

Shri Sai Satcharitra

Chapter I

Salutations -- The Story of Grinding Wheat and Its Philosophical Significance.

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

First, he makes obeisance to the God Ganesha to remove all obstacles and make the work a success and says that Shri Sai is the God Ganesha.

Then, to the Goddess Saraswati to inspire him to write out the work and says that Shri Sai is one with this Goddess and that He is Himself singing His own life.

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 as the great Teacher, will carry us across the River of Worldly Existence.

Then, to his tutelary Deity Narayan Adinath who manifested himself in Konkan - the land reclaimed by Parashurama, (Rama in the Hindi version) from the sea; and to the Adi (Original) Purusha of the family.

Then, to the Bharadwaja Muni, into whose gotra (clan) he was born and also to various Rishis, Yagyavalkya, Bhrgu, Parashara, Narad, Vedavyasa, Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatkumar, Shuka. Shounak, Vishwamitra, Vasistha, Valmiki, Vamadeva, Jaimini, Vaishampayan, Nava Yogindra etc, and also modern Saints such as Nivrutti, Jnanadev, Sopan, Muktabai, Janardan, Ekanath, Namdev, Tukaram, Kanha, and Narahari etc.

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.

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

And lastly, to his Guru Shri Sainath - an Incarnation of Shri Dattatreya, Who is his sole Refuge and who will make him realize that Brahman is the Reality and the world an illusion; and incidentally, to all the Beings in whom the Lord God dwells.

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

"It was sometime after 1910 A.D. that I went, one fine morning, to the Masjid in Shirdi for getting a 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's 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, took forcibly 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, He did not require any wheat-flour for making bread or roti, what will He do with this big quantity of flour? Perhaps as Baba is very kind, He will distribute the flour amongst us. Thinking in this way 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 one per head. Baba, Who was calm and quiet up till now, got wild and started abusing them saying, "Ladies, are 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 please do this. Take the flour and throw it on the village border limits." On hearing this, the women felt abashed and whispering amongst them, went away 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 the Cholera Epidemic was spreading in the village and this was Baba's remedy against the same; it was not wheat that was ground but the 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 casual 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 Satcharita.

And as we know, with Baba's grace and blessing 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. Sai Baba lived in Shirdi for about sixty years and during this long period; He did the business of grinding almost every day - not, however, the 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 and the latter the upper one. The handle with which Baba worked the mill consisted of Jnana. 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 the three gunas, viz. Sattva, Raja and Tama; and the Ahamkara, which is so subtle and therefore so difficult to be got rid of.

This reminds us of a similar story of Kabir who seeing a woman grinding corn said to his Guru, Nipathiranjana, "I am weeping because I feel the agony of being crushed in this wheel of worldly existence like the corn in the hand-mill." Nipathiranjana 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."

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 the persons qualified to read the same and such other points. Now in this chapter, he starts to tell the same.

Object of Writing the Work

In the first chapter, I described Sai Baba's miracle of checking and destroying the epidemic of Cholera 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 grand 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, then how can I describe their glory? To write the life of a saint is the most difficult, though one may as well measure the depth of the water of the seven seas or enclose the sky with cloth-trappings. I knew, that this was the most venturous undertaking, which might expose me to ridicule. I, therefore, invoked Sai Baba's grace.

