, and that they both are bound, the one in the body and the other in a cage. Both think that, their present bound state is good for them. It is only when a helper, i.e. Guru comes and by God's grace opens their eyes and liberates them from their bondage, that, their eyes are opened to a greater and larger life, compared to which, their former bound and limited life is nothing.

In the last chapter, it was shown, how Baba anticipated the calamity, that was to befall on Mr. Mirikar and rescued him from it. Now let the readers hear a story more interesting than this. Once Shama was bitten by a poisonous snake. His little finger was bitten and the poison began to spread in the body. The pain was also severe and Shama thought that, he would pass away soon. His friends wanted to take him to the God Vithoba, where such cases were often sent but Shama ran to the Masjid to his Vithoba (Sai Baba). When Baba saw him, He began to scold and abuse. He got enraged and said, "Oh vile Bhaturdya (Priest) do not climb up. Beware if you do so!" and then, roared, "Go, Get away, Come down!" Seeing Baba thus, red with wrath, Shama was greatly puzzled and disappointed. He thought that the Masjid was his home and Sai Baba his Sole Refuge, but if he was driven away like this, where should he go? He lost all hopes of life and kept silent. After a while, when Baba became normal and calm, Shama went up and sat near him. Then Baba said to him, "Don't be afraid, don't care a jot (a small amount), the Merciful Fakir will save you, go and sit

quiet at home, don't go out, believe in Me and remain fearless and have no anxiety". Then he was sent home. Immediately afterwards, Baba sent Taty Patil and Kakasaheb Dixit to him with instructions to the effect, that he should eat what he liked, should move around in the house; but should in no case lie down and sleep. Needless to say, that these instructions were acted upon and Shama got all right in a short time. The only thing to be remembered in this connection is this – the words of Baba (or the five syllabled Mantra, viz. 'Go, Get away, Come down') were not addressed to Shama, as it apparently looked, but they were a direct order to the snake and its poison not to rise up and circulate through Shama's body. Like others well-versed in Mantrashastra, He had not to use any incantation, charged rice or water etc, His words only were most efficacious in saving the life of Shama.

Anyone, hearing this story and other similar ones, will beget firm faith in the Feet of Sai Baba, and the only way to cross the ocean of Maya is to remember the Feet of Baba, in the heart.

Cholera Epidemic

Once, cholera was raging virulently in Shirdi. The residents were much frightened and they stopped all communication with the outside people. The Panch¹ of the village assembled together and decided upon two ordinances, as a remedy to check and put down the epidemic. They were (1) No fuelcart should be allowed to come in the village and (2) No goat should be killed there. If anybody disobeyed these ordinances, they were to be fined by the village-authorities and Panch. Baba knew that all this was mere superstition and therefore, He cared a damn for the cholera-ordinances. While the ordinances were in force, a fuelcart came there and wanted to enter the village. Everybody knew that there was dearth or scarcity of fuel in the village, still the people began to drive away the fuelcart. Baba came to know of this. He came to the spot and asked the cartman to take the fuel-cart to the Masjid. None dared to raise his voice against this action of Baba. He wanted fuel for His Dhuni and so He purchased it. Like an Agnihotri² keeping his sacred fire alive, throughout his life, Baba kept His Dhuni ever burning, all day and night; and for this He always stocked the fuel. Baba's home, i.e. the Masjid was free and open to all. It had no lock and key and some poor

1. Panch – Five headmen

2. Agnihotri – Fire worshipper

people removed some wood from there for their use. Baba did not grumble about this. Baba saw that the whole universe was pervaded by the Almighty and so, He never bore enmity or ill-will to anybody. Though perfectly detached He behaved like an ordinary house-holder, to set an example to the people.

Ordeal of Guru-bhakti

Let us now see, how the second cholera-ordinance fared with Baba. While it was in force, somebody brought a goat to the Masjid. It was weak, old and about to die. At this time Fakir Pir Mohammad of Malegaon, alias Bade Baba, was near. Sai Baba asked him to behead it with one stroke and offer it as an oblation. This Bade Baba was much respected by Sai Baba. He always sat on the right side of Sai Baba. After the chillim (pipe) was first smoked by him, it was then offered to Baba and others. After the dishes were served, at the time of taking meals at noon, Baba called Bade Baba and made him sit on His left side and then all partook of food. Baba paid him also daily Rs. 50/-, out of the amount collected as Dakshina. Baba accompanied him hundred steps, whenever he went away from the Masjid. Such was his position with Baba. But, when Baba asked him to behead the goat, he flatly refused, saying, "Why it should be killed for nothing?" Then, Baba asked Shama to kill it. He went to Radhakrishnamai and brought a knife from her and placed it before Baba. Knowing the purpose for which the knife was taken, she recalled it. Then Shama went to bring another knife but stayed in the Wada and did not return soon. Then came the turn of Kakasaheb Dixit. He was 'gold' not doubt but had to be tested. Baba asked him to get a knife and kill the goat. He went to the Sathe's Wada and returned with a knife. He was ready to kill it at Baba's bidding. He was born in a pure Brahmin family and never in his life knew killing. Though quite averse to do any act of violence, still, he made himself bold to kill the goat. All the people wondered to see that, while Bade Baba, a Mohammedan was unwilling to kill it but this Brahmin was making preparations to do so. He tightened his Dhotar and with a semicircular motion raised his hand with the knife and looked at Baba for the final signal. Baba said, "What are you thinking of? Go on, strike!" Then when the hand was just about to come down, Baba said, "Stop, how cruel you are! Being a Brahmin, you are killing a goat?" Kakasaheb obeyed and kept the knife down and said to Baba, "Your word is law unto us, we do not know any other ordinance. We remember

You always, meditate on Your Form and obey You day and night, we do not know or consider whether it is right or wrong to kill, we do not want to reason or discuss things, but implicit and prompt compliance with Guru's orders, is our duty and Dharma."

Then Baba said to Kakasaheb that He would Himself do the offering and killing business. It was settled that, the goat should be disposed off near a place called Takiya, where Fakirs used to sit. Then, when the goat was being taken to that place, it fell dead on the way.

Hemadpant closes the chapter with a classification of disciples. He says that they are of three kinds: (1) First or best (2) Second or average and (3) Third or ordinary. The best kind of disciples are those, who guess, what their Gurus want and immediately carry it out and serve them, without waiting for an order from them. The average disciples are those, who carry out the orders of their masters to a letter, without any delay, and the third kind of disciples are those, who go on postponing the carrying out of their order and make mistakes at every step.

The disciples should have firm faith, backed up by intelligence, and if they add patience to these, their spiritual goal will not be distant. Control of breath-ingoin and outgoing, or Hath-Yoga or other difficult practices, are not at all necessary. When the disciples get the above-mentioned qualities, they become ready for further instructions and the masters then appear and lead them on, in their spiritual path to perfection.

In the next chapter we deal with Baba's interesting wit and humour.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXIV

*Baba's Wit and Humour – Chana Leela (1)
Hemadpant (2) Sudama (3) Anna Chinchanikar vs.
Maushibai*

Preliminary

Unless we surrender our ego to the feet of our Sadguru, we will not succeed in our undertaking. If we become egoless, then, our success is assured.

By worshipping Sai Baba, we attain both the objects – worldly and spiritual, and are fixed in our true nature and get peace and happiness. Therefore, those who want to accomplish or gain their welfare, should respectfully hear Sai Baba's Leelas or stories, and meditate on them. If they do this, they will easily attain the object of their life and get bliss.

Generally, all people like wit and humour but they do not like that jokes should be cut at their expense. But Baba's method was peculiar; when it was accompanied with good gestures, it was very interesting and instructive, and the people therefore did not mind, even if they were held up to the ridicule. Hemadpant gives his own instance below.

Chana Leela

In Shirdi, a special bazaar was held every Sunday and people from the neighbouring villages came there, erected booths and stalls in the open street and sold their wares and commodities. Every noon the Masjid was crowded, but on Sunday, it was crowded to suffocation. On one such Sunday Hemadpant sat in front of Baba, shampooing His Legs and muttering God's name. Shama was on Baba's left, Vamanrao to His right. Shriman Buti and Kakasaheb Dixit and others were also present there. Then Shama laughed and said to Annasaheb, "See that some grains seem to have stuck to the sleeve of your coat!" So saying he touched the sleeve and found that, there were some grains. Hemadpant straightened his left fore-arm to see what the matter was, and to the surprise of all, some grains of gram came rolling down and were picked up by the people, who were sitting there.

This incident furnished a subject-matter for joke. Everybody present

began to wonder and said something or other, as to how the grains found their way into the sleeve of the coat and lodged there so long. Hemadpant also could not guess. When nobody could give any satisfactory explanation in this matter, and everybody was wondering about this mystery, Baba said as follows:

"This fellow (Annasaheb) has got the bad habit of eating alone. Today is a bazaar-day and he came here chewing grams. I know, his habit and these grams are a proof of it. What wonder is there, in this matter?"

Hemadpant, "Baba, I never know of eating things alone; then, why do You shoulder this bad habit on me? I have never yet seen Shirdi bazaar. I never went to the bazaar today, then how could I buy grams and how could I eat them if I had not bought them? I never eat anything unless I share it with others present around me at the time of my meals."

Baba, "It is true that, you give to the persons present but if none be near-by, what could you or I do? But do you remember Me before eating? Am I not always with you? Then do you offer Me anything before you eat?"

Moral

Let us mark and note carefully, what Baba has taught us by this incident. He has advised us that, before the senses, mind and intellect enjoy their objects, first He should be remembered, and if this be done, it is in a way by making an offering to Him. The senses etc. can never remain without their objects, but if those objects are first offered to the Guru, the attachment for them will naturally vanish. In this way, all the Vrittis (subtle thoughts) regarding desire, anger, avarice etc. should first be offered and directed to the Guru, and if this practice be followed, the Lord will help you in eradicating all the Vrittis. When before enjoyment of the objects, you think that Baba is present, the question, whether the object is fit to be enjoyed or not, will at once arise. Then the object, that is not fit to be enjoyed, will be shunned and in this way our vicious habits or vices will disappear, and our character will improve. Then love for the Guru will grow and pure knowledge will sprout up. When this knowledge grows, the bondage of body-consciousness (we are the body) will snap and our intellect will be merged in spirit-consciousness (we are the spirit). Then we shall get bliss and contentment. There is no

difference between Guru and God. He who sees any difference in them, finds God nowhere. So leaving aside all ideas of difference, we should regard Guru and God as one; and if we serve our Guru, as stated above, God will be certainly pleased and by purifying our minds will give us self-realization. To put the matter in a nut-shell, we should not enjoy any object with our senses etc., without first remembering our Guru. When the mind is trained in this way, we will be always reminded of Baba and our meditation on Baba will grow apace. The Sagun Form of Baba will ever be before our eyes and then, devotion, non-attachment and salvation will all be ours. When Baba's Form is thus fixed before our mental vision, we forget hunger, thirst and this Sansar (world), the consciousness of worldly pleasures will disappear and our mind shall attain peace and happiness.

Sudama's Story

When the above story was being narrated, Hemadpant was reminded of a similar story of Sudama, which illustrates the same principle and therefore, it is given here.

Shri Krishna and His elder brother, Balaram, were living with a co-student, named Sudama, in the ashram of their Guru, Sandipani. Once Krishna and Balaram were sent to the forest for bringing fuel. Then the wife of Sandipani sent Sudama also for the same purpose, with some quantity of grams for the three. When Krishna met Sudama in the forest, he said to him, "Dada, I want water, as I am thirsty." Sudama replied, "No water should be drunk on an empty stomach so, it is better to rest a while." He did not say that he had got grams with him and that Krishna should take some. As Krishna was tired, He lay down for rest on the lap of Sudama and was soon snoring. On seeing this, Sudama took out the grams and began to eat. Then Krishna suddenly asked him, "Dada, what are you eating, what is this chitter-chatter sound?". He replied, "What is there to eat? I am shivering with cold and my teeth are chattering. I can't even repeat Vishnu-sahasra-naam." Hearing this, the Omniscient Krishna said, "I just had a dream, in which I saw a man eating things of another, and when asked about this, he said, 'What dust should he eat', meaning thereby that he had nothing to eat? The other man said, 'Let it be so.' Dada, this is only a dream. I know that you won't eat anything without Me, under the influence of the dream I asked you what you were eating?" If Sudama had known the Omniscient Shri Krishna and His Leelas, he would not have acted as he did. Therefore, he had to suffer for what he did.

Though he was a chum of Shri Krishna, he had to pass his later life in utter poverty. But when he later offered Krishna a handful of parched rice, earned by his wife with her own labour, Krishna was pleased and gave him a golden estate to enjoy. This story should be remembered by those, who have the habit of eating things alone, without partaking them with others.

The Shruti also emphasizes this lesson, and asks us to offer things first to God and then enjoy them, after they are renounced by Him. Baba also has taught us the same lesson in His inimitable and humorous way.

Anna Chinchanikar vs. Maushibai

Hemadpant now describes another witty incident, in which Baba played a peace-maker's part. There was one devotee by name Damodar Ghanashyam Babare, alias Anna Chinchanikar. He was simple, rustic and straightforward. He cared for nobody, always spoke plainly and carried all dealings in cash. Though he looked outwardly harsh and uncompromising, he was good natured and guileless. So Sai Baba loved him. He has willed away all his property to Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi. One day like others, serving Baba in their own way, this Anna was shampooing the left arm of Baba, which rested on the Kathada (railing). On the right side, one old widow named Venubai Koujalgi, whom Baba called 'mother' and all others called Maushibai,¹ was serving Baba in her own way. This Maushibai was an elderly woman of pure heart. She clasped the fingers of both her hands round the trunk of Baba and was at this time massaging Baba's abdomen. She did this so forcibly that Baba's back and abdomen became flat and Baba moved from side to side. Anna on the other side was steady but Maushibai's face moved up and down with her strokes. Once it so happened that, her face came very close to Anna's. Being of a witty disposition she remarked, "Oh, this Anna is a lewd fellow, he wants to kiss me. Even being so old with grey hair, he feels no shame in kissing me." These words enraged Anna and he pulled up his sleeves and said, "You say that I am an old bad fellow, am I quite a fool? It is you who has picked up a quarrel with me." All the persons present there were enjoying this encounter between them. Baba Who loved both of them equally and wanted to pacify them, managed the affair very skillfully. Lovingly He

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः — ईश-उपनिषद्

1. Maushibai – Mother's sister (aunt)

said, "Oh Anna, why are you unnecessarily raising this hue and cry? I do not understand what harm or impropriety is there, when the mother is kissed?" Hearing these words of Baba, both of them were satisfied, and all the persons laughed merrily and enjoyed Baba's wit to their heart's content.

Baba's Characteristics – His Dependency on Bhaktas

Baba allowed His devotees to serve Him in their own way and did not like any other persons interfering in this. To quote an instance, the same Maushibai was, on another occasion kneading Baba's abdomen. Seeing the force used by her, all other devotees felt nervous and anxious. They said, "Oh mother be more considerate and moderate, otherwise you will break Baba's arteries and nerves." At this Baba got up at once from His seat and dashed His Satka on the ground. He got enraged and His eyes became red like a live ember. None dared to stand before Baba. Then He took hold of one end of the Satka with both hands and pressed it in the hollow of His abdomen. The other end He fixed to the post and began to press His abdomen against it. The Satka which was about two or three feet in length, seemed all ready to go into the abdomen and the people feared that, the abdomen would be ruptured in a short time. The post was fixed and immovable and Baba began to go closer and closer to it, and clasped the post firmly. Every moment the rupture was expected and they were all dismayed, did not know what to do and stood dumb with wonder and fear. The other devotees wanted only to give a hint to the Maushibai to be moderate in her service and not cause any trouble or pain to Baba. They were surprised to see that, their well-intentioned effort had resulted in this crisis, and they could do nothing but to wait and watch. Fortunately, Baba's rage soon cooled down. He left the Satka and resumed His seat. From this time onward the devotees took the lesson that, they should not meddle with anybody but allow him to serve Baba as he chooses, as He was capable to gauge the merits and worth of the service rendered unto Him.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXV

*Damu Anna Kasar of Ahmednagar (1) Speculations
(2) Amraleela*

Preliminary

We begin this chapter with a prostration, with all our eight limbs, to Sai Baba, Who is an Ocean of Mercy, the God Incarnate, the Para Brahma and the great Yogeshwara (Lord of Yoga). Victory be unto Sai Baba, who is the crest-jewel of the saints, an Abode of all auspicious things, our Atmaram (Self) and the sole refuge of the devotees. We prostrate ourselves before Him, who has attained the aim and end of life.

Sai Baba is always full of mercy. What is wanted on our part, is whole-hearted devotion to Him. When a devotee has got firm faith and devotion, his wishes are soon fulfilled. When the desire arose in the mind of Hemadpant to write the life and Leelas of Sai Baba, He immediately got it written by him. When the order 'to keep the memos' was given, Hemadpant was inspired and his intellect got strength and boldness to undertake and finish the work. He was not as he says, qualified to write the work but the gracious blessings of Baba enabled him to complete the undertaking and thus, you have this Satcharita, which is a cistern, or a Somakant jewel, from which nectar, in the form of Sai Leelas, oozes out for the readers to drink to their hearts content.

Whenever, a devotee had complete and whole-hearted devotion to Sai Baba, all his calamities and dangers were warded off and his welfare attended to by Baba. The story of Damodar Savalaram Rasane Kasar of Ahmednagar (now of Poona), alias Damu Anna, illustrating the above statement, is given below.

Damu Anna

The readers are aware that a mention of this gentleman was made in the 6th chapter, regarding the celebration of Ram Navami festival in Shirdi. He went to Shirdi about the year 1895 A.D., when the Ram Navami Utsav – celebration began and since that time, he has been providing an ornamental flag, for that occasion every year. He also feeds the poor and the fakirs, who come there for the festival.

His Speculations : (1) Cotton trading

A Mumbai friend of Damu Anna wrote to him that, they should do some cotton-speculation business in partnership, which would bring them about two lakhs of rupees as profit. (Damu Anna says, in his statement, made about the year 1936, to Mr. B.V. Narsimha Swami that the proposal about speculating at Mumbai in cotton was from a broker, who was not to be a partner and that, he (Damu Anna) was to be the sole adventurer: vide P. 75 of the 'Devotees' Experiences', part II). The broker wrote, that the business was good and involved no risks, and that the opportunity should not be lost. Damu Anna was vacillating. He could not at once determine to venture into the speculation. He thought over this, and as he was a devotee of Baba, he wrote a detailed letter to Shama giving all the facts and requested him to consult Baba and take His advice in the matter. Shama got the letter next day, and when he went with it at noon to the Masjid and placed it before Baba, He asked Shama, what the matter was and what the letter was about. He replied that, Damu Anna of Nagar wanted to consult Him about something. Then Baba said, "What does he write, and what does he plan? It seems that he wants to reach the sky and he is not content with, what God has given him, read his letter!" Shama then said, "The letter contains what you have just said. Oh Deva, You sit here calm and composed and agitate the devotees and when they get restless, You draw them here, some in person and others through letters. If You know the contents of the letter, why do You then press me to read it?" Baba said, "Oh Shama, read it, I speak at random, and who believes Me."

Then, Shama read the letter and Baba heard it attentively and said feelingly, "The Sheth (Damu Anna) has gone mad, write to him in reply that, nothing is wanting in his house, let him be content with the half loaf (bread) he has and not bother himself about lakhs." Shama sent the reply, which Damu Anna was anxiously waiting for. After reading it he found that, all his hopes and prospects about lakhs of rupees as profit, were dashed to the ground. He thought that, he had done a mistake by consulting Baba. But, as Shama had hinted in the reply that, there was always much difference in seeing and hearing and that therefore, he should come to Shirdi personally and see Baba. He thought, it was advisable to go to Shirdi and consult Baba personally about the affair. So he went to Shirdi, saw Baba, prostrated himself before Him and sat shampooing His Legs. He had no courage to ask Baba openly about the speculation; but he thought in his mind that, it would be better, if some share in the business should be assigned to Baba, and

said in his mind that if Baba were to help him in this transaction, he would surrender some share of profits to Him. Damu Anna was thus thinking secretly in his mind, but nothing was veiled from Baba; everything, past, present and future, were clear to Him. A child wants sweets, but his mother gives bitter pills; the former spoil his health, while the latter improve it. So the Mother, looking to the welfare of her infant, coaxes and gives bitter pills. Baba, kind Mother as He was, knew the present and future prospects of His devotees and therefore, reading Damu Anna's mind, He openly spoke to him, "Bapu, I do not want to be entangled in any such worldly things (sharing profits)." On seeing Baba's disapproval, Damu Anna dropped the enterprise.

(2) Grain Dealing

Then he thought of trading in rice, wheat and other grains. Baba read this thought also and said to him, "You will be buying at five seers and selling at seven seers a rupee!" So this business was also given up. The rise in the prices of grains was kept up for some time and Baba's prophecy seemed to be falsified; but in a month or two, there was abundant rain everywhere and the prices suddenly fell down and therefore, those, who stored grains suffered a severe losses. Damu Anna was saved from this fate. Needless to say, that the cotton speculation, which was conducted by the broker with the help of another merchant, also collapsed with severe loss to the adventurers. After seeing that, Baba had saved him from two severe losses in cotton and grain speculations, Damu Anna's faith in Baba grew stronger and he remained a true devotee of Baba till His passing away.

Amra-leela (Mango miracle)

Once a parcel of about 300 good mangoes was received at Shirdi. It was sent from Goa by one Mamlatdar, named Rale to Sai Baba, in the name of Shama. When it was opened, all the mangoes were found to be in a good condition. They were given in Shama's charge and only four were retained and placed in the Kolamba (pot) by Baba. He said, "These four fruits are for Damu Anna, let them lie there!"

This Damu Anna had three wives. According to his statement, mentioned above, he had not three, but two wives only. He had no issue. He consulted many astrologers and himself studied astrology to some extent and found that, as there was a 'Papi' (inauspicious) planet in his horoscope there was no prospect of any issue to him in this life.

But, he had great faith in Baba. When he went to Shirdi, two hours after the receipt of the mango parcel, for worshipping Baba, He said, "Though other people are looking for the mangoes, they are Damya's. He whose they are, should 'eat and die'." Damu Anna, on hearing these words, was first shocked, but on Mhalsapati (a Shirdi devotee) explaining to him that, death meant the death of the ego and to have it at Baba's Feet was a blessing. Damu Anna said that, he could accept the fruits and eat them. But Baba said to him, "Do not eat yourself, but give them to your younger wife. This Amra-leela (mango miracle of 4 mangoes) will give her four sons and four daughters." This was done, and in due course it was found Baba's words turned out true and not those of the astrologers.

Baba's speech established its efficacy or greatness, while He was living in the flesh, but it did the same even after His passing away. Baba said, **"Believe Me, though I pass away, My bones in My tomb would be speaking, moving and communicating with those, who would surrender themselves whole-heartedly to Me. Do not be anxious that, I would be absent from you. You will hear My bones speaking and discussing your welfare. But remember Me always, believe in Me heart and soul and then, you will be most benefitted."**

Prayer

Hemadpant closes this chapter with a prayer. "Oh Sai Sadguru, the wish- fulfilling tree of the bhaktas, we pray, let us never forget and lose sight of Your feet; we have been troubled with the ins and outs (births and deaths) in this sansar; now free us from this cycle of births and deaths. Restrain us from the outgoing of our senses to their objects and introvert us, and bring us face to face with the Atma (self). As long as this outgoing tendency of the senses and the mind is not checked, there is no prospect of self-realization. Neither son, nor wife, nor friend, will be of any use in the end. It is only, You, Who will give us salvation and bliss. Destroy completely our tendency for discussions and other evil matters, let our tongue get a passion for chanting Your name. Drive out our thoughts, and make us forget our bodies and do away with our egoism. Make us ever remember Your name and forget all other things. Remove the restlessness of our mind and make it steady and calm. If You just clasp us, the darkness of night, of our ignorance, will vanish and we shall live happily in Your light. That, You made us drink the nectar of Your leelas and awakened us from our slumber, is due to Your grace and our store of merits in past births."

Note: In this connection the following extract from Damu Anna's statement, mentioned above, is worth perusal (page 76).

"Once, when I sat at His Feet along with many others, I had two questions in my mind and He gave answers to both.

(1) There are so many crowding to Sai Baba. Do they all get benefit from Him?

To this, He replied orally, "Look at the mango tree in blossom. If all the flowers become fruit, what a splendid crop it would be. But do they? Most fall off (either as flowers or as unripe fruits) by wind etc. very few remain."

(2) The second question was about myself. If Baba were to pass away, how hopelessly adrift I would be and how am I to fare then? To this, Baba answered that, **He would be with me, whenever and wherever I thought of Him.** That promise He had kept up before 1918, and has been keeping up after 1918. He is still with me. He is still guiding me. This was about 1910-11, when brothers separated from me and my sister died, and there was a theft and police enquiry, all these incidents made me very disturbed.

When my sister died, my mind was much upset. I did not care for life and enjoyments. When I went to Baba, He pacified me with His Upadesh and made me eat a feast of Pooran Poli at Appa Kulkarni's house.

There was a theft in my house. A thirty - year - old friend of mine stole my wife's jewel box, including her auspicious Nath (nose ring). I wept before Baba's photo. The next day, the man returned the jewel-box and asked for pardon."

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXVI

*Stories of (1) Bhakta Pant (2) Harishchandra Pitale
(3) Gopal Ambadekar*

Preliminary

All the things, that we see in the universe are nothing but a play of Maya¹ – the creative power of the Lord. These things do not really exist. What really exists is the Absolute. Just as we mistake a rope or a garland for a serpent, on account of darkness, we always see the phenomena, i.e. things, as they outwardly appear, and not the Noumenon, which underlies all the visible things. It is only the Sadguru who opens the eyes of our understanding and enables us to see things in their true light and not as they appear. Let us therefore, worship the Sadguru and pray to him to give us the true vision, which is nothing but God-vision.

Inner Worship

Hemadpant has given us a novel form of worship. Let us, he says, use water in the form of tears of joy to wash the Sadguru's Feet, let us besmear His body with sandal-paste of pure love, let us cover His body with the cloth of true faith, let us offer eight lotus in the form of our eight Sattwik emotions and fruit in the form of our concentrated mind, let us apply to His head the Bukka (black-powder) in the form of devotion and tie the waistband of Bhakti and place our head at His feet.

After decorating the Sadguru with all ornamentation this way, let us offer our self to Him and wave chamar² of devotion to ward off heat. After such blissful worship, let us pray thus : Turn our mind inward, give us discrimination between the unreal and the real and non-attachment for all worldly things, and thus enable us to get self-realization. We surrender ourselves, body and soul (body-consciousness and ego) to You. Make our eyes Yours, so that we should never feel pleasure and pain. Control our body and mind as You wish. Let our mind rest at Your Feet."

1. Maya – Illusion

2. Chamar – Fan like object made up of animal hair

Now let us turn to the stories of this chapter.

Bhakta Pant

Once, it so happened that, a devotee by name Pant, a disciple of another Guru, had the good fortune of visiting Shirdi. He had no mind to go to Shirdi, but man proposes one way and God disposes the other. He was travelling in a B.B. & C.I. Rly¹ train, where he met many friends bound for Shirdi. They all asked him to accompany them and he could not say 'no.' They alighted at Mumbai, while Pant got down at Virar. There, he took the permission of his Guru for the Shirdi trip and after arranging for the expenses, left with the party for Shirdi. They all reached the place in the morning and went to the Masjid at about 11 a.m. On seeing the concourse of the devotees assembled for Baba's worship, they were all pleased but Pant suddenly got a fit and fell senseless. They were all frightened, still they tried their best to revive his senses. With Baba's grace after sprinkling water over his head, he regained his consciousness and sat upright as if he was just awakened from sleep. The Omniscient Baba, knowing that he was a disciple of another Guru, assured him and confirmed his faith in his own Guru, by addressing him as follows: "Come what may, leave not but stick to your own bolster (support, i.e., Guru) and ever remain steady with him." Pant, at once, knew the significance of this remark, and thus he was reminded of his Guru. This kindness of Baba, he never forgot in his life.

Harishchandra Pitale

There was a gentleman, by name Harishchandra Pitale in Mumbai. He had a son who suffered from epilepsy. He tried many allopathic and ayurvedic physicians but there was no cure. There remained only one way of remedy, viz. resorting to the saints. It has been stated in chapter XV that Das Ganu, by his inimitable and splendid Kirtans, spread the fame of Sai Baba in the Mumbai Presidency. Mr. Pitale heard some of these Kirtans in 1910 and learnt from the kirtans and others that Baba, with His touch and mere glance, cured many incurable diseases. Then a desire arose in his mind to see Sai Baba. Making all preparations and taking offerings and fruit baskets, Mr. Pitale came to Shirdi with wife and children. He then went to the Masjid with them, prostrated before

1. B.B.C. & C.I. Rly. - The then Bombay Baroda and Central India Railway - Now Western Railway.

Baba and placed his sick son at Baba's Feet. No sooner did Baba see the child, then an untoward thing happened. The son immediately revolved his eyes and fell down senseless. His mouth began to throw foam and his whole body began to perspire profusely, and it seemed as if he was breathing his last. Seeing this, the parents became very nervous and upset. The boy used to get such fits very often, but this fit seemed to persist long. Tears began to flow ceaselessly from the mother's eyes and she began to wail, that, her condition was like that of a person, who being afraid of the robbers ran into a house, which collapsed on him; or like a cow fearing a tiger, ran into the hands of a butcher; or like a traveller, who being tormented by the heat of the sun went to take refuge under a tree, which fell upon him; or like a devout person going for worship into a temple, which collapsed upon him. Baba comforted her saying, "Do not wail like this, wait a bit, have patience, take the boy to your lodgings, he will come to his senses within half an hour." They did as directed by Baba and found that, His words came true. As soon as he was taken into the Wada, the boy recovered and all the Pitale family, and others were very happy, and all their doubts disappeared. Then Mr. Pitale went with his wife to see Baba and prostrated himself before Him very humbly and respectfully and sat shampooing His Legs and mentally thanking Baba for His kind help. Baba then smilingly said, "Have not all your thoughts, doubts and apprehensions calmed down now? Hari (Lord) will protect him, who has got faith and patience." Mr. Pitale was a rich and well-to-do gentleman. He distributed sweet meats on a large scale and offered to Baba excellent fruits and Pan (betel leaves). Mrs. Pitale was a very pious lady, simple, loving and faithful. She used to sit near the post, gazing at Baba with tears of joy flowing down from her eyes. Seeing her amicable and loving nature, Baba was much pleased with her. Like Gods, saints are always dependent on their devotees, who surrender and worship them with their heart and soul. After passing some happy days in Baba's company, the Pitale family came to the Masjid to take Baba's leave to depart. Baba gave them Udi and blessings and called Mr. Pitale close to him and said, "Bapu, I had given you Rs. two before, now I give you Rs. three; keep these in your shrine for worship and you will be benefitted." Mr. Pitale accepted these as prasad, prostrated himself again before Baba and prayed for His blessings. A thought arose in his mind that, as this was his first visit to Shirdi, he could not understand what Baba meant, when He said that He had given Rs. two previously. He was curious to have this mystery solved; but Baba kept silent. When Mr. Pitale

returned to Mumbai, he narrated to his old mother, all that had happened at Shirdi and the mystery about Baba's giving him Rs. two earlier. The mother also did not understand the mystery but thinking seriously about this, she was reminded of an old incident, which solved the mystery. She said to her son, "As you now went to Sai Baba with your son, so had your father done, when he took you to Akkalkot for the darshan of the Maharaj there, many years ago. That Maharaj was also a Siddha, Perfect Yogi, omniscient and gracious. Your father was devout and his worship was accepted. He then gave your father Rs. two for being kept in the shrine and worshipped. Your father worshipped them till his death; but thereafter the worship was neglected and the rupees were lost. After some years the memory of these two rupees also disappeared and now, as you are very fortunate, the Akkalkot Maharaj has appeared to you in the form of Sai Baba just to remind you of your duties and worship to ward off all dangers. Now beware henceforth, leave all doubts and bad thoughts, follow your ancestors and go on worshipping the family gods and the rupees, and take pride in the blessing of the saints. Sai Samartha has kindly revived the spirit of Bhakti in you, cultivate it to your benefit." Hearing the remarks of the mother, Mr. Pitale was very much delighted. He came to know and was convinced about the all-pervasiveness of Baba and the significance of His darshan. Then onwards, he became very careful about his conduct.

