

Shri Sai Satcharitra

Chapter 26

Stories of (1) Bhakata Pant (2) Harishchandra Pitale and (3) Gopal Ambadekar.

Preliminary

All the things that we see in the universe are nothing but a play of Maya -- the creative power of the Lord. These things do not really exist. What really exists is the Real Absolute. Just as we mistake a rope of a garland or a stick 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 Sad-guru that 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 Sad-guru 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 hot water in the form of tears of joy to wash the Sad-guru'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 lotuses in the form of our eight Sattwik emotions and fruit in the form of our concentrated mind; let us apply to His head bukka (black-powder) in the form of devotion and tie the waistband of Bhakti and place our head on his toes.

After decorating the Sad-guru with all jewelry in this way, let us offer our all to Him and wave charmar of devotion to ward off heat. After such blissful worship, let us pray thus:- "Introvert our mind, turn it inward, give us discrimination between the Unreal and the Real and non-attachment for all worldly things and thus enable us to get Self-realisation. We surrender ourselves, body and soul (body-consciousness and ego). Make our eyes Yours, so that we should never feel pleasure and pain. Control our body and mind as You will and wish. Let our mind get rest in Your Feet".

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 Sad-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. Rly. Train where he met many friends and relations bound for Shirdi. They all asked him to accompany them and he could not say nay. They alighted at Bombay while pant got down at Virar. There he took the permission of his Sadguru 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. 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 bring him

to his senses. With Baba's grace and with pitchers of water, which they poured 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 fearlessness and confirmed his faith in his own Guru, by addressing him as follows: - "Come what may, leave not, but stick to your Bolster (support, i.e. Guru) and ever remain steady, always at-one-ment (in union) with him." Pant at once knew the significance of this remark and thus he was reminded of his Sad-guru. This kindness of Baba he never forgot in his life.

Harishchandra Pitale

There was a gentleman by name Harishchandra Pital in Bombay. He had a son, who suffered from epilepsy. He tried many allopathic and ayurvedic doctors, 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 Bombay Presidency. Mr. Pitale heard some of these kirtans in 1910 and learnt therefrom and from others that Baba, by 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 presents and fruit-baskets, Mr. Pitale came to Shirdi with family, wife and children. He then went to the Masjid with them, prostrated before Baba and placed his sick son on Baba's Feet. No sooner Baba saw the child than an untoward thing happened. The son immediately revolved his eyes and fell down senseless. His mouth began to foam and his whole body began to perspire profusely and it seemed as if he breathed himself out. Seeing this, the parents became very nervous and excited. 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, crying 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. Then Baba comforted her saying - "Do not wail like this, wait a bit, have patience, take the boy to your lodging, 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, husband, wife and others were very delighted and all their doubts disappeared. Then Mr. Pitale came 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 help. Baba then smilingly said - "Are 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 sweetmeat on a large scale and gave Baba excellent fruits and pan (betel-leaves). Mrs. Pitale was a very Sattwik lady, simple, loving and faithful. She used to sit near the post staring at Baba with tears of joy flowing down from her eyes. Seeing her of an 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 by and said to him - "Bapu, I had given you before, Rs. two, now I give you Rs. three; keep these in your shrine for worship and you will be benefited." Mr. Pitale accepted these as Prasad, prostrated himself again before Baba and prayed for His blessings. A thought arose in his mind, that as that was his first trip 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 solves, but Baba kept silent. When Mr. Pitale returned to Bombay, he narrated to his old mother all that had

happened at Shirdi and the mystery about Baba's giving him Rs. two formerly. The mother also did not understand the mystery, but, thinking seriously about that, 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 darshana of the Maharaj there many years ago. That Maharaj was also a Siddha, Perfect Yogi, omniscient and liberal. Your father was pure, 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 accordingly 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 Akkalkotkar Maharaj has appeared to you in the form of Sai Baba just to remind you to your duties and worship, and to ward off all dangers. Now beware henceforth, leave off all doubts and bad thoughts, follow your ancestors and behave well; go on worshipping the family gods and the rupees, appraise properly 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-prevasiveness of Baba and the significance of His darshan. From that time he became very careful about his behaviour.