The premier poet-saint of Maharashtra, Shri Jnaneshwar Maharaj, has stated that the Lord loves those who write the lives of saints; and the saints also have a peculiar method of their own of getting the service, which the devotees long for, successfully accomplished. The saints inspire the work; the devotee becomes only an indirect cause or instrument to achieve the end. For instance, in 1700 Shaka year, the poet Mahipati aspired to write the lives of saints. Saints inspired him, and got the work done; so also in 1800 Shaka year, Das Ganu's service was accepted. The former wrote 4 works-Bhakta Vijaya, Santa Vijaya, Bhakta Leelamrit and Santa Kathamrit, while the latter wrote two - "Bhakta Leelamrit and Santa Kathamrit", in which the lives of modern Saints were described. In chapters 31,32,33 of Bhakta Leelamrit and in chapter 57 of Santa Kathamrit, the sweet 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 in a small decent book named Shri Sainath Bhajana Mala by Mrs. Savitribai Raghunath Tendulkar of Bandra. Das-Ganu Maharaj also has composed various sweet poems on Sai Baba. A devotee named Amidas Bhavani Mehta, has also published some stories of Sri Baba in Gujarathi; 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 to the aspiring public. 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 the 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 Brahman, 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 souls, whose eyes were not blessed with Sai Baba's darshana. So, I set about collecting Sai Baba's teachings and expressions - the outcome of His boundless and natural 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 for my cause and said to Sai Baba, "This Annasaheb wishes to write Your biography, don't say that You are a poor begging Fakir, and there is no necessity to write it, but if You agree and help him, he will write or rather, Your feet (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 ashes) 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 Myself My autobiography and satisfy the wishes of My devotees. He should get rid of his ego, place (or 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 discussions of pros and cons of any subject."

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 darshana, and I promised them to do so. But something in the interval 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 bedside 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 in 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 Prant Officer, was going on tour to Bassein. From Thana he came to Dadar and was waiting for a train bound for Bassein. In the 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 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 Mahomedan came hastily to my compartment and seeing all my paraphernalia, asked me where I was bound. I told him my plan. He then suggested that I should straight go to Boribunder, and not get down at Dadar, for the Manmad Mail did not get down at Dadar at all. If this little miracle or Leela had not happened, I would not have reached Shirdi 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. Mr. Bhausahab (Kaka) Dixit was waiting for me there. This was in 1910 A.D., when there was only one place, viz., Sathé's Wada for lodging pilgrim devotees. After alighting from the Tonga, I was anxious to have darshana, 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 darshana and then, after bath, see Him at leisure. Hearing this I ran and prostrated before Baba and then my joy knew no bounds. I found more than what Nana Chandorkar had told me. All my senses were satisfied and I forgot 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 darshana; 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 darshana, as I found it, is that by His darshana our thoughts are changed, the force of previous actions is abated and gradually non-attachment of dispassion towards worldly objects grows up. It is by the merit of actions in many past births that such darshana is got, and if only you see Sai Baba, really all the world becomes or 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 Bhatre 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 freewill, while Mr. Bhatre 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 (contrary) 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 decision 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 which breeds discussion.

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

"What was going on in the (Sathé'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 Sathé's 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?

Significant and Prophetic Title

I began to think why Sai Baba should call me by the name Hemadpant. This word is a corrupt form of Hemadripant. This Hemadripant was a wellknown Minister of the kings Mahadev and Ramadev of Devgiri of the Yadav dynasty. He was very learned, good-natured and the author of good 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 Modi (Marathi Shorthand) script. But I was quite the opposite, an ignoramus, and of dull, 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 to the future 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 nicely all the accounts and was also the author of such a good work "Sai Satcharita", which deals with such important and spiritual subjects as Jnana, Bhakti and 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. Next day after Hemadpant's meeting with Sai Baba, Kakasaheb went to Baba and asked whether he should leave Shirdi. Baba Said, "Yes". Then someone asked - "Baba, where to go?" Baba said, "High up." Then the man said, "How is the way?" Baba said, "There are many ways leading there; there is one way also from here (Shirdi). 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 of the problem, whether man is free or bound, is of any use in spiritual matters, but that 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 Rama 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).

Chapter III

Sai Baba's Sanction and Promise - Assignment of Work to Devotees - Baba's Stories as Beacon - Light - His Motherly Love - Rohilla'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 Sat-Charita and said, "I fully agree with you regarding the writing of Sat Charita. 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, author was much pleased, and he at once became fearless and confident, and thought that 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 everlasting contentment. It is My special characteristic to free any person, who surrenders completely to Me, and who does worship 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 it has wholehearted and complete faith, it 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 Sat Charita. 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 job? 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 up the pen in my hand, Sai Baba took away my egoism and wrote Himself 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 Smriti and therefore was not at all capable of writing the Sat-Charita, but the grace of the Lord makes a dumb man talk, enables a lame man to cross a mountain. He alone knows the knack 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 to the rise 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 fly out to all sides, 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 Shamadama (tranquillity of mind and body), for Treta Age, sacrifice, for Dwapara, 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, Yagya (sacrifice), Dhyana (meditation) and Dharana (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 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 or helped me to write His stories, Sat-Charitamrita. 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 detachment and self-realization. In the preparation and writing of this work, Sat-Charitamrita, 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 and feeds it, 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 beautifully dressed and adorned. The love of mother is peculiar, extraordinary and disinterested, and has no parallel. Sadgurus feel this motherly love towards their disciples. Sai Baba had this same love towards me, and I give an instance of it below: -