Mr. Ambadekar

Mr. Gopal Narayan Ambadekar of Poona was a devotee of Baba. He served for ten years in the Abkari department¹ in the Thana district and in Javhar state, from where he had to retire. He tried to get some other job but he did not succeed. He was overtaken by other calamities and his condition grew from bad to worse. He passed 7 years in this condition, visiting Shirdi every year and placing his grievance before Baba. In 1916, his plight became worst and he decided to commit suicide in Shirdi. So he came there with his wife and stayed for two months. One night while sitting in a bullock cart in front of Dixit Wada he resolved to end his life by throwing himself into a well close-by. But Baba wished to do something else. A few paces from this place there was a hotel and its proprietor Mr. Sagun, a devotee of Baba, came out and accosted him thus: "Did you ever read Akkalkot Maharaj's life?" Ambadekar took this book from Sagun and began to read it. Casually,

1. Abkari department – Excise deptt.

or we may say providentially he came across a story, which was to this effect; during the lifetime of Akkalkot Maharaj, a certain devotee suffered very much from an incurable disease and when he could no longer endure the agony and pain, he became desperate and in order to end his miseries threw himself one night into a well. Immediately, the Maharaj came there and took him out with his own hands and advised him thus: **"You must bear the fruit-good or bad-of your past actions; if it is incomplete, suicide won't help you. You have to take another birth and suffer again; so instead of killing yourself, why not suffer for some time and finish up the fruit of your past deeds and be done with it once and for all?"**

Reading this appropriate and timely story, Ambadekar was much surprised, and moved. Had he not got Baba's hint through the story, he would have been no more. On seeing Baba's all-pervasiveness and benevolence, his faith in Him was confirmed and he became a staunch devotee. His father was a devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj and Sai Baba wanted him to walk in his father's footsteps and continue his devotion to Him. He then got Sai Baba's blessings and his prospects began to improve. He studied astrology and gained proficiency in it, and thereby improved his lot. He was able to earn sufficient money and passed his later-life in ease and comfort.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXVII

Favour shown by giving Bhagwat and Vishnu-sahastra-naam – Dixit's Vitthal Vision – Gita Rahasya – Khapardes

This chapter describes how Sai Baba favoured His devotees by granting them religious books, after he had touched and consecrated them, for paraayan (reading regularly) and certain other matters.

Preliminary

When a man takes a plunge into sea he gets the merit of bathing in all the tirthas and sacred rivers. Similarly, when a man takes refuge at the feet of the Sadguru, he gets the merit of bowing to the Trinity, i.e., Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh and also Para-Brahma. Victory be unto Shri Sai, the wish-fulfilling tree and the ocean of knowledge, who gives us self-realization. Oh Sai, create in us reverence for Your stories. Let the readers and audience devour them with the same relish, with which the chatak bird drinks the water from the clouds and becomes happy. While listening to Your stories, let them and their families get all the true and pious emotions, viz. let their bodies perspire, let their eyes be full of tears, let their breath be steady, let their minds be composed, let their hair stand on end, let them cry, sob and quiver, let their hostilities vanish. When these things happen, that is a sign of the grace of the Guru, dawning upon them. When these emotions grow in you, the Guru is most pleased, and will certainly lead you on the path of self-realization. The best way therefore, to get free from the shackles of Maya, is our complete and whole-hearted surrender to Baba. The Vedas cannot take you across the ocean of Maya. It is only the Sadguru who can do so, and make you see the God in all creatures.

Granting Consecrated Book

The various methods of imparting instructions, followed by Baba have already been noticed in the previous chapters. In this we shall deal with one aspect of it. It was the habit of some devotees to take to Baba some religious books, of which they wanted to make a special study and to receive the same back from Him, after they were touched

and consecrated by Him. While reading such books daily, they felt that, Baba was with them. Once Kaka Mahajani came to Shirdi with a copy of Eknathi Bhagwat. Shama took this book to read in the Masjid. There Baba took it from him, touched it and turning some pages here and there, gave it back to Shama and asked him to keep it with him. When Shama said that it belonged to Kaka and had to be returned to him, "No, no," replied Baba. "As I have given it to you, you better keep it, it will be of use to you." In this way many books were entrusted to Shama. Kaka Mahajani after a few days, came again with another copy of the same Bhagwat and gave it in Baba's hand. Then Baba gave it back as Prasad and asked him to preserve it well, and assured him that, it would stand him in good stead. Kaka accepted it with reverence.

Shama and Vishnu-sahasra-naam

Shama was a very intimate devotee of Baba and Baba wanted to favour him in a particular way by giving him a copy of Vishnu-sahasra-naam, as Prasad. This was done in the following way; once a Ramadas (follower of the Saint Ramadas) came to Shirdi and stayed there for some time. The routine he followed daily was as follows; he got up early in the morning, washed his face, bathed and then after wearing saffron-coloured clothes and besmearing himself with sacred ashes, read Vishnu-sahasra-naam (a book giving a thousand names in praise of Vishnu and held second in importance to Bhagwad Gita) and Adhyatma Ramayan (Esoteric version of Rama's story) with faith. He read these books very often. After some days, Baba thought of favouring and initiating Shama with Vishnu-sahasra-naam. He therefore called the Ramadas to Him and said to him that, He was suffering from intense stomach-pain and unless He took Sennapods (Sona-mukhi, a mild purgative drug) the pain would not stop; so he should please go to the bazaar (market) and bring the drug. The Ramadas closed his book and went to the bazaar. Then Baba came from His seat, to Ramdas's place of reading and took out the copy of Vishnu-sahasra-naam and after coming back to His seat said to Shama, "Shama, this book is very valuable and efficacious, so, I present it to you, you read it. Once I suffered intensely and My heart began to palpitate and My life was in danger. At that critical moment I hugged this book to My heart, and then Shama, what a relief it gave me! I thought that, Allah Himself came down and saved Me. So I give this to you, read it slowly, little by little, read daily one name at least and it will do you good." Shama replied,

that he did not want it and that the owner of it, the Ramadasī, who was a bad tempered, obstinate and irritable fellow would certainly pick up a quarrel with him; besides, being a rustic himself, he could not read distinctly the Sanskrit (Devanagari script) text of the book.

Shama thought that Baba wanted to set him up against the Ramadasī by this act of His, but he had no idea, what Baba felt for him. Baba must have thought to tie this necklace of Vishnu-sahasra-naam round the neck of Shama, as he was an intimate devotee, though a rustic; and thus, save him from the miseries of worldly existence. **The efficacy of God's name is well-known. It saves us from all sins and bad tendencies, frees us from the cycle of births and deaths. There is no easier Sadhana than this. It is the best purifier of our mind. It requires no paraphernalia and no restrictions. It is so easy and so effective.** This Sadhana, Baba wanted Shama to practise, though he did not crave for it. So Baba forced this on him. It is also reported that long ago, Eknath Maharaj, similarly forced this Vishnu-sahasra-naam on a poor brahmin neighbour and thus saved him. The reading and study of this Vishnu-sahasra-naam is a broad open way of purifying the mind and hence, Baba thrust this on His devotee, Shama.

The Ramadasī returned soon with the Senna-pods. Anna Chinchaniḥkar, who was then present and wanted to play the part of Narad (the Celestial Rishi, who was well-known for setting up confrontations between gods and demons and vice versa), informed him of what had happened. The Ramadasī at once flared up. He came down at once on Shama with full fury. He said that it was Shama, who set Baba to send him away, under the pretext of stomach-ache, for bringing the medicine and thus took away the book. He began to scold and abuse Shama and remarked that if the book was not returned, he would dash his head. Shama calmly remonstrated with him but in vain. Then, Baba spoke kindly to him as follows: "Oh Ramadasī, what is the matter with you? Why are you so turbulent? Is not Shama our boy? Why do you scold him unnecessarily. How is it that you are so quarrelsome? Can you not speak soft and tender words? You read these sacred books daily and still your mind is agitated and your passions uncontrolled. What sort of a Ramadasī are you! You ought to be indifferent to all things. Is it not strange that you should possess this book so strongly? A true Ramadasī should have no 'Mamata' (attachment), but have

'Samata' (equality) towards all. You are now quarrelling with Shama, for a mere book. Go take your seat, books can be had in plenty with money, but not men; think well and be considerate. What worth is your book? Shama had no concern with it. I took it up Myself and gave it to him. You know it by heart. I thought Shama might read it and benefit thereby, and so I gave it to him."

How sweet were these words of Baba! soft, tender and nectar-like. Their effect was wonderful. The Ramadasī calmed down and said to Shama that he would take 'Panch-ratni Gita' in return. Shama was much pleased and said, "Why one, I shall give ten copies in return."

So the matter was ultimately settled. The question for consideration is 'Why should the Ramadasī press for Pancha-ratni Gita, a book, for which he never cared to know and why should he, who daily read religious books in the Masjid in front of Baba, quarrel with Shama before Him?' We do not know how to apportion the blame and whom to blame. We only say that, had this incident not happened, the importance of the subject, the efficacy of God's name and the significance of Vishnu-sahasra-naam would not have been brought home to Shama. So we see that Baba's method of teaching and initiating, was unique. In this case, Shama did gradually study the book and mastered its contents to such an extent that he was able to explain it to Professor G.G. Narke, M.A., of the College of Engineering, Poona, the son-in-law of Shriman Buti and a devotee of Baba.

Vitthal Vision

One day while Kakasaheb Dixit was in meditation, after his morning bath in his Wada at Shirdi, he saw a vision of Vitthal. When he went to see Baba afterwards, Baba asked him, "Did Vitthal Patil come? Did you not see Him? He is very elusive, hold Him fast otherwise, He will give you the slip and run away." Then at noon, a certain hawker came there with 20 or 25 pictures of Vitthal of Pandharpur, for sale. Mr. Dixit was surprised to see that the form of Vitthal, he saw in his meditation, exactly tallied with that in the picture, and he was also reminded of Baba's words. He, therefore, bought one picture most willingly and kept it in his shrine for worship.

Gita Rahasya

Baba always loved those, who studied Brahma-vidya (metaphysics) and encouraged them. To give an instance, once Bapusaheb Jog received a post-parcel. It contained a copy of Gita Rahasya by Lokamanya Tilak. Taking it under his armpit he came to the Masjid and prostrated before Baba, when the parcel fell at Baba's Feet. Baba enquired what it was. It was opened then and there, and the book was placed in Baba's hand. He turned some pages here and there for a few minutes and took out a rupee from His pocket, placed it on the book and handed the same with the rupee to Jog and said to him, "Read this completely and you will be benefitted."

Mr. and Mrs. Khaparde

Let us close this chapter with a description of the Khapardes. Once Dadasaheb Khaparde came with his family and lived in Shirdi for some months. (The diary of his stay has been published in English in the Shri Sai Leela Magazine, I Volume.) Dadasaheb was not an ordinary man. He was the affluent and the most famous advocate of Amaravati (Berar) and was a member of the council of state, Delhi. He was intelligent and a very good speaker. Still he dared not open his mouth before Baba. Most devotees spoke and argued with Baba off and on but only three, viz. Khaparde, Noolkar and Buti, kept always silent. They were meek, modest, humble and good-natured. Dadasaheb, who was able to expound Panchadashi (Well-known Sanskrit treatise on the Adwait Philosophy by the famous Vidyaranya) to others, uttered no word, when he came to the Masjid before Baba. A man, however learned he may be even in Vedas, fades away before one, who has realized Brahma and becomes one with it. Learning cannot stand before self-realization. Dadasaheb stayed for four months but Mrs. Khaparde stayed for seven. Both were highly pleased with their Shirdi stay. Mrs. Khaparde was faithful and devout, and loved Baba deeply. Every noon she brought naivaidya herself, to the Masjid and after it was accepted by Baba, she used to return and take her meals. On seeing her steady and firm devotion, Baba wanted to exhibit it to others. One noon she brought a dish containing Sanza (wheat-pudding), purees, rice, soup, and Kheer (sweet rice) and other sundry articles to the Masjid. Baba Who usually waited for hours, got up at once, went up to His seat and removing the cover from the dish, began to partake of the things zealously. Shama

then asked Him, "Why this partiality? At times You throw away dishes of others, and do not care to look at them; but this appeals to You earnestly. Why is the dish brought by this lady so sweet? This intrigues us." Baba then explained, "This food is really extra-ordinary. In former birth this lady was a merchant's fat cow yielding much milk. Then, she disappeared and took birth in a gardener's family, then in a Kshatriya family and married a merchant. Then she was born in a Brahmin family. I saw her after a very long time, let Me take some sweet morsels of love from her dish." After saying this, Baba did full justice to her dish, washed his mouth and hands, belched out as He was fully satisfied and resumed His seat. Then, she bowed down and began to shampoo Baba's Legs and He began to talk with her and knead her arms which were shampooing His Legs. On seeing this reciprocal service, Shama began to joke and said, "It is going on well, it is a wonderful sight to see God and His bhakta serving each other." After being pleased with her sincere service, Baba asked her in low and fascinating tone to chant 'Rajaram, Rajaram' then and always and said, "If you do this, your life's object will be achieved, your mind will attain peace and you will be immensely benefitted." To persons unfamiliar with spiritual matters, this might appear as a polite gesture, but really it was not so. It was a case of what is technically called, 'Shakti-paat', i.e. transference of power from the Guru to the disciple. How effective were Baba's words! In an instant they pierced her heart and remained there.

This case illustrates the nature of the relations, that should subsist between the Guru and the disciple. Both should love and serve each other, as One. There is no distinction nor any difference between them. Both are One, and one cannot live without the other. The disciple placing his head at the Guru's feet is a gross or outward vision; really and internally they are both One and the same. Those who see any difference between them, are yet unripe and not perfect.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXVIII

Sparrows Drawn to Shirdi

(1) Lakhshmichand (2) Burhanpore Lady (3) Megha

Preliminary

Sai is not finite or limited. He dwells in all beings, from ants and insects to the God Brahma. He pervades all. Sai was well-versed in the knowledge of the Vedas, as well as in the science of self-realization. As He was proficient in both these, He was well-fitted to be the Sadguru. Any one though learned, but not able to awaken the disciples and establish them in self-realization, does not deserve to be called a Sadguru. Generally, the worldly parents give birth to the body but death invariably follows life; but Sadguru does away with both life and death and so he is more kind and merciful than anybody.

Sai Baba often said that – **let His man (Devotee) be at any distance, a thousand kos away from Him, he will be drawn to Shirdi, like a sparrow, with a thread tied to its feet.** This chapter describes the stories of three such sparrows.

(1) Lala Lakshmichand

This gentleman was first serving in the Shri Venkateshwar Press in Mumbai, then in the railway department and afterwards in the firm of Messrs Ralli Brothers & Co., as a Munshi (clerk). He came in Baba's contact in 1910. One or two months before Christmas he saw in his dream at Santacruz (a suburb of Mumbai) an old man with a beard, standing and surrounded by his Bhaktas. A few days later he went to the house of his friend, Mr. Dattatreya Manjunath Bijur to hear the Kirtan by Das Ganu. It was (and is) always the practice of Das Ganu to keep Baba's picture in front of the audience, while doing the Kirtan. Lakhshmichand was surprised to see that the features of the old man he saw in his dream, tallied exactly with those in the picture and thus, he came to the conclusion that the old man he saw in his dream, was Sai Baba Himself. The sight of this picture, Das Ganu's Kirtan and the life of the Saint Tukaram on which Das Ganu discoursed, all these things made a deep impression on his mind and he decided to go to

Shirdi. It is always the experience of the bhaktas, that God always helps them in their search for Sadguru and other spiritual endeavours. That very night, a friend named Shankararao knocked at his door and asked him whether he would accompany him to Shirdi. His joy knew no bounds and he at once decided to go to Shirdi. He borrowed Rs. 15/- from his cousin and after making due preparations left for Shirdi. In the train he and his friend Shankararao did some bhajan (sang religious songs) and enquired about Sai Baba with some fellow passengers-four Mohammedans who were returning to their place near Shirdi. They all told them that Sai Baba was a great Saint living in Shirdi for many years. When they reached Kopergaon, he wanted to buy some good guavas as offering to Baba, but he was so rapt in the scenery and sights there, that he forgot to purchase them. When they were nearing Shirdi he was reminded of the guavas, just then he saw an old woman with a guava-basket on her head running after the tonga. The tonga was stopped, and he gladly purchased some fruits, when the woman said, "Take all the rest and offer them on my behalf to Baba". The facts viz. that he had intended to purchase guavas but had forgotten to do so, the old woman's encounter and her devotion to Baba, all these were a pleasant surprise to both the friends, and Lakhshmichand thought in his mind that the old woman might be some relation of the old man he saw in his dream. Then they drove on and came near Shirdi, and on seeing flags on the Masjid, they saluted them. With puja materials in hand they went to the Masjid and worshipped Baba with due ritual. Lakhshmichand was much moved and was extremely happy to see Baba. He wrapped himself around with Baba's Feet, as a bee with a sweet - smelling lotus. Then Baba spoke as follows:

"Cunning fellow he does bhajan on the way and enquires from others, why ask others? Everything we should see with our own eyes; where is the necessity to question others? Just think for yourself whether your dream is true or not? Where was the necessity of the darshan by taking a loan from a marwari? Is the heart's desire now satisfied?"

Hearing these words Lakhshmichand was wonderstruck at Baba's omniscience. He was at a loss to know how Baba came to know about all the things that had happened en-route from his house to Shirdi. The chief thing to note in this respect is that Baba never liked people to borrow or take loan for His darshan or celebrating any holiday or making any pilgrimage.

Sanza

At noon when Lakhshmichand was sitting for meals he got some sanza (wheat-pudding), from a devotee as prasad. He was pleased to have it. Next day also he expected it, but got nothing. So he was anxious to get it again. Then on the third day at the noon Arati time, Bapusaheb Jog asked Baba, what Naivaidya he should bring. Baba told him to bring sanza. Then, the bhaktas brought two big potfuls of sanza. Lakhshmichand was very hungry and there was some pain in his back. Then, Baba said to him, "It is good that you are hungry take sanza and some medicine for the pain in the back." He was again wonderstruck to see that Baba again read his mind and spoke out what was passing therein. How Omniscient was He!

Evil eye

During this visit, he (Lakhshmichand) also witnessed one night the procession to the Chavadi. Baba then suffered much from cough. He thought that this suffering of Baba might be due to somebody's evil eye. Next morning when he went to the Masjid, Baba spoke to Shama as follows, "I suffered last night from cough; is it due to some evil eye? I think that somebody's evil eye has worked on Me and so I am suffering". In this case Baba spoke out what was going on in the mind of Lakhshmichand.

On seeing these proofs of Baba's omniscience and kindness to His bhaktas, he fell prostrate at Baba's Feet and said, "I am much blessed with Your darshan. Ever be kind and merciful to me and protect me always. There is no other God to me in this world except You, let my mind be ever rapt in Your Bhajan and Feet, let Your grace protect me from the miseries of the world and let me ever chant Your name and be happy."

After getting Baba's Udi and blessings he returned home with his friend, much pleased and contented, and was singing Baba's glory on the way. He remained a staunch devotee of Baba then onwards and always sent garlands of flowers, camphor and dakshina with any person of his acquaintance bound for Shirdi.

(2) Burhanpore Lady

Now, let us turn to another sparrow (devotee). One lady in Burhanpore saw in her dream Sai Baba coming to her door and begging khichadi (rice cooked with dal and salt) for His meals. On waking up she saw nobody at her door. However, she was pleased with the vision and told it to all, including her husband. He was employed in the postal department and when he was transferred to Akola, both husband and wife, who were devout persons decided to go to Shirdi. Then on a suitable day they left for Shirdi and after visiting Gomati Tirth on the way, reached Shirdi and stayed there for two months. Every day they went to the Masjid, worshipped Baba and passed their time happily. The couple came to Shirdi to offer khichadi as Naivaidya but for the first 14 days somehow or other, it could not be offered. The lady did not like this delay or tardiness. Then on the 15th day she came at noon to the Masjid with her khichadi. There she found that Baba and others were already sitting for meals and that the curtain was down. Nobody dared enter in when the curtain was down but the lady could not wait. She lifted up the curtain and entered. Strange to say that Baba seemed that day hungry for khichadi and wanted that thing first, and when the lady came in with the dish Baba was delighted and began to eat morsel after morsel of khichadi. On seeing the earnestness of Baba in this respect, everybody was wonderstruck and those, who heard the story of khichadi were convinced about His extraordinary love for His devotees.

(3) Megha

Now let us go to the third sparrow; Megha of Viramgaon was a simple and illiterate Brahmin cook of Rao Bahadur H.V. Sathe. He was a devotee of Shiva and always chanted the five syllabled mantra 'Namah Shivay'.* He did not know the Sandhya nor its chief mantra, the Gayatri. Rao Bahadur Sathe was interested in him, taught him the Sandhya and the Gayatri. Sathe told him that Sai Baba of Shirdi was the embodied form of God Shiva and made him start for Shirdi. At Bharuch Railway station he learnt that Sai Baba was a Muslim, and his simple and orthodox mind was much perturbed at the prospect of bowing down to a Muslim, and he prayed to his master not to send him there. His master however insisted on his going there and gave him a letter of introduction

* (ॐ) नमः शिवाय

to his (Sathe's) father-in-law, Ganesh Damodar, alias Dada Kelkar at Shirdi, to introduce him to Sai Baba. When he reached Shirdi and went to the Masjid, Baba was very indignant and would not allow him to enter. "Kick out the rascal" roared Baba and then said to Megha, "You are a high caste Brahmin and I am a low Muslim, you will lose your caste by coming here. Just get away!" On hearing these words Megha began to tremble. He was wondering, as to how Baba had come to know about what was passing in his mind. He stayed there for some days serving Baba in his own way but was not convinced. Then he went home and then to Tryambak (Nasik district) and stayed there for a year and a half. Then again he returned to Shirdi. This time at the intercession of Dada Kelkar he was allowed to enter the Masjid and stay in Shirdi. Sai Baba's help to Megha was not through any oral instruction. He worked upon Megha internally (mentally) with the result that he was considerably changed and benefitted. Then Megha began to look upon Sai Baba as an Incarnation of Shiva. In order to worship Shiva bel leaves are required and Megha used to go miles and miles every day to bring them and worship his Shiva (Baba). His practice was to worship all the deities in the village and then come to the Masjid, and after saluting Baba's Gadi (Asan) he worshipped Baba and after doing some service (shampooing His Legs) drank the washings (Tirth) of Baba's Feet. Once it so happened that he came to the Masjid without worshipping Khandoba, as the door of the temple was closed. Baba did not accept his worship and sent him back again saying that the door was open then. Megha went found the door open, worshipped the Deity, and then returned to Baba as usual.

Ganges Bath

On one Makar Sankranti day Megha wanted to besmear the body of Baba with sandal paste and bath Him with Ganges water. Baba was first unwilling to undergo this but at his repeated requests He consented. Megha had to traverse a distance of eight Kos¹ (going and returning) to bring the sacred water from the Godavari river. He brought the water, made all preparations for the bath at noon and asked Baba to get ready for the same. Then, Baba again asked him to be spared from this bath saying that as a Fakir He had nothing to do with Ganges water but

1. Kos = 3 miles = 4.8 Kms

Megha did not listen to Him. He knew that Shiva is pleased with Abhishek (Sacred Bath) on that auspicious day. Baba then consented, came down and sat on a wooden board and projecting His head said, "Oh Megha do at least this favour, head is the most important organ of the body, so pour the water over that only – it is equivalent to the whole bath". "All right", said Megha and lifting the water pot up began to pour it on the head but in doing this, he was so much overwhelmed with love that he cried out, "Har Har Gange" (Hail goddess Ganga) and emptied the pot on the whole body. He kept the pot aside and began to look at Baba, but to his surprise and amazement he found that only Baba's head was drenched while the body quite dry.

Trident and Pindi

Megha worshipped Baba at two places: in the Masjid he worshipped Baba in person and in the Wada, Baba's big picture given by Nanasaheb Chandorkar. This he did for 12 months. Then in order to appreciate his devotion and confirm his faith Baba gave him a vision. One morning when Megha was still lying down on his bed with eyes closed but internally awake he saw clearly Baba's Form. Baba knowing him to be awake threw akshata (rice-grains marked red with Kumkum) and said, "Megha, draw a Trident!" and disappeared. Hearing Baba's words he eagerly opened his eyes, saw no Baba there but only rice grains spread here and there. He then went to Baba, told Him about the vision and asked permission to draw Trident. Baba said, "Did you not hear My words asking you to draw Trident? It was no vision but direct order, My words are always pregnant with meaning and never hollow." Megha said, "I thought you woke me up but all the doors were closed so I was doubtful and thought it to be a vision." Baba rejoined, "I require no door to enter. I have no form; I always live everywhere. As a wire-puller I carry on all the actions of the man who trusts Me and merges in Me."

Megha returned to the Wada and drew a red Trident on the wall near Baba's picture. Next day a Ramadasi bhakta came from Poona, saluted Baba and offered Him Pindi (a phallic image of Shiva). At this time Megha also turned up there. Baba said to him, "See, Shankar has come, protect (i.e., worships) Him now!" Megha was pleasantly surprised to see Pindi. Also in the Wada Kakasaheb Dixit was standing with a towel on his head after having taken his bath and was remembering Sai

when he saw a Pindi in his mental vision. While he was wondering about this Megha came and showed him the Pindi presented to him by Baba. Dixit was happy to know that this Pindi exactly tallied with the one he saw a few minutes before in his vision. In a few days after the drawing of the Trident was complete, Baba installed the Pindi near the big picture, which Megha was worshipping. The worship of Shiva was dear to Megha and by the drawing of the Trident and the installation of the Pindi, Baba confirmed his faith therein.

After continuous service of Baba for many years, doing regular worship and Arati every noon and evening Megha passed away in 1912. Then Baba passed His hands over his mortal remains and said, "This was a true devotee of Mine" Baba also ordered that at His own expense the funeral dinner should be given to the Brahmins, and this order was carried out by Kakasaheb Dixit.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXIX

Stories of (1) Chennai's Bhajani Mela (2) Tendulkars (father and son) (3) Dr. Captain Hate (4) Woman Narvekar

This chapter describes other interesting and wonderful stories of Sai Baba.

(1) Chennai's Bhajani Mela

It was in the year 1916 when a Chennai's Bhajani Mela (Party of the Ramdasi Panth) started on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Benaras. The party consisted of a man, his wife, daughter and sister-in-law. Unfortunately, their names are not mentioned. On their way the party heard that there lived in Shirdi, Ahmednagar district, a great saint named Sai Baba, Who was God realized and Who was very generous and distributed money every day to His bhaktas and to skillful persons who went and showed their talent there. A lot of money in the form of dakshina was collected daily by Sai Baba and out of this amount He gave daily one rupee to a three year old girl Amani, the daughter of a bhakta Kondaji and Rs. 2 to 5 to some, Rs. 6 to Jamali, the mother of Amani and Rs. 10 to 20 or even Rs. 50 to other bhaktas, as He pleased. On hearing all this, the party came to Shirdi and stayed there. The Mela did very good bhajan and sang very good songs, but inwardly they desired money. Three of the party were full of avarice but the lady or mistress was of a very different nature. She had regard and love for Baba. Once it so happened that when the noon-day Arati was going on, Baba was much pleased with her faith and devotion and gave her vision of her Ishta (chosen) deity. To her Baba appeared as Sitanath (Ram), while to all others the usual Sainath. On seeing her beloved Deity she was very much moved. Tears began to flow from her eyes and she clapped her hands in joy. The people began to wonder at her joyful mood but were not able to guess its cause. Late in the afternoon she disclosed everything to her husband. She told him how she saw Shri Ram in Sai Baba. He thought that she was a very simple and devout woman and her seeing Ram might be a creation of her mind. He ignored her saying that it was not possible that she alone should see Ram, while they all saw Sai Baba there. She did not resent this remark as she was

Bhajan : Devotional songs

fortunate enough to get Ram-darshan, as and when her mind was calm and composed and free from avarice.

Wonderful Vision

Things were going on like this when the husband got a strange vision in his dream one night: He was in a big city the police there had arrested him tied his hands with a rope and put him up in a cage (lock-up). As the police were tightening the grip he saw Sai Baba, standing quiet outside, near the cage. On seeing Baba so close he said in a plaintive tone, "After hearing Your fame I resorted to Your Feet then why should a calamity befall me when You are standing here in person?" Baba said, "You must suffer the consequences of your action." He said, "I have not done anything in this life which would bring such a misfortune on me." Baba said, "If not in this life you must have committed some sin in your past life." He replied, "I do not know anything of my past life but assuming that I did commit some sin then, why should it not be burnt and destroyed in Your presence as happens to dry grass before fire?" Baba, "Have you got such faith?" He, "Yes." Baba then asked him to close his eyes. No sooner did he shut them, than he heard a thumping sound of something falling down and after opening his eyes he saw that he was free and the police fallen down, bleeding. Being much frightened he began to look at Baba, Who said, "Now you are well caught, officers will now come and arrest you." Then, he begged, "There is no other saviour except You, save me anyhow!" Then Baba again asked him to close his eyes. He did so and when he opened them again he saw that he was free, out of the cage and that Baba was by his side. He then fell at Baba's Feet. Baba then asked him, "Is there any difference between this Namaskar and your previous ones? Think well and then reply." He said, "There is a lot of difference, my former Namaskars were offered with the object of getting money from You but the present Namaskar is one offered to You as God, besides, earlier I thought resentfully that You, being a Mohammedan, were spoiling us the Hindus." Baba, "Do you not believe in your mind in Mohammedan gods?" He said, "No". Then, Baba said, "Have you not got a Panja (Emblem of Hand) in your house and do you not worship the same in Tabut, i.e. Moharrum festival? Also there is in your house another deity, by name Kadbibi whom you propitiate and appease on marriage occasion and other festivals. Is it not so?" He admitted all this. Then Baba said, "What more do you want?" Then a desire arose in his mind to get the

darshan of his Guru Ramdas when Baba asked him to turn back and see. And when he turned around, lo! Ramdas was in front of him. No sooner did he bend to fall at His Feet Guru Ramdas vanished. Then he inquisitively asked Baba, "You look old, do You know Your age?" Baba, "What! Do you say, I am old! Just race with Me and see!" On saying this Baba began to run and he too followed. Baba disappeared in the dust raised by His foot steps while running, and at that moment man was awakened.

After waking up he began to think seriously about the dream-vision. His mental attitude was completely changed and he realized the greatness of Baba. After this his doubting tendencies disappeared and pure devotion to Baba's Feet descended on his mind. The vision was a mere dream but the questions and answers therein, were most significant and interesting. Next morning when all assembled in the Masjid for the Arati Baba gave him as prasad, two rupees' worth of sweetmeats and also two rupees from His pocket, and blessed him. He made him stay there for a few more days and gave him His blessing saying, "Allah (God) will give you plenty and He will do you all good." He did not get more money there but he got far better things, viz. Baba's blessing, which stood him in good stead all along. The party got plenty of money afterwards and their pilgrimage was successful as they did not suffer any trouble or inconvenience during their journey. They all returned home safe, thinking of Baba's words and blessings, and the Anand (Bliss) they experienced by His grace.

This story illustrates one of the methods which Baba followed in some cases, to improve and reform His devotees.

(2) Tendulkar family

There lived in Bandra (a suburb of Mumbai), a Tendulkar family, all the members of which were devoted to Baba. Mrs. Savitribai Tendulkar has published a Marathi book, named 'Shri Sainath Bhajan Mala', containing 800 Abhangas and Padas, describing the Leelas of Baba. It is a book worth reading by those, who are interested in Baba. The son Babu Tendulkar was studying hard day and night and wanted to appear for the medical examination. He consulted some astrologers. On examining his horoscope they told him that the stars were not favourable that year and that he should appear for the examination

next year when he would be certainly successful. This cast a gloom over him and made him restless. A few days afterwards his mother went to Shirdi and saw Baba. Amongst other things she mentioned the gloomy and morose condition of her son who was to appear for the examination in a few days. On hearing this Baba said to her, "Tell your son to believe Me, to throw aside horoscopes and predictions of astrologers and palmists and go on with his studies. Let him appear for the examination with a calm mind, he is sure to pass this year. Ask him to trust Me and not to get disappointed." The mother returned home and communicated Baba's message to her son. Then he studied hard and in due course appeared for the examination. In the written papers he did well, but being overtaken by doubts he thought that he would not secure sufficient marks for passing. So he did not care to appear for the oral examination. But the examiner was after him. He sent word through a fellow-student stating that he had passed in the written examination, and that he should appear for the oral. The son being thus encouraged, appeared for the oral examination and was successful in it also. Thus, he got through the examination that year successfully by Baba's grace, though the stars were against him, as indicated. **It is to be noted here that doubts and difficulties surround us, just to move us and confirm our faith. We are tested as it were. If we only hold on steadily to Baba, with full faith and continue our endeavours, our efforts will be ultimately crowned with success.**

The father of this boy Raghunathrao was serving in some foreign mercantile firm in Mumbai. As he grew old he was not able to attend to his work properly, and so he had to take leave and rest. As he did not improve during the period of leave, a further extension of leave or premature retirement from service was inevitable. The chief manager of the firm decided to retire him on pension as he was an old and a reliable servant. The question regarding the amount of pension to be given was under consideration. He was getting Rs. 150/- p.m. and his pension, i.e. half the amount, viz. Rs. 75/- would not be enough to meet the expenses of the family. So they were all anxious about this matter. Fifteen days before the final settlement Baba appeared to Mrs. Tendulkar in her dream and said, "I wish that Rs. 100/- should be settled as pension, will this satisfy you?" She replied, "Baba, why ask me this? We fully trust in You." Though Baba said Rs. 100/-, still he was given ten Rupees more, i.e., Rs. 110/-, as a special case. Such wonderful love and care did Baba exhibit towards His bhaktas.