Mr. Ambadekar

Mr. Gopal Narayan Ambadekar of Poona was a devotee of Baba. He served for ten years in the Abkari department 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's Wada, he resolved to end his life by throwing himself into a well close by. He proposed to do one way 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 this Akkalkotkar Maharaja's life?" Ambadekar took that book from Sagun and began to read it. Casually, or we may say providentially he came across a story which was to this effect. - During the life time of Akkalkotkar Maharaj a certain devotee suffered very much from an incurable disease and when he could endure the agony and pain no longer, he became desperate and 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 enjoy the fruit - good or bad - of your past actions; if the enjoyment be 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 your store of 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-prevasiveness and benevolence, his faith in Him was confirmed, and he became a staunch devotee. His father was a devotee of Akkalkotkar Maharaj and Sai Baba wanted him to walk into 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 after-life in ease and comfort.

Chapter 27

Favour Shown by Giving Bhagwat and Vishnu-Sahasra Nam - 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 parayana (reading regularly) and certain other matters.

Preliminary

When a man takes a plunge into the 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 Sad-guru, 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-realisation. Oh Sai, create in us regard 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 sattwik emotions, viz. let their bodies perspire, let their eyes be full of tears, let their prana be steady, let their minds be composed, let their hair stand on end, let them cry, sob and shake, let their hostilities and their distinctions, great and small vanish. If these things happen, that is a sign of the grace of the Guru dawning upon them. When these emotions develop in you, the Guru is most pleased and will certainly lead you on to the goal of self-realisation. 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 Sad-guru, who can do so and make you, see the Lord in all creatures.

Granting Consecrated Book

The variety of imparting instructions followed by Baba has 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 some religious books, of which they wanted to make a special study, to Baba and to receive the same back from Him, after they were touched and consecrated by Him. While reading daily such books, they felt that Baba was with them. Once, Kaka Mahajani came to Shirdi with a copy of Ekanathi Bhagwat. Shama took that book to read and taking it with him went to 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", said Baba. "As I have given it to you, better keep it with you for safe custody; it will be of use to you." In this way many books were entrusted to Shama. Kaka Mahajani after some 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 a bow.

Shama and Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam

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-Nam as Prasad. This was done in the following way. Once a Ramadasi (follower of Saint Ramadas) came to Shirdi and stayed 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-Nam (a book giving a thousand names in praise of Vishnu, and held second in importance to Bhagwad Geeta) and Adhyatma-Ramayana (Esoteric version of Rama's story) with faith. He read these books often and often and then after some days Baba thought of favouring and initiating Shama with Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam. He, therefore, called the Ramadasi to Him and said to him that, He was suffering from intense stomach-pain, and unless He took Senna-pods (Sona-mukhi, a mild purgative drug) the pain would not stop; so he should please go to the bazar and bring the drug. The Ramadasi closed his reading and went to the bazar. Then Baba descended from His seat, came to the Ramadasi's place of reading, took out the copy of Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam, and coming to His seat said to Shama- "Oh 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 time, 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 Ramadasi who was a mad, 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) letters of the book.

Shama thought that Baba wanted to set him up against the Ramadasi by this act of His, but he had no idea of what Baba felt for him. Baba must have thought to tie this necklace of Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam round the neck of Shama, as he was an intimate devotee, though a rustic, and thus save him from the miseries of the 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-Nam on a poor Brahmin neighbour, and thus saved him. The reading and study of this Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam is a broad open way of purifying the mind, and hence Baba thrust this on His Shama.