In 1916 A.D. 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 Chinchankar, of his own accord, prayed to Baba for me as follows:- "Please look kindly on 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 dishes 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 meek and humble towards all and worship Me 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.

[Rohilla's Story](#)

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

Baba's Sweet and Nectar-like Words

One day at noon after the Arti, 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 their hearts. I envelope all the creatures, the movable and immovable world. I am the Controller - the wirepuller 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 henceforward, but my Guru only; but the reply of Baba to Anna Chinchankar'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 solely devoted my self 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 one 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 always 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.

Chapter IV

SAI BABA'S FIRST ADVENT IN SHIRDI

Mission of the Saints - Shirdi a Holy Tirth - Personality of Sai Baba - Dictum of Goulibuva - Appearance of Vithal - 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-Sat-Charita. Let me now describe the first advent of Sai Baba in Shirdi.

Mission of the Saints

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

This is the mission of Lord, and the Sages and Saints, Who are His representatives and Who appear here at proper times, help 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 rights of the higher classes, when spiritual preceptors are not respected but humiliated, when nobody cares for religious instructions, when every body 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 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 do Saints appear and try to set matters right by their words and action. They serve us as beacon-lights, and show us the right path, and the right way for us to follow. In this way, many saints, viz. Nivritti, Jnanadev, Muktabai, Namdev, Gora, Gonayi, Ekanath, Tukaram, Narahari, Narsi Bhai, Sajjan Kasai, Sawata, Ramdas, and various others did appear at various times to show the right path to the people, and so presently came 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 Jnaneshwar. Shirdi also falls in the Kopargaon Taluka of the Ahmednagar District. After crossing the Godavari River at Kopargaon, one gets the way to Shirdi. When you go three Koss (9 miles), you come to Nimgaon, from whence Shirdi is visible. Shirdi is as famous and well known as other holy places like Gangapur, Narsinhwadi, Audumbar on the banks of Krishna River. As the devotee Damaji flourished in and blessed Mangalvedha (near Pandharpur) as Samarth Ramdas at Sajjangad, as Shri Narasimha Saraswati at Saraswatiwadi, so Sainath flourished at Shirdi and blessed it.

Personality of Sai Baba

It is on account of Sai Baba that Shirdi grew into importance. Let us see what sort of a personage Sai Baba was. He conquered this Samsar (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 Vaishnava devotees, most liberal (like Karna) amongst liberals, 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 did not know or care

for honour or dishonour. He was the Lord of all beings. He spoke freely and mixed with all people, saw the actings and dances of Nautchgirls and heard Gajjal 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 abdomen (Inside) 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 knew all the transactions of the world. His Darbar was imposing. He told daily hundreds of stories; 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 jnaneshwar elevated Alandi, Ekanath did to Paithan, so Sai Baba raised Shirdi. Blessed are the grass-leaves and stones of Shirdi, for they could easily kiss the Holy Feet of Sai Baba, and take their dust on their head. Shirdi became to us, devotees, another Pandharpur, Jagannath, Dwarka, Banaras (Kashi) and Rameshwar, Badrikedar, Nasik, Tryambakeshwar, Ujjain, and Maha Kaleshwar or Mahabaleshwar Gokarn. Contact of Sai Baba in Shirdi was like our Veda and Tantra; it quieted our Samsara (world consciousness) and rendered self-realization easy. The darshana 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 desires. 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 Rama who gave us solace and He was our Para Brahma (Absolute Reality). He was Himself beyond the Pair of dwandwas (opposite), 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 wide, 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 darshana and be blessed. By mere darshan, minds of people, whether, pure or impure, would become at once quiet. They got here the same sort of unparalleled joy that devotees get at Pandharpur by seeing Vithal Rakhumai. This is not an exaggeration. Consider what a devotee sees in this respect.