(3) Captain Hate

Captain Hate, who was staying in Bikaner was a great devotee of Baba. Once, Baba appeared to him in his dream and said, "Did you forget Me?" Hate then immediately held Baba's Feet and replied, "If a child forgets his mother how could he be saved?" Then Hate went into the garden and took out fresh Walpapadi vegetables and after arranging 'Shidha' (ghee, wheat-flour and dal etc.) and dakshina, was about to offer all this to Baba when he was awakened and came to know that the whole thing was a dream. Then he decided to send all these things to Baba at Shirdi. When he came to Gwalior some days afterwards, he sent Rs. 12/- by money order to a friend with instructions that Rs. two should be spent in buying Shidha articles and Walpapadi vegetables, and those should be offered to Baba with Rs. ten as dakshina. The friend went to Shirdi and purchased the things mentioned but Walpapadi was not available. In a short time a woman turned up with a basket on her head, which curiously enough contained the Walpapadi vegetables. It was purchased and then all the things were offered to Baba on behalf of captain Hate. Mr. Nimonkar prepared the 'Naivaidya' (rice and Walpapadi vegetables) next day and offered the same to Baba. All the people were surprised to see that Baba while dining, took and ate Walpapadi and did not touch rice and other things. Hate's joy knew no bounds when he learnt this from his friend.

Consecrated Rupee

At another time captain Hate wished that he should have in his house, a rupee consecrated by Baba with His touch. He came across a friend who was bound for Shirdi. Through him Hate sent his rupee. The friend went to Shirdi and after the usual salutation gave first his dakshina which Baba accepted. Then he gave Hate's rupee which Baba took in His hand and began to gaze at it. He held it in front, tossed it up with His right thumb and played with it. Then He said to the friend, "Return this to its owner with the Prasad of Udi, tell him that I want nothing from him; ask him to live in peace and contentment!" The friend returned to Gwalior handed over the consecrated rupee to Hate and told him all that happened at Shirdi. This time Hate was much pleased and realized that Baba always encouraged good thoughts, and as he wished intently, Baba fulfilled the same accordingly.

(4) Waman Narvekar

Now let the readers hear a different story. A gentleman named Waman Narvekar, loved Baba very much. He once brought a rupee. On one side (obverse) of it were engraved the figures of Ram, Laxman and Sita and on the other (reverse) side was engraved the figure of Maruti with folded hands. He offered it to Baba with a hope that He should consecrate it with His touch and return it to him with Udi. But Baba immediately pocketed it. Then Shama spoke to Baba regarding Wamanrao's intention and requested Him to return it. Then Baba spoke in the presence of Wamanrao, "Why should it be returned to him? We should keep it ourselves. If he gives Rs. 25/- for it, it will be returned." Then for the sake of that rupee, Wamanrao collected Rs. 25/- and placed them before Baba. Then Baba said, "The value of that rupee far exceeds 25 Rupees. Shama take this rupee, let us have it in our store, keep this in your shrine and worship it!" No one had the courage to ask Baba why He followed this peculiar action. He only knows what is best and most suitable to each and all.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXX

Drawn to Shirdi

(1) Kakaji Vaidya of Vani (2) Ramlal Punjabi of Mumbai

In this chapter the story of two more devotees who were drawn to Shirdi, is narrated.

Preliminary

Bow to the Kind Sai Who is the Abode of Mercy and Who is affectionate towards His devotees. By His mere darshan He does away with their fear of worldly illusions (Sansaar) and destroys their calamities. He was first Nirgun (formless) but on account of the devotion of His bhaktas, He was obliged to take a form. To give liberation, self-realization to the bhaktas is the mission of the saints and for Sai, the Chief of them that mission is inevitable. Those who take refuge in His Feet, have all their sins destroyed and their progress is certain. Remembering His Feet Brahmins from holy places come to Him and read scriptures and chant the Gayatri Mantra in His presence. We who are weak and without any merits do not know what Bhakti is, but we know this much that though all others may leave us, Sai won't forsake us. Those whom He favours get enormous strength, discrimination between the unreal and the real and knowledge.

Sai knows fully the desire of His devotees and fulfils the same. Hence, they get what they want and are grateful. So we invoke Him and prostrate ourselves before Him. Forgetting all our faults let Him free us from all anxieties. He who being overcome with calamities remembers and prays to Sai thus, will get his mind calmed and pacified through His grace.

This Sai – the ocean of mercy, says Hemadpant favoured him, and the result of this is the present work Sai Satcharita. Otherwise, what qualifications had he to undertake this enterprise? But as Sai took all the responsibility Hemadpant felt no burden nor any care about this. When the powerful Light of Knowledge was there to inspire his speech and pen why should he entertain any doubt or feel any anxiety? Sai got

the service in the form of this book done by him; this is due to the accumulation of his merits in the past births and therefore, he thinks himself fortunate and blessed.

The following story is not a mere tale but pure nectar. He who drinks it will realize Sai's greatness and all-pervasiveness. Those who want to argue and criticise should not go in for this. What is wanted here is not discussion but unlimited love and devotion. Learned devout and faithful believers or those who consider themselves as servants of the saints, will like and appreciate these stories, others will take them to be fables. The fortunate bhaktas of Sai will find the Sai-leelas as the Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling tree). Drinking in or devouring this nectar of Sai-leelas will give liberation to the ignorant Jivas, satisfaction to the house-holders and a sadhana to the aspirants. Now, we come to the story of this chapter.

Kakaji Vaidya

There lived in Vani, Nasik district, a man named Kakaji Vaidya. He was the priest of the Goddess Saptashringi, there. He was so overpowered by adverse circumstances and calamities that he lost peace of mind and became quite restless. Under such circumstances, one evening, he went into the temple of the Goddess and prayed unto Her from the bottom of his heart and invoked Her aid to free him from anxiety. The Goddess was pleased with his devotion and the same night appeared to him in his dream and said to him, "You go to Baba and then your mind will become calm and composed." Kakaji was anxious to know from Her, Who this Baba was, but before he could get any explanation he was awakened. Then, he began to think as to Who might be this Baba to whom the Goddess had asked him to go. After some thinking he resolved that this Baba might be 'Tryambakeshwar' (Lord Shiva). So he went to the holy place 'Tryambak' (Nasik district) and stayed there for ten days. During this period he bathed early in the morning, chanted the 'Rudra' hymns, did the 'Abhishek' (pouring fresh water over the Pindi) and did other religious rites but with all this, he was as restless as before. Then he returned to his place and again invoked the Goddess most pitifully. That night She again appeared in his dream and said, "Why did you go to Tryambakeshwar in vain? I mean by Baba-Shri Sai Samarth of Shirdi."

The question before Kakaji now was 'How and when to go to Shirdi and how to see Baba?' If anybody is in real earnest to see a saint, not only the saint but God also fulfils his wish. In fact the 'Sant' (saint) and the 'Anant' (God) are one and the same, there is not the least difference between them. If anybody thinks that he will go on his own wish and see a saint, that will be a mere boast. Unless the saint wills it, no one is able to go and see him. Even the leaf of the tree won't move without his bidding. The more anxious a bhakta is for the visit to the saint, the more devout and faithful he is, the more speedily and effectively is his wish satisfied to his heart's content. He who invites anybody for a visit, also arranges everything for his reception, and so it happened with Kakaji.

Shama's Vows

When Kakaji was thinking about his intended visit to Shirdi, a guest came to him at his place to take him to Shirdi. He was no other than Shama, a very close and intimate devotee of Baba. How he came to Vani at this juncture, we shall just see. Shama was severely ill when he was very young and his mother had taken a vow to her family Goddess, Saptashringi at Vani that, if her son got well she would bring and dedicate him at Her feet. Then, after some years the mother herself suffered much from ring-worms on her breasts. At that time she again took another vow to her Deity that, if she got all right she would offer Her two silver breasts. These two vows remained unfulfilled. At her death-bed she called her son Shama and drew his attention to the vows, and after taking a promise from him that, he would fulfill them, she breathed her last. After some time Shama forgot about these vows, and thus 30 years elapsed. About this time a famous astrologer had come to Shirdi and stayed there for a month. His predictions in the case of Shriman Buti and others came true and everybody was satisfied. Shama's younger brother Bapaji, consulted him and was told about his mother's vows which his elder brother had promised to fulfil at her death-bed and not yet fulfilled; hence the Goddess was displeased with them and that was bringing troubles on them. Bapaji told this to his brother Shama, who was then reminded of the unfulfilled vows. On thinking that any further delay would be dangerous he called a goldsmith and got a pair of silver breast prepared. Then, he went to the Masjid prostrated himself before Baba and placing before Him the two silver breasts, requested Him to accept them and free him from the vows as to him He

was his Saptashringi Goddess. Then, Baba insisted upon him to go himself to the temple of Saptashringi and offer them at the Feet of the Goddess. Thus, after taking Baba's permission and Udi he left for Vani, and while searching for the priest reached Kakaji's house. Kakaji was then very anxious to visit Baba and Shama went there to see him at that very time. What a wonderful coincidence was this!

Kakaji asked him who he was and whence did he come, and on learning that, he came from Shirdi, he at once embraced him. So overwhelmed was he with love! Then they talked about Sai-leelas and after finishing the rites of Shama's vows they both started for Shirdi. On reaching the place Kakaji went to the Masjid and fell at Baba's Feet. His eyes were soon bedewed with tears and his mind attained calmness. According to the vision of the Goddess no sooner did he see Baba, then his mind lost all its restlessness and became calm and composed. Kakaji began to think in his mind, "What a wonderful power is this! Baba spoke nothing, there was no question and answer, no benediction pronounced; the mere darshan itself was so conducive to happiness, the restlessness of my mind disappeared by His mere darshan, consciousness of joy came upon me – this is what is called 'the greatness of darshan'." His vision was fixed on Sai's Feet and he could utter no word. Hearing Baba's Leelas, his joy knew no bounds. He surrendered himself completely to Baba, forgot his anxiety and cares and got undiluted happiness. He lived happily there for twelve days, and after taking Baba's leave, Udi and blessings returned home.

Khushalchand of Rahata

It is said that a dream which we get in the wee hours of the morning generally comes out true, in the waking state. This may be so, but regarding Baba's dreams there is no restriction of time. To quote an instance : Baba told Kakasaheb Dixit one afternoon to go to Rahata and fetch Khushalchand to Shirdi, as He had not seen him since long. Kakasaheb accordingly took a tonga and went to Rahata. He met Khushalchand and gave him Baba's message. On hearing it Khushalchand was surprised and said that, while he was taking a noon nap after meals, Baba appeared in his dream and asked him to come to Shirdi immediately, and that he was anxious to go. As he had no horse of his own nearby, he had sent his son to inform Baba. When his son was just out of the village-border, Dixit's tonga turned up. Dixit

then said that he was sent specially to bring him. Then, they both went in the tonga back to Shirdi. Khushalchand saw Baba and all were pleased. Seeing this Leela of Baba Khushalchand was much moved.

Ramlal Punjabi of Mumbai

Once a Punjabi Brahmin of Mumbai, named Ramlal, got a dream in which Baba appeared and asked him to come to Shirdi. Baba appeared to him as a Mahant (saint) but he did not know His whereabouts. He thought that he should go and see Him but, as he did not have His address he did not know what to do. But, He Who calls anybody to Him also makes the necessary arrangements for the same. The same happened in this case. The same afternoon when he was strolling in the street, he saw a picture of Baba in a shop. The features of the Mahant he saw earlier in the dream tallied exactly with those of the picture. Then on making enquiries, he came to know that the picture was of Sai Baba of Shirdi. He went soon after this to Shirdi and stayed there till his death.

In this way Baba brought His devotees to Shirdi for darshan and satisfied their wants, material as well as spiritual.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXI

The Passing Away in Baba's Presence of (1) Sanyaasi Vijayanand (2) Balaram Mankar (3) Noolkar (4) Megha (5) The Tiger

In this chapter Hemadpant describes the passing away of certain devotees and a tiger in Baba's presence.

Preliminary

The last wish or thought that a man has at the hour of death, determines his future course. Shri Krishna has said in Gita (VIII-5-6) that, "he who remembers Me in his last moments, comes verily to Me; and he who meditates otherwise, at that time, goes to what he longs for." We cannot be certain that we can entertain a particular good thought at our last moment, for more often than not, we are more likely to be frightened and terrified by death. Hence constant practice is necessary for enabling us to fix our mind on any desired good thought at any moment. All saints, therefore, recommend us to remember God and chant His name always, so that we may not be perplexed or perturbed, when the time for departure comes. The devotees on their part surrender themselves completely to the saints, fully believing that the saints would guide and help them in their last moments. A few such cases will be noted here.

(1) Vijayanand

A Sanyaasi from Chennai, named Vijayanand started on pilgrimage to Mansarovar. En route on hearing Baba's fame, he halted at Shirdi. There, he met one Somadevaji Swami of Hardwar and enquired from him about the Mansarovar trip. The Swami told him that the Sarovar was 500 miles above Gangotri, and described to him the difficulties of the journey, viz. plenty of snow and the change of dialect every 50 kos and the suspicious nature of the local people, who give a lot of trouble to the pilgrims on the way. On hearing this the Sanyaasi was dejected and cancelled the trip. Then, when he went to Baba and prostrated himself before Him, Baba got enraged and said, "Drive out this useless Sanyaasi, his company is of no use." The Sanyaasi did not know Baba's nature. He felt discomforted but sat there watching things that were

going on. It was the morning Darbar, and the Masjid was overcrowded. Baba was being worshipped in various ways. Some were washing His Feet, some taking the Tirth (holy water) and drinking it heartily, and some touching their eyes with it; some were applying sandal paste and some scents to His body. And all were doing these things forgetting the distinction of caste and creed. Though, Baba got enraged with him he was filled with affection for Baba and he did not feel like leaving the place.

He stayed in Shirdi for two days, when he got a letter from Chennai, stating that his mother was very ill. He felt very dejected and wanted to be by his mother's side, but he could not leave without Baba's permission to return home. The Omniscient Baba knowing the future said to him, "If you so loved your mother, why did you take Sanyaas? Attachment makes misuse of an ochre garb. Go and sit quiet at your lodging, wait with patience for a few days. In the wada there are many robbers, bolt your doors and be very vigilant, the thieves will carry everything. Wealth and prosperity are tansient and the body is subject to decay and death. While knowing this, do your duty leaving all attachment with the things of this world and next. He who does this and surrenders himself to the Feet of Hari (Lord) will get free from all troubles and attain Bliss. The Lord runs and helps him, who remembers and meditates on Him with love and affection. Your store of past merits is considerable so you have come here. Now attend to what I say and realize the goal of your life. Begin from tomorrow the study of Bhagwat. Do three 'Saptahs', i.e., three readings during three weeks, conscientiously. The Lord will be pleased with you and will destroy your sorrows, your illusions will vanish and you will get eternal peace." On seeing that his end was approaching, Baba prescribed this remedy and made him read 'Ramavijaya', which pleases the God of death. Next morning, after bathing and other purifying rites he commenced to read Bhagwat at a secluded spot in the Lendi garden. He completed two readings, and thereafter felt much exhausted. He returned to the wada and stayed in his lodging for two days, and on the third day he breathed his last, on Fakir (Bade) Baba's lap. Baba asked the people to preserve the body for a day for a reason. The police afterwards came and on making proper enquiries gave permission for the disposal of the body. It was buried in a proper place with due rites. In this way Baba helped the Sanyaasi and ensured him Sadgati (salvation).

(2) Balaram Mankar

There was a house-holder devotee of Baba, by name Balaram Mankar. When his wife passed away he got dejected and entrusting his household to his son, left home and came to Shirdi and lived with Baba. Being pleased with his devotion Baba wanted to give a good turn to his life and He did it in this way. He gave him Rs. 12/- and asked him to go and live in Machhindragad (District Satara). Mankar was first unwilling to go and stay away from Baba, but Baba convinced him that he was giving the best course for him, and asked him to practise meditation thrice a day in the Gad¹. On believing in Baba's words Mankar went to the Gad. He was much pleased with the serenity, pure water, healthy air and the surroundings of the place, and began to practise assiduously the meditations, as recommended by Baba. After some days he got a revelation. Generally, bhaktas get revelation in their Samadhi or trance states but in Mankar's case, he got it when he came down to his ordinary consciousness from his trance. Baba appeared to him in person. Not only that Mankar saw Him, but he also asked Him why he was sent there. Baba replied, "In Shirdi many thoughts and ideas began to rise in your mind and I sent you here to bring your unsteady mind to rest. You thought that I was in Shirdi with a body, composed of the five elements and three and a half cubits in length. Now you see and determine for yourself whether the person you see here now is the same you saw at Shirdi. It is for this reason that I sent you here." Then after the period was over, Mankar left the Gad and proceeded to his native place Bandra. He wanted to travel by rail from Poona to Dadar, but when he went to the booking office to get a ticket he found it very much crowded. He could not get his ticket soon, when a villager with a Langoti (piece of cloth) on his waist and Kambali on his shoulder turned up and said, "Where are you going?" "To Dadar," replied Mankar. Then, he said, "Please, take this Dadar ticket of mine, as I have some urgent work here, I have cancelled my Dadar trip." Mankar was very glad to receive the ticket and was taking out money from his pocket when the rustic disappeared in the crowd. Mankar tried to find him out in the crowd but in vain. He waited for him till the train left the station but found no trace of him. This was the second revelation Mankar got in a strange form. Then Mankar after visiting his home, again returned to Shirdi and remained there at Baba's Feet following

1. Gad (Fort) - Machhindragad

His bidding and advice. In the end he was very fortunate to leave this world in the presence of Baba.

(3) Tatyasaheb Noolkar

Hemadpant gives no particulars regarding Tatyasaheb Noolkar except the bare mention of the fact that he gave up his ghost in Shirdi. A brief summary of his account that appeared in the Sai Leela magazine is given here.

Tatyasaheb was a sub-judge at Pandharpur in 1909, when Nanasaheb Chandorkar was Mamalatdar there. Both met often and exchanged words. Tatyasaheb did not believe in saints, while Nanasaheb respected them. Nanasaheb often told him the Leelas of Sai Baba and pressed him to go to Shirdi and see Baba. Noolkar finally agreed to go to Shirdi on two conditions: (1) he must get a Brahmin cook and (2) he must get good Nagpur oranges for the presentation. Both these conditions were providentially fulfilled. A Brahmin came to Nanasaheb for service and he was sent to Tatyasaheb, and a fruit parcel containing 100 beautiful oranges was received by Tatyasaheb, the consigner being unknown. As the conditions were fulfilled Tatyasaheb had to go to Shirdi. At first Baba was much enraged with him. But, by and by Tatyasaheb got such experiences that he was convinced that Baba was God Incarnate. So he was enamoured of Baba and stayed there till his death. As his end was approaching sacred literature was read out to him, and at the last hour Baba's Pada-tirth was brought and given to him for drinking. Baba on hearing of his death said, "Oh, Tatyasaheb went ahead of us, he won't be reborn."

(4) Megha

The story of Megha has been already described in chapter 28. When Megha died all the villagers followed the funeral procession. Baba also accompanied them and showered flowers on Megha's body. After the obsequies were performed, tears flowed from Baba's eyes, and like an ordinary mortal Baba showed Himself overcome with grief and sorrow. Then covering the body with flowers and crying like a near relation Baba returned to the Masjid.

Many saints have been seen giving Sadgati to men but Baba's

greatness is unique. Even an animal like tiger came to Baba's Feet for being delivered from demerits. It is this story which will be narrated now.

(5) Tiger¹

Seven days before Baba passed away a wonderful incident occurred at Shirdi. There came a country-cart and stopped in front of the Masjid. A tiger was on the cart, fastened with iron chains with its agonised face turned to the rear. It was suffering from some painful malady. Its keepers – three Derveshis – had been taking it from place to place and making money by exhibiting it. It was the means of their subsistence. They tried all sorts of remedies to cure it from the malady it was suffering from, but all in vain. Then they heard of Baba's fame and came to Him with the animal. They got it down with chains in their hands and made it stand at the door. It was naturally fierce besides being disease-ridden. So it was restless. The people began to look at it with fright and amazement. The Derveshis told Baba everything about the animal and with His consent brought it before Him. As it approached the steps it retreated on account of the awe of Baba, and hung its head down. When both saw each other, it got on to the step and looked at Baba with affection. Immediately, it moved the tuft of its tail and dashed it thrice against the ground, and then fell down senseless. On seeing it dead the Derveshis were much dejected and full of sorrow, but on proper thought they came to terms with it. They considered that as the animal was diseased and nearing its end it was very meritorious on its part that it met its death at the Feet of Baba. It was their debtor and when the debt was paid off it was free and met its end at Sai's Feet. When any creatures bow down their heads at saints' feet and meet death they are liberated. Unless they have got a good store of merit on their account, how could they get such a meritorious end?

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

1. This tiger is buried in Shirdi in front of Mahadev temple.



CHAPTER XXXII

In Quest of Guru and God – Fasting disapproved

In this chapter Hemadpant describes two things: (1) How Baba met His Guru in the woods and through him God; and (2) How Baba made Mrs. Ghokhale, who had made up her mind to fast for three days, eat Puranpolis.

Preliminary

In the beginning Hemadpant describes the Sansara (visible world) by the allegory of Ashvattha (Banyan) tree, which has in the phraseology of the Gita, roots above and branches below. Its branches are spread downward and upwards, and are nourished by the Gunas (qualities), and its sprouts are the objects of the senses. Its roots, leading to actions are extended downwards to this world of men. Its form cannot be known in this world, nor its end, its beginning, nor its support. After cutting this Ashvattha tree of strong roots with the sharp weapon of non-attachment one should seek the path beyond, treading where there is no return.

For traversing this path, the help of a good guide (Guru) is absolutely necessary. However learned a man may be, or however deep his study of Veda and Vedant (sacred literature) may be, he cannot reach his destination safely. If the guide be there to help him and show him the right way, he would avoid the pitfalls, and the wild beasts on the journey move aside.

Baba's experience in this matter, through the story which He gave out Himself is really wonderful, which when attended to, will give you faith, devotion and salvation.

The Quest

Once four of us were studying religious scriptures and other books and being thus enlightened, we began to discuss the nature of Brahma. One of us said that we should raise the Self with self-efforts and not depend on others. To this the second replied that, he who controls his mind is blessed; we should be free from thoughts and ideas and there is nothing in the world without us. The third said that the world (phenomenon) is always changing, the formless is eternal; so, we should discriminate between the unreal and the Real. And the fourth

(Baba Himself) urged that, bookish knowledge alone is worthless and added "Let us do our prescribed duty and surrender our body, mind and five Pranas (life) to the Guru's feet. Guru is God, all pervading. To get this conviction, strong unbounded faith is necessary."

While discussing in this way we four learned men began to ramble through the woods in quest of God. The three wanted to make the quest with their free and unaided intellect. On the way, a Vanjari (a man who trades in certain things, such as grain etc., by carrying them on bullock) met us and asked us, "It is hot now, where and how far are you going?" "In the woods," we replied. He enquired, "On what quest are you bound?" We gave him an ambiguous and evasive reply. On seeing us rambling aimlessly, he was moved and said, "Without knowing the woods fully, you should not wander at random. If you want to walk through forests and jungles, you should take a guide with you. Why do you exert yourselves unnecessarily during this hot noon sun? You may not give out to me your secret of the quest, still you can sit down, eat bread, drink water, take rest and then go. Be always patient at heart!" Though he spoke so tenderly, we discarded his request and marched on. We thought that we were self-contained men and needed nobody's help. The woods were vast and trackless, the trees therein grew so close and tall that, the sun's rays could not penetrate through them; so we lost our way and wandered here and there for a long time. Ultimately, through sheer good luck, we came back to the place, from where we started. The Vanjari met us again and said, "By relying on your own cleverness you missed your way; a guide is always necessary to show us the right way in small or great matters and no quest can be successfully carried out on an empty stomach. Unless God wills it, no one meets us on the way. Do not discard offers of food, served dish should not be thrust away. Offers of food should be regarded as auspicious signs of success." On saying this, he again offered us food and asked us to be calm and patient. Again my companions did not like this unsolicited hospitality and discarded his offer. Without doing any quest and without taking any food, the three began to move out. So obstinate were they. I was hungry and thirsty and I was moved by the Vanjari's extraordinary love; we thought ourselves very learned, but were strangers to kindness. The Vanjari was a quite, illiterate and unqualified fellow and belonged to a low caste. Still he had love in his heart and asked us to eat the bread. In this way he who loves others disinterestedly, is really enlightened; and I thought, acceptance of his hospitality was the best beginning of getting knowledge. So very respectfully I accepted the loaf of bread offered, ate it and drank water.

Then lo! The Guru, came and stood before us, "What was the dispute about?" He asked and I told him everything, that had happened. Then he said, "Would you like to come with me? I will show you what you want, but he alone who believes in what I say, will be successful." The others did not agree to what he said and left him but I bowed to him reverently and accepted his dictum. Then he took Me to a well, tied My Feet with a rope and hung Me – head downwards and Feet up – from a tree, near the well. I was suspended three feet above the water, which I could not reach with My hands, or with my mouth. After suspending Me in this manner he went away, no one knew where. After 10 or 12 Ghatakas (4 or 5 hours) he returned and after taking Me out quickly, asked Me how I fared. "In bliss supreme, I was. How can a fool like Me describe the joy, I experienced?" I replied. On hearing My answer the Guru was much pleased with Me, drew Me near him and stroking My head with his hand kept Me with him! He took care of Me as tenderly as a mother-bird does of her young ones. He put me into his school; how beautiful it was! There I forgot My parents, all My attachment was snapped and I was liberated easily. I thought that I should embrace him and keep staring at him always. If his image was not fixed in My eyes, I would rather be blind. Such was the school! No one who entered it once, could return empty-handed. My Guru became My all-in-all, My home, mother and father, everything. All My senses left their places, and concentrated themselves in My eyes, and My sight was centred on him. Thus, My Guru was the sole object of My meditation and I was conscious of none else. While meditating on him My mind and intellect were silent and I had thus, to keep quiet and bow to him in silence.*

There are other schools where you see an altogether different spectacle. The disciples go there to seek knowledge and spend their money, time and labour, but ultimately they don't gain much. The Guru

* We think that, this description of the hanging in upside-down position in the well for 4 or 5 hours should not be taken too literally; for no one can be at ease and feel bliss, if he be suspended with a rope-head down and feet up – in a well for hours together. This seems to be a figurative description of the trance or Samadhi state. There are two sorts of consciousness: (1) Sensual and (2) Spiritual. When our senses and mind, which are created by God with an outgoing tendency meet their objects, we get the sensual consciousness, in which we feel pleasure or pain, pure or mixed; but not bliss supreme of happiness. When the senses and the mind are withdrawn from their objects and are given opposite direction, i.e., when they are introverted and fixed on the Self, we get the other, i.e., spiritual consciousness, in which we feel unalloyed joy or bliss, which is ineffable. The words "In bliss supreme I was, and how can I describe the joy, I felt?" So that the Guru put him in a trance and kept him above the waters of the restless senses and mind.

there boasts of his secret knowledge and his straight-forwardness. He makes a show of his sacredness and holiness. He speaks a lot and sings his own glory but his own words do not touch the disciples heart and they are not convinced. So far as self-realization is concerned, he has not reached that. How can such schools be of any use to the disciples and how can they be benefitted? The master (Guru) mentioned above, was of different type. By his grace realization flashed upon Me of itself, without effort or study. I had nothing to seek, everything became to Me as clear as broad daylight. The Guru alone knows how the inverse suspension, 'with head down and feet up' can give happiness!

Among the four, one was a Karmkandi (ritualistic), who only knew how to observe and abstain from certain rites; the second was Dnyani who was puffed up with pride of knowledge and the third was a bhakta, who surrendered himself completely to God, believing that he was the sole Doer. When they were discussing and arguing, the question of God came up, and they depending on their unaided knowledge, went in search of Him. Sai, who was discrimination and dispassion incarnate, was one of the four. On being Himself Brahma Incarnate, some may ask, "Why did He mix with them and act foolishly?" He did this for setting an example to follow. Though an Incarnation Himself, He respected a low Vanjari, by accepting his food with the firm belief that, "Food is Brahma*" and showed how those who rejected Vanjari's hospitable offer, suffered and how it was impossible to get Dnyan without a Guru. The Shruti (Taittiriya Upanishad) exhorts us to honour and worship mother, father and preceptor and to study (learn and teach) the sacred scriptures. These are the means of purifying our minds, and unless this purification is effected, self-realization is not possible. Neither the senses, nor the mind, and intellect reach the Self. Modes of proof, such as perception and inference, will not help us in the matter. It is the grace of the Guru that counts. The objects of our life such as Dharma, Artha and Kama are attainable with our effort; but the fourth object, Moksha (liberation), can only be had with the help of the Guru.

In the life story of Shri Sai, many personalities appear and play their part; astrologers come and give out their predictions; princes, noblemen, ordinary and poor men, sanyasis, yogis, singers and others come for darshan. Even a Mahar comes and making his salutation, says, 'Sai is the Mai-Baap (True parents), Who will do away with our rounds of births and deaths.' So many others, such as jugglers,

* 'अन्नं ब्रह्म'

Gondhalis (who sing devotional songs), the blind and the lame, Nathpanthis, dancers and other players come and are given suitable reception. The Vanjari also appeared at the right time and played the part, assigned to him. Let us now revert to the other story.

Fasting and Mrs. Gokhale

Baba never fasted Himself, nor did He allow others to do so. The mind of the person who fasts is never at ease, then how could he attain his Paramartha (goal of life)? God is not attained on an empty stomach; first the soul has to be appeased. If there be no food in the stomach and nutrition, with what eyes should we see God, with what tongue should we describe His greatness and with what ears should we hear the same? In short, when all our organs get their proper nutrition and are sound, we can practise devotion and other Sadhanas to attain God. Therefore, neither fasting nor over-eating is good. Moderation in diet is really wholesome, both to the body and mind.

One Mrs. Gokhale, came to Shirdi with an introductory letter, from Mrs. Kashibai Kanitkar (a devotee of Baba), to Dada Kelkar. She came to Baba, with a determination to sit at Baba's Feet and observe a three days fast. The previous day Baba said to Dada Kelkar that He would not allow his children to starve during the Shimga, i.e. Holi¹ holidays and that if they had to starve, why was He there? Next day when the woman went with Dada Kelkar and sat at Baba's Feet, Baba at once said to her, "Where is the necessity of fasting? Go to Dadabhat's house, prepare the dish of Puran Polis (wheat rotis with gram-flour and jaggery), feed his children and yourself too." Shimga holidays were on. Mrs. Kelkar was then going through her menses, and there was nobody to cook in Dadabhat's house. So Baba's advice was very timely. Then Mrs. Gokhale had to go to Dadabhat's house and prepare the dish, as directed. She cooked that day, fed others and herself. What a good story and how beautiful its import!

Baba's Sarkar

Baba gave a story of his boyhood as follows: "When I was a youngster, I was in search of bread and went to Beed. There I got embroidery work. I worked hard, sparing no pains. The employer was very much pleased with Me. Three other boys worked before Me. The first got Rs. 50/-, the second Rs. 100/- and the third Rs. 150/-. And I was given twice the total of this amount, viz. Rs. 600/-. After seeing My

1. The festival of colours Hindus celebrate every year.

cleverness, the employer loved Me, praised Me and honoured Me with a full dress, a turban for the head and a Shela for the body etc. I kept this dress intact without using it. I thought that what a man might give, does not last long and it is always imperfect. But what My Sarkar (God) gives, lasts to the end of time. No other gift from any man can be compared to His. My Sarkar says, "Take, take;" but everybody comes to Me and says, "Give, give!" Nobody attends carefully to the meaning of what I say. My Sarkar's treasury (spiritual wealth) is full, it is overflowing. I say, "Dig out and take away this wealth in cartloads; the blessed son of a true mother should fill himself with this wealth." The skill of My Fakir, the Leela of my Lord and the aptitude of My Sarkar is quite unique. What about Me? Body (earth) will mix with earth, breath with air. This time won't come again. No matter where I go or where I sit, Maya always troubles me much, still I am always anxious for My men. He, who does anything (spiritual endeavour), will reap its fruit and he, who remembers these words of mine, will get invaluable happiness."

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXIII

Greatness of Udi

*Scorpion sting and Plague cases cured – Jamner
Miracle – Narayan Rao's sickness – Balabua Sutar –
Appasaheb Kulkarni – Haribhau Karnik*

In the last chapter we described the greatness of the Guru; now in this we will describe the greatness of Udi. However both are interlinked. The greatness of Udi is due to the spiritual grandeur of Baba.