The Ramadasi returned soon with the Senna-pods. Anna Chinchankar, who was then present and who wanted to play the part of Narada (the Celestial Rishi who was well-known for setting up quarrels between Gods and demons and vice versa), informed him of what had happened. The Ramadasi at once flared up. He came down at once on Shama with all fury. He said that it was Shama who set Baba to send him away under the pretext of stomachache for bringing the medicine and thus got the book. He began to scold and abuse Shama and remarked that if the book be not returned, he would dash his head before him. Shama calmly remonstrated with him, but in vain. Then Baba spoke kindly to him as follows - "Oh Ramadasi, 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 sweet words? You read daily these sacred books and still your mind is impure and your passions uncontrolled. What sort of a Ramadasi you are! You ought to be indifferent to all things. Is it not strange that you should covet this book so strongly? A true Ramadasi should have no 'mamata' (attachment) but have 'samata' (equality) towards all. You are now

quarrelling with the boy Shama for a mere book. Go, take your seat, books can be had in plenty for 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 profit thereby, and so I gave to it him."

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

So the matter was ultimately compromised. The question for consideration is "Why should the Ramadasi press for Pancha-ratni Geeta, the God in 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 procedure been not gone through, the importance of the subject, the efficacy of God's name and the study of Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam 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 Booty and a devotee of Baba.

Vitthal-Vision

One day, while Kakasaheb Dixit was in mediation 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 mediation 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.

Geeta-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 Geeta-Rahasya by Lokamanya Tilak. Taking it under his armpit he came to the Masjid and prostrated himself 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 benefited".

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 first Volume.) Dadasaheb was not an ordinary man. He was the richest and the most famous advocate of Amraoti (Berar) and was a member of the Council of State, Delhi. He was very 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 Booty kept always silent. They were meek, modest, humble and goodnatured. Dadasaheb, who was able to expound Panchadashi (A well-known Sanskrit treatise on the Advaita Philosophy by the famous Vidyananda) to others, said nothing or uttered no word when he came to the Masjid before Baba. Really a man, however learned he may be even in Vedas, fades away before one, who was realised Brahman and become one with it. Learning cannot shine before Self-realisation. 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 naivedya herself to the Masjid, and after it was accepted by Baba, she used to return and take her meals. 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 dining seat and removing the outer covering from the dish began to partake of the things zealously. Shama then asked Him - "Why this partiality? You throw away dishes of others and do not care to look at them, but this You draw to You earnestly and do justice to it. Why is the dish of this woman so sweet? This is a problem to 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." Saying this, Baba did full justice to her dish, washed his mouth and hands, gave out some belches as a mark of satisfaction, and resumed His seat. Then she made a bow and began to shampoo Baba's legs and Baba 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 'Rajarama, Rajarama' then and always, and said - "If you do this, your life's object will be gained, your mind will attain peace and you will be immensely benefited." To persons unfamiliar with spiritual matters, this might appear as affair, but really it was not so. It was a case of, what is technically called, 'Shakti-pat', i.e. transference of power from the Guru to the disciple. How forcible and effective were Baba's words! In an instant, they pierced her heart and found lodgement 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 neither distinction nor any difference between them. Both are One, and one cannot live without the other. The disciple placing his head on 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.

Chapter 28

Sparrows Drawn To Shirdi

(1) Lakhamichand - (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-realisation. As He was proficient in both these, He was well fitted to be the Sad-guru. Any one, though learned, but not able to awaken the disciples and establish them in Self-realisation, does not deserve to be called a Sadguru. Generally the father gives birth to the body, and death invariably follows life; but Sadguru does away with both life and death, and so he is more kind and merciful, than any body.

Sai Baba often said that-let His man (Devotee) be at any distance, a thousand koss 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.