Dictum of Goulibuva

An old devotee by name Goulibuva, aged about 95 years, was a Varkari of Pandhari. He stayed 8 months at Pandharpur and four months - Ashadha to Kartik (July - November) on the banks of the Ganges. He had an ass 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 stare at Baba and say, "This is Pandharinath Vithal incarnate, the merciful Lord of the poor and helpless." This Goulibuva was an old devotee of Vithoba, and had made many a trip to Pandhari; and he testified that Sai Baba was real Pandharinath.

Vithal 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 7 days. This is called Namasaptaha. Once He asked Das Ganu Maharaj to do the Namasaptaha. He replied that he would do it, provided he was assured that Vithal would appear at the end of the 7th day. Then Baba, placing His hand on his breast assured him that certainly Vithal would appear, but that the devotee must be 'earnest and devout'. The Dankapuri (Takore) of Takurnath, the Pandhari of Vithal, the Dwarka of Ranchhod (Krishna) is here (Shirdi). One need not go far out to see Dwarka. Will Vithal come here from some outside place? He is here. Only when the devotee is bursting with love and devotion, Vithal will manifest Himself here (Shirdi).

After the Saptaha was over, Vithal did manifest Himself in the following manner. Kakasaheb Dixit was, as usual, sitting in meditation after the bath, and he saw Vithal in a vision. When he went at noon for Baba's darshana, Baba asked him point-blank - "Did Vithal Patil come? Did you

see Him? He is a very truant fellow, catch Him firmly, otherwise, he will escape, if you be a little inattentive." This happened in the morning and at noon there was another Vithal darshana. One hawker from outside came there for selling 25 or 30 pictures of Vithoba. This picture exactly tallied with the figure that 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 Vithal 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 Vithal 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 Prayag, where the Ganga and Yamuna meet, is very meritorious and thousands of pilgrims go there, at periodical times, 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 long. Our Prayag is here, believe me." Then wonder of wonders! When Das Ganu placed his head on Baba's Feet, out came or 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 was full of tears. 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 birthplace of Sai Baba. Many inquiries were made, many questions were put to Baba and others regarding these items, 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 Gonayee, 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 under a Neem tree in Shirdi, for the sake of Bhaktas. Even then He seemed to be full with the knowledge of Brahman. He had no desire for worldly objects even in dream. 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, always sat near the Neem tree. Outwardly he looked very young; but by His action 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 led to a cellar where cow-mouth-shaped structures, wooden boards, necklaces 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 the scent by telling them that it was His Guru's place, His holy Watan and requested them to guard it 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. Mhalasapati and other Shirdi devotees regard this site as the resting place (Samadhi-Sthana) 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 Par (platform) was built round 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 wanted repairs. The Sansthan has made the necessary repairs, additions and alterations now.

(2) Then after some years another Wada, Dixit's Wada was constructed. Kakasaheb Dixit, Solicitor of Bombay, had gone to England. He had injured his leg by an accident there. The injury could not be got rid of by any means. Nanasaheb Chandorkar advised him to try Sai Baba. So he saw Sai Baba in 1909 A.D., and requested Him to cure rather the lameness of his mind than that of his leg. He was so much pleased with the darshana 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 Arti in Chavadi was commenced. The Wada was complete and was inhabited on the Rama-Navami day in 1911 A.D., with due rites and formalities. (3) Then another Wada or palatial mansion was put up by the famous millionaire, Mr. Booty, of Nagpur. Lots of money was spent on this building, but the entire amount was well utilized, as Sai Baba's body is resting in this Wada, which is now called the Samadhi Mandir. The site of this Mandir had formerly a garden, which was watered and looked after by Baba. Three Wadas thus sprang 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, attended to 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 Mohdin Tamboli, residence in Masjid, love of Mr. Dengale and other devotees; and other incidents will be described in the next Chapter.