Preliminary

Let us now bow before the great saints. Their merciful glances will destroy mountains of sins and do away with all the blemishes of our character. Their talk gives us good teachings and confers on us invaluable happiness. Their minds do not know any difference, such as "This is ours and that is yours." Such differentiation never arises in their minds. Their debts (obligations) will never be repaid by us in this birth, as well as in many future births.

Udi

It is well-known that Baba took dakshina from all and out of the amount thus collected, He spent on charity and purchased fuel. This fuel He put in the dhuni – the sacred fire, which He kept ever burning. The ash from this fire was called Udi, and it was freely distributed to the devotees, at the time of their departure from Shirdi.

What did Baba teach by this Udi? Baba taught by this Udi that all the visible phenomena in the universe are as transient as the ash. Our bodies composed of matter of the five elements, will fall down, after all their enjoyments are over and be reduced to ashes. In order to remind the devotees of the fact that, their bodies will be reduced to ashes, Baba distributed Udi to them. Baba also taught by the Udi that the Brahma is the only Reality and the universe is ephemeral, and that no one in this world, be he a son, father or wife, is really ours. We come here (in this world) alone and we have to go from here alone. It has been found that the Udi cured many physical and mental maladies but Baba wanted

to repeat into the devotee's ears the principles of discrimination between the Unreal and the Real, He taught non-attachment for the unreal by His Udi and Dakshina. The former (Udi) taught us discrimination and the latter (Dakshina) taught us non-attachment. Unless we have these two things it is not possible for us to cross over the sea of the mundane existence. So Baba asked for dakshina, and while the devotees took leave He gave Udi as Prasad, besmeared some of it on their foreheads and placed His boon-conferring hand on them. When Baba was in a cheerful mood He used to sing merrily. One such song was about Udi. The meaning of this song was : "Oh, playful Ram, come, come and bring with you sacks of Udi,"* Baba used to sing in very clear and tender tones.

So besides the spiritual implication of Udi, it had also its material significance. It conferred health, prosperity, freedom from anxiety and many other worldly gains. So, the Udi has helped us to gain both our ends – material as well as spiritual. We shall now begin with the stories about the Udi.

Scorpion-sting

Narayan Motiram Jani of Nasik was a devotee of Baba. He was serving under another devotee of Baba, by name Ramchandra Vaman Modak. Once he went to Shirdi with his mother and saw Baba. Then Baba Himself told her that her son should start independent business. Some days after this prophecy turned true. Narayan Jani left service and started a boarding house – 'Anand Ashram', which thrived well. Once a friend of this Narayanrao was stung by a scorpion and the pain caused by it was severe and unbearable. Udi is most efficacious in such cases; it is to be applied on the point of pain and so Narayanrao searched for it but found none. Then he stood before Baba's picture and invoked Baba's aid, chanted Baba's name and taking out a pinch of the ashes of the joss-stick burning in front of Baba's picture and thinking it as Baba's Udi, applied it on the seat of pain and the sting. As soon as he moved his fingers, the pain vanished and both the persons were moved and felt delighted.

Bubonic plague case

Once a devotee in Bandra, came to know that his daughter who

* "रमते राम आजोजी आजोजी ! उदिया की गोनियां लाजोजी लाजोजी"

was staying in another place was down with bubonic plague. He had no Udi with him so he sent word to Nanasaheb Chandorkar to send the same. Nanasaheb got this message enroute Thana Railway Station, when he was travelling with his wife to Kalyan. He had no Udi with him then. He therefore, took up some dust from the road, meditated upon Sai Baba, invoked His aid and applied it to his wife's forehead. The devotee was very glad to learn that his daughter, who was suffering for three days, began to improve from the very moment Nanasaheb invoked Baba's aid near the Thana Railway Station.

The Jamner Miracle

In the year 1904⁰⁵ Nanasaheb Chandorkar was Mamlatdar at Jamner, in the Khandesh district, which is more than 100 miles from Shirdi. His daughter Mainatai, was pregnant and was due to deliver. Her case was very serious and she was suffering from labour-pains for the last two or three days. Nanasaheb tried all remedies but in vain; he then remembered Baba and invoked His aid. There in Shirdi, one Ramgirbua whom Baba called Bapugirbua, was leaving for his native place, in Khandesh. Baba called him and told him to stop at Jamner on his way home and give the Udi and Aarti to Nanasaheb. Ramgirbua said that he had only two rupees with him and this amount was barely sufficient for the railway fare upto Jalgaon, and it was not possible for him to go from Jalgaon to Jamner, a distance of about 30 miles. Baba assured him that he need not care, as everything would be provided for. Then Baba asked Shama to write a well-known Aarti composed by Madhav Adkar (Aarti and translation of this is given at the end of this work), and gave a copy of it with Udi to Ramgirbua, to be delivered to Nanasaheb. Then relying on Baba's words Ramgirbua left Shirdi and reached Jalgaon at about 2:45 a.m. He had only two annas¹ left with him and he was in a plight. To his great relief he heard somebody calling out, "Who is Bapugirbua of Shirdi?" He went to him and told him that he was Bapugirbua. Then the person, professing to be sent by Nanasaheb took him to an excellent tonga with a good pair of horses. They both drove in it. The tonga ran fast and early in the morning they came to a brooklet. The man took the horses for watering them and he asked Ramgirbua to partake of some eatables. On seeing the beard, moustache and the livery of that person, Ramgirbua suspected him to be a Muslim, and was unwilling to take any refreshments from him, but he satisfied Ramgirbua by saying that he was a Hindu, a Kshatriya of

1. Then 16 annas = Re. 1

Garhwal, and that Nanasaheb had sent these refreshments and there should be no difficulty in its acceptance. Then both of them took the refreshments and started again. They reached Jamner at dawn. Ramgirbua alighted to attend a call of nature and returned within a few minutes, but found that there was no tonga, and no driver. He was dumbfounded. Then he went to the neighbouring Kachehri and on making enquiries learnt that the Mamlatdar was at home. He went to Nanasaheb's house and gave to Nanasaheb, Baba's Udi and Aarti. At this time Mainatai's case was in the most serious condition and all were in deep anxiety about her. Nanasaheb called out his wife and asked her to give the Udi, mixed with water, to their daughter to drink. He thought that Baba's help was most opportune. In a few minutes came the news that, the delivery was safe and that the crisis had passed away. When Ramgirbua thanked Nanasaheb for the peon, tonga and the refreshments etc., the latter was greatly surprised as he had sent none to the station, and was not aware of any person coming from Shirdi.

Mr. B.V. Dev of Thana, retired Mamlatdar, made enquiries about this matter with Bapurao Chandorkar son of Nanasaheb and Ramgirbua of Shirdi, and after satisfying himself wrote an elaborate article – part prose and part poetry – in the Shri Sai Leela magazine (Vol. 13 Nos. 11, 12 and 13). B.V. Narsimhaswami has also taken down the statements of (1) Mainatai (No. V, page 14) and (2) Bapusaheb Chandorkar (No. XX, page 50) and (3) Ramgirbua (No. XXV II, page 83, dated 1st June, 1936, 1st September, 1936 and 1st December, 1936 respectively, and published them in his 'Devotees Experiences, Part III'. The following is quoted from Ramgirbua's statement:

"One day Baba called me to him and gave me a packet of Udi and a copy of Baba's Aarti. I had to go to Khandesh at that time. Baba directed me to go to Jamner and told me to deliver the Aarti and Udi to Nanasaheb Chandorkar at Jamner. I said to Baba that all I had was Rs. 2 and asked Him, how that could take me by train, from Kopergaon to Jalgaon and next from Jalgaon to Jamner. Baba said, "God will give." That was a Friday and I started at once. I reached Manmad at 7:30 p.m. and Jalgaon at 2:45 a.m. At that time plague regulations were in force and I had much trouble. I was to discover, what I should do to get to Jamner. At about 3 a.m. a peon in boots, turban, and equipped with other details of good dress, came to me and took me to a tonga and drove me on. On the way at Bhaghoor, I took refreshments. We reached

Jamner early in the morning and by the time I attended call of nature, the tonga and its driver had disappeared (page 83). "

Narayanrao

Bhakta Narayanrao (father's name and surname are not given) had the good fortune to see Baba twice during the latter's lifetime. Three years after the passing away of Baba in 1918 he wanted to come to Shirdi but could not. Within a year of Baba's Mahasamadhi he fell sick and suffered much. All possible remedies gave him no relief. So he meditated on Baba day and night. One night he had a vision. Baba came through a cellar and comforted him saying, "Don't be anxious, you will be improving from tomorrow and within a week you will be on your legs." Narayanrao got perfectly well within the time indicated in the vision. Now the point for consideration is this: Was Baba living because He had the body, or was He dead because He left it? No, Baba is ever alive for, He transcends both life and death. He who loved Him whole-heartedly, gets response from Him at any time and at any place. He is always by our side and will take any form, appear before the devout bhakta and satisfy him.

Appasaheb Kulkarni

In 1917, Appasaheb Kulkarni was transferred to Thana and began to worship Baba's picture presented to him by Balasaheb Bhate. In real earnest, he did the worship. He offered, flowers, sandal-paste, and Naivaidya daily to Baba in the picture, and longed intently to see Him. In this connection it may be remarked that, seeing Baba's picture earnestly is equivalent to seeing Him in person. The following story illustrates this statement.

Balabua Sutar

A saint of Mumbai named Balabua Sutar, who on account of his piety, devotion and style was called 'Modern Tukaram', came to Shirdi for the first time in 1917. When he bowed before Baba, the latter said, "I have known this man for four years". Balabua wondered and thought how could that be, as that was his first trip to Shirdi. But thinking about it seriously, he recollected that he had prostrated himself four years ago before Baba's portrait at Mumbai, and was convinced about the significance of Baba's words. He said to himself, "How omniscient and all-pervading are the saints and how kind are they to their devotees ! I

merely bowed to His photo, but this fact was noticed by Baba, and in due time He made me realize that, seeing His photo is equivalent to seeing Him in person!"

Now we return to Appasaheb's story. While he was in Thana, he had to go on tour to Bhivandi and was expected to return after a week. In his absence, the following wonderful thing took place on the third day. At noon a Fakir turned up, at Appasaheb's house. His features resembled exactly those of Baba's photo. Mrs. Kulkarni and the children all asked him, whether he was Sai Baba of Shirdi. He said, "No", but that he was an obedient servant of His and came there at His order to enquire after the well-being of the family. Then he asked for dakshina. The lady gave him a rupee. He gave her a small packet of Udi and asked her to keep this in the shrine. Then he left the house and went away. Now, hear the wonderful Legend of Sai!

Appasaheb could not proceed with his tour, as his horse fell sick at Bhivandi. He returned home that afternoon, and learnt from his wife about Fakir's visit. He got very restless as he did not have the darshan of the Fakir, moreover he did not like that only one rupee was paid to him as Dakshina. He said that had he been present, he would have paid not less than ten rupees. Then, he immediately started in quest of the Fakir, and searched for him in the Masjid and other places, without taking any food. His search was in vain. He then returned home and took his food. The readers may remember here Baba's dictum in chapter 32 that, God's quest should not be made on an empty belly. Then, after meals he went out for a walk with a friend, Mr. Chitre. After going some distance, they saw a man approaching them rapidly. Appasaheb thought that, he must be the Fakir that came to his house at noon, as his features tallied with those of Baba in the photo. The Fakir immediately put forth his hand and asked for Dakshina. Appasaheb gave him a rupee. He demanded again and again, and so Appasaheb gave him two more. Still he was not satisfied. Then he borrowed Rs. three from Mr. Chitre and gave them to him. He wanted still more. Appasaheb asked him to accompany him to his home. Then they all returned home and Appasaheb gave him three rupees, in all nine. He looked unsatisfied and demanded again. Then, Appasaheb told him that he had a currency note of Rs. ten. The Fakir asked for the same, took it and returned the nine rupees and went away. Appasaheb had earlier said that he would pay ten rupees and that sum was taken from him and nine rupees, consecrated by Baba's touch, were returned to him. The figure 9 is significant. It denotes

the nine types of devotion (vide chapter 21). It may also be noted here that, Baba gave nine coins to one Laxmibai Shinde, at His last moment.

Appasaheb examined the Udi-packet and found that it contained some flower-leaves and Akshata. Then some time afterwards, he got a hair from Baba, when he saw Him at Shirdi. He put the Udi-packet and the hair in a Tabiz and wore it always on his arm. Appasaheb realized the power of the Udi. Though he was very efficient, he got Rs. 40/- as pay in the beginning; but after he secured Baba's photo and His Udi, he got many times more, and also got much power and influence, and along with these temporal benefits, his spiritual progress was also rapid. So those who are fortunate enough to get Baba's Udi should, after bath, apply it on the forehead and take some of it, mixed with water as holy Tirth.

Haribhau Karnik

In 1917, Haribhau Karnik of Dahanu (Thana district) came to Shirdi, on the Guru-pournima day (in the month of Ashadha) and worshipped Baba with all formalities. He offered clothes and dakshina and after taking Baba's leave got down the steps of the Masjid. Then he thought that, he should offer one more rupee to Baba and was just turning to climb up again, when Shama signalled him by gesture that, as he had got Baba's leave he should go and not return. So he started for home. On his way, when he went into the temple of Kala Ram at Nasik for darshan, the saint Narsing Maharaj, who used to sit inside the temple, came to Haribhau, caught him by his wrist and said, "Give me my one rupee". Karnik was surprised; he paid the rupee most willingly and thought that, Sai Baba recovered the rupee, which he intended in his mind to give, through saint Narsing Maharaj.

This story illustrates the fact that, all saints are one, and illustrates, how they work in unison.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXIV

Greatness of Udi (continued)

(1) Doctor's Nephew (2) Dr. Pilky (3) Shama's Sister-in-law (4) Irani Girl (5) Harda Gentleman (6) Mumbai Lady

This chapter continues the subject – 'Greatness of Udi' – and describes cases, in which the application of Udi was most efficacious.

Doctor's Nephew

In Malegaon (Dist. Nasik), there lived a doctor (qualified and degree holder). His nephew suffered from an incurable disease – tubercular bone-abscess. The doctor along with his relatives, and medical practitioners, tried all sorts of remedies and even surgery. There was no relief and no end to the little boy's suffering. Friends and relatives advised the parents of the boy, to seek divine aid and recommended them to go to Sai Baba, Who was known to have cured such incurable cases, by His mere glance. The parents, therefore, came to Shirdi. They prostrated themselves before Baba, placed the boy before Him and pleaded humbly and implored Him to save their son. The merciful Baba comforted them saying, "Those who resort to this Masjid, shall never suffer anything in this life to the end of time, now do not worry! Apply Udi on the abscess, and within a week he will recover. Believe in God! This is no Masjid, but Dwarkamai. He who steps here, will soon get health and happiness, and his sufferings will come to an end". The boy was made to sit before Baba, Who moved his hands on the affected part and cast His loving glances on him. The patient was pleased and with the application of the Udi, he began to recover, and was all right after some days. The parents then left Shirdi with their son, thanking Baba for the cure, which was effected by Udi and Baba's gracious looks.

After knowing this, the doctor, the uncle of the boy, became wonder-struck and desired to see Baba. While he was on his way to Mumbai for some business, at Malegaon and Manmad, somebody spoke to him against Baba and poisoned his ears. Therefore, he dropped the idea of visiting Shirdi and went to Mumbai direct. He wanted to spend the rest of his leave at Alibagh, but at Mumbai he heard for three successive nights a voice : "Still you disbelieve Me?" Then, the doctor changed his

mind and resolved to go to Shirdi. He had to attend to a case of infectious fever in Mumbai, which showed no signs of quick abatement. So he thought that his Shirdi trip would be postponed. He however proposed a test in his mind and said that 'If the patient gets all right by today, I will start for Shirdi tomorrow.' The wonder is that exactly from the time when the determination was done, the fever began to abate and the temperature became normal. Then he went to Shirdi, as per his determination, took Baba's darshan and prostrated himself before Him. Baba gave him such experiences that, he became His devotee. He stayed there for four days and returned home with Baba's Ud and blessings. Within a fortnight, he was transferred on promotion to Bijapur. His nephew's case gave him an opportunity for seeing Baba and this visit garnered in him a never-fading love for the Saint's feet.

Dr. Pilley

One Dr. Pilley was an intimate devotee of Baba. He was much liked by Baba, Who always called him Bhau (brother). Baba talked to him off and on and consulted him in all matters, and wanted him always at His side. This Pilley suffered once very badly from guinea-worms. He said to Kakasaheb Dixit, "The pain is most excruciating and unbearable. I prefer death to it. This pain I know is for repaying past karma, but go to Baba and tell Him to cease the pain and transfer the balance of my past karma to ten future births of mine." Mr. Dixit went to Baba and told Him his request. Then Baba, being moved by his request, said to Dixit, "Tell him to be fearless! Why should he suffer for ten births? In ten days he can work out the sufferings and consequences of his past karma. While I am here to give him temporal and spiritual welfare, why should he pray for death? Bring him here on somebody's back, and let us work and finish his sufferings once for all."

The doctor was brought in that condition and was seated on Baba's right side. Baba gave him His bolster and said, "Lie down calmly here and be at ease. The true remedy is that the result of past actions has to be suffered and got over. Our karma is the cause of our happiness and sorrow therefore, put up with whatever comes to you. Allah (God) is the sole Dispenser and Protector, think of Him always. He will take care of you. Surrender to Him with body, mind, and speech, and then see what He does." Dr. Pilley said that, Nanasaheb had put a bandage over the leg, but he had no relief. "Nana is a fool," replied Baba. "Take off that bandage or else you will die. Now a crow

will come and peck at you, and then you will recover."

While this conversation was going on, Abdul, who always cleaned the Masjid and trimmed the lamps, turned up. While he was attending to his work, his foot accidentally fell upon the stretched leg of Dr. Pilley. The leg was already swollen, and when Abdul's foot fell upon it and pressed it, all the seven guinea-worms were squeezed out at once. The pain was unbearable and Dr. Pilley cried out loudly. After some time he calmed down and began to sing and cry alternately. Then Pilley enquired when the crow was coming and pecking. Baba said, "Did you not see the crow? He won't come again. Abdul was the crow. Now go and rest in the wada, and you will be soon all right."

By application of the Udi and by taking it orally with water, without taking any other treatment or medicine, the disease was completely cured in ten days, as assured by Baba.

Shama's Sister-in-law

Shama's younger brother, Bapaji, was staying near the Sawlivihi. Once his wife was attacked with bubonic plague. She had high fever and two bubos in her groins. Bapaji rushed to Shama at Shirdi and asked him to come and help. Shama was frightened but according to his wont (custom), he went to Baba, prostrated himself before Him to invoke His aid, by requesting Him to cure the case. He also asked His permission to go to his brother's house. Then Baba said, "Don't go there at this late hour, send her the Udi. Why care for the fever and bubos? God is our father; she will be all right easily. Do not go now; go there in the morning and return immediately."

Shama had full faith in Baba's Udi. It was sent with Bapaji. It was applied on the bubos and some of it was mixed with water given to the patient for drinking. No sooner was it taken in, perspiration set in profusely, the fever abated and the patient had a sound sleep. Next morning, Bapaji was surprised to see his wife all right, with no fever and no bubos. When Shama went there next morning, with Baba's permission he was also surprised to see her in the kitchen preparing tea. On questioning his brother he learnt that, Baba's Udi cured her completely in one night. Then Shama realized the significance of Baba's words: "Go there in the morning and return immediately."

After taking tea, Shama returned and after saluting Baba said,

"Deva, what is this play of Yours? You first raise a storm and make us restless and then calm it down and comfort us." Baba replied, "You see mysterious is the path of action. Though I do nothing, they hold Me responsible for the actions which take place on account of Prarabdh (destiny). I am only their witness. The Lord is the Sole Doer and Inspirer. He is most merciful. Neither I am God, nor Master. I am His obedient servant and remember Him constantly. He who casts aside his egoism and thanks Him and he, who trusts Him entirely will have his shackles removed and will obtain liberation."

Irani's Daughter

Now read the experience of an Irani gentleman. His young daughter got fits every hour. When the convulsion came, she lost her power of speech, her limbs contracted and she fell down senseless. No remedy gave her any relief. Some friend recommended Baba's Udi to her father and asked him to get it from Kakasaheb Dixit, at Ville Parle (suburb of Mumbai). Then the Irani gentleman got the Udi and gave it, mixed with water to his daughter daily for drinking. In the beginning the convulsions, which were coming hourly, came every seven hours, and after a few days the daughter recovered completely.

Harda Gentleman

An old gentleman of Harda was suffering from a stone in his kidney. Such stones are generally removed by surgical operations and people recommended him to undergo one. He was old and weak, lacked strength of mind, and could not think of submitting himself to surgical treatment. His suffering was soon to end in another way. The Inamdar (city officer) of that town happened to come there at that time. He was a devotee of Baba and had always a stock of Udi with him. On the recommendation of friends, his son got some Udi from him and after mixing it with water gave it to his old father to drink. Within five minutes the Udi was assimilated, the stone was dissolved and came out through his urine, and old man was soon relieved.

Mumbai Lady

A woman of the Kayastha Prabhu caste in Mumbai, always suffered terrible pain at her delivery. She was very much frightened each time she became pregnant and did not know what to do. Shri Ramamaruti

of Kalyan, who was a devotee of Baba advised her husband to take her to Shirdi. When she next became pregnant, both husband and wife came to Shirdi, stayed there for some months and worshipped Baba. After some time, the hour of delivery came and as usual there was obstruction in the passage from the womb. She began to suffer labour pains, did not know what to do but began to pray to Baba for relief. In the meantime, some neighbouring women turned up and after invoking Baba's aid, gave her Udi-mixture to drink. In five minutes, the woman delivered safely and painlessly. The issue was still-born according to its fate but the mother, who got rid of the anxiety and pain thanked Baba for the safe delivery, and ever remained grateful to Him.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXV

Tested and Never Found Wanting

*Kaka Mahajani's Friend and Master – Bandra
insomnia case – Bala Patil Newaskar*

This chapter also continues with the subject of the importance and effectiveness of the Udi; it also gives two cases in which Baba was tested and not found wanting. These cases will be taken up first.

Preliminary

In spiritual matters or endeavours, sectarianism is the greatest bar to our progress. Those who believe that God is without form, are heard saying that, to believe that God is with the form is an illusion; and that the saints are only human beings. Then why should they bow down their heads before them and offer dakshina? Persons belonging to other sects will also raise objections and say: "Why should they bow and offer allegiance to other saints, leaving their own Gurus?" Similar objections regarding Sai Baba were heard before and even now. Some said that when they went to Shirdi, Baba asked for dakshina from them; is it good that saints should collect money in this fashion? If they do so, where is their sainthood? But there are many instances where men went to Shirdi to scoff but remained there to pray. Two such instances are given below.

Kaka Mahajani's Friend

A friend of Kaka Mahajani was a worshipper of Nirgun, God without form, and was averse to idolatry. Out of curiosity he agreed to go to Shirdi with Kaka Mahajani on two conditions, viz: (1) that he would neither bow down to Baba, (2) nor pay Him any dakshina. Kaka agreed to these conditions and they both left Mumbai on a Saturday night and reached Shirdi the next morning. As soon as they put their feet on the steps of the Masjid, Baba, looking at the friend from a little distance addressed him in sweet words as follows: "Oh, welcome sir". The tone in which He uttered these words, was a very peculiar one. It exactly resembled the tone of the friend's father. It reminded him of his departed father and sent a thrill through his body. What an enchanting power the tone had! Being surprised the friend said, "This is no doubt the voice of my father". Then, he at once went up and forgetting his resolution, placed his head upon Baba's Feet.

* कां, यावें जी.

Then Baba asked for dakshina twice, once in the morning and again at noon, at the time of their taking leave but, He asked it from Kaka only and not from the friend. The latter whispered to Kaka, "Baba asked for dakshina from you twice. I am with you why does He ignore me?" "You ask Baba yourself" was Kaka's reply. Baba asked Kaka, what his friend was whispering, then the friend asked Baba himself whether he should pay any dakshina. Baba replied, "You had no mind to pay, so you were not asked, but if you want to pay now you may." Then the friend paid Rs. 17 as dakshina, the same amount that Kaka paid. Baba then addressed him with a few words of advice, "You destroy the Teli's wall (sense of difference) between us, so that we can see and meet each other face to face." Then, Baba allowed them to leave. Though the weather was cloudy and rough, Baba assured them of their safe journey, and both of them reached Mumbai safely. When he reached home and opened the door and windows of his house, he found two sparrows dead on the ground and one just flying out through a window. He thought that if he had left the windows open, two sparrows would have been saved but thought again that, they had met their lot, and that Baba had sent him back soon just to save the third sparrow.

Kaka Mahajani's Master

Kaka was the Manager in the firm of Thakkar Dharamsey Jethabhai, a solicitor of Mumbai. Both the Master and the Manager, were on intimate terms. Mr. Thakkar knew that Kaka would often go to Shirdi, stay there for some days and return, when Baba permitted him. Out of curiosity Mr. Thakkar decided to go to Shirdi with Kaka, during Shimga holidays. As Kaka's return was uncertain, he took another man with him, for his company. The three started together and Kaka bought two seers of raisins (dried grapes with seed), on the way for presentation to Baba. They reached Shirdi in due time, and went to the Masjid for darshan. Babasaheb Tarkhad was also there, and Mr. Thakkar asked him, why he came there. "For darshan", Tarkhad replied. Mr. Thakkar asked if miracles took place there. Tarkhad replied that it (to see miracles) was not the concern, the earnest intentions of the bhaktas were satisfied here. Then, Kaka prostrated himself before Baba and offered the raisins to Him. Baba ordered them to be distributed. Mr. Thakkar also got a few of them. He did not want to have the raisins, as he was advised by his doctor not to eat them without washing and cleaning them. So he was in a fix. He did not want to eat them, nor could he reject them. To keep up formalities, he put them into his mouth but did not know, what to do with the seeds. He could not spit them out on the floor of the Masjid, so he pocketed them against his wish. He then said in his mind that, if Baba was a Saint, how could He be ignorant of his dislike for the

raisins, and how could He force them on him. When this thought arose in his mind Baba again gave him some more raisins. He could not eat them but held them in his hand. Then Baba asked him to eat them up. He obeyed and found to his surprise that, they were all seedless. He wanted to see miracles and here was one. He knew that Baba read his thought and as per his wish converted raisins (with seeds) into seedless grapes. What a wonderful power! Again to test further, he asked Tarkhad, who was sitting by and who also got some raisins, "What kind of grapes you got?" He replied, "The variety with seeds." Mr. Thakkar was still more surprised to hear this. Then to confirm his faith further Thakkar thought in his mind that, if Baba was a real saint, the raisins should be now given to Kaka first. Reading this thought also, Baba ordered that, distribution should be commenced from Kaka. These proofs were sufficient for Thakkar.

Then Shama introduced Mr. Thakkar, as the master of Kaka, upon which Baba said, "How could he be his master? He has got a different Master altogether." Kaka appreciated this reply. After forgetting his resolve, Thakkar saluted Baba and returned to the wada.

After the noon-Arati was over, they all went to the Masjid for taking Baba's leave for their departure. Shama spoke for them. Baba, then spoke as follows :

"There was a fickle-minded gentleman. He had health and wealth and was free from both, physical and mental afflictions, but he took on needless anxieties and burdens and wandered hither and thither, thus losing his peace of mind. Sometimes, he dropped the burdens and at other times carried them again. His mind knew no steadiness. On seeing his state, I took pity on him and said, "Now, keep your faith on one place you like, why roam like this?"

Thakkar at once understood that, this was an exact description of himself. He wished that Kaka should also return with him; but no one expected that Kaka would be allowed to leave Shirdi, so soon. Baba read this thought also and permitted Kaka to return with his master.

Then Baba asked Kaka for Rs. 15/- as dakshina and received it. He said, "If I take one rupee as Dakshina from anybody, I have to return tenfold to him. I never take anything gratis. I never ask anyone, indiscriminately. I only ask and take from him, whom the Fakir (My Guru) points out. If anyone is indebted formerly to the Fakir, Dakshina is received from him. The donor gives, i.e. sows his seeds, only to reap a rich harvest in future. Wealth should be the means to work out dharma. If it is used for personal enjoyment, it is wasted. Unless you

have given it before, you do not get it now. So, the best way to receive, is to give. The giving of Dakshina, advances Vairagya (non-attachment), and thereby Bhakti and Dnyan. Give one and receive tenfold!"

On hearing these words Mr. Thakkar himself gave Rs. 15/- in Baba's hand, forgetting his earlier resolve, not to do so. He thought, it was good that he came to Shirdi as all his doubts were solved and he learnt so much.

Baba's skill in handling such cases was unique. Though He conducted all that, He was totally non-attached to them. Whether anybody saluted Him or not, or whether anybody gave Him Dakshina or not, all was same to Him. He felt no pleasure, if He was worshipped and felt no pain, if He was disregarded. He had transcended the pairs of opposites, viz. pleasure and pain, etc.

Insomnia case

A Kayastha Prabhu gentleman of Bandra suffered from insomnia for long. As soon as he lay down for sleep, his departed father appeared to him in his dream, abused and scolded him severely. This disturbed his sleep and made him restless the whole night. Every night this went on and the man did not know what to do. One day he consulted a devotee of Baba in this respect. He recommended the Udi, as the only infallible remedy he knew. He gave him some of the Udi and asked him to apply a little on his forehead before going to bed and keep the Udi-packet, under his pillow. He tried this remedy and found to his great surprise and joy that he had a sound sleep, and there was no disturbance of any kind. He continued the remedy and always remembered Sai. Then he got a picture of Sai Baba, which he hung on the wall, near his pillow and started worshipping it daily, and on Thursdays offered garland, Naivaidya etc. Then he got well and forgot his trouble altogether.

Balaji Patil Newaskar

This man was a great devotee of Baba. He rendered excellent and selfless service. Every day he swept and kept clean all the passages and streets in Shirdi, through which Baba passed in His daily routine. After him this work was done equally well by another devotee, Radhakrishnamai, and after her by Abdulla. When Balaji reaped his corn every year, he brought the whole quantity and presented it to Baba. He returned with what Baba gave him back and maintained himself and his family with it. This course was followed by him for many years and after him by his son also.

Power and Efficacy of Udi

Once it happened that, on Balaji's death anniversary a certain number of guests were invited and the dinner was prepared for them. But at dinner-time it was found that, thrice the number of people invited, turned up. Mrs. Newaskar was in a fix. She thought that the food would not suffice for the people assembled, and if it fell short, the honour of the family would be at stake. Her mother-in-law comforted her by saying, "Don't be afraid, it is not ours but Sai's food; cover every vessel with cloth, putting some Udi in it and serve from the same without opening it; Sai will save us from ignominy." She did as she was advised, and it was found to their surprise and joy that, not only did the food suffice for all, but plenty of it remained after serving. "As one feeds intently, so he realizes accordingly" was proved in this case.*

Sai appearing as Serpent

Once Raghu Patil of Shirdi went to Balaji Patil at Newase. That evening he found that a serpent entered the cowshed hissing. All the cattle were afraid and became restless. The inmates of the house were frightened, but Balaji thought that it was Sai. Who appeared in his house as a serpent. Without being afraid in the least, he brought a cup of milk and placing it before the serpent said, "Baba, why do You hiss like this? Do you want to frighten us? Take this cup of milk and drink it with a calm mind." Saying this, he sat down close by. The other members were frightened and did not know what to do. In a short time the serpent disappeared of its own and nobody knew where it went. It was not found, though a thorough search was made in the cowshed.

Balaji had two wives and some children. They sometimes went to Shirdi, from Newase, for taking Baba's darshan. Then, Baba bought saris and other clothes, which were given to them with His blessings.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

* A similar instance is reported to me by my friend Mr. B.A. Chougule, first class sub-judge and a great devotee of Baba. In February 1943, there was a puja-festival and dinner, at Karjat (Dist. Ahmednagar). About five times the number of people invited, came up, and they were all fed. To the astonishment of all, it was found that, by Baba's grace there was no shortage of food.



CHAPTER XXXVI

Wonderful Stories of

(1) Two Goa Gentlemen (2) Mrs. Aurangabadkar

This chapter relates the wonderful stories of two gentlemen from Goa; and Mrs. Aurangabadkar of Solapur.

Two Gentlemen

Once, two gentlemen came from Goa for taking darshan of Sai Baba and prostrated themselves before Him. Though both came together, Baba asked only one of them to give Him Rs. 15/- as dakshina, which was paid willingly. The other man voluntarily offered Rs. 35/- which was rejected by Baba, to the astonishment of all. Shama, who was present, asked Baba, "What is this? Both came together; one's Dakshina you accept, the other's though voluntarily paid, you refuse. Why this discrimination?" Baba replied, "Shama you know nothing. I take nothing from anybody. The Masjidmai (The presiding Deity of the Masjid) calls for the debt, the donor pays it and becomes free. Have I any home, property or family to look after? I require nothing. I am ever free. Debt, enmity and murder have to be atoned for, as there is no escape from them." Baba then continued in His characteristic way as follows :

At first he was poor and took a vow to his god that, he would pay his first month's salary, if he got a job. He got one for Rs. 15/- p.m. Then he steadily got promotions. From Rs. 15/- he got Rs. 30, 60, 100, 200, and ultimately Rs. 700/- p.m. But in his prosperity, he forgot completely the vow, he took. The force of his Karma has driven him here and I asked that amount (Rs. 15/-) from him as Dakshina.