Lala Lakhamichand

This gentleman was first serving in the Railways and afterwards in Shri Venkateshwar Press in Bombay and thereafter in the firm of Messrs. Ralli Brothers as a munshi (clerk). He got the contact of Baba in 1910. One or two months before Christmas he saw in his dream at Santacruz (a suburb of Bombay) an old man with a beard, standing and surrounded by his Bhaktas. Some days later he went to the house of his friend. Mr Dattatreya Manjunath Bijur to hear the kirtan by Das Ganu. It was always the practice of Das Ganu to keep Baba's picture in front of the audience while making the kirtan. Lakhamichand 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 pined to go to Shirdi. It is always the experience of the Bhaktas that God always helps them in their search for Sad-guru and other spiritual endeavours. That very night at 8-00 p.m. a friend named Shankarrao 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 Shankar Rao did some Bhajan (sang religious songs) and enquired about Sai baba with some fellow passengers-four Mahomedans, 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. Then when they reached Kopergaon he wanted to buy some good guavas for offering to Baba, but he was so much enrapt with 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 tanga. The tanga was stopped and he gladly purchased some select 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 that he had forgotten to do so, the old woman's encounter and her devotion to Baba, all these were a surprise to both the friends; and Lakhamichand 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 seeing the flags on the Masjid they saluted them. With Puja materials in hand, they then went to the Masjid and worshipped Baba with due formality. Lakhamichand was much moved and was extremely happy to see Baba. He was enrapt 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 Lakhamichand 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 enroute from his house to Shirdi. The chief thing to note in this respect is that Baba never liked people to run into debt for taking His darshan, or celebrating any holiday or making any pilgrimage.

Sanza

At noon when Lakhamichand 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 naivedya he should bring. Baba told him to bring sanza. Then the Bhaktas brought two big potfuls of sanza. Lakshamichand 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

On this occasion, he once 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 passing in Lakshamichand's mind.

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 pleased 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 Your Feet. 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' Udi and blessing he returned home with his friend, much pleased and contented and singing Baba's glory on the way. He remained a staunch devotee of baba afterwards and always sent garlands of flowers, camphor and Dakshina with any person of his acquaintance bound for Shirdi.

Burhanpore Lady

Now let us turn to another sparrow (Baba's word meaning 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 awakening she saw no body 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, 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, performed Baba's worship and passed their time happily. The couple came to Shirdi to offer Khichadi as naivedya but for the first 14 days, somehow or other, it could not be offered. The lady did not like this delay. 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 let down, but the lady could not wait. She threw up the curtain with her hand 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.

Megha

Now let us go to the third and bigger '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 Shivaya'. He did not know the Sandhya nor its chief mantra, the Gayatri. Rao Bahadur Sathe was interested in him, got him taught the Sandhya and the Gayatri. Sathe told him that Sai Baba of Shirdi was the embodied form of the God Shiva and made him start for Shirdi. At the Broach Railway station he learnt that Sai Baba was a Moslem and his simple and orthodox mind was much perturbed at the prospect of bowing to a Moslem, 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 to his (Sathe's) father-in-law, Ganesh Domodar, 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 Moslem; you will lose your caste by coming here. So get away." 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. After that he went 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 benefited. Then Megha began to look upon Sai Baba as an incarnation of Shiva. In order to worship Shiva, bela 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 Gods 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 God Khandoba, as the door of the temple was closed. Baba did not accept his worship and sent him 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 bathe Him with Ganges water. Baba was first unwilling to undergo this operation, but at his repeated requests, He consented. Megha had to traverse a distance of eight koss (going and returning) to bring the sacred water from the Gomati

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 freed from his bath saying that, as a Fakir He had nothing to do (or gain) with Ganges water; but Megha did not listen. He knew that Shiva is pleased with a bath of Ganges water and that he must give his Shiva (Baba) that bath on that auspicious day. Baba then consented, came down and sat on a pat (wooden board) and protruding 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 full or whole bath." "Alright" 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 Gange' 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 Baba's head was only drenched but the body quite dry.

Trident and Pindi

Megha worshipped Baba in 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. Early 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 but did not see Baba, but saw 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 and 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 thought it was a vision". Baba rejoined - "I require no door to enter. I have no form nor any extension; I always live everywhere. I carry on, as a wirepuller, 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 (an image of Shiva). At this time Megha also turned up there. Baba said to him - "See, Shankar has come, protect (i.e., worship) Him now." Megha was surprised to see Pindi following Trident immediately. Then 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 before 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 the 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 arranging 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 corpse and said - "This was a true devotee of Mine." Baba also ordered that at His own expense the usual funeral dinner should be given to the Brahmins, and Kakasaheb Dixit carried out this order

Chapter 29

Stories of (1) Madrasi Bhajani Mela - (2) Tendulkars (Father and son) - (3) Dr. Captain Hate - (4) Waman Narvekar.