Chapter V

Baba's Return with Chand Patil's Marriage - party - Welcomed and Addressed as "Sai" - Contact with Other Saints - His Dress and Daily Routine - The Story of the Padukas - Wrestling Bout with Mohdin 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 Mahomedan 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 Koss and a half, he came, on the way, to a mango tree under the foot of which sat a RATNA (queer fellow). He had a cap on His head, wore Kafni (long robe) and had a "Satka" (short stick) under His armpit and He was preparing to smoke a Chilim (pipe). On seeing

Chand Patil pass by the way, He called out to him and asked him to have a smoke and to rest a little. The Fakir asked him about the saddle. Chand Patil replied that it was of his mare, which was lost. The queer fellow or Fakir asked him to make a search in the Nala close by. He went and the wonder of wonders! He found out the mare. 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 Chilim 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 burning coal, which He put on the pipe. Then He dashed the Satka on the ground, from whence water began to ooze. The chhapi was wetted with that water, was then wrung out and wrapped round the pipe. Thus everything being complete, the Fakir smoked the Chilim and then gave it also to Chand Patil. On seeing all this, Chand Patil was wonderstruck. He requested the Fakir to come to his home and accept his hospitality. Next day He went to the Patil's house and stayed there for some time. The 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 alone stayed 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 Bhagata Mhalsapati's field near Khandoba's temple. The carts were loosened in the open courtyard of 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 known as Sai Baba.

[Contact with Other Saints](#)

Sai Baba began to stay in a deserted Masjid. One Saint named Devidas was living in Shirdi many years before Baba came there. Baba liked his company. He stayed with him in the Maruti temple, in the Chavadi, and 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 householder 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 lucky and meritorious, it secured this Jewel." So also one famous Saint by name Anandnath of Yewala Math, a disciple of Akkalkot Maharaj came to Shirdi with some Shirdi 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.

[Baba's Dress and Daily Routine](#)

In his young days, Sai Baba grew 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 Merry Gold, Jai and Jui, and after cleaning, he planted and watered them. A devotee by name Vaman Tatyā supplied Him daily with two earthen pitchers. With this 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 were broken, as they were made of raw earth and not baked. Next day, Tatyā supplied two fresh pitchers. This course went on for 3 years; and with Sai Baba's toil and labour, there grew a flower garden. On this site, at present, stands the big mansion - Samadhi Mandir of Baba, which is now frequented and used 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 (Sholapur District), taking the darshana of the Padukas (foot-prints) of the Maharaj and offering his sincere worship 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. Deo, Retired Mamalatdar of Thana, and a great devotee of Sai Baba, made enquired 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 Ramarao Kothare of Bombay came to Shirdi for Baba's darshana. 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 the fact of Sai Baba's first coming to Shirdi and sitting under the holy Neem tree. They thought of installing Baba's Padukas there and were going to make them of some rough stones. Then Bhai's friend, the compounder, suggested that if this matter be made known to his master, Dr. Ramarao Kothare, who would prepare nice Padukas for this purpose. All liked the 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 lotuses, flowers, conch, disc, man etc., and suggested that the following SHLOKA (verse) regarding Neem tree's great ness and Baba's Yogi powers be inscribed. The verse was as follows:

"Sada Nimbarvrikshasya mooladhiwasat,
Sudhasravinam tiktamapi -apriyam tam,
Tarum Kalpavrikshadhikam sadhayantam
Namameeshwaram Sadgurum Sai Natham"

Upasani's suggestions were accepted and carried out. The Padukas were made in Bombay 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 procession. Baba touched the Padukas, saying that these are the feet of the Lord and asked the people to instal them, under foot of the Neem tree.