Another story : While wandering by the sea-side I came to a huge mansion and sat in its verandah. The Brahmin owner gave me a good reception and fed me sumptuously. He showed me a neat and clean place near a cupboard for sleeping. I slept there. While I was sound asleep, the man removed a laterite slab and broke the wall, crept in and scissored off all the money from my pocket. When I woke up, I found that Rs. 30,000/- were stolen. I was greatly distressed and sat weeping and moaning. The money was in currency notes and I thought that, the Brahmin had stolen it. I lost all interest in food and drink and sat for

a fortnight in the verandah, bemoaning my loss. After the fortnight was over, a passing Fakir saw me crying and made enquiries regarding the cause of my sorrow. I told him everything. He said, "If you act according to my bidding, you will recover your money. Go to a Fakir, I shall give his whereabouts, surrender yourself to him, he will get your money back; in the meanwhile give up your favourite food, till you recover your money." I followed the Fakir's advice and got my money. Then, I went to the sea-shore, where a steamer was standing but I could not get into it, as it was over crowded. There a good-natured peon interceded for me and I got in luckily. That brought me to another shore from where I caught a train and came to the Masjidmai.

The story finished and Baba asked Shama to take the guests and arrange for their feeding. Then Shama took them home and fed them. At dinner, Shama said to the guests that Baba's story was rather mysterious, as He had never gone to the sea-side, never had any money (Rs.30,000/-), never travelled, never lost any money and never recovered it, and enquired from them, whether they understood it and caught its significance. The guests were deeply moved and were shedding tears. In a choked voice they said that Baba was Omniscient, Infinite, the Supreme One (Para Brahma) without a second. The story He gave out is exactly our story. What He spoke has already taken place in our case. How He knew this, is a wonder of wonders! We shall give all the details after the meals.

Then after the meals, while they were chewing betel-leaves, the guests began to tell their stories. One of them said :

"A hill station on the ghats is, my native place. I went to Goa to earn my living by securing a job. I took a vow to God Datta that if I got a job, I would offer Him my first month's salary. By His grace I got a job of Rs. 15/- and then I got promotions, as described by Baba. I did forget all about my vow. Baba has just reminded me of it in this way and recovered Rs. 15/- from me. It is not Dakshina as one may think it to be; but a repayment of an old debt and fulfillment of long forgotten vow."

Moral

In fact, Baba never begged for any money, nor allowed His Bhaktas to beg. He regarded money as a danger or bar to spiritual progress, and did not allow his Bhaktas to fall into its clutches. Bhagat Mhalsapati

is an instance on this point. He was very poor and could hardly make both ends meet. Baba never allowed him to make any money, nor gave him anything from the Dakshina collection. Once a kind and liberal merchant, named Hansraj, gave a large amount of money to Mhalsapati in Baba's presence but Baba did not permit him to accept it.

Then the second guest began his tale. "My Brahmin (cook) was serving me faithfully for 35 years. Unfortunately, he fell into bad ways, his mind changed and he robbed me of my treasure. By removing a laterite slab from my wall where my cup-board is fixed, he came in while we were all deep asleep and carried away all my accumulated wealth, Rs. 30,000/- in currency notes. I know not how Baba mentioned the exact amount. I sat crying day and night. My enquiries came to nothing. I spent a fortnight in great anxiety. As I sat on the verandah, sad and dejected, a passing Fakir saw my condition and enquired of its cause, and I told him all about it. He told me that an Avalia (Saint), by name Sai lives in Shirdi, Kopergaon taluka. Make vow to Him and give up any food, that you like best and say to Him mentally that "I have given up eating that food, till I take Your darshan." Then I took the vow and gave up eating rice and said, "Baba, I will eat it after recovering my property and after taking Your darshan."

Fifteen days passed after this. The Brahmin of his own accord, came to me, returned my money and apologized, saying, "I went mad and acted thus; I now place my head on your feet please forgive me." Thus everything ended well. The Fakir that met me and helped me, was not seen again. An intense desire to see Sai Baba, whom the Fakir pointed out to me arose in my mind. I thought that the Fakir, Who came all the way to my house, was no other than Sai Baba. Would He, Who saw me and helped me to get my lost money, ever covet Rs. 35/-? On the contrary without expecting anything from us, He always leads us on the path of spiritual progress.

I was overjoyed when I recovered my stolen property and being ignorant, I forgot all about my vow. Then when I was at Colaba, one night, I saw Sai Baba in my dream. This reminded me of my promised visit to Shirdi. I went to Goa and from there wanted to start for Shirdi, by taking a steamer to Mumbai en route. But when I came to the harbour, I found that the steamer was crowded and there was no place. The captain did not allow me but on the intercession of a peon, who was a stranger to me, I was allowed to get into the steamer which

brought me to Mumbai. From there I came by train. Surely, I think that Baba is all-pervading and all-knowing. What are we and where is our home? How fortunate we are that, Baba got our money back and drew us here to Himself? Shirdi folks must be infinitely superior and more fortunate than we; for, Baba has played, laughed, talked and lived with you for so many years. I think that, your store of good merits must be infinite. Sai is our Datta (Lord Dattatreya). He gave me a seat in the steamer and brought me here, and thus gave proof of His omniscience and omnipotence."

Mrs. Aurangabadkar

A lady from Solapur, the wife of Sakharam Aurangabadkar, had no issue during the long period of 27 years. She had made a number of vows to gods and goddesses for an issue but was not successful. She then became almost hopeless. To make a last attempt in this matter, she came to Shirdi with her step-son Vishwanath and stayed there for two months, serving Baba. Whenever she went to the Masjid, she found Baba surrounded by devotees. She wanted to see Baba alone, fall at His Feet and open her heart and pray for an issue; but she did not get any suitable opportunity. Ultimately, she requested Shama to intercede with Baba for her, when He was alone. Shama said to her that Baba's Darbar was open, still he would try for her and that the Lord might bless her. He asked her to sit ready with a coconut and joss-sticks in the open courtyard at the time of Baba's meals, and that when he beckoned to her, she should come up. One day, after dinner when Shama was wiping Baba's wet hands with a towel, the latter pinched Shama's cheek. Shama feigning anger said, "Deva, is it proper for You to pinch me like this? We don't want such a mischievous God, Who pinches us thus. Are we Your dependents, is this the fruit of our intimacy?" Baba replied, "Oh Shama, during the 72 generations that you were with me, I never pinched you till now and now you resent my touching you." Shama replied, "I want a God who will always love us and gives us new dishes to eat. We do not want any reward from You, or heaven, etc. Let our faith unto Your Feet be ever awake." Baba, "Yes, I have indeed come for that. I have been feeding and nursing you, and have got love and affection for you."

Then Baba went up and took His seat. Shama beckoned to the lady. She came up, bowed down and presented the coconut and joss-

sticks. Baba shook the coconut, which was dry. The kernel within rolled and made a noise. Baba said, "Shama, this is rolling, see, what it says." Shama, "The woman prays that, a child should similarly roll in her womb. So, please give her the coconut with Your blessing."

Baba, "Will the coconut give her any issue? How foolish people are to fancy such things!"

Shama, "I know the power of Your words and blessing, Your word will give her a series of children. You are wrangling and not giving real blessing."

The parley went on for a while. Baba repeatedly ordered to break the coconut and Shama pleaded for the gift of the entire fruit to the lady. Finally, Baba yielded and said, "She will have an issue." "When?" asked Shama. "In 12 months," was the reply. At this the coconut was broken into two parts, one was eaten by the two, the other was given to the lady.

Then Shama turned up to the lady and said, "Dear lady, you are a witness to my words. If within 12 months you do not get any issue, I will break a coconut against this Deva's head and drive him out of this Masjid. If I fail in this I will not call myself Madhav. You will soon realize what I say."

She delivered a son in a year's time, and the son was brought to Baba in his fifth month. The couple, both husband and wife, prostrated themselves before Baba, and the grateful father (Mr. Aurangabadkar) paid a sum of Rs. 500/-, which was spent in constructing a shed for Baba's horse 'Shyam-karna'.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXVII

Chavadi Procession

In this chapter, Hemadpant, after making some preliminary observations on some points of Vedanta, describes the Chavadi procession.

Preliminary

Blessed is Sai's life for His devotees, blessed is His daily routine. His ways and actions are indescribable. Some times He was intoxicated with Brahmanand (divine bliss) and at other times, completely Self-absorbed. While doing so many things at the same time, He was yet unconcerned with them. Though He seemed at times quite inactive He was not idle or dozing; He always abided in His own Self. Though He looked calm and placid as the sea, He was deep and unfathomable. Who can describe His ineffable nature? He regarded men as brothers, women as sisters and mothers. He was a Perfect Celibate, as everybody knows. May the knowledge we got in His company, last long unto death. Let us ever serve Him with whole-hearted devotion to His Feet. Let us see Him (God) in all beings and let us constantly remember His name.

Hemadpant after making some lengthy dissertations on some topics of Vedanta, which he himself considers, as a digression, goes on to describe the Chavadi procession.

Chavadi Procession

Baba's dormitory has been already described. One day He slept in the Masjid and on the next, in the Chavadi near the Masjid. He slept in the Masjid and in the Chavadi on alternate days. This alternate sleeping at both these places went on till Baba's Mahasamadhi. From 10th December 1909, devotees began to offer regular worship to Baba in the Chavadi. This we will now describe, with His grace. When the day of retiring to the Chavadi came, people flocked to the Masjid and did Bhajan in the Mandap (courtyard) for a few hours. Behind them was a beautiful Palanquin, to the right a Tulsi-vrindavan, and in front Baba adorned His seat, and there were the devotees singing Bhajan.

Men and women, who had a liking for the bhajan came in time. Some took tal, chiplis and kartal, mridang, khanjiri and ghol (all musical instruments), in their hands and conducted the bhajan. Sai Baba was the Magnet, Who drew all the devotees to Him. Outside in the open, some trimmed their Divatyas (torches), some decorated the palanquin, some stood with cane-sticks in their hands and hailed victory to Baba. The corners were decorated with buntings. In the Masjid, rows of burning oil lamps shed their light. Baba's horse 'Shyam-karna' stood fully decorated outside. Then Tatya Patil came with a group of men to Baba and asked Him to be ready. Baba sat quiet in His place, till Tatya came and helped Him to get up by putting his arm under Baba's arm. Tatya called Baba, by the name of Mama (maternal uncle). Really their relationship was extremely intimate. Baba wore on His body the usual Kafni, took His Satka (short stick) under His arm-pit and after taking His Chillim (tobacco-pipe) and tobacco, and placing a cloth over His shoulder became ready to start. Then Tatya placed a golden-embroidered beautiful Shela (shawl) over His body. After this, Baba himself put a few fuel sticks into the Dhuni to keep it alive and with his right hand extinguished the lamp burning near the Dhuni and then started for the Chavadi. Then all sorts of musical instruments, band and horns etc. gave out different sounds, and fire-works exhibited various coloured views. Men and women singing Baba's name, started walking, doing bhajan to the accompaniment of mridang and veena. Some danced with joy and some carried various flags. The Bhaldars¹ announced Baba's name, when He came on the steps of the Masjid. On two sides of Baba stood persons, who held Chamars² and others, who fanned Baba. On the way were spread folds of cloth, which Baba walked on, being supported by devotees' hands, Tatya Patil held the left hand and Mhalsapati the right, and Bapusaheb Jog held the Chhatra (umbrella) over His head. In this fashion, Baba marched on to the Chavadi. The fully decorated horse, named Shyamkarna led the way and behind him, were all the carriers, waiters, musical players and the crowd of devotees. Hari-naam (the name of the Lord) was being chanted to the accompaniment of music, as also the name of Sai. In this manner the procession reached the corner, and everyone who joined this party, seemed pleased and delighted.

1. Bhaldars – Uniformed Escorts

2. Chamar – A bundle of animal hair fixed at one end of a stick

On reaching this corner, Baba stood facing the Chavadi and shone with a peculiar aura. It seemed as if the face of Baba took over the glory of the rising sun. Baba stood there with a concentrated mind, facing the north, as if He was signalling something. All the instruments played music, while Baba moved His right hand up and down for some time. Kakasaheb Dixit at this time, came forward with a silver plate, containing flowers besmeared with Gulal (red powder) and threw them on Baba's body, off and on. The musical instruments played their best at this juncture and Baba's face beamed with radiance and beauty, and all the persons viewed this lustre to their hearts content. Words fail to describe the splendour of this scene. Some times Mhalsapati began to dance, as if possessed by some Deity; but all were surprised to see that Baba's concentration was least disturbed. With a lantern in his hand, Tatyapa Patil walked on Baba's left side and Bhagat Mhalsapati on the right, holding in his hand the hem of Baba's garment. What a beautiful procession and what an expression of devotion! To witness this men and women, poor and rich, flocked there. Baba walked at very slow pace. Bhaktas followed on both sides with love and devotion. With joy permeating the whole atmosphere of the place, the procession reached the Chavadi. Those days are gone now. Nobody can see them in future, but by remembering and visualizing that sight, we can bring solace and ecstasy to our minds.

The Chavadi was also fully decorated with a good white ceiling, mirrors, and many sorts of lamps. On reaching there, Tatyapa went ahead and spread an Asan (seat-cushion) and placing a bolster, made Baba sit there and made Him wear Angarkha (coat). Then the devotees worshipped Him in various ways. They put a crown on His head with a tuft above, placed garlands of flowers and jewels round His neck and marking His forehead with musk-mixed vertical lines (as Vaishnava devotees do), they gazed at Him for long to their heart's content. They changed His head-dress now, and then held it aloft on the head, fearing that Baba might throw it away. Baba knew what the Bhaktas wished for and meekly submitted to all their ways without objection. With these adornments, He looked wonderful and beautiful.

Nanasaheb Nimonkar held the Chhatra (State umbrella) with its beautiful pendants, which moved in a circle, with its supporting stick. Bapusaheb Jog washed His Feet in a silver dish, offered 'Arghya' and worship with due rituals, then besmeared His arms with sandal paste

and offered Him Tambul (betel-leaves). Baba sat on the Asan (Gadi), while Tatya and others kept standing. When Baba sat on the Gadi, supporting Himself against the bolster, devotees on both sides waved Chamars and fans. Shama then prepared the Chillim and handed it over to Tatya Patil, who drew a flame out of it by inhaling a deep breath through his mouth and then gave it to Baba. After Baba had His smoke, it was given to Bhagat Mhalsapati and then it was passed round to all. Blessed was the inanimate Chillim. It had first to undergo many ordeals of penance, such as being kneaded by pot-makers, dried in the sun and burnt in fire, and then it had the good fortune to get the contact of Baba's hand and His kiss. After this function was over, devotees put garlands of flowers around His neck and gave Him scent and bunches of flowers. Baba, Who was an Incarnation of dispassion, cared a fig for all these necklaces of jewels and garlands of flowers and other decorations, but out of real love to His devotees, He allowed them to have their own way and to please themselves. Finally, Bapusaheb Jog waved the Arati over Baba, observing all formalities and the musical instruments played their auspicious tunes. When this Arati was over, the devotees returned home one by one saluting Baba and taking His leave. When Tatya Patil, after offering Chillim, Attar (scent) and rose-water, stood to depart, Baba said to him lovingly, "Guard Me properly, Go if you like but return sometime at night and enquire for Me." On replying in the affirmative, Tatya Patil left the Chavadi and went home. Then, Baba Himself prepared His bed. He arranged 60-65 white cleaned sheets one upon another, and thus making His bed, went to rest.

We shall also now take rest and close this chapter with a request to the readers that, they should remember Baba and His Chavadi procession daily before they retire and go to bed.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXVIII

Baba's Handi – Disrespect of Shrine - Kala or Hodge Podge – Cup of Butter-milk

In the last chapter, we described Baba's Chavadi procession. In this, we take up Baba's Handi (cooking pot), and some other subjects.

Preliminary

Oh, blessed Sadguru Sai, we bow to You, Who has given happiness to the whole world, accomplished the welfare of the devotees and have removed the affliction of those, who have resorted to Your Feet. By being very liberal and also being the protector and saviour of the bhaktas, who surrender themselves to You, You have Incarnated Yourself in this world to oblige mankind and do them good. The liquid essence of Pure Self was poured into the mould of Brahma¹ and out of this has come out the crest-jewel of the saints – Sai. This Sai is Atmaram Himself. He is the Abode of the Perfect Divine Bliss. After having attained Himself all objects of life, He made His devotees established on the path.

Baba's Handi

Different Sadhanas (means of accomplishments) are prescribed in our scriptures for different ages. Tapa (penance) is recommended for Krita age, Dnyan (knowledge) for Treta age, Yagnya (sacrifice) for Dwapara age and Daan (Charity) for Kali (present) age. Of all the charities, giving food is the best one. We are much perturbed, when we get no food at noon. Other beings feel similarly under such circumstances. After knowing this, he, who gives food to the poor and hungry, is the best donor or charitable person. The Taittiriya Upanishad says that "Food is Brahma; from food all the creatures are born and by food they live, and after having departed, into food again they enter." When an Atithi (guest) comes to our door at noon, it is our duty to welcome him by giving him food. Other kinds of charities, viz. giving away wealth, property and clothes etc., require some discrimination but in the matter of food no such consideration is necessary. If anybody

1. Brahma – The God of Creation

comes to our door at noon, he should be served forthwith; and if lame, crippled, blind and diseased persons come, they should be fed first and the able-bodied persons and our relations afterwards. The merit of feeding the former is much greater, than that of feeding the latter. Other kinds of charities are imperfect without this Anna-daan (donation of food), just as stars without the moon, necklace without its pendant, crown without its pinnacle, pond without a lotus, Bhajan without devotion, married lady without the Kumkum-mark, song without a sweet voice or butter-milk without salt. Just as Varan (pulse-soup) excels all other dishes, Anna-daan is the best of all merits. Now, let us see how Baba prepared food and distributed it to others.

It has been stated before that, Baba required very little food for Himself, and whatever little He wanted was obtained by begging from a few houses. But when He decided to distribute food to all, He made all preparations, Himself. He depended on no body and troubled none, in this matter. First He went to the bazaar and bought all the things, corn, flour, spices etc., paying cash. He also did the grinding. In the open court-yard of the Masjid, He arranged a big hearth and after lighting a fire, He kept a Handi over it with a proper measure of water. There were two kinds of Handis, one small and the other big. The former provided food for 50 persons, the latter for 100. Sometimes He cooked 'Mithe Chaval' (sweet rice), and at other times 'Biryani' with meat. At times, in the boiling Varan (soup), He let in small balls of thick or flat bread of wheat flour. He grinded the spices on a stone-slab and put the thin pulverized spices, into the cooking-pot. He took all pains to make the dishes very palatable. He prepared 'Ambil' by boiling jawari-flour in water and later mixing to it butter-milk, and then boiled both together. With the food, He distributed this Ambil to all alike. To see whether the food was properly cooked or not, Baba rolled up the sleeve of His Kafni and put His bare arm, in the boiling cauldron, without fear, and churned (moved) the whole mass from side to side and up and down. There was no mark of burn on His arm nor fear on His face. When the cooking was over, Baba got the pots in the Masjid and had them duly consecrated by the Moulvi (Muslim priest). First He sent part of the food as Prasad to Mhalsapati and Tatya Patil, and then He served the remaining contents with His own hand to all the poor and helpless people, to their heart's content. Really blessed and fortunate must be those people, who got food, prepared by Baba and served by Him.

Somebody may raise a point here and ask: "Did Baba distribute vegetarian and non-vegetarian food as Prasad to all His devotees?" The answer is plain and simple. Those who were accustomed to non-vegetarian food, were given non-vegetarian food from the Handi as Prasad and those who were not so accustomed were given vegetarian meal. He never created in them any wish or desire to indulge in this food. There is a principle that, when a Guru himself gives anything as Prasad, the disciple who thinks and doubts whether it is acceptable or otherwise, goes to perdition (future misery). In order to see, whether any disciple has imbibed this principle, Baba at times put them to tests. For instance, on an Ekadashi day, He gave some rupees to Dada Kelkar and asked him to go in person to Korhala to get meat from there. This Dada Kelkar was an orthodox Brahmin and adhered to all orthodox manners in his life. He knew that offering wealth, grain and clothes etc. to a Sadguru was not enough; but that implicit obedience to Him and prompt compliance with His order was the real dakshina, that pleased Him most. So Dada Kelkar dressed himself and started for the place. Then Baba called him back and said, "Don't go yourself; but send somebody." Then, Dada sent his own servant, Pandu, for the purpose. When Baba saw him going, He asked Dada to call him back and cancelled that programme. On another occasion Baba asked Dada, just to see how the saltish 'Biryani' (mutton dish) was done. The latter replied casually that, it was all right. Then, Baba said to him, "Neither have you seen it with your eyes, nor tasted it with your tongue, then how could you say that it was good? Just take off the lid and see." While saying this Baba caught his arm and thrust it into the pot and added, "Take some out of this leaving aside your orthodox feelings". When a wave of real love rises in a mother's mind, she pinches her child and when he begins to cry, she hugs him close to her bosom. Similarly, Baba, in a true motherly way, pinched Dada Kelkar in this way. Really, no saint or Guru will ever force his orthodox disciple, to eat food forbidden in his religion.

The Handi business went on for some time till 1910, and was stopped thereafter. As stated before, Das Ganu spread the fame of Baba by his kirtans, far and wide, in the Mumbai Presidency and people from that part of the country began to flock to Shirdi, which became very soon a place of pilgrimage. The devotees brought with them various articles for presentation and offered various dishes of food as Naivaidya. The quantity of Naivaidya offered by them was so much that, the Fakirs

and paupers could feed themselves to their heart's content, leaving some surplus behind. Before stating how Naivaidya was distributed, we shall refer to Nanasaheb Chandorkar's story, showing Baba's regard for local shrines and deities.

Nanasaheb's Disrespect of a Shrine

By drawing inferences or guessing in their own way, some people said that Sai was a Brahmin and some said that He was a Muslim. In Reality, He belonged to no caste. No one knew definitely when He was born, and in what community, and who His parents were. Then how could He be a Muslim or Brahmin? If He was a Muslim, how could He keep Dhuni ever burning in the Masjid, how could there be a Tulsi-vrindavan there, how could He allow the blowing of conches and ringing of bells, how could He allow all the different forms of Hindu worship there? Had He been a Muslim, could He have ears pierced and could He have spent money from His pocket for repairing Hindu temples? On the contrary, He never tolerated the slightest disrespect to Shrines and Deities.

Once Nanasaheb Chandorkar came to Shirdi with his 'Sadhu' – husband of his wife's sister, Mr. Biniwale. When they went to the Masjid and sat before Baba, the latter suddenly got angry with Nanasaheb and said, "You have been so long in My company then why do you behave like this?" Nanasaheb at first did not understand anything and humbly requested Baba to explain. Baba asked him, when did he come to Kopergaon and how he came to Shirdi from there Nanasaheb then at once realized his mistake. He usually worshipped the Shrine of Datta, on the banks of the Godavari, at Kopergaon on his way to Shirdi but this time he dissuaded his relative, who was a Datta Bhakta, from going to that Shrine in order to avoid delay and drove straight. He confessed all this to Baba and told Him that, while bathing in the Godavari, a big thorn went into his foot and gave him much trouble. Baba said that, that was a slight punishment he met and warned him to be more careful in future.

Kala (hotch-potch)

To revert to the distribution of the Naivaidya : After the Arati was over and after Baba sent away the people with Udi and blessings, He

went inside and sat behind a curtain with His back to the Nimbar for meals, with two rows of the intimate devotees, one on each side. The Bhaktas brought Naivaidya, containing a variety of food, such as puris, mande, polis, basundi, sanza, fine rice etc and kept waiting outside, for prasad, consecrated by Baba. All the foods were mixed in a hotch-potch and placed before Baba. He offered it to God and consecrated it. Then portions of the same were given to the persons, waiting outside and the rest was served to the group of devotees inside, with Baba at the centre. The Bhaktas sitting in two rows then dined to their heart's content. Baba asked Shama and Nanasaheb Nimonkar, daily to serve the consecrated food to all persons, sitting inside and look to their individual needs and comforts. This they did very carefully and willingly. Every morsel of the food thus partaken gave them fulfilment and satisfaction. Such sweet, lovely and consecrated food it was ! Ever auspicious and ever holy!

Cup of Butter-milk

Once Hemadpant had eaten to his full capacity in this company, when Baba offered him a cup of butter-milk. Its white appearance pleased him, but there was no space for it. He however, took only a sip, on seeing his faltering attitude, Baba said, "Drink it all, you won't get any such opportunity, hereafter." He drank it off then, and found that Baba's words were prophetic, for He passed away after a brief period.

Now readers, we have certainly to thank Hemadpant. He drank the cup of butter-milk; but has supplied us with sufficient quantity of nectar in the form of Baba's Leelas. Let us drink this nectar to our heart's content and be satisfied and happy.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XXXIX

Baba's Knowledge of Sanskrit

His Interpretation of a Verse from Gita – Construction of the Samadhi Mandir

This chapter (39) deals with Baba's interpretation of a verse from the Bhagwad-Gita. As some people believed that Baba had little knowledge of Sanskrit but by the interpretation of Nanasaheb Chandorkar's query Hemadpant refuted that charge, in chapter no. 50, and as it deals with the same subject-matter, it is incorporated in this chapter.

Preliminary

Blessed is Shirdi and blessed is Dwarkamai, where Shri Sai lived and moved, until He took Mahasamadhi. Blessed are the people of Shirdi, whom He obliged and for whom, He lived there. Shirdi was a small village first, but it attained importance, on account of His contact and became a Tirtha, holy place of pilgrimage. Equally blessed are the womenfolk of Shirdi, blessed is their whole and undivided faith in Him. They sang the glories of Baba, while bathing, grinding, pounding corn and doing other house-hold work.

Baba's Interpretation

Nobody believed that, Baba knew Sanskrit. One day He surprised all by giving an interpretation of a verse from the Gita, to Nanasaheb Chandorkar. A brief account about this matter was written by Mr. B.V. Dev, retired Mamlatdar and published in Marathi in 'Shri Sai Leela' magazine, Vol. IV. Sphuta Vishaya, page 563. Short accounts of the same are also published in 'Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings' page 61 and in 'The Wondrous Saint Sai Baba' page 36 – both by B.V. Narsimhaswami. Mr. B.V. Dev has also given an English version of this, in his statement, dated 27-9-1936 and published on page 66 of 'Devotees' Experiences, Part III', by Narsimha swami. As Mr. Dev has got first hand information about this subject from Nanasaheb himself, we give below his version.

Nanasaheb Chandorkar was a good student of Vedanta. He had read Gita with commentaries. He fancied that Baba knew nothing of Sanskrit texts. So Baba one day pricked the bubble. These were the days, before crowds flocked to Baba, when Baba had individual meetings at

the Mosque with such devotees. Nana was sitting near Baba and massaging His legs and muttering something under his breath.

Baba – Nana, what are you mumbling to yourself?

Nana – I am reciting a Shloka (verse)

Baba – What Shloka?

Nana – From Bhagawad-Gita

Baba – Say it loudly.

Nana, then, recited B.G., IV-34, which is as follows :

*Tadviddhi Pranipaatenā Pariprashnena Sevaṃ,
Upadekshyanti Te Gyaṇam Gyaṇinastattwadārshinaḥ**

Baba – Nana, do you understand it?

Nana – Yes.

Baba – If you do, then tell me its meaning!

Nana – It means this : “Making Sashtanga Namaskar. i.e. prostration, asking the Guru, serving him, learn, what this Knowledge is. Then those who have attained the real knowledge of the Sadvastu (Brahma) will give you Upadesha (instruction) of Knowledge.”

Baba – Nana, I do not want this sort of collected purport of the whole stanza. Give me each word, its grammatical force and meaning.

Then, Nana explained it word by word.

Baba – Nana, is it enough to merely make prostration?

Nana – I do not know any other meaning for the word ‘Pranipaāt’ than ‘making prostration.’

Baba – What is ‘Pariprashna’?

Nana – Asking questions.

Baba – What does ‘Prashna’ mean?

Nana – The same (questioning).

Baba – If ‘Pariprashna’ means the same as ‘Prashna’ (question), why did Vyasa add the prefix ‘Pari’? Was Vyasa off his head?

Nana – I do not know of any other meaning for the word ‘Pariprashna.’

Baba – ‘Seva’, what sort of ‘Seva’ is meant?

Nana – Just what we are doing to You.

* तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः॥

Baba – Is it enough to render such service?

Nana – I do not know, what more is signified by the word 'Seva'.

Baba – In the next line 'Upadekshyanti te Gnyanam', can you read any other word in lieu of Gnyanam?

Nana – Yes.

Baba – What word?

Nana – Agnyanam.

Baba – Taking that word (instead of gnyan) is any meaning made out of the verse?

Nana – No, Shankara Bhashya gives no such construction.

Baba – Never mind, if he does not. Is there any objection in using the word 'Agnyan' if it gives a better sense?

Nana – I do not understand, how to construe by placing 'Agnyan' in it.

Baba – Why does Krishna refer Arjun to Tattwadarshis to do his prostration, interrogation and service? Was not Krishna, a Tattwadarshi, in fact Gnyan itself.

Nana – Yes, He was. But, I do not make out, why he referred Arjun to Gnyanis?

Baba – Have you not understood this?

Nana was humiliated, His pride was knocked down. Then Baba began to explain.

(1) It is not enough merely to prostrate before the Gnyanis. We must make Sarvasva Sharanagati (complete surrender) to the Sadguru.

(2) Mere questioning is not enough. The question must not be made with any improper motive or attitude or to trap the Guru and catch mistakes in the answer, or out of idle curiosity. It must be earnest with a view to achieve spiritual progress or liberation.

(3) Seva is not rendering service with the feeling that one is free to offer or refuse service. One must feel that, he is not the master of the body, that the body is Guru's and exists merely to render service to him.

If this is done the Sadguru will show you, what the Knowledge referred to in the previous stanza is.

Nana did not understand, what is meant by saying, that a Guru

teaches Agnyan.

Baba – How is Gnyan Upadesh, i.e., imparting of realization to be effected? Destroying ignorance is Gnyan. (of Verse – Ovi – 1396 of Dnyaneshwari, commenting on Gita 18-66 says : “Removal of ignorance is, Oh Arjun, if dream and sleep disappear, you are yourself. It is like that.” Also, Ovi 83 on Gita V-16 says : “Is there anything different or independent in Gnyan besides the destruction of ignorance?”)* Expelling darkness means light. Destroying duality (Dwaita) means nonduality (Adwaita). Whenever we speak of destroying Dwaita, we speak of Adwaita. Whenever we talk of destroying darkness, we talk of light. If we have to realize the Adwaita state, the feeling of Dwaita in ourselves has to be removed. That is the realization of the Adwaita state. Who can speak of Adwaita, while remaining in Dwaita state? Unless one gets into that state of non-duality, how can one know it and realize it?

Again the Shishya (disciple), like the Sadguru, is the embodiment of Gnyan. The difference between the two lies in the attitude, high realization of Sadguru and his marvellous super human sattva (beingness) and unrivalled capacity and Aishwarya Yoga (divine powers). The Sadguru is Nirgun, Sat-Chit-Anand. He has indeed taken human form to elevate mankind and raise the world. But his real Nirgun nature is not destroyed thereby, even a bit. His existence (or reality), divine power and wisdom remain undiminished. The disciple also is in fact of the same Swarupa. But it is overlaid by the effect of the Sanskars of innumerable births in the shape of ignorance, which veils his view that, he is Shuddha Chaitanya (See, B.G., Ch. V-15).** As stated therein, he gets the impressions : “I am Jiva, a creature, meek and poor.” The Guru has to root out these offshoots of ignorance and has to give Upadesh or instruction. To the disciple, held spell-bound for endless generations by the ideas of his being a Jiva the Guru imparts the teaching : “You are God, you are mighty and opulent.” Then, he realizes that, he is God really. The perpetual delusion, under which the disciple is labouring that he is the body, that he is a creature (jiva) or ego that, God (Paramatma) and the world are different from him, is an ignorance inherited from innumerable past births. From actions, based on it, he has derived his joy, sorrows and mixtures of both. To remove this delusion, this error, this root ignorance, he must start the inquiry. How

* मग अज्ञान निमालिया। मीच एक असे अपैसाया।।

रानिंद्र खचन गेलिया। आपण जसें।।1396 (गी.अ. 18-66)

तें अज्ञान जें समूल तुटे। तें भ्रांतीचें मसैरें फिटे।।83।। (गी.5-16)

** अज्ञानेनायुत ज्ञान तेन मुह्यन्ति जंतयः।

did the ignorance arise? Where is it? And to show him, this is called the Guru's Upadesh. The following are the instances of Agnyan :

- 1 – I am a Jiva (creature).
- 2 – Body is the soul (I am the body).
- 3 – God, world and Jiva are different.
- 4 – I am not God.
- 5 – Not knowing that body is not the soul.
- 6 – Not knowing that God, world and Jiva are one.