This Chapter described other interesting and wonderful stories of Sai Baba.

(1) Madrasi Bhajani Mela

It was in the year 1916 that a Madrasi Bhajani Mela (Party of the Ramadasi Panth) started on a Pilgrimage to the holy city of Banaras. 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 at Shirdi in Kopergaon Taluka, Ahmednagar District, a great sage named Sai Baba, who was calm and composed, and who was very liberal and who distributed money every day to His Bhaktas and to skilful persons, who went and showed their skill 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 and 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 craved for money. Three of the party was full of avarice, but the chief lady or mistress was of a very different nature. She had a 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 was pleased to give her darshan of her Ishtam (Beloved Deity). To her Baba appeared as Sitanath (Rama) while to all the 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 Rama in Sai Baba. He thought that she was very simple and devout, and her seeing Rama might be a hallucination of her mind. He poohpoohed her, saying that it was not possible, that she alone should see Rama while they all saw Sai Baba. She did not resent this remark, as she was fortunate enough to get Ramadarshan now and then, when her mind was calm and composed and free from avarice.

Wonderful Vision

Things were going on like this, when the husband got a wonderful vision in his dream one night as follows: - 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 near, he said in a plaintive tone - "Hearing Your fame I came to Your Feet and 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 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 opening his

eyes, he saw that he was free and the police had 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, 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 reply." He said "There is a lot of difference; my former namaskaras were offered with the object of getting money from You, but the present namaskar is one offered to You as God; besides, formerly I thought resentfully that you, being a Mahomendan, were spoiling us, the Hindus". Baba "Do you not believe in your mind in Mahomendan 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. Moharum festival? Also there is in your house another Mahomedan Deity by name Kadbibi, whom you propitiate and appease on your marriage 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, lo, Ramadas was in front of him. No sooner did he begin to fall at His Feet, Ramadas vanished. Then he inquisitively asked Baba, "You look old. Do You know Your age?" Baba - "What! Do you say I am old! just run a race with Me and see." Saying this Baba began to run and he too followed. Baba disappeared in the dust raised by His footsteps while running and the man was awakened.

After awakening he began to think seriously about the dream-vision. His mental attitude was completely changed and he realised the greatness of Baba. After this, his grabbing and doubting tendencies disappeared and true devotion to Baba's Feet sprang in his mind. The vision was a mere dream, but the questions and answers therein were most significant and interesting. Next morning when all the persons assembled in the Masjid for the Arati, Baba gave him as prasad two rupees' worth 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 had not to suffer any trouble or inconvenience during their journey. They all returned home safe and sound, 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 (and is following even now) in some cases to improve and reform His devotees.

(2) Tendulkar family

There lived in Bandra (a suburb of Bombay) a Tendalkar 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. 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. Hearing this Baba said to her, "Tell your son to believe in 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 in 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 overwhelmed 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 both. Thus he got through the examination that year successfully by Baba's grace, though the stars were against him. 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 Bombay. 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 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 paid (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 for 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 it be saved?" Then Hate went into the garden and took out fresh walpapadi vegetables, and 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. 2 should be spent in buying shidha articles and walpapadi vegetables, and those should be offered to Baba with Rs. 10 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 vegetables. It was purchased and then all the things were offered to Baba on behalf of Captain hate. Mr. Nimonkar prepared the 'naivedya' (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 heard of this from his friend.