A day before, one Parsi devotee of Bombay named Pস্থা Shet sent Rs.25/- by money order. Baba gave this sum for the installation 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 Laxman Kacheshwar Jakhadi did this. In the first five years, Dr. Kothare sent Rs. 2 per month for lighting and he also sent the railing round the Padukas. The expense of bringing the railing from the station to Shirdi (Rs. 7-8-0) (presently Rs.7.50p) 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 orginally 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 darshana of Baba. He asked Baba's permission for this. Baba said - "Oh, what is

there in Akkalkot? Why do you go there? The incumbent 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. Deo concluded that Hemadpant did not know these details. Had he known them, he would not have failed to depict them in his Sat-charita.

Wrestling Bout with Mohdin Tamboli and Change in Life

To return to other stories of Baba. There was a wrestler in Shirdi, by name Mohdin Tamboli. Baba and he did not agree on some items, and both had a fight. In this Baba was defeated. Thenceforth, Baba changed His dress 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 seat, sack-cloth for His bed and was content with wearing torn and worn out rags. He always said "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. While he was once wrestling, a similar feeling of dispassion came 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 Samsara and turned towards God-realization. He established a math on the banks of the river near Puntambe, and lived there with 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 under the shade of a branch of a Babul tree near the stream at 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 Dengale. Baba loved Mr. Balasaheb. His younger brother, named Nanasaheb, had no son, though he married a second wife. Balasaheb sent Nanasaheb for taking darshana of Sai Baba, and after some time with His grace, Nanasaheb got a son. From that time onwards, people began to come in 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 Chilim, tobacco, a "Tumrel" (tin pot), long flowing Kafni, a piece of cloth round 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 as oblation; egoism, desires and all thoughts 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 A.D., 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 GHUNGUR (small bells) on His legs, Baba danced beautifully sang with tender love.

Turning Water into Oil

Sai Baba was very fond of lights. He used to borrow oil from shop-keepers, and keep lamps burning the whole night in the Masjid and temple. This went on for some time. The Banias, who supplied oil gratis, once met together and decided not to give Him oil. When, as 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) of oil, put water into it and drank it and forced it fall in the container. After consecrating the tin-pot in this way, He again took water in 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. Baba forgave them and asked them to be more truthful in future.

The Pseudo-Guru Javhar Ali

Five years after the wrestling bout mentioned above, one Fakir from Ahmednager 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 Koran 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 wall before which Mahomedans pray on Idgah 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. 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 defects 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 ill-tempered fellow, he would not leave him and that they should better return 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 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 came to Shirdi and lived in the Maruti temple. Devidas had fine features and brilliant eyes, and he was dispassion incarnate and a Jnani. Many persons, 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 actual 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 will be described Rama-Navami Festival, the Masjid, its former condition and later improvement etc.

Chapter VI

RAMA-NAVAMI FESTIVAL AND MASJID REPAIRS

Efficacy of the Touch of Guru's Hand - Rama-Navami Festival - Its Origin, Transformation etc. Repairs to the Masjid.

Before describing Rama-Navami Festival and Masjid Repairs, the author makes some preliminary remarks about Sad-Guru as follows:-

Efficacy of the Touch of Guru's Hand

Where Real or Sad-Guru is the helmsman, he is sure to carry us safely and easily beyond the worldly ocean. The word Sadguru brings to mind Sai Baba. He appears to me, as if standing before me, and applying Udi (scared ashes) to my forehead and placing his hand of blessing on my head. Then joy fills my heart and love overflows through 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 world dissolving 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, whose heads feel annoyed when they hear religious and Godly talks, attains calmness. The seeing of Sai Baba's handsome form, chokes our throat with joy, makes the eyes overflowing with tears, and overwhelms the heart with emotions. It awakens in us 'I am He (Brahman)' consciousness, manifests the joy of self-realization, and dissolving the distinction of Thou, and I then and there, makes us one with the Supreme (One Reality). When I begin to read scriptures, at every step I am reminded of my Sadguru, and Sai Baba, 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 Uddhava Gita (song of teachings by Lord Shri Krishna to His disciple, Uddhava) for the welfare of the devotees. When I begin to chitchat, I am at once put in mind of Sai's stories for enabling me to give suitable illustrations. 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 writing and there is no end to it. When the disciple's egoism props up, He presses it down with His hand, and giving him His own power, makes him gain His object, and thus satisfies and blesses him. If any one prostrates before Sai and surrenders heart and soul to Him, then unsolicited, all the chief objects of life viz. Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (Desire) and Moksha (Deliverance), are easily and unsolicitedly attained. Four paths, viz., of Karma, Jnana, 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 the destination (God). So says definitely, Sai Baba.