Unless these errors are exposed to his view, the disciple cannot learn, what is God, Jiva, world, body; how they are interrelated and whether they are different from each other, or are one and the same. To teach him these and destroy his ignorance, is this instruction in Gnyan or Agnyan. Why should Gnyan be imparted to the Jiva (who is a Gnyan moorti). Upadesh is merely to show him his error and destroy his ignorance.

Baba added - (1) Pranipaata implies complete surrender (2) Surrender must be of body, mind and wealth (3) Why should Krishna refer to other gnyanis? Sadbhakata takes everything to be Vasudev (B.G. VII-19 i.e. any Guru would be Krishna to the devotee and Guru takes disciple to be Vasudev (B.G. 7-18). As Shri Krishna knows that there are such Gurus and disciples, He refers Arjun to them so that their greatness be known.

Construction of the Samadhi Mandir

Baba never made any fuss about things, which He wanted to accomplish, but He so skillfully arranged the circumstances that the people were surprised at the slow but sure results attained. The construction of the Samadhi Mandir is an instance. Shriman Bapusaheb Buti, the famous multi-millionaire of Nagpur, lived in Shirdi with his family. Once an idea arose in his mind that he should have a building of his own there. Some time after this, while he was sleeping in Dixit Wada he got a vision. Baba appeared in his dream and ordered him to build a Wada with a temple. Shama, who was sleeping there, also got a similar vision. When Bapusaheb awoke, he saw Shama crying and asked the latter, as to why he was in tears. Shama replied that in his vision, Baba came to him and ordered distinctly : "Build the Wada with the temple! I shall fulfil the desires of all." On hearing the sweet and loving words of Baba, I was overpowered with emotion, my throat was choked, my eyes were overflowing with tears and I began to cry."

Bapusaheb was surprised to see that both their visions tallied. Being a rich and capable man, he decided to build a Wada there and drew up a plan with Shama (Madhavrao). Kakasaheb Dixit also approved of it. And when it was placed before Baba, He also sanctioned it immediately. Then the construction-work was duly started, and under the supervision of Shama, the ground floor, the cellar and the well were completed. Baba on his way to and from Lendi, also suggested some improvements. Further work was entrusted to Bapusaheb Jog; and when it was going on, an idea struck Bapusaheb Buti's mind that, there should be an open space or platform and in the centre, the image of Murlidhar (Lord Krishna with the flute) be installed. He asked Shama to refer this matter to Baba and get His consent. The latter asked Baba about this when He was just passing by the Wada. On hearing Shama, Baba gave His consent saying, "After the temple is complete, I will come there to stay", and staring at the Wada He added, "After the Wada is complete, we shall use it ourselves, we shall live, move and play there, embrace each other and be happy". Then, Shama asked Baba, whether this was the auspicious time to begin the foundation-work of the central room of the shrine. Baba answered in the affirmative. Then Shama got a coconut broken there and started the work. In due time the work was completed and an order was also placed for making a good image of Murlidhar. But before it was ready, a new situation turned up. Baba became seriously ill. Bapusaheb became very sad and dejected, thinking that if Baba passed away, his Wada would not be consecrated by the holy touch of Baba's Feet, and all his money (about a lakh of rupees) would be wasted away. But the words "Keep Me in the Wada", which came out of Baba's mouth just before His passing away, consoled not only Bapusaheb, but one and all. In due time, Baba's holy body was placed and preserved in the central shrine meant for Murlidhar, and Baba Himself became Murlidhar, and the Wada thus became the Samadhi Mandir of Sai Baba. His wonderful leela is unfathomable.

Blessed and fortunate is Bapusaheb Buti, in whose Wada lies the holy and the pure body of Baba.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XL

Stories of Baba

(1) Attending Mrs. Dev's Udyapan Ceremony as a Sanyaasi with two others (2) Visiting Hemadpant's House in the Form of His Picture

In this chapter we give two stories; (1) How Baba attended the Udyapan ceremony, organised by Mr. B.V. Dev's mother at his house at Dahanu and (2) How Baba attended the Shimga dinner-party in Hemadpant's house at Bandra.

Preliminary

Blessed is Shri Sai Samartha, Who gives instructions, in both temporal and spiritual matters, to His devotees and makes them happy by enabling them to achieve the goal of their life. Sai, when places His hand on their heads, transfers His powers to them, and thus destroying the sense of differentiation, makes them attain the unattainable thing. He, Who embraces the Bhaktas, who prostrate themselves before Him with no sense of duality or differentiation. He becomes one with the Bhaktas, as the sea with the rivers. Now, to revert to the stories of this chapter.

Mrs. Dev's Udyapan Ceremony

Mr. B.V. Dev was a Mamlatdar at Dahanu (Thana district). His mother had observed 25 or 30 religious vows and a Udyapan (concluding) ceremony, in connection therewith, was to be performed. This ceremony included the feeding of 100 or 200 brahmins. Mr Dev fixed a date for the ceremony and wrote a letter to Bapusaheb Jog asking him to request Sai Baba on his behalf, to attend the dinner of the ceremony, as without His presence the ceremony would not be duly completed. Bapusaheb Jog read out the letter to Baba. Baba noted carefully the pure-hearted invitation, and said, **"I always think of him, who remembers Me. I require no conveyance, carriage, tonga, train, or aeroplane. I manifest Myself to him, who lovingly calls Me.** Write to him a reply that, three of us (the trio), Myself, yourself and a third person, will go and attend it." Mr. Jog informed Mr. Dev, of what Baba said. Mr. Dev was much pleased, but he knew that, Baba never went to any place, except Rahata, Rui and Nimgaon, in person. He also

thought that, nothing was impossible for Baba as He was all-pervading and that, He might suddenly come in any form and fulfill His words.

A few days before this, a Sanyaasi in bengali dress and professing to work for the cause of the protection of the cows, came to the station-master at Dahanu, to collect donations. The Station-master told him to go into the town, and see the Mamlatdar (Mr. Dev) and with his help collect funds. Just then, the Mamlatdar happened to come there. The station-master then introduced the Sanyaasi to him. Both sat talking on the platform. Mr. Dev told him that a subscription-list for some other charitable cause had already been prepared by the leading citizen, Rao Saheb Narottam Shetti, and so, it was not proper to start another subscription-list and that, it would be better, if he would visit the place after 2 or 4 months. Hearing this, the Sanyaasi left the place.

About a month afterwards, the Sanyaasi came in a tonga, which stopped in front of Mr. Dev's house at about 10 a.m. Dev thought that, he came for donations. On seeing him busy with the preparations of the ceremony, the Sanyaasi said that he had come not for money, but for meals. Dev said, "All right, you are welcome in the house." The Sanyaasi said, "Two lads are with me." Dev said, "Well, come with them." As there was about two hours for the meals to be served, Dev enquired, where he should send for them. He said that, it was not necessary, as he would come himself at the appointed time. Dev asked him to come at noon. Exactly at twelve noon, the trio came, joined the party, and after feeding themselves went away.

After the ceremony was finished, Dev wrote a letter to Bapusaheb Jog, complaining of Baba's breach of promise. Jog went to Baba with the letter, but before it was opened Baba spoke, "Ah, he says that I promised him to come but deceived him. Tell him that, I did attend his dinner with two others but he failed to recognise Me. Then, why did he call me at all? He thought that, the Sanyaasi came to ask for subscription money, did I not remove his doubt in that respect, and did I not say that I would come with two others, and did not the trio come in time and have their meals? See to keep My words, I would sacrifice my life, I would never be untrue to My words." This reply pleased Jog's heart, and he communicated the whole reply to Dev. As soon as he read it, he burst into tears of joy; but he took himself to task mentally, for vainly blaming Baba. He wondered, how he was deceived by the Sanyaasi's prior visit and his coming to him for subscriptions, how he also failed

to catch the significance of the Sanyaasi's words that, he would come with two others for meals.

This story clearly shows that, when the devotees surrender themselves completely to their Sadguru, He sees to it that, the religious functions in their houses are duly executed and complied with all the necessary formalities.

Hemadpant's Shinga Dinner

Now, let us take another story, which shows how Baba appeared in the form of His picture and fulfilled the desire of His devotee.

In 1917, on the morning of the full-moon day Hemadpant had a vision. Baba appeared to him in his dream in the form of a well-dressed Sanyaasi, woke him up, and said that He would come to him for meals that day. This vision constituted a part of the dream. When he fully woke up, he saw neither Sai nor any Sanyaasi. But, when he began to recollect the dream, he remembered each and every word the Sanyaasi uttered in his dream. Though, he was in contact with Baba for seven years and always meditated on Baba, he never expected that Baba would come to his house for meals. However, being much pleased with Baba's words, he went to his wife and informed her that being the Holi day a Sanyaasi was coming for meals and that, some more rice should be prepared. She enquired about the guest, who he was and where he was coming from. Then, not to cause any misunderstanding, he gave her the truth, and told her about the dream. She, doubtingly asked, whether it was possible that, Baba should come there (Bandra) from Shirdi, leaving the dainty dishes there to accept their coarse food. Hemadpant then assured her that Baba might not come in person, but He might attend in the form of a guest, and that they would lose nothing, if they cooked some more rice.

After this, preparations for the dinner went on, and it was ready at noon. The Holika-worship was through and the leaves¹, were spread and arranged with 'Rangoli' around them. Two rows were arranged with a central seat between them for the honourable guest. All members of the family – sons, grandsons, daughters and sons-in-law etc. came and occupied their seats, and the serving of the various items commenced. While this was being done, everybody was watching for

1. Big size leaves are stapled with firewood pieces as food is served on them, which are used as disposable plates.

the guest but none turned up, though it was past noon. Then, the entrance was closed, the Anm-shuddhi (ghee) was served. This was a signal to start eating. Formal offering to the Vaishwadeva (Fire), and Naivaidya to Shri Krishna were also over and the members were about to begin, when foot-steps in the stair-case were heard distinctly. Hemadpant went immediately and opened the door and saw two men there : (1) Ali Mohammed and (2) Moulana Ismu Mujavar. These two persons, seeing that meals were laid out and all the members were about to begin eating, apologised to Hemadpant and requested him to excuse their interference. They said, "You left your seat and came running to us, others are waiting for you, so, please take this thing, and I shall relate all about it later, at your convenience." Saying so, he took out from under his arm a packet, wrapped in an old newspaper, and placed it on the table. Hemadpant uncovered the packet and saw, to his great wonder and pleasant surprise, a big and nice picture of Sai Baba. On seeing it, he was much moved, tears ran down from his eyes and hair stood on end all over his body, and he bent and placed his head on the Feet of Baba in the picture. He thought that, Baba had blessed him by this miracle or Leela. Out of curiosity, he asked Ali Mohammed, how he got this picture. He said that, he bought it from a shop and that, he would give all the details about it afterwards; and wished that as all the members were waiting for him, he should go and join them. Hemadpant thanked him, bade them good-bye, and returned to the dining-hall. The picture was placed on the central seat, reserved for the guest, and after making the due offering of the Naivaidya, the whole party commenced eating and finished it in proper time. On seeing the beautiful form of Sai in the picture, everybody was extremely pleased and wondered, how all this happened.

This is how Sai Baba fulfilled His words, uttered by Him in the dream of Hemadpant. The story of the picture with all its details, viz., how Ali Mohammed got it, why he bought it and gave it to Hemadpant, is reserved for the next chapter.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XLI

Story of the Picture – Stealing the Rags and Rāding of Dnyaneshawari

As stated in the last chapter, we continue here the story of the picture.

Nine years after the incident described in the last chapter, Ali Mohammed met Hemadpant again, and related to him the following story.

One day, while wandering in the streets of Mumbai he bought the picture from a street-hawker, then, he got it framed and set it on a wall in his house, at Bandra (suburb of Mumbai). As he loved Baba, daily he took darshan of it. Three months before he gave the picture to Hemadpant, he was suffering from an abscess or swelling on his leg, for which an operation was performed and he was convalescing in the house of his brother-in-law, Mr. Noor Mohammed Peerbhoy in Mumbai. For three months, his house in Bandra was closed and nobody was living there. Only the pictures of the Baba Abdul Rehman, Moulana Saheb Mohammed Hussain, Sai Baba, Baba Tajuddin and a few other saints (living) were there. The wheel of time did not even spare these. He was lying sick and was suffering in Mumbai. Why should the pictures suffer there (in Bandra)? All the pictures met their end; but how Sai Baba's picture escaped it, nobody had been able to explain to me up till now. It shows the all-pervasiveness, omnipresence of Sai and His inscrutable power. The story goes like this :

He had a small picture of Saint Baba Abdul Rehman from Mohammed Hussain Thariyatopan many years ago. He gave it to his brother-in-law Noor Mohammed Peerbhoy, and it was lying on his table for eight years. Once, Peerbhoy took it to a photographer and got it enlarged to life-size and distributed copies of the same amongst his relations and friends including Ali Mohammed, who fixed it up in his Bandra house. Noor Mohammed was a disciple of saint Abdul Rehman, and when he went to present the picture to his Guru in an open darbar held by him, the Guru got wild and ran to beat him and drove him out. He felt sorry and dejected. He also thought that he spent so much of money, and incurred his Guru's displeasure and wrath as his Guru, Baba Abdul Rehman did not like image-worship. He took the enlarged

picture of Baba Rehman with him to Apolo Bunder, and after hiring a boat, took it and immersed it in the sea. He requested the friends and relations to return their copies and after getting them (6 in all) back, had them immersed in Bandra sea. At this time Ali Mohammed was in his brother-in-law's house. He was told by him that his suffering would come to an end, if he would soon immerse the pictures of the other saints also in the sea. On hearing this Ali Mohammed sent Mehta (his manager) to his Bandra house, and got all the pictures of the saints in the house to be thrown into the sea.

When Ali Mohammed returned home after two months, he was surprised to find Sai Baba's picture on the wall as before. He did not understand, how Mehta took away all the pictures except this. He immediately took it out and kept it in his cupboard, fearing that if his brother-in-law saw it, he would do away with it. While he was thinking, how it should be disposed off and who would keep it with care, Sai Baba Himself as it were, suggested to him that he should see and consult Moulana Ismu Mujavar and abide by his opinion. He met the Moulana and told him everything. After much consultation, they both decided that the picture should be presented to Annasaheb (Hemadpant) and that, he would protect it well. Then, they both went to Hemadpant and presented him the picture in the nick of time.

This story shows, how Baba knew all past, present and future, and how skillfully He pulled the wires and fulfilled desires of His devotees. The following story shows that, Baba liked very much those who took real interest in spiritual matters and that, He removed all their difficulties and made them happy.

Stealing the Rags and Reading of Dnyaneshwari

Mr. B.V. Dev, who was Mamlatdar of Dahanu (Thana district), wished for a long time to read Dnyaneshwari – (the well-known Marathi commentary on the Bhagawad-Gita, by Dnyaneshwar), along with other scriptures. He could read daily one chapter of the Bhagawad-Gita, but when he took Dnyaneshwari in hand, some difficulties cropped up and he was precluded from reading it. He took three months' leave, went to Shirdi, and thence to his home at Poud for rest. He could read other books there but when he opened Dnyaneshwari, some evil or stray thoughts came crowding up in his mind and stopped him in the effort. Try as much as he could, he was not able to read even a few lines of

the book with ease. So, he resolved in his mind that when Baba would create love for the book, and would order him to read it, he would begin and not till then. Then, in the month of February 1914, he went with his family to Shirdi. There, Jog asked him, whether he reads Dnyaneshwari daily. Dev replied that, he was desirous of reading it, but he was not successful and that, only when Baba would order him to read it, he would commence. Jog then advised him to take a copy of the book and present it to Baba, and start the reading after it was consecrated and returned by Him. Dev replied that, he did not want to resort to this device, as Baba knows his heart. Would He not know his desire and satisfy it by giving him a clear order to read?

Dev, then, saw Baba and offered one rupee as dakshina. Baba asked for Rs. 20/-, which he gave. At night, he met one Balakram and enquired from him, as to how he secured Baba's devotion and grace. Balakram told him that he would communicate everything next day after Arati. When Dev went for darshan the next day, Baba asked for Rs. 20/-, which he gave willingly. As the Masjid was crowded, Dev went aside and sat in a corner. Baba asked him to come closer and sit with a calm mind, which Dev did. Then, after the noon-Arati was over and the men dispersed, Dev saw Balakram again and asked him his previous experiences, what Baba told him and how he was taught meditation. While Balakram was going to reply, Baba sent one Chandru, a leper devotee, to call Dev to Him. When Dev went to Baba, the latter asked him, with whom and what he was talking. He said that he was with Balakram and heard from him His fame. Then, Baba asked again Rs. 25/- as Dakshina, which Dev gladly gave. Then, Baba took him inside and sitting near the post charged him saying, "You stole away My rags, without My knowledge." Dev denied any knowledge of the rags, but Baba asked him to make a search. He searched but found none. Then, Baba got angry and said, "There is nobody here, you are the only thief, grey-haired and old, you came here for stealing!" After this, Baba lost His temper, got terribly wild, gave all sorts of abuses and scoldings. Dev remained silent and apprehended that, he might get a beating also. After about an hour or so, Baba asked him to go to the Wada. He returned to the Wada and told Jog and Balakram all that had happened. Then, in the after-noon Baba sent for all of them and said that, His words might have pained the old man (Dev), but as he committed the theft, He took him to task. Then, Baba asked again for Rs. 12/-. Dev collected the amount, paid it and prostrated himself before

Him. Then, Baba said to him, "Go on reading the Pothi (Dnyaneshwari) daily, go and sit in the Wada, read regularly every day, and while reading, explain the portion read to all with love and devotion. I am sitting here, ready to give you the whole gold-embroidered Shela (valuable shawl), then, why go to others to steal rags! and why should you get into the habit of stealing?"

Dev, was much pleased to hear the words of Baba, for He directly asked him to start reading Pothi (Dnyaneshwari). He thought that, he got what he wanted and that, he could read the book with ease, thenceforth. He again prostrated himself before Baba and said that, he surrendered himself to Him, and that he should be treated as a child and be helped in his reading. He realized then, what Baba meant by 'stealing the rags'. What he asked Balakram constituted the 'rags', and Baba did not like his behaviour in this respect. As He was ready to answer all his questions, He did not like him to ask others and make unnecessary enquiries, and therefore, He scolded him. Dev thought that, He really did not 'scold' him but taught that, He was ready to fulfil his desires and there was no use asking others, in vain. Dev took these scoldings as blessings, and went home satisfied and contented.

The matter did not end here. Baba did not stop with only issuing an order to read. Within a year, He went to Dev and enquired about his progress. On 2nd April, 1914, on Thursday morning Baba gave him a dream. He sat on the upper floor and asked him, whether he understood the Pothi. "No", answered Dev. Baba said, "Then, when are you going to understand?" Dev burst into tears and said, "Unless, You shower Your grace, the reading is mere burden, and the understanding is still more difficult." Baba told, "While reading you make haste, read it before Me, in My presence." Dev asked - "What shall I read?" Baba said, "Read Adhyatma (spiritualism)." Dev went in to bring the book, when he opened his eyes he was fully awoken. We leave the readers to imagine, what ineffable joy and bliss Dev felt after this vision.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all



CHAPTER XLII

Baba's Passing Away

Previous Indication - Averting Death of Ramchandra Dada Patil and Tatyia Kote Patil - Charity to Laxmibai Shinde - Last Moment

This chapter describes the passing away of Baba.

Preliminary

The stories given in the previous chapter have shown that, the light of Guru's grace removes fear of mundane existence, opens the path of salvation and turns our misery into happiness. If we always remember the feet of the Sadguru, our troubles come to an end, death loses its sting, and the misery of this mundane existence is obliterated. Therefore, those who care for their welfare, should carefully listen to these stories of Sai Samarth, which will purify their minds.

In the beginning, Hemadpant dwells on Dr. Pandit's worship and his marking Baba's forehead with Tripunda, i.e. three horizontal lines; but as this has been already described in chapter XI, it has been omitted here.

Previous Indication

The readers, up till now, heard the stories of Baba's life. Let them now hear attentively of Baba's passing away. Baba got a slight fever on 28th September, 1918. The fever lasted for 2 or 3 days, but afterwards Baba gave up his food, and thereby grew weaker and weaker. On the 17th day, i.e., Tuesday, the 15th October, 1918, Baba left His mortal coil at about 2-30 p.m. (Vide Professor G.G. Narke's letter, dated 5th November, 1918, to Dadasaheb Khaparde, published in 'Sai Leela' magazine, page 78, first year). Two years before this, i.e. in 1916, Baba gave an indication of His passing away, but nobody understood it then. It was as follows : On the Vijayadashami (Dasara) day, Baba, all of a sudden got into wild rage in the evening, when people were returning from 'Seemollanghan' (crossing the border or limits of the village). Taking off His head-dress, kafni and langota etc. He tore them and threw them in the dhuni before Him. On being fed this offering, the fire in the Dhuni began to burn brighter and Baba shone still brighter. He

stood there stark naked and with His burning red eyes shouted, "You fellows, now have a look and decide finally, whether I am a Muslim or a Hindu." Everybody was trembling with fear, and none dared to approach Baba. After some time Bhagoji Shinde, the leper devotee of Baba, went boldly near Him and succeeded in tying a Langota (waist-band) round His waist and said, "Baba, what is all this? To day is the 'Seen olh nghan', i.e., Dasara Holiday." Baba striking the ground with His Satka said, "This is my 'Seen olh nghan' (crossing the border)." Baba did not cool down till 11-00 p.m., and the people doubted, whether the Chavadi procession would ever take place that night. After an hour Baba resumed His normal condition, and dressing Himself as usual, attended the Chavadi procession as described before. By this incident Baba gave a suggestion that, Dasara was the proper time for Him to cross the border of life, but none understood its meaning then. Baba gave another indication also as follows:

Averting Death of Ramchandra and Tatya Patil

Some time after this, Ramchandra Patil became seriously ill. He suffered a lot. He tried all remedies, but finding no relief, despaired of his life and was waiting for the last moment. Then, one midnight Baba suddenly stood near his bed. Patil held His Feet and said, "I have lost all hopes of life, please tell me definitely, when I shall die." Merciful Baba said, "Don't be anxious, your Hundi (death-warrant) has been withdrawn and you will soon recover, but I am afraid of Tatya Patil. He will pass away on Vijayadashami of Shaka 1840 (1918 A.D.). Do not divulge this to anybody nor to him, for he will be terribly frightened." Ramchandra Dada got well but he felt nervous about Tatya's life, for he knew that Baba's word was unalterable, and that Tatya would breathe his last within two years. He kept this secret, told it to none, but to Bala Shimpi (a tailor) only. Only these two persons - Ramchandra Dada and Bala Shimpi were in fear and suspense regarding Tatya's life.

Ramchandra Dada soon left his bed and was on his legs. Time passed quickly. The month of Bhadrapad of Shaka 1840 (1918) was ending and Ashwin was approaching. True to Baba's word, Tatya fell sick and was bed-ridden; and so he could not come for Baba's darshan. Baba was also down with fever. Tatya had full faith in Baba. Tatya's illness began to grow from bad to worse and he could not move at all, but always remembered Baba. The predicament of Baba began to grow equally worse. The day predicted, i.e. Vijayadashami was impending

and both Ramchandra Dada and Bala Shimpi were terribly frightened about Tatyā; and their bodies trembling and perspiring with fear, though t that, as predicted by Baba, Tatyā's end was near. Vijayadashami dawned and Tatyā's pulse began to beat very slow, and he was expected to pass away shortly. But, a curious thing happened. Tatyā remained, his death was averted and Baba passed away instead. It seemed, as if there was an exchange. People said that Baba gave up His life for Tatyā. Why He did so? He alone knows, as His ways are inscrutable. It seems, however that, in this incident Baba gave a hint of His passing away, substituting Tatyā's name for His own.

Next morning (16th October) Baba appeared to Das Ganu at Pandharpur in his dream and said to him: The Masjid collapsed, all the oilmen and grocers of Shirdi harassed Me a lot, so, I leave the place. I, therefore, came to inform you here. Go there quickly and cover Me with 'Bakkal' flowers!" Das Ganu got the information also from Shirdi letters. So, he came to Shirdi with his disciples, and started Bhajan and Kirtan and sang the Lord's name, throughout the day before Baba's Samadhi. Himself weaving a beautiful garland of Lord Hari's name, he placed it on Baba's Samadhi and gave a mass feeding in Baba's name.

Charity to Laxmibai

Dasara or Vijayadashami is regarded by all the Hindus, as the most auspicious time and it is befitting that, Baba should choose this time for His crossing the border-line. He was ailing some days before this, but he was ever conscious internally. Just before the last moment, He sat up without anybody's aid and looked better. People thought that, the danger had passed off and He was getting well. He knew that, He was to pass away soon and therefore, He wanted to give some money as charity to Laxmibai Shinde.

Baba pervading All Creatures

This Laxmibai Shinde was a good and well-to-do woman. She was serving in the Masjid, day and night. Except Bhagat Mhalsapati, Tatyā and Laxmibai, none was allowed to step in the Masjid at night. Once, while Baba was sitting in the Masjid with Tatyā in the evening, Laxmibai came and saluted Baba. Baba said to her, "Oh Laxmi, I am very hungry." Off she went saying, "Baba, wait a bit, I return immediately with bread." She did return with bread and vegetables and placed the

same before Baba. He took it and gave it to a dog. Laxmibai then asked, "What is this, Baba, I ran in haste, prepared bread with my own hands for You, and You threw it to a dog without eating a morsel of it. You gave me trouble, unnecessarily." Baba replied, "Why do you grieve for nothing? The appeasement of the dog's hunger is the same as Mine. The dog has a soul, the creatures may be different, but the hunger of all is the same, though some speak and others are dumb. Know for certain that, he who feeds the hungry really serves Me with food. Regard this as Truth." This is an ordinary incident; but Baba thereby propounded a great spiritual truth, and showed its practical application in daily life without hurting anybody's feelings. From this time onward, Laxmibai began to offer Him daily bread and milk with love and devotion. Baba accepted and ate it appreciatingly. He took a part of this and sent the remainder, through Laxmibai to Radhakrishnamai, who always relished and ate Baba's remnant Prasad. This bread-story should not be considered as a digression it shows how Sai Baba pervaded all the creatures and transcended them. He is Omni-present, Birthless, Deathless and Immortal.

Baba remembered Laxmibai's service. How could He forget her? Just before leaving His body, He put His hand in His pocket and gave her Rs. 5/- and then Rs. 4/-, in all Rs. 9/-. This figure (9) is indicative of the nine types of devotion¹ described in chapter 21; or it may be the dakshina offered at the time of 'Seemollanghan'. Laxmibai was a well-to-do woman, and so, she was not in want of any money. Baba might have suggested to her and brought to her notice, the nine characteristics of a good disciple, mentioned in the 6th verse of chapter ten, Skandha eleven of the Bhagwat, wherein first five and then four characteristics are mentioned, in the first and second couplets.* Baba's this gift of nine, she will remember ever.

Being so watchful and conscious, He ordered them all to clear off. Kakasaheb Dixit, Bapusaheb Buti and others were in the Masjid anxiously waiting upon Baba, but He asked them to go to the Wada, and return after meals. They could not leave Baba's presence, nor could they disobey Him. So, with heavy hearts and heavy feet they went to the Wada. They knew that, Baba's condition was very serious, and that,

* अमान्यमत्सरो दशो निर्ममो दृढसौहृदः ।

असत्त्वरोऽर्थजिज्ञासुर्नसूयमोघवाक् ॥

1. These nine types of devotion were learnt by Shabari from Lord Ram.

they could not leave Him. They sat for meals; but their mind was elsewhere, it was with Baba. Before they finished, news came to them of Baba's shedding the mortal coil. Leaving their dishes, they ran to the Masjid and found that, Baba rested finally on Bayaji's lap. He did not collapse on the ground nor did He lie on His bed; but sitting quietly on His seat and doing charity with His own hand, left the mortal coil. Saints embody themselves and come into this world with a definite mission and after that is fulfilled, they pass away, as quietly and easily as they came.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all



CHAPTER X LIII - XLIV

Baba's Passing A way (continued)

*Preparation – Samadhi-Mandir – Breaking of the
Brick – 72 Hours' Samadhi – Jog's Sanyaas – Baba's
Nectar-like Words*

Chapters 43 and 44 continue the story of Baba's passing away, and therefore, they are taken together.

Previous Preparation

It is the general practice amongst the Hindus that, when a man is about to die, some good religious scripture is read out to him with the object that, his mind should be withdrawn from worldly things and fixed in spiritual matters, so that his future progress should be natural and easy. Everybody knows that, when king Parikshit was cursed by the son of a Brahmin Rishi, and was to die after a week, the great sage Shukadev expounded to him the famous Bhagwat Puran in that week. This practice is followed even now, and the Gita, Bhagwat and other sacred books are read out to dying persons. Baba being an Incarnation of God needed no such help, but just to set an example to the people, He followed this practice. When He knew that, He was to pass away soon, He asked one Mr. Vaze to read Ramvijay to Him. Mr. Vaze read the book once in the week. Then, Baba asked him to read the same again day and night, and he finished the second reading in three days. Thus eleven days passed. Then again he read for three days and was exhausted. So Baba let him go and kept Himself quiet. He abided in His Self and was waiting for the last moment.

Two or three days earlier, Baba had stopped His morning peregrinations (going out) and begging rounds, and sat quietly in the Masjid. He was conscious till the last and was advising the devotees not to lose heart. He let nobody know the exact time of His departure. Kakasaheb Dixit and Shriman Buti were dining daily with Him in the Masjid. That day (15th October) after the Arati, He asked them to go to their residence for dining. Still a few, viz. Laxmibai Shinde, Bhagoji Shinde, Bayaji, Laxman Bala Shimpi and Nanasaheb Nimonkar remained there, Shama was sitting down on the steps. After giving Rs. 9/- to Laxmibai Shinde, Baba said that, He did not feel well there (in

the Masjid) and that, He should be taken to the Dagadi (stone) Wada of Buti, where He would be all right. While saying these last words, He leaned on Bayaji's body and breathed His last. Bhagoji noticed that His breathing had stopped, and he immediately told this to Nanasaheb Nimonkar, who was sitting near. Nanasaheb brought some water and poured it in Baba's mouth. It came out. Then, he cried out loudly 'Oh Deva!' Baba seemed to open His eyes and say 'Ah,' in a low tone. But it soon became evident that, Baba had left His mortal body for good.

The news of Baba's passing away spread like wildfire in the village of Shirdi and all people, men, women and children ran to the Masjid, and began to mourn this loss in various ways. Some cried out loudly, some wallowed on and some fell down senseless in the streets. Tears ran down from the eyes of all and every one was filled with sorrow.

Some people started remembering the words of Sai Baba. Somebody said that Maharaj (Sai Baba) told His devotees that in time to come He would appear as a lad of eight years. In the Krishna Avatar, Chakrapani (Lord Vishnu) performed this very deed. Krishna appeared before Devaki in the prison as a lad of eight years, Who had bright complexion and Who wielded weapons in His four arms. In that Incarnation He (Lord Krishna) lightened the burden of the earth. This Incarnation (Sai Baba) was for the uplift of His devotees. Then, where is the reason for doubt? The ways of the saints are really inscrutable. This contact of Sai Baba with His devotees is not only for one generation, but it is there for the last seventy-two generations. Generating such ties of love, it appears that, Maharaj (Sai Baba) has gone for ever and the devotees had a firm belief that, He will return soon.

Then, the question arose – How to lay Baba's body to rest? Some (Mohammedans) said that the body should be interred in an open space and a tomb built over it. Even Khushalchand and Amir Shakkar shared this opinion. But, Ramachandra Patil, the village officer said to the villagers with a firm and determined voice, "Your thought is not acceptable to us. Baba's body should be placed nowhere, except in the Wada." Thus, people were divided on this point, and discussion regarding this went on for 36 hours.