Consecrated Rupee

At another time Captain Hate wished that he should have in his house a coin of rupee consecrated by Baba with His touch. He came across a friend who was bound for Shirdi. With him Hate sent his rupee. The friend went to Shirdi and after the usual salutation gave first his Dakshina which Baba pocketed. Then he gave Hate's rupee, which Baba took in His hand and began to stare 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, and ask him to live in peace and contentment." The friend returned to Gwalior, handed over the consecrated rupee to Hate, and told him all the happened at Shirdi. This time Hate was much pleased and realised 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 Rama, 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 as follows: - "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 particular action. He only knows what is best and most suitable to each and all.

Chapter 30

Drawn To Shirdi

(1) Kakaji Vaidya of Vani - (2) Punjabi Ramalal of Bombay.

In this Chapter the story of two more devotees that 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 this 'bhava' (samsar) 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-realisation 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 fulfills 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 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-Satcharia. Otherwise what qualifications had he and who would 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 realise Sai's greatness and all-pervasiveness. Those who want to argue and criticise, should not go in for these stories. 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 this nectar of Sai-leelas, will give liberation to the ignorant Jivas, satisfaction to the householders and a sadhana to the aspirants. Now 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 Goodness Sapta-Shringi there. He was so much overwhelmed with 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 Goodness 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 that Baba was, but before he could get any explanation, he was awakened. Then he began to think as to who might be that Baba, to whom the Goodness has 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 'Abhishekam' (pouring unceasingly fresh cold water over the Pindi) and did other religious rites; but with all that, he was as restless as before. Then he returned to his place and again invoked the Goddess most pitifully. The 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, fulfills 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

himself and see a Saint, which will be a mere boast. Unless the Saint wills it, who 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 saint's visit, 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 his 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 Sapt-Shringi at Vani, that if the son got well, she would bring and dedicate him at Her feet. Then after some years the mother herself suffered much from ringworms 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 to her 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 quite 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 Booty and others came true and everybody was satisfied. Shama's younger brother Bapaji consulted him and was told that his mother's vows, which his elder brother promised to fulfill at her death-bed, were not yet fulfilled; hence the Goddess was displeased with them and bringing troubles on them. Bapaji told this to his brother Shama who was then reminded of the unfulfilled vows. 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 He was to him his Sapt-Shringi Goddess. Then Baba insisted upon him to go himself to the temple of Sapt-Shringi and offer them in person at the feet of the Goddess. Then after taking Baba's permission and Udi, he left for Vani and searching for the priest came to 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 is this!

Kakaji asked him who he was and whence he had come, and on learning that he came from Shirdi, he at once embraced him. So overpowered 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 than his mind lost all its restlessness and it 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 darshana 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 small 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 tanga and went to Rahata. He saw Khushalchand and gave him Baba's message. Hearing it, Khushalchand was surprised and said that he was taking a noon nap after meals when 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 tanga turned up. Dixit then said that he was sent specially to bring him. Then they both went in the tanga back to Shirdi. Khushalchand saw Baba and all were pleased. Seeing this Leela of Baba, Khushalchand was much moved.

Punjabi Ramalal of Bombay

Once a Punjabi Brahmin of Bombay named Ramalal 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 knew not His address, he did not know what to do. But He Who calls anybody for an interview makes the necessary arrangements for the same. The same happened in this case. The same afternoon when he was strolling in the streets, he saw a picture of Baba in a shop. The features of the Mahant, he saw in the dream, exactly tallied with those of the picture. Then making enquiries, he came to know that the picture was of Sai Baba of Shirdi. He then went soon after 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.

Chapter 31

The Passing Away In Baba's Presence of - (1) Sannyasi Vijayanand - (2) Balaram Mankar - (3) Noolkar - (4) Megha - and (5) The Tiger.

In this Chapter Hemadpant describes the passing away of certain persons 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 that meditates otherwise at that time goes to what he looks 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 many causes. Hence constant practice is necessary for enabling us to fix our mind on any desired good thought at any or the last moment. All Saints, therefore, recommended us to always remember God and chant His name always, so that we may not be puzzled when the time for departure comes. The devotees on their part surrender themselves completely to the Saints, fully believing that the all-knowing Saints would guide and help them in their last moments. A few such cases will be noted here.