On Wednesday morning Baba appeared to Laxman Mama Joshi in his dream and drawing him by His hand said, "Get up soon,

Bapusaheb thinks that, I am dead and so he won't come, you do the worship and the Kakad (morning) Arati!" Laxman Mama was the village astrologer and the maternal uncle of Shama. He was an orthodox Brahmin, and daily worshipped Baba first in the morning and then all the village Deities. He had full faith in Baba. After the vision he came with all the puja materials, and not minding the protests of the Moulvis, did the Puja and the Kakad Arati with all due formalities and went away. Then, at noon Bapusaheb Jog came with all others, and went through the noon-Arati ceremony as usual. After paying due respect to Baba's words the people decided to place His body in the Wada and started digging the central portion there. In the evening of Tuesday, the sub-inspector came from Rahata and others turned up from other places and they all agreed to the proposal. Next morning, Amirbhai came from Mumbai and the Mamalatdar from Kopergaon. The people seemed divided in their opinion. Some insisted on interring His body in the open field. The Mamalatdar, therefore, took a general plebiscite and found that, the proposal to use the Wada secured double the number of votes. He however, wanted to refer the matter to the collector, and Kakasaheb Dixit got himself ready to go to Ahmednagar. Meanwhile, by Baba's inspiration there was a change in the opinion of the other people, and all unanimously voted for the proposal. On Wednesday evening, Baba's body was taken in procession and brought to the Wada and was interred there with due formalities in the Garbha, i.e., the central portion, reserved for Murlidhar. In fact Baba became the Murlidhar, and the Wada became a temple and a holy shrine, where so many devotees, since then, have been going to find rest and peace. All the obsequies of Baba were duly performed by Balasaheb Bhate and Upasani, a great devotee of Baba.

It may be noted here that, as observed by Professor Narke, Baba's body did not get stiff, though it was exposed for 36 hours and that, all the limbs were elastic and that His Kafni could be taken out without being torn to pieces.

Breaking of the Brick

Some days before Baba's departure, there occurred an ominous sign foreboding the event. There was, in the Masjid, an old brick on which Baba rested His hand and sat. At night time He leaned against it and had His Asan. This went on for many years. One day, during Baba's absence a boy who was sweeping the floor, took it up in his

hand, and unfortunately it slipped and fell down and got broken into two pieces. When Baba came to know about this, He bemoaned its loss, saying : "It is not the brick, but My fate, that has been broken into pieces. It was my life-long companion, with it I always meditated on the Self, it was as dear to Me as My life, it has left Me today". Some may raise here a question, "Why should Baba express this sorrow for such an inanimate thing as a brick?" To this, Hemadpant replies that, saints incarnate in this world with the express mission of saving the poor helpless people, and when they embody themselves and act with the people, they act like them, i.e., outwardly they laugh, play and cry, like all other people, but inwardly they are wide awake to their duties and mission.

72 Hours' Samadhi

Thirty-two years before this, i.e. in 1886 Baba made an attempt to cross the border line. On a Margashirsha Pournima (Full moon) day, Baba suffered from a severe attack of Asthma. To get rid of it, Baba decided to take His Pran high up and go into Samadhi. He said to Bhagat Mhalsapati, "Protect My body for three days! If I return, it will be all right, if I do not, bury My body in that open land (pointing to it) and fix two flags there as a mark!" After saying this, Baba fell down at about 10 p.m. His breathing stopped as well as His pulse. It seemed as if His Pran left the body. All the people, including the villagers came there and wanted to hold an inquest and bury the body in the place, pointed by Baba. But, Mhalsapati prevented this. With Baba's body on his lap, he sat full three days guarding it. After three days passed, Baba showed signs of life at 3 a.m., His breathing commenced, the abdomen began to move. His eyes opened and stretching His limbs, Baba returned to consciousness (life) again.

From this and other accounts, let the readers consider, whether Sai Baba was the three and a half cubits' body that He occupied for some years, and that He left thereafter or He was the Self inside. The body, composed of the five elements, is perishable and transient but the Self within is the thing – Absolute Reality; which is immortal and intransient. This pure Being, Consciousness or Brahma, the Ruler and Controller of the senses and mind is Sai. This pervades all things in the universe and there is no space without it. For fulfilling His mission He assumed the body, and after it was fulfilled He threw away the body (the finite aspect), and assumed His infinite aspect. Sai ever lives, as also the

previous Incarnation of God Dattatreya, Shri Narsimha Saraswati of Gangapur. His passing away is only an outward aspect, but in reality He pervades all animate and inanimate things and is their Inre Controller and Ruler. This can be, and is even now experienced by many, who surrender themselves completely to Him and worship Him with whole-hearted devotion.

Though, it is not possible for us to see Baba's Form now onwards, but, if we go to Shirdi, we shall find His beautiful life-like portrait adorning the Masjid. This has been drawn by Shamrao Jaykar, a famous artist and well-known devotee of Baba. To an imaginative and devout spectator this portrait can give even to-day the satisfaction of taking Baba's darshan. Though Baba has no gross body now, He lives there and everywhere, and will effect the welfare of the devotees even now, as He was doing before, when He was embodied. Saints like Baba never die, though they look like men, they are in reality God Himself.

Bapusaheb Jog's Sanyas

Hemadpant closes this chapter with the account of Jog's Sanyas. Sakharam Hari alias Bapusaheb Jog was the uncle of the famous Varkari Vishrubha Jog of Poona. He had no issue. After his retirement from Govt. service (He was a supervisor in the P.W.D.) in 1909, he came and lived in Shirdi with his wife. Both husband and wife loved Baba and spent all their time in worshipping and serving Baba. After Megha's death, Bapusaheb daily did the Arati ceremony in the Masjid and Chavadi till Baba's Maha-Samadhi. He was also entrusted with the work of reading and explaining Dnyaneshwari and Eknathi Bhagwat in Sathe's Wada to the audience. After serving for many years, Jog asked Baba, "I have served you so long, my mind is not yet calm and composed, how is it that, my contact with saints has not improved me? When will You bless me?" Hearing the Bhakta's prayer Baba replied, "In due time your bad actions (their fruit or result) will be destroyed, your merits and demerits will be reduced to ashes, and I shall consider you blessed, when you will renounce all attachments, conquer lust and sense of taste, and getting rid of all impediments, serve God wholeheartedly and resort to the begging bowl (accept Sanyas)". After some time, Baba's Words came true. His wife predeceased him; and as he had no other attachment, he became free and accepted Sanyas before his death, and realized the goal of his life.

Baba's Nectar-like Words

The kind and merciful Sai Baba said many a time the following sweet words in the Masjid : **"He who loves Me most, always sees Me. The whole world is desolate to him without Me, he who tells no stories but Mine; he ceaselessly meditates upon Me and always chants My name. I feel indebted to him who surrenders himself completely to Me, and ever remembers Me. I shall repay his debt by giving him salvation (self-realization). I am dependent on him, who thinks and hungers after Me and who does not eat anything, without first offering it to Me. He who thus comes to Me, becomes one with Me, just as a river gets to the sea and becomes merged (one) with it. So, leaving out pride and egoism and with no trace of them, you should surrender yourself to Me, Who is seated in your heart."**

Who is this ME?

Sai Baba expounded many a time Who this ME (or I) is. He said, **"You need not go far in search of Me. Barring your name and form, there exists in you as well as in all beings, a sense of Being or Consciousness of Existence. That is Myself. Knowing this, you see Me inside yourself, as well as in all beings. If you practise this, you will realize all-pervasiveness, and thus attain oneness with Me."**

Hemadpant, therefore, requests the readers humbly and lovingly that, they should love and respect all gods, saints and devotees. Has not Baba often said, **"He, who carps and cavils at others, pierces Me in the heart and injures Me, but he that suffers and endures, pleases Me most."** Baba thus pervades all beings and creatures. He likes nothing but love to all beings. Such nectar, pure auspicious ambrosia always flowed from Baba's lips, He, therefore, concludes – those who lovingly sing Baba's fame and those who hear the same with devotion, both become one with Sai.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XLV

*Kakasaheb's Doubt and Anandrao's Vision –
Wooden Plank – Baba's bed-stead and not Bhagat's.*

Preliminary

We have described in the last three chapters Baba's passing away. His physical or finite form has, no doubt, disappeared from our view, but the infinite or spiritual form (Spirit of Baba) ever lives. The Ledas, which occurred during His lifetime have been dwelt upon at great length, up till now. Ever since His passing away, more Ledas have taken place and are even now happening. This clearly shows that, Baba is ever-living and helping His devotees as before. The people, who got the contact of Baba, when He was living, were indeed very fortunate, but if any of them did not get a dispassion for the things and enjoyments of the world, and had not their minds turned to the Lord, it was their sheer ill-luck. What was then desired, and is still desired, is the whole-hearted devotion to Baba. All our senses, organs, and mind should co-operate in worshipping and serving Baba. It is no use, in engaging some organs in the worship and deflecting others. If a thing like worship or meditation is to be done, it ought to be done with all our mind and soul.

The love that a chaste woman bears to her husband, is sometimes compared to that, which a disciple bears to his master (Guru). Yet, the former falls far short of the latter, which is incomparable. No one, whether he be father, mother, brother or any other relation, comes to our aid in attaining the goal of life (self-realization). We have to chalk out and traverse the path of self-realization ourselves. We have to discriminate between the unreal and the Real, renounce the things and enjoyments of this world and the next and control our senses and mind, and aspire for liberation only. Instead of depending upon others, we should have full faith in ourselves. When we begin to practice discrimination we come to know that the world is transient and unreal and our passion for worldly things becomes less and ultimately we get dispassion or non-attachment for them. When we know that Brahma, which is no other than our Guru, is the sole reality; and as It transcends and besets the seeming universe, we begin to worship It in all creatures. This is the unitive Bhajan or worship. When we thus worship Brahma or Guru whole-heartedly, we become one with Him and attain self-

realization. In short, always chanting the name of the Guru and meditating on Him, enables us to see Him in all beings, and confers eternal Bliss on us. The following story will illustrate this.

Kakasaheb's Doubt and Anandao's Vision

It is well-known that Sai Baba had enjoined Kakasaheb Dixit to read daily two works of Shri Eknath: (1) Bhagwat and (2) Bhavartha Ramayan. Kakasaheb read these daily, while Baba was living and he followed the practice, even after Baba's passing away. Once in Kaka Mahajani's house in Choupati Mumbai, Kakasaheb was reading Eknathi Bhagwat in the morning. Madhavrao Deshpande, alias Shama, and Kaka Mahajani were then present and listened attentively to the portion read, viz., the 2nd chapter, 11th Skandha of the book. Therein the nine Nathas or Siddhas of the Rishabha family, viz., Kavi, Hari, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayan, Avihotra, Drumil, Chamas and Karabhajan expounded the principles of the Bhagwat Dharma to King Janak. The latter asked, all the nine Nathas, most important questions and each of them answered them satisfactorily. The first, i.e., Kavi explained, what is Bhagwat Dharma; Hari, the characteristics of a Bhakta (devotee); Antariksha, what is Maya; Prabuddha, how to cross Maya; Pippalayan, what is Para-Brahma; Avihotra, what is Karma; Drumil, the incarnations of God and their deeds; Chamas, how a non-devotee fares after death; Karabhajan, the different modes of worship of God in different ages. The substance of all the exposition was that, in this Kali age, the only means of liberation was the remembrance of Hari's (Lord's) or Guru's feet. After the reading was over, Kakasaheb said in a despondent tone to Madhavrao and others: "How wonderful is the discourse of the nine Nathas on Bhakti or devotion. But, at the same time how difficult it is, to put it into practice! The Nathas were perfect, but is it possible for fools like us to attain devotion as delineated by them? We won't get it even after several births, then, how are we to get salvation? It seems that there is no hope for us." Madhavrao did not like this pessimistic attitude of Kakasaheb. He said, "It is a pity that one, who by his good luck got such a jewel (Guru) as Baba, should cry out so disparagingly, if he has unwavering faith in Baba, why should he feel restless? The Bhakti of the Nathas may be strong and powerful, but is not ours' loving and affectionate? And has not Baba told us authoritatively that remembering and chanting Hari's and Guru's name confers salvation? Then, where is the cause for fear and anxiety?" Kakasaheb was not satisfied with Madhavrao's explanation. He continued to be anxious and restless the

whole day, thinking and brooding over, how to get the powerful Bhakti of the Nathas. Next morning, the following miracle took place:

One gentleman, named Anandrao Pakhade came there, in search of Madhavrao. The reading of the Bhagwat was then going on. Mr. Pakhade sat near Madhavrao and was whispering something to him. He was mentioning in low tone, his dream-vision. As there was some interruption in the reading by this whispering, Kakasaheb stopped the reading and asked Madhavrao, what the matter was. The latter said, "Yesterday, you expressed your doubt, now, here is the explanation of it, hear Mr. Pakhade's vision, explaining the characteristic of devotion and showing that, the devotion, in the form of bowing down to or worshipping of Guru's feet is sufficient." All were anxious to hear the vision, specially Kakasaheb. At their suggestion Mr. Pakhade began to relate the vision as follows:

I was standing in deep sea in waist-deep water. There, I saw Sai Baba all of a sudden. He was sitting on a beautiful throne studded with diamonds, with His Feet submerged in water. I was most pleased and satisfied with the Form of Baba. The vision was so realistic that, I never thought that, it was a dream. Curiously enough, Madhavrao was also standing there. He said to me feelingly, "Anandrao, fall at Baba's Feet." I rejoined, "I also wish to do so, but His Feet are in water, how can I place my head on them? I am helpless." Hearing this, he said to Baba, "Oh Deva, take out Your Feet, which are under water." Then, Baba immediately took out His Feet. I caught them without delay and bowed down to them. On seeing this, Baba blessed me saying, "Go now, you will attain your welfare, there is no cause for fear and anxiety." He also added, "Give a silk-bordered Dhotar to my Shama, you will benefit thereby."

In compliance with Baba's order, Mr. Pakhade had brought the Dhotar, and requested Kakasaheb to hand it over to Madhavrao, but the latter refused to accept it, saying that unless Baba gave a hint or suggestion for acceptance, he would not accept it. Then, after some discussion Kakasaheb decided to cast lots. It was the practice of Kakasaheb to cast lots in all the significant matters, and to abide by the decision, as given in the picked-up chit. In this particular case, two chits, on one of which was written 'To accept' and on other 'To reject,' were placed at the Feet of Baba and a child was asked to pick one of them. The 'Accept' chit was picked up and the Dhotar was accepted by Madhavrao. In this way both Anandrao and Madhavrao were satisfied,

and Kakasaheb's difficulty was solved.

This story exhorts us to give respect to the words of other saints, but at the same time asks us to have full faith in our Mother, i.e., the Guru, and abide by His instructions, for he knows our welfare better than any other person. Carve out on your heart, the following words of Baba: "There are innumerable saints in this world, but 'our father' (Guru) is the Father (Real Guru). Others might say many good things, but we should never forget our Guru's words. In short, love your Guru whole-heartedly, surrender to Him completely and prostrate yourselves before Him reverentially; and then, you will see that there is no sea of mundane existence, before you to cross as there is no darkness for the sun".

Wooden plank Baba's Bed-Stead, and not Bhagat's

In His earlier days, Baba slept on a wooden plank, 4 arms in length and only a span in breadth with Panatis (earthen lamps) burning at its four corners. Later on, He broke the plank into pieces and threw it away (Vide chapter X). Once, Baba was describing the greatness or importance of this plank to Kakasaheb. On hearing this, the latter said to Baba, "If you still love the wooden plank, I will again suspend or hang up one in the Masjid for You to sleep at ease." Baba replied, "I won't like to sleep up leaving Mhalsapati down on the ground." Then, Kakasaheb said, "I will provide another plank for Mhalsapati too." Baba said, "How can he sleep on the plank? It is not easy to sleep on the plank. He who has many good qualities in him, only can do so. He who can sleep with his eyes wide open can effect that. When I go to sleep I often ask Mhalsapati to sit by My side, place his hand on My heart and watch the 'chanting of the Lord's name' there, and if he finds Me sleeping, wake Me up. He can't do even this. He himself gets drowsy and begins to nod his head. When, I feel his hand heavy as a stone on My heart and cry out 'Oh Bhagat, he moves and opens his eyes. How can he, who can't sit and sleep well on the ground, and whose Asana (posture) is not steady, and who is slave to sleep, can sleep high up on a plank?' On many other occasions, Baba said, out of love for His devotees "What is our's (whether good or bad), is with us, and what is other's is with them."

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CHAPTER XLVI

Baba's Gaya Trip – Story of Goats

This chapter describes Shama's trip to Kashi, Prayag and Gaya; and how Baba (in the Form of His portrait) was there ahead of him; it also describes Baba's reminiscences of the past birth of two goats.

Preliminary

Blessed, Oh Sai, are Your Feet, blessed is Your remembrance and blessed is Your darshan, which liberates us from the bond of Karma. Though Your Form is invisible to us now, still if the devotees believe in You, they get living experiences from You. By an invisible and subtle thread, You draw Your devotees from far and near to Your Feet, and embrace them like a kind and loving mother. The devotees do not know, where You are, but You so skillfully pull the wires that, they ultimately realize that, You are behind them to help and support them. The intelligent, wise and learned folk fall into the pit of the Sansar on account of their egoism; but You save, by Your power, the poor, simple and devout persons. Inwardly and invisibly, You play all the game but show that You are not concerned with it. While You do things but pose Your-self as a non-doer. Nobody ever knows Your life. The best course, therefore, for us is to surrender our body, speech and mind of Your Feet, and always chant Your name to destroy our sins. You fulfil the wishes of the devotees and to those, who are without any desire, You give Bliss supreme. The chanting of Your sweet name, is the easiest Sadhana for devotees. By this Sadhana, our sins, Rajas and Tamas qualities, will vanish; the Sattwa qualities and righteousness will gain predominance and along with this, discrimination, dispassion and knowledge will follow. Then, we shall abide in our Self and our Guru (who are one and the same). This is what is called complete surrender to the Guru. The only sure sign of this is that, our mind gets calm and peaceful. The greatness of this surrender, devotion and knowledge is unique, for peace, non-attachment, fame and salvation etc., come in its wake.

If Baba accepts a devotee, He follows him and stands by him, day and night, at his home or abroad. Let the devotee go anywhere he likes, Baba is there ahead of him in some form, in an inconceivable manner. The following story illustrates this.

Gaya Trip

Sometime after Kakasaheb Dixit was introduced to Sai Baba, he decided to perform the thread (Upanayan) ceremony of his eldest son, Babu, at Nagpur. At about the same time, Nanasaheb Chandorkar decided to perform the marriage ceremony of his eldest son, at Gwalior. Both Dixit and Chandorkar came to Shirdi and lovingly invited Baba for these functions. Baba asked them to take Shama, as His representative. When He was pressed to come in person, Baba told them to take Shama with them and said, "After doing Benaras and Prayag we would be ahead of Shama". Now, mark these words for they show Baba's all-pervasiveness.

After taking the permission of Baba, Shama decided to go to Nagpur and Gwalior for these functions and ceremonies, and then to Kashi, Prayag and Gaya. Appa Kote made up his mind to accompany him. They both went first to Nagpur for the thread ceremony. Kakasaheb Dixit gave Shama Rs. 200/- for his expenses. Then, they went to Gwalior for the marriage ceremony. There, Nanasaheb Chandorkar gave Shama Rs. 100/- and his Vyahi (relative), Mr. Jathar gave him also Rs. 100/-. Then, Shama went to Kashi, and then to Ayodhya. He was well received in Jathar's beautiful temple of Laxmi-Narayan at Kashi (Varanasi or Banaras) and in the Ram-Mandir at Ayodhya by Jathar's manager. They (Shama and Kote) stayed for 21 days in Ayodhya and two months in Kashi (Benaras). Then, they left for Gaya. In the train they felt little uneasy on hearing that, plague was prevailing in Gaya. At night they alighted at Gaya station and stayed in the Dharmshala. In the morning, the Gayawala (the priest who arranges for the lodging and boarding of the pilgrims) came there and said, "The pilgrims have already started, you better make haste." Shama casually asked him, whether there was plague in Gaya. "No," said the Gayawala, "Please come without any fear or anxiety and see yourself". Then, they went with him and stayed in his house, which was a big and spacious Wada. Shama was pleased with the accommodation provided to him; but what pleased him most, was the beautiful big portrait of Baba, fixed in the central and front portion of the building. On seeing this portrait, Shama was overwhelmed with emotion. He remembered Baba's words, viz. "After doing Kashi and Prayag, We would be ahead of Shama," and burst into tears. His hairs stood on end, his throat was choked and he began to sob. The Gayawala thought that, he was afraid of plague prevailing there, and therefore, was crying. But, Shama enquired from him how he got Baba's

portrait there. He replied that he had 200 or 300 agents working at Manmad and Puntambe, for looking after the convenience of the pilgrims to Gaya and from them he heard about Baba's fame. Then, about 12 years ago he went to Shirdi and took Baba's darshan. There, he was attracted by Baba's portrait, hung in Shama's house and with Baba's permission, Shama gave it to him. This was the same portrait. Shama then remembered, this incident. The Gayawala's joy knew no bounds, when he learnt that the same Shama, who obliged him before, was his guest now. Then, they both exchanged love and service and were most delighted and happy. The Gayawala gave him a royal welcome. He was a very rich man. He sat in a palanquin; and made Shama ride an elephant and attended to all his comforts and conveniences.

The moral of the story is this that : Baba's words came out true to the letter, and unbounded was His love towards the devotees. But, leave this aside. He also loved all creatures equally, for He felt that, He was one with them. The following story will illustrate this.

Two Goats

Baba was, once, returning from Lendi, when He saw a flock of goats. Two of them attracted His attention. He went to them, caressed and fondled them and bought them for Rs. 32/-. The devotees were surprised at this conduct of Baba. They thought that, Baba was duped in this bargain, as the goats would fetch Rs. two each or at the most Rs. 3/- or 4/- each, i.e., Rs. 8/- for both. They began to take Baba to task for this but Baba kept calm and cool. Shama and Tatya Kote asked Baba for an explanation. He said, He did not care to store money, as He had no home or family to look after. He asked them to purchase, at His cost, 4 seers of 'Dal' (lentil) and feed the goats. After this was done, Baba returned the goats to the owner of the flock and gave out the following reminiscences and story of the goats.

"Oh Shama and Tatya, you think that, I have been deceived in this bargain. No. Listen to their story! In their former birth, they were human-beings, and had the good fortune to be with Me and sit by My side. They were uterine brothers, loving each other initially but later on, they became enemies. The elder brother was an idle fellow, while the younger one was an active chap and earned a lot of money. The former became greedy and jealous and wanted to kill his younger brother and take away his money. They forgot their fraternal relations, and began to quarrel with each other. The elder brother resorted to many devices to

kill his younger brother, but all his attempts failed. Thus, they became deadly enemies and finally, on one occasion the elder gave a deadly blow with a big stick on the latter's head, while the latter struck the former with an axe, with the result that, both fell dead on the spot. As the result of their actions, they were both born as goats. As they passed by Me, I, at once, recognised them. I remembered their past history. By taking pity on them, I wanted to feed them and give them rest and comfort, and for this reason I spent all the money, for which you blame Me. As you did not like My bargain, I sent them back to their shepherd." Such was Sai's love for the goats!

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CHAPTER XLVII

Baba's Reminiscences

Story of Veerbhadrappa and Chenbassappa (snake and frog)

The last chapter described Baba's reminiscences about two goats. This chapter describes more such reminiscences, and relates the story of Veerbhadrappa and Chenbassappa.

Preliminary

Blessed is the face of Sai. If we cast a glance at Him for a moment, He destroys the sorrow of many past births and confers great Bliss on us; and if He looks at us with grace, our bondage of Karma is immediately snapped away and we are led to happiness. The river Ganges washes away the dirt and sins of all people, who go to her for a bath, but she intently longs for the saints to come to her, and bless her with the touch of their feet and remove all the filth (sins) accumulated in her. She knows, for certain that, this can only be removed by the holy feet of the saints. Sai is the crest-jewel of the saints, and now, hear from Him the following purifying story.

The Snake and the Frog

Sai Baba said, "One morning, after taking My breakfast I strolled along, till I came to a small river bank. As I was tired I rested there, washed My hands and Feet and had a bath and felt refreshed. There was a foot-path and a cart-track, sheltered by shady trees. The breeze was also blowing gently. As I was preparing to smoke Chillim (pipe), I heard the croaking of a frog. I was striking the flint and lighting the fire, when a traveller turned up, sat by My side, bowed down to Me and politely invited Me to his house for meals and rest. He lit up the pipe and handed it over to Me. The croaking was heard again and he wanted to know, what it was. I told him that a frog was in trouble, and was tasting the bitter fruit of its own Karma. We have to reap now the fruit of what we sow in our past life, and there is no use crying about it now. Then, he smoked and handed over the pipe to Me, and said that he would go there in person and see for himself. I told him that a frog

was caught by a big snake and was crying. Both were very wicked in their past life, and were now reaping the fruit of their past actions in the present bodies. He went and found that a huge black serpent was holding a big frog in its mouth.

He returned to Me and said that in about 10 or 12 minutes the frog would be eaten up by the snake. I said, "No, this can't be. I am its Father (Protector), and I am here now. How shall I allow the snake to eat it up, am I here for nothing? Just see how I release it."

After smoking again, we walked up to the place. He was afraid and asked Me not to proceed further, as the snake might attack us. Not minding him, I went ahead and addressed the creatures thus, "Oh Veerbhadrappa, has not your enemy Bassappa yet repented, though he has been born as a frog, and you too, though born as a serpent, still hold bitter enmity against him? Be ashamed of yourself, give up your hatred now and rest in peace."

On hearing these words, the snake left the frog quickly and dived into the river and disappeared. The frog also jumped away, and hid itself in the bushes.

The traveller was much surprised; he said that he could not understand, how the snake dropped the frog and disappeared on hearing the words. Who was Veerbhadrappa? And who was Bassappa? and what was the cause of their enmity? I returned with him to the foot of the tree and after sharing again a few puffs of smoke with him I explained the whole mystery to him as follows :

There was an ancient holy place sanctified by a temple of Mahadev about 4 or 5 miles from My place. The temple was old and dilapidated. The residents of the place collected funds for its repairs. After a large amount was collected, arrangement for worship was made and plans with estimates for repairs were prepared. A rich local man was appointed the treasurer and the whole work was entrusted to him. He was to keep regular accounts, and be honest in all his dealings. He was a first class miser and spent very little for the repairs, which consequently made very little progress. He spent all the funds, swallowed some amount himself and spent nothing from his pocket. He had a sweet tongue, and

was very clever in offering plausible explanations, regarding the poor and tardy progress of the work. The people again went to him and said that unless he lent his helping hand and tried his best, the work would not be complete. They requested him to work out the scheme and again collected subscriptions, and sent the amount to him. He received it, but sat as quiet as before, without making any progress. After some days, God (Mahadev) appeared in his wife's dream and said to her, "You get up, build the dome of the temple, I will give you a hundred-fold of what you spend." She told this vision to her husband. He was afraid that, it would involve him in expenses, and therefore, laughed it off saying that it was a mere dream, a thing not to be relied and acted upon or else why did not God appear to him in the dream and tell him about it? Was he far off from her? This looks like a bad dream, having its object in the creation of ill feeling between husband and wife. She had to remain quiet.

God does not like big subscriptions and donations, collected against the wishes of the donors, but He likes ever trifling amounts given with love, devotion and gratitude. Some days after, God again appeared in her dream and said : "Do not bother yourself about your husband, and the collections with him. Don't press him to spend any money for the temple. What I want is, bhava and devotion. So, give, if you like, anything of your own." She consulted her husband about this vision and decided to give God her ornaments, given by her father. The miser felt disconcerted and decided to cheat even God in this item. He undervalued the ornaments at Rs. 1000/- and bought them himself and in lieu of the amount gave a barren field to God, as endowment or security. The wife agreed to this. The field or land was not his own, it belonged to one poor woman, named Dubaki, who mortgaged it to him for Rs. 200/-. She was not able to redeem it for long. So, the cunning miser cheated all, his wife, Dubaki and even God. The land was sterile, uncultivated and worth nothing and yielded nothing, even in the best season.

Thus, ended this transaction and the land was given in the possession of the poor priest, who was pleased with the endowment. Some time later strange things happened. There was a terrific storm and heavy downpour; lightning struck the house of the miser, when he and his wife both died. Dubaki also breathed her last.

In the next life, the rich miser was born at Mathura in a Brahmin family and was named Veerbhadrappa. His devout wife was born as the daughter of the priest of the temple, and was named Gouri. The woman Dubaki (the mortgagor) was born as a male in the family of the Gurav (attendant) of the temple and was named Chenbassappa. The priest was a friend of Mine. He often came to Me, chatted and smoked with Me. His daughter Gouri was also devoted to Me. She was growing fast and her father was seeking a good husband for her. I told him not to worry about this, as the bridegroom himself would come seeking her. Then, there came a poor boy, named Veerbhadrappa wandering and begging his bread, to the priest's house. With My consent Gouri was given in marriage to him. He was also, devoted to Me initially, as I recommended his marriage with Gouri but later became miser. Even in this new life he was hankering after money, and asked Me to help him to get it, as he was leading a married man's life.

Strange things happened. There was a sudden rise in prices. By Gouri's good luck, there was a great demand for land and the land was sold for one lakh of rupees (100 times the worth of her ornaments). Half the amount was paid in cash and the remaining was to be paid in 25 instalments or Rs. 2000/- each. All agreed to this transaction, but began to quarrel over the money. They came to Me for consultation. I told them that the property belonged to God and was vested in the priest, and that, Gouri was his sole heiress and proprietress and no amount should be spent without her consent; and that, her husband had no right whatsoever to the amount. On hearing My opinion, Veerbhadrappa was annoyed with Me and said that, I wanted to establish Gouri's claim and embezzle her property. On hearing his words, I remembered God and kept quiet. Veerbhadrappa scolded his wife (Gouri) and she came to Me at noon and requested Me not to mind the words of others and not to discard her, as she was My daughter. As she thus sought My protection, I gave her a pledge that, I would cross seven seas to help her. Then, that night, Gouri had a vision. Mahadev appeared in her dream and said, "The whole money is yours, do not give anything to anybody, spend some amount for temple purposes in consultation with Chenbassappa and if you want to use it for some other purpose, consult Baba in the Masjid (Myself)." Gouri told Me the vision and I gave her proper advice in the matter. I told her to take the principal or capital amount to herself, give half the amount of interest to Chenbassappa, and that, Veerbhadrappa had nothing to do in the matter. While I was

thus talking, both Veerbhadrappa and Chenbassappa came there quarrelling. I tried My best to pacify them and told them of God's vision to Gouri. Veerbhadrappa got wild and angry and threatened to kill Chenbassappa cutting him to pieces. The latter was timid, he caught My Feet and sought refuge in Me. I pledged Myself to save him from the wrath of his foe. Then, after some time, Veerbhadrappa died and was born as a snake and Chenbassappa died and was born as a frog. On hearing the croaking of Chenbassappa and remembering my pledge, I came here, saved him and kept My word. God runs to His devotees for help in times of danger. He saved Chenbassappa (the frog) by sending Me here. All this is God's Leela or sport."

The Moral

The moral of the story is that, one has to reap what one sows, and there is no escape, unless one suffers and squares up one's old debts and dealings with others, and that, greed for money drags the greedy man to the lowest level, and ultimately brings destruction for him and others.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XLVIII

Warding off Devotee's Calamities

Story of (1) Shevade (2) Sapatneker

At the commencement of this chapter, someone asked Hemadpant, whether Sai Baba was a Guru or Sadguru. In order to answer the question Hemadpant describes the signs or marks of a Sadguru as follows :

Signs of Sadguru

He, who teaches us Ved and Vedanta or the six Shastras (systems), he, who controls the breath or brands his body with Mudras (metallic marks of Vishnu's weapons) or gives pleasing discourses regarding Brahma; he, who gives Mantras (sacred syllables) to the disciples and orders them to chant the same a certain number of times, but does not assure them any result in a definite time, he, who, by his lengthy gross knowledge, explains beautifully the Ultimate Principle; but has himself got no experience or self-realization, is not a Sadguru. But, he, who, by his discourse, creates in us a distaste for the enjoyments of this world and the next, and gives us a taste of self-realization, who is well-versed in both the theoretical and practical knowledge (self-realization) deserves to be called a Sadguru. How can he, who is himself devoid of self-realization, give it to the disciples? A Sadguru does not, ever in his dream, expect any service or profit from his disciples. On the contrary he wishes to serve them. He does not think that, he is great and the disciple small. Not only, he loves him as his son but regards him as equal to himself or as Brahma. The main characteristic of a Sadguru is that, he is the abode of peace. He is never restless nor ruffled. He has no pride of his learning. The poor and the rich, the small and the great, are the same to him.

Hemadpant thinks that, on account of the store or accumulation of merits in his past births, he had the good fortune of meeting and being blessed by such a Sadguru as Sai Baba. Even in full youth, He hoarded nothing (except Chillim perhaps). He had no family, no friend, no home, nor any support. Since He was eighteen, His control of mind was perfect and extra-ordinary. He lived fearlessly in secluded places and always abided in His Self. On seeing the pure attachment of His

devotees, He always acted in their interests, and hence, He was in a way dependent on them. What experience He gave to His devotees, while he was living in flesh, are felt even to-day, after His Mahasamadhi, by those who attach themselves to Him. What the devotees have to do is this – They have to trim their heart-lamp of faith and devotion, and burn in it wicks of love, and when this is done, the flame of knowledge (self-realization) will be lit up and shine bright. Mere knowledge without love is dry, nobody wants such knowledge. Without love there is no contentment, so we should have unbroken and unbounded love. How can we praise love? Everything is insignificant before it. Without love our reading, hearing and the study are of no avail. In the wake of love come devotion, dispassion, peace and liberation with all their treasures. We do not get love for anything, unless we feel earnestly about it. So, where there is real yearning God manifests Himself. It includes love and it is the means of liberation.