(1) Vijayanand

A Madras Sannyasi named Vijayanand started on a pilgrimage to Manasa-Sarovar. En route, hearing Baba's fame, he halted at Shirdi. There he met one Somadevaji Swami of Hardwar and enquired of him about the particulars of the Manasa-Sarovar trip. The Swami told him that the Sarovar was 500 miles above the Gangotri and described to him the difficulties of the journey, viz. plenty of snow and the change of dialect every 50 koss and the suspicious nature of the people of Bhutan who give a lot of trouble to the pilgrims on the way. Hearing this, the Sannyasi 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 Sannyasi, his company is of no use". The Sannyasi did not know Baba's nature. He felt discomfited, 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) from His toe 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 like to leave the place.

He stayed in Shirdi for two days when he got a letter from Madras 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. So he saw Baba with the letter in hand and asked for His permission to return home. The omniscient Baba knowing the future said to him - "If you so loved your mother, why did you take Sannyasa? Fondness or attachment ill becomes 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, be very vigilant, the thieves will carry everything. Wealth and prosperity are transient and the body is subject to decay and death. Knowing this, do your duty, leaving all attachment to 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 realise the end of your life. Being desireless, begin from tomorrow the study of Bhagwat. Do three 'saptahas' i.e. three readings during three weeks, conscientiously. The Lord will be pleased with you and destroy your sorrows, your illusions will vanish and you will get peace." Seeing that his end was approaching, Baba prescribed that 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 in a secluded part 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 good 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 Sannyasi and ensured him Sadgati (salvation).

(2) Balaram Mankar

There was a householder devotee of Baba by name Balaram Mankar. When his wife passed away, he got dejected and entrusting his household to his son, left his 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 this in this wise. He gave him Rs. 12/- and asked him to go and live in Macchindragad (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 on the Gad. Believing in Baba's words, Mankar came to the Gad. He was much pleased with the lovely sight, pure water, healthy air and the surroundings of the place, and began to practice 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 rest your unsteady mind. You thought that I was in Shirdi with a body composed of the five elements and three and a half cubits in length, and not outside of it. 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 Gada 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 business here, I have cancelled my Dadar trip." Mankar was very glad to receive the ticket and was just taking out money from his pocket, when the rustic disappeared in the crowd. Mankar tried to find him out in the crowd, but it was 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, always following His biddings and advice. In the end, he was very fortunate to leave this world in the presence, and with the blessings of Baba.

(3) Tatyasaheb Noolkar

Hemadpant gives no particulars regarding Tatyasaheb Noolkar, except the bare mention of the fact that he 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 talks. Tatyasaheb did not believe in saints, while Nanasaheb loved them. Nanasaheb often told him the Leelas of Sai Baba and pressed him to go to Shirdi and see Baba. He finally agreed to go to Shirdi on two conditions: - (1) he must get a Brahmin cook, and (2) 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 Tatyasaheb received a fruit parcel containing 100 beautiful oranges, the consigner being not known. 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 a cruel animal like a tiger came to Baba's feet for being saved. It is this story which will be narrated now.

5) Tiger

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 fierce face turned to the rear. It was suffering from some pain or agony. Its keepers - three Derveshis - were 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 was in vain. Then they heard of Baba's fame and came to Him with the animal. They got it down the chains in their hands and made it stand at the door. It was naturally fierce, besides, disease ridden. So it was restless. The people began to look at it with fear and amazement. The Derveshies went in, told Baba everything about the animal and with His consent, brought it before Him. As it approached the steps, it was taken aback on account of the lustre of Baba and hung its head down. When both saw each other, it got on 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 first much dejected and full of sorrow, but on mature thought they came to their senses. They considered that as the animal was diseased and nearing its end, it was very meritorious on its part that it should meet its death at the feet and in the presence 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 saved; and unless they have got a good store of merit on their account, How could they get such a happy end?