Now, let us revert to the main story of this chapter. A man should go to a true saint with a pure mind or even otherwise (fraudulently), and hold his feet; ultimately, he is sure to be saved. This is illustrated by the following stories.

Mr. Shevade

Mr. Sapatnekar of Akkalkot (Solapur district) was studying law. A co-student Mr. Shevade met him. Other fellow students also got together and compared notes of their study. It was found by the questions and answers amongst themselves that, Mr. Shevade was the least prepared of all for the examination, and therefore, all the students derided him. But, he said that though he was not prepared, he was sure to pass the examination, as his Sai Baba was there to get him through it successfully. Mr. Sapatnekar was surprised at this remark. He took Mr. Shevade aside and asked him, "who this Sai Baba is whom he extolled so high." He replied, "There lives in a masjid in Shirdi (Ahmednagar district) a Fakir. He is a great Satpurush. There may be other saints, but this one is unique. Unless there is a great store of merits on one's account, one can't see Him. I fully believe in Him, and what He says will never be untrue. He has assured me that, I will pass definitely next year and I am confident that I will get through the final examination by His grace." Mr. Sapatnekar laughed at his friend's confidence and jeered at him and Baba. Later when Shevade passed his exams successfully, it made Sapatnekar quite surprised.

Sapatnekar

Mr. Sapatnekar passed his examination, settled at Akkalkot and practised as a pleader there. Ten years after this, i.e., in 1913 he lost his only son on account of a throat disease. This broke his heart. He sought relief by making a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, Gangapur and other holy places. He got no peace of mind. Then, he read Vedanta, which also did not help him. In the meanwhile, he remembered Mr. Shevade's remarks and his faith in Baba, and he thought that, he too should go to Shirdi and see Baba. He went to Shirdi with his younger brother Panditrao and was much pleased to see Baba from a distance. When he went near and prostrated himself and placed a coconut before Baba with feeling of devotion, the latter at once, cried out "Get away!" Sapatnekar hung down his head, moved back and sat aside. He wanted to consult somebody, who would advise him how to proceed. Somebody mentioned Bala Shimpi's name. Sapatnekar saw him and sought his help. They bought Baba's photos and came with them to the masjid. Bala Shimpi took a photo in his hand, gave it to Baba and asked him, whose photo it was. Baba said that this photo was of the 'Yaar' (lover) of him, pointing to Sapatnekar. Saying this Baba laughed and all others joined. Bala asked Baba the significance of the laugh and beckoned Sapatnekar to come forward and take darshan. When Sapatnekar began to prostrate himself, Baba again cried "Get out!" Sapatnekar did not know, what to do. Then, they both joined their hands and sat before Baba, praying. Baba finally ordered Sapatnekar to clear out immediately. Both were sad and dejected. As Baba's order had to be obeyed, Sapatnekar left Shirdi with a heavy heart praying that, he should be allowed to take darshan next time.

Mrs. Sapatnekar

One year elapsed. Still his mind was not at peace. He went to Gangapur, where he felt more restless. Then, he went to Madhegaon for rest, and finally, decided to go to Kashi. Two days before starting, his wife got a vision. In her dream, she was going with a pitcher to Lakkad Shah's well. There, a Fakir, with a piece of cloth tied around his head, sitting at the foot of the Neem tree, came close to her and said, "My dear lassie, why get exhausted for nothing? I get your pitcher filled with pure water." She was afraid of the Fakir and hastened back with the empty pitcher. The Fakir followed her. At this, she was woke up and opened her eyes. She told this vision to her husband. They thought that, this

was an auspicious sign, and they both left for Shirdi. When they reached the Masjid, Baba was absent. He had gone to Lendi. They waited till His return. When He returned, she was surprised to see that, the Fakir she saw in her vision, exactly resembled Baba. She reverentially prostrated herself before Baba and sat down looking at him. On seeing her humility, Baba was much pleased and began to tell a story in His peculiar characteristic manner to a third party. He said, "My arms, abdomen and waist have been paining for a long time. I took many medicines, the pains did not abate. I got sick of the medicines, as they gave Me no relief, but I am surprised to see now that, all the pains have disappeared at once." Though no name was mentioned, it was the story of Mrs. Sapatnekar herself. Her pains, as described by Baba left her soon and she was happy.

Then, Mr. Sapatnekar went ahead to take darshan. He was again welcomed with the former "Get out!" This time, he was more penitent and persevering. He said that Baba's displeasure was due to his past deeds and resolved to make amends for the same. He determined to see Baba alone and ask his pardon for his past actions. He placed his head on Baba's Feet, and Baba placed His hand on him, and Sapatnekar sat stroking Baba's Leg. Then, a shepherdess came and sat massaging Baba's back. Baba, in His characteristic way, began to tell the story of a bania. He related the various vicissitudes of all his life, including the death of his only son. Sapatnekar was surprised to see that, the story, which Baba related, was his own and he wondered, how Baba knew every detail of it. He came to understand that He was Omniscient, and knew the hearts of all. When this thought crossed his mind, Baba still addressing the shepherdess and pointing to Sapatnekar said, "This fellow blames Me and charges Me with the killing of his son. Do I kill people's children? Why does this fellow come to the Masjid and cry? Now, I will do this, I will again bring that very child back in his wife's womb." With these words, He placed His blessing hand on his head and comforted him saying, **"These Feet are old and holy, you are care-free now; place entire faith in Me and you will soon get your object."** Sapatnekar was much moved with emotion, he bathed Baba's Feet with his tears, and then, returned to his residence.

Then, he made preparations for worship and Naivaidya and came with his wife to the Masjid. He offered all this to Baba and accepted Prasad from Him. There was a crowd in the Masjid and Sapatnekar went there and saluted Baba again and again. On seeing heads clashing

against heads, Baba said to Sapatnekar, **"Oh, why do you prostrate yourself now and then? One Namaskar offered with love and humility is enough."** Then, Sapatnekar witnessed that night the Chavadi procession, described earlier. In that procession Baba looked like veritable Pandurang (Vitthal).

At the parting next day, Sapatnekar thought that he should first pay one rupee as Dakshina and if Baba asked again, instead of saying no, he should pay one more, reserving with him sufficient amount as expenses for the journey. When he went to the Masjid and offered one rupee, Baba asked for another as per his intention and when it was paid, Baba blessed him saying, "Take the coconut, put it in your wife's Oti (upper fold of her sari), and go away without the least anxiety." He did so, and within a year a son was born to him, and with an infant of 8 months the couple came to Shirdi, placed him at Baba's Feet and prayed thus, "Oh, Sainath, we do not know, how to repay Your obligations, therefore, we prostrate ourselves before You, bless us poor helpless fellows, henceforth, let Your Holy Feet be our sole refuge. Many thoughts and ideas trouble us in waking and dream states, so, turn away our minds from them to Your Bhajan and bless us."

The son was named Murlidhar. Two others (Bhaskar and Dinkar) were born afterwards. The Sapatnekar couple thus realized that, Baba's words were never untrue and unfulfilled.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER XLIX

*Stories of (1) Hari Kanoba (2) Somadev Swami (3)
Nanasaheb Chandorkar*

Preliminary

When even the Vedas and the Puranas cannot sufficiently praise (describe) Brahma or Sadguru, then, how can we, ignorant describe our Sadguru, Shri Sai Baba? We think that, it is better for us to keep quiet in this matter. In reality, the observance of the vow of silence is the best way of praising the Sadguru; but the divine qualities of Sai Baba make us forget our vow of silence and inspire us to open our mouth. Tasteful dishes lose their taste, if there is no company of friends and relatives to partake the dishes with us; but when they join us, the dishes acquire additional flavour. The same is the case with the Sai Leelamrit – the nectar in the form of Sai's Leelas. This nectar we cannot partake alone. Friends and brothers have to join us – the more the better.

It is Sai Baba Himself Who inspires these stories and gets them written, as He desires. Our duty is to surrender completely to Him and meditate on Him. Practising penance is better than pilgrimage, vow, sacrifice, and charity. Worshipping Hari (Lord) is better than penance; and meditation on the Sadguru is the best of all. We have, therefore, to chant Sai's name think over His sayings in our mind, meditate on His Form, feel true love for Him in our heart, and do all our actions for His sake. There is no better means than this for snapping the bondage of this Sansar. If we can do our duty on our part, as stated above, Sai is bound to help and liberate us. Now, we revert to the stories of this chapter.

Hari Kanoba

A gentleman of Mumbai, named Hari Kanoba heard from his friends and relatives many Leelas of Baba. He did not believe in them, as he had a doubting mind. He wanted to see Baba himself. So, he came to Shirdi with some Mumbai friends. He wore a lace bordered turban on his head and a new pair of sandals on his feet. On seeing Baba from a distance, he thought of going to Him and prostrating himself before Him. He did not know, what to do about his new sandals. After going to one corner in the open courtyard, he placed them there and went in the Masjid and had Baba's darshan. He made a reverential bow to Baba, took Udi and Prasad from Baba and returned. When he reached

the corner, he found to his utter dismay that his sandals had disappeared. He searched for them in vain; and returned to his lodging, very much dejected.

He bathed, offered worship and Naivaidya and sat down for meals, but all this while he was thinking about nothing but his sandals. After finishing his meals, he came out to wash his hands, when he saw a Maratha boy coming towards him. He held in his hand a stick, at the end of which was hanging a pair of new sandals. He said to the men, who had come out to wash their hands that, Baba sent him with this stick in hand and asked him to go on the streets crying "Hari Ka Beta. Jari Ka Pheta" and that, "If anybody claims these sandals, first assure yourself that, his name is Hari and that, he is the son of 'Ka', i.e., Kanoba; and that, he wears a lace-bordered turban; and then, give them over to him." On hearing this, Hari Kanoba was pleasantly surprised. He went ahead to the boy and claimed the sandals as his own. He said to the boy that his name was Hari, and that, he was the son of 'Ka' (Kanoba); and showed him his lace bordered turban. The boy was satisfied and returned the sandals to him. Hari Kanoba wondered in his mind that his lace-bordered turban was visible to all, and Baba might have seen it; but how could he know that his name was Hari, and that he was the son of Kanoba, as this was his first trip to Shirdi. He came there with the sole object of testing Baba, and with no other motive. He came to know by this incident that, Baba was a great Satpurush. He got what he wanted, and returned home well-pleased.

Somadev Swami

Now, hear the story of another man, who came to try Baba. Bhaiji, brother of Kakasaheb Dixit was staying at Nagpur. When he had gone to the Himalayas in 1906 he made an acquaintance with one Somadev Swami of Hardwar at Uttar Kashi, down the Gangotri valley¹. Both took down each other's names in their diaries. Five years later Somadev Swami came to Nagpur and was Bhaiji's guest. There, he was pleased to hear the Leelas of Baba, and a strong desire arose in his mind to go to Shirdi and see Him. He got a letter of introduction from Bhaiji and left for Shirdi. After passing Manmad and Kopergaon, he took a Tonga and drove to Shirdi. As he came near Shirdi, he saw two flags floating high over the Masjid in Shirdi. Generally, we find different behaviour, different mode of living and different outward paraphernalia with different saints. But, these outward signs should never be our standards to judge the worth of a saint. But, with Somadev Swami, it was different.

1. In Garhwal region of Uttaranchal.

As soon as, he saw the flags flying, he thought, "Why should a saint take a liking for the flags? Does this denote saint-hood? It implies the saint's hankering after fame." Thinking thus, he wished to cancel his Shirdi trip and said to his fellow travellers that he would go back. They said to him, "Then, why did you come so far? If your mind became restless by the mere sight of the flags, how much more agitated would you be on seeing the Rath, the palanquin, the horse and all other paraphernalia in Shirdi?" The Swami got more confounded and said, "Not Sadhu with horses, palanquins and tom-toms have I seen, and it is better for me to return than visit such a Sadhu." After saying this he started to return. The fellow-travellers pressed him not to do so but to proceed. They asked him to stop his inconsistent way of thinking and told him that the Sadhu, i.e., Baba did not care a bit for the flags and other paraphernalia, nor for the name. It was the people, His devotees who, kept up all this paraphernalia out of love and devotion to Him. Finally, he was persuaded to continue his journey, go to Shirdi and see Baba. When he went and saw Baba from the courtyard, he entered inside, his eyes were full of tears, his throat was choked, and all his evil and crooked thoughts vanished. He remembered his Guru's saying that, "That is our abode and place of rest, where the mind is most pleased and settled." He wished to roll himself in the dust at Baba's Feet and when he approached Baba, the latter got wild and cried aloud, "Let all our humbug (paraphernalia) be with us, you go back to your home beware! If you come back to this Masjid again. Why take the darshan of One, Who flies a flag over His Masjid? Is this a sign of sainthood? Remain here not a moment." The Swami was taken aback by surprise. He realized that, Baba read his heart and spoke it out. How Omniscient He was! He knew that, he was least intelligent, and that, Baba was noble and pure. He saw Baba embracing somebody, touching someone with his hand, comforting others, staring kindly at some laughing at others, giving Udi-Prasad to some and thus pleasing and satisfying all. Why should he alone be dealt so harshly? After thinking seriously, he came to realize that, Baba's conduct responded exactly to his inner thought; and that, he should take a lesson from this and improve; and that Baba's wrath was a blessing in disguise. It is needless to say that later on, his faith in Baba was confirmed, and he became a staunch devotee of Baba.

Nanasaheb Chandorkar

Henad pant concludes this chapter, with a story of Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Nanasaheb was once sitting in the Masjid with Mhalsapati and others, a Mohammedan gentleman from Bijapur came with his

family, to see Baba. On seeing veiled ladies with him, Nanasaheb wanted to go away, but Baba prevented him from doing so. The ladies came and took the darshan of Baba. When one of the ladies removed her veil for saluting Baba's Feet, Nanasaheb, who had a glimpse of her face, was so much smitten with her beauty that he wished to see her face again. Knowing Nana's restlessness of mind, Baba spoke to him after the lady had left the place, "Nana, why are you getting agitated in vain? Let the senses do their allotted work or duty, we should not meddle with their work. God had created this beautiful world, and it is our duty to appreciate its beauty. The mind will get steady and calm slowly and gradually. When the front door was open, why go by the back one? When the heart is pure, there is no difficulty, whatsoever. Why should one be afraid of anyone, if there be no evil thought in us? The eyes may do their work, why should you feel shy and tottering?"

Shama was there, and he could not follow the meaning of what Baba said. So, he asked Nana about this on their way home. Nana told him about his restlessness at the sight of the beautiful lady, how Baba knew it and advised him about it. Nana explained Baba's meaning as follows, "That our mind is fickle by nature, it should not be allowed to get wild. The senses may get restless, the body, however, should be held in check, and not allowed to be impatient. Senses run after objects of desire but we should not follow them and crave for them. By slow and gradual practice, restlessness can be conquered. We should not be swayed by the senses, though they cannot be completely controlled. We should curb them, rightly and properly, according to the need of the occasion. Beauty is the subject of sight, we may fearlessly look at the beauty of objects. There is no room for shyness or fear. Only, we should never entertain evil thoughts. Making the mind desireless, observe God's works of beauty. In this way, the senses will be easily and naturally controlled, and even in enjoying objects you will be reminded of God. If the outer senses are not held in check, and if the mind be allowed to run after objects and be attached to them, our cycle of births and deaths will not come to an end. With Vivek (discrimination) as our charioteer, we will control the mind, and shall not allow the senses to go astray. With such a charioteer, we reach the Vishnu-pada – the final abode, our real Home, from where there is no return."

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all



CHAPTER L

*Stories of (1) Kakasaheb Dixit (2) Shri Tembe Swami
(3) Balaram Dhurandhar*

Chapter 50 of the original Satcharita has been incorporated in chapter 39, as it dealt with the same subject matter. Now, chapter 51 of the Satcharita has been treated here as chapter 50. This chapter gives the stories of (1) Kakasaheb Dixit, (2) Shri Tembe Swami and (3) Balaram Dhurandhar.

Preliminary

Victory be unto Sai, Who is the main-stay of the Bhaktas, Who is our Sadguru, Who expounds the meaning of the Gita and Who gives us all powers. Oh Sai, look favourably on us and bless us all.

The sandal-wood trees grow on the Malaya mountains¹ and ward off heat. The clouds pour their rain-water and thereby, cool and refresh all the people. The flowers blossom in the spring and enable us to worship God, therewith. So, the stories of Sai Baba come forth in order to give solace and comfort to the readers. Both, those who tell and those, who hear the stories of Baba, are blessed and holy.

It is a well-established fact that, though we try hundreds of means or Sadhanas, we do not attain the spiritual goal of life, unless a Sadguru blesses us with his grace. Hear the following story in illustration of this statement.

Kakasaheb Dixit (1864-1926)

Mr. Hari Sitaram alias Kakasaheb Dixit was born in 1864 in a Vadnagara Nagar in a Brahmin-family, at Khandwa (Central Province). His primary education was done at Khandwa, Hinganghat, and secondary education at Nagpur. He came to Mumbai for higher education and studied first in the Wilson College and then in the Elphinstone College. After graduation in 1883, he passed his LL.B. and solicitor's examinations; and then served in the firm of the Govt. Solicitors, Messrs Little and Co.; and then after some time started a solicitors' firm of his own.

Before 1909, Sai Baba's name was not familiar to Kakasaheb, but after that he soon became His great devotee. While he was staying at Lonavla, he happened to see his old friend, Mr. Nanasahb Chandorkar.

1. In India

Both spent some time in talking about many things. Kakasaheb described to him, how while he was boarding a train in London, he met with an accident in which his foot slipped and was injured. Hundreds of remedies gave him no relief. Nanasaheb then told him that if he wished to get rid of the pain and lameness of his leg, he should go to his Sadguru – Sai Baba. He also gave him all the particulars of Sai Baba and mentioned to him Sai Baba's dictum, **"I draw to Me My man from far off or even across the seven seas, like a sparrow with a string fastened to its feet."** He also made it clear to him that, if he was not Baba's man, he would not be attracted to Him and given darshan. Kakasaheb was pleased to hear all this and said to Nanasaheb that he would go to Baba, see Him and pray to Him to cure not so much his lame leg, but bring round his lame, fickle mind and give him eternal Bliss.

Some time after, Kakasaheb went to Ahmednagar, and stayed with Sirdar Kakasaheb Mirikar in connection with securing votes for a seat in the Mumbai Legislative Council. Mr. Balasaheb Mirikar, son of Kakasaheb Mirikar, who was a Mamalatdar of Kopergaon, also came at that time to Ahmednagar in connection with a horse-exhibition there. After the election business was over, Kakasaheb Dixit wanted to go to Shirdi and both the Mirikars, father and son, were also thinking about a fit and proper person, as a guide, with whom he should be sent there. There Sai Baba was arranging things for his reception. Shama got a telegram from his father-in-law at Ahmednagar stating that, his wife was seriously ill, and that, he should come to see her with his wife. Shama with Baba's permission went there, and saw his mother-in-law and found her improving and better. Nanasaheb Panse and Appasaheb Gadre happened to see Shama on their way to the exhibition and they told him to go to Mirikar's house, see Kakasaheb Dixit there and take him to Shirdi along with him. Kakasaheb Dixit and the Mirikars were also informed of Shama's arrival. In the evening, Shama came to Mirikars, who introduced him to Kakasaheb. They arranged that Shama should leave for Kopergaon with Kakasaheb by the 10 o'clock night train. After this was settled, a curious thing happened. Balasaheb Mirikar threw aside the veil or covering on Baba's big portrait and showed the same to Kakasaheb. He was surprised to see that, He, Whom he was going to meet at Shirdi, was already there in the form of His portrait to greet him, at this juncture. He was much moved and made his prostration before the portrait. This portrait belonged to Megha. The glass over it was broken and it was sent to Mirikars for repairs. The necessary repairs had been already made, and it was decided to return the portrait

with Kakasaheb and Shama.

Before ten o'clock, they went to the station and booked their passage; but when the train arrived, they found that the second class was overcrowded; and that there was no room for them. Fortunately, the guard of the train turned out to be an acquaintance of Kakasaheb and he put them up in the first class. Thus, they travelled comfortably and alighted at Kopergaon. Their joy knew no bounds, when they saw there Nanasaheb Chandorkar, who was also bound for Shirdi. Kakasaheb and Nanasaheb embraced each other, and then after bathing in the sacred Godavari river, they started for Shirdi. After coming there and getting Baba's darshan, Kakasaheb's mind was melted, his eyes were full of tears and he was overflowing with joy. Baba said to him that He was also waiting for him, and had sent Shama ahead to receive him.

Kakasaheb then passed many happy years in Baba's company. He built a Wada in Shirdi, which he made as his, more or less, the permanent home. The experiences, he got from Baba, are so manifold that it is not possible to relate them all here. The readers are advised to read a Special (Kakasaheb Dixit) No. of 'Shri Sai Leela' magazine Vol 12, No. 6-9.

We close this account with the mention of one fact only. Baba had comforted him by saying that in the end "He will take him in air coach (Viman)", (i.e., secure him a happy death). This came out true. On the 5th July, 1926, he was travelling in the train with Hemadpant and talking about Sai Baba. He seemed deeply engrossed in Sai Baba. All of a sudden he threw his neck on Hemadpant's shoulder, and breathed his last with no trace of pain and uneasiness.

Shri Tembe Swami

We come to the next story, which shows, how saints love each other with fraternal affection. Once Shri Vasudevanand Saraswati, known as Shri Tembe Swami encamped, at Rajamahendri (Andhra Country), on the banks of the Godavari. He was devout, orthodox, Dnyani and Yogi Bhakta of the Dattatreya. One, Mr. Pundalikrao, pleader of Nanded (Nizam state) went to see him with some friends. While they were talking with him, the names of Shirdi and Sai Baba were causally mentioned. Hearing Baba's name the Swami joined hands with reverence and taking a coconut gave it to Pundalikrao, and said to him, "Offer this to my brother Sai, with my Pranam and request Him not to forget me, but ever love me." He also added that, Swamis do not generally bow to others, but in this case an exception had to be made. Mr. Pundalikrao

consented to take the coconut and his message to Baba. The Swami was right in calling Baba a brother, for as he maintained an Agnihotra (sacred fire) day and night, in his orthodox fashion, Baba too kept His Agnihotra, i.e., Dhuni ever burning in the Masjid.

After one month Pundalik rao and others left for Shirdi with the coconut, 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 refreshment, i.e., Chivda (flattened rice mixed with spice). The Chivda tasted most pungent and in order to soften it, as someone suggested, broke the coconut and mixed its scrapings with it. Thus, they made the Chivda more tasty and palatable. Unfortunately, the coconut turned out to be the same that was entrusted to Pundalik rao. As they neared Shirdi, Pundalik rao remembered the trust, i.e. the coconut, and was very sorry to learn that it was broken and consumed. He came to Shirdi and saw Baba. Baba had already received a wireless message, regarding the coconut from Tenbe Swami, and himself asked Pundalikrao first to give the thing 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 far more than that of an ordinary one, and that it could not be replaced by another. 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 doership in doing good, as well as for bad deeds; be entirely prideless and egotless in all things and thus your spiritual progress will be rapid." What a beautiful spiritual instruction Baba gave!

Balaram Dhurandhar (1878-1925)

Mr. Balaram Dhurandhar, belonged to the Pathare Prabhu community of Santacruz, Mumbai. He was an advocate of the Mumbai High Court and some time Principal of the Government Law School, Mumbai. The whole Dhurandhar family was pious and religious. Mr. Balaram served his community and wrote and published an account of it. He then turned his attention to spiritual and religious matters. He studied Gita carefully, and its commentary Dnyaneshwari and other philosophical and metaphysical works. He was a devotee of Vithoba of Pandharpur. He came in contact with Sai Baba in 1912. Six months earlier, his brothers Babulji and Vamanrao came to Shirdi and took Baba's darshan. They returned home, and mentioned their sweet

experiences to Balaram and other members. Then, they all decided to see Sai Baba. Before they came to Shirdi, Baba declared openly that, "Today many of my Darbar-people are coming." The Dhurandhar brothers were astonished to hear this remark of Baba, from others, as they had not given any previous intimation of their trip. All other people prostrated themselves before Baba, and sat talking with him. Baba said to them, "These are my Darbar-people, whom I referred to before" and said to the Dhurandhar brothers, "We have been with each other for the last sixty generations." All the brothers were gentle and modest, they stood with joined hands, looking at Baba's Feet. All the Sattwic emotions, such as tears, choking etc., moved them and they were all happy. Then, they went to their lodging, took their meals and after taking a little rest again came back to the Masjid. Balaram sat near Baba, massaging His legs. Baba, Who was smoking the Chillim, advanced it towards him and beckoned him to smoke it. Balaram was not accustomed to smoking, still he accepted the pipe, smoked it with great difficulty, and returned it reverentially. This was the most auspicious moment for Balaram. He was suffering from asthma for six years. This smoke completely cured him of the disease, which never troubled him again. Some six years later, on a particular day, he again got an attack of asthma. This was precisely the time, when Baba took His Mahasamadhi.

The day of this visit was a Thursday, and the Dhurandhar brothers had the good fortune of witnessing the Chavadi procession that night. At the Arati-function in the Chavadi, Balaram saw the glow of Pandurang on Baba's face and next morning at the Kakad-Arati time, the same phenomenon - the same lustre of the Beloved Deity - Pandurang was visible again on Baba's face.

Mr. Balaram Dhurandhar wrote in Marathi, the life of the Maharashtra Saint Tukaram, but he did not survive to see its publication. It was published, later on by his brothers in 1928. In a short note on Balaram's life given in the beginning of that book, the above account of Balaram's visit has been fully corroborated (Vide page 6 of the book).

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

EPILOGUE

We have done with chapter 51 and now, we come to the last chapter (No. 52 in the original). In this Hemadpant gave his concluding remarks and promised to give an index, giving the contents of all the chapters in verse as is given in Marathi sacred books, but unfortunately, that index was not found in Hemadpant's papers. It was therefore, composed and supplied by an able and worthy devotee of Sai Baba, Mr. B.V. Dev (Retired Mamlatdar) of Thana. As we give in English books an index in the beginning and contents of each chapter at its top, we need not consider the last chapter as index here; and so, we consider this chapter as the Epilogue. Unfortunately, Hemadpant did not survive to revise the manuscript of this chapter and make it ready for the press. When it was sent to the press Mr. Dev found it to be incomplete and unintelligible in certain places, but it had to be published as it was found. The main topics dealt therein are briefly given below.

Greatness of Sadguru Sai

We prostrate ourselves before and take refuge in that Sai Samarth, Who besets all animate and inanimate things in the universe - Who pervades all creatures equally without any differentiation, to Whom all devotees are alike and Who knows not honour and dishonor, like or dislike. If we remember Him and surrender to Him, He fulfils all our wishes and makes us attain the goal of life.

This ocean of mundane existence is very hard to cross. Waves of attachments beat high against the bank of bad thoughts and break down trees of fortitude. The breeze of egoism blows with force and makes the ocean rough and agitated. Crocodiles in the form of anger and hatred move there fearlessly. Eddies in the form of the idea "I and Mine" and other doubts whirl there incessantly, and innumerable fishes in the form of censure, hate and jealousy play there. Though, this ocean is so fierce and terrible, Sadguru Sai is its Agasti (Destroyer) and the devotees of Sai have the least fear of it. Our Sadguru is the boat, which will safely take us across this ocean.

Prayer

Now, we fall before Sai Baba and holding His Feet make the following prayer for the public; Let not our mind wander and desire anything except Thee. Let this work (Satcharita) be in every house and let it be studied daily. Let it ward off the calamities of those, who study it regularly with reverence.

Fala-shruti (Reward of Study)

Now, a few words about the reward you get, from this work. After bathing in the sacred Godavari and after taking the darshan of the Samadhi in the Samadhi Mandir at Shirdi, you should read or hear the Satcharita. If you do this all your threefold afflictions will vanish. Casually thinking about the stories of Sai, you will get interested in spiritual life, and if you go through it with love and reverence, all your sins will be destroyed. If you wish to get rid of the cycle of births and deaths, read Sai stories and remember Him always; and get yourself devoted to His Feet. If you dive into the sea of Sai's stories, and then give them out to others, you will get an ever-new flavour of them and save the hearers from future misery. If you go on meditating on Sai's Form, it will, in course of time, lead you into self-realization. It is very hard to know or realize the nature of Self of Brahma; but if you approach through the Sagun Brahma (Sai's Form) your progress will be easy. If the devotee completely surrenders himself to Him, he will lose his individual ego and be merged in Him and be one with him, as the river becomes one with the sea. If you thus become merged with Him in any of the three states, viz., waking, dream and sleep, you get rid of the bond of Sansar. If anybody, after bathing, reads this with love and faith, and completes it within a week, his calamities will disappear; or if he hears or reads it daily and regularly, all his dangers will be warded off. He will get the reward according to his faith and devotion. Without these, there will be no experience of any kind. If you read this with reverence Sai will be pleased, and by removing your ignorance and poverty, will give you knowledge, wealth and prosperity. With concentrated mind, if you read a chapter daily, it will give you unbounded happiness. One, who has his own welfare at heart, should study it carefully and then, he will ever remember Sai gratefully and joyfully birth after birth. This work should be read at home specially on Guru Pournima (Ashadha full-moon day), Gokul Ashtami, Ram Navami and Dasara (Baba's Punyatithi). If you study this one book carefully, all your desires will be satisfied, and if you always remember Sai's Feet in you heart, you will easily cross the Bhava (worldly illusions) Sagar. By its study, the diseased and sick will get health, the poor wealth, the mean and afflicted the prosperity, and the mind will get rid of all futile ideas and get steadiness.

Dear devoted readers and listeners, we also bow to you all, and make you a special request, never forget Him, whose stories you have read day by day or month by month. The more fervently you read or listen to these stories, the more encouragement Sai gives us to serve you and be of use to you. Both the author and the readers must co-operate in this work, help each other and be happy.

Prasad Yachana

We close this with prayer to the Almighty for the following Prasad of favour: May the readers and devotees have complete and wholehearted surrender and devotion at Sai's Feet. May His form be ever fixed in their eyes and may they see Sai (the Lord) in all beings. Amen!

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

आरती

आरती साईबाबा। सौख्यदातार जीवा। चरणरजतली। द्यावा दासा विसावा, भक्ता विसावा। आरती ०॥ जालूनिया अनंग। स्वस्वरूपी राहे दंग। मुमुक्षुजना दावी। निज डोळा श्रीरंग, डोळा श्रीरंग। आरती॥१॥ जया मनीं जैसा भाव। तया तैसा अनुभव। दाविसी दयाघना। ऐसी तुझी ही माव, तुझी ही माव। आरती॥२॥ तुमवें नाम ध्याता। हरे संसर्पतिव्याथा। अगाध तव करणी। मार्ग दाविसी अनाथा, दाविसी अनाथा। आरती॥३॥ कलियुगी अवतार सगुण ब्रह्म साचार। अवतीर्ण झालासी। स्वामी दत्त दिगंबर। दत्त दिगंबर। आरती॥४॥ आठां दिवसां गुरुवारीं। भक्त करिती वारी। प्रभुपद पहाव्या। भवभय निवारी। भय निवारी। आरती॥५॥ माझा निजद्रव्यतेवा। तव चरणरजसेवा। मागणें हेंचि आतां। तुम्हा देवाधिदेवा, देवाधिदेवा, देवाधिदेवा। आरती॥६॥ इच्छित दीन चातक। निर्मल तोय निजसुख। पाजावें माधवा या। सांभाळ निज आपुली भाक, आपुली भाक। आरती साईबाबा। सौख्यदातार जीवा। आरती॥७॥

(AARATI)

Oh Sai Baba, we wave lights before you, the bestower of happiness to the Jivas. Give us - Your servants and devotees rest under the dust of your Feet, burning (destroying) desires. You remain absorbed in Your Self, and show the Lord (God) to the aspirants. As one feels intently for you, you give him experiences or realizations accordingly. Oh Kind-hearted, Your power is such! meditation on Your name removes our fear of the Sansar. Your method of word is really unfathomable as You always help the poor and the helpless. In this Kali age you - the all-pervasive Datta, have Incarnated as Sagun Brahma. Ward off the fear of Sansar of the devotees, who come to You every Thursday, so as to enable them to see the Feet of the Lord. Oh God of Gods, I pray that, let my treasure be the service of Your Feet. Feed Madhav (the composer of this aarati) with happiness as the cloud feeds the Chatak bird with pure water, and thus keep up Your Word. Amen!

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all