After philosophising about the Self-Existent Brahman, 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 any devotees' homes. It is my special characteristic, that I always look to, and provide, for the welfare of those devotees, who worship Me whole-heartedly 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, leave worldly honours, try to get Lord's grace and blessings, and be honored in His Court. Do not be deluded by worldly honor. 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."

After quoting these words, the author goes on to relate the story of Rama Navami festival in Shirdi. As Rama-Navami is the greatest festival celebrated at Shirdi, another fuller account, as published in 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 Circle Inspector 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 regarding the event, an idea of celebrating a fair or 'Urus' occurred to him in the year 1897, and he placed it for consideration before other Shirdi devotees, viz. Taty Patil, Dada Kote Patil and Madhavrao Deshpande (Shama). They all approved of the idea, and got Sai Baba's permission and blessings. Then an application for getting the Collector's sanction for

celebrating the urus was made, but as the village Kulkarni reported 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 the Rama-Navami day, after having consultation with Sai Baba. It seems, He had some end in view, in this, viz., the Unification of the two fairs of festivals, the Urus and the Rama-Navami and the unification of the two communities - the Hindus and the Mahomedans. As future events showed, this end or object was 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 one by Sai Baba, by throwing flowers into it. The water of this well was insufficient, so Taty Patil had to arrange to get water, from a well by fixing Moats (leather sacks) thereon, at a considerable distance. Then temporary shops had 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 married two wives. Sai Baba too blessed him with sons, and Mr. Gund prevailed upon his friend to prepare and supply one simple flag for the procession of the fair; he also succeeded in inducing Mr. Nanasaheb Nimonkar to supply another embroidered flag. Both these flags were taken in procession through the village, and finally fixed at the two ends or 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. This idea of 'Sandal' procession originated with one Mr. Amir Shakkar Dalal, a Mahomedan 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), and these are carried with incense burning before them 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' (nitche) and walls of the Masjid with hands. This work was managed by Mr. Amir Shakkar for the first three years, and then afterwards by his wife. So on one day, the two processions, the 'Flags' by the Hindus and that of 'Sandal' by the Muslims, went on side by side, and are still going on without any hitch.

Arrangement

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

Transformation of Urus into Rama-Navami Festival

Things were going on in this way and the fair was gradually increasing in importance till 1912 A.D., when a change took place; That year one devotee, Mr. Krishnarao Jageshwar Bhisma (the author of the pamphlet 'Sai Sagunopasana'), came for the fair with Dadasaheb Khaparde of Amraoti, and was staying on the previous day in the Dixit Wada. While he was lying on the verandah, and while Mr. Laxmanrao alias Kaka Mahajani, was going down with Puja materials to

the Masjid, a new 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 the Rama-Navami day; this day is very dear to all the Hindus; then why not begin the Rama-Navami Festival - the celebration of the birth of Shri Rama here on this day? 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 perform 'Kirtan' and sing the glories of the Lord on the occasion. But Bhishma solved the difficulty, by saying that his 'Rama Akhyan' (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 Radha-Krishna Mai. So they immediately went to the Masjid to get Baba's permission. Baba, who knew all things and what was passing there, asked Mahajani, as to what was going on in the Wada. Being rather perturbed, Mahajani could not catch the purport of the question and remained silent. Then Baba asked Bhishma, what he had to say. He explained the idea of celebrating Rama-Navami festival, and asked for Baba's permission and Baba gladly gave it. All rejoiced and made preparations for the Jayanti-festival. Next day, the Masjid was decorated with buntings etc., a cradle was supplied by Radha-Krishna Mai, and placed in front of Baba's seat and the proceedings started. Bhishma stood up for Kirtan and Mahajani played on the harmonium. Sai Baba sent a man to call Mahajani. He was hesitating to go, doubting 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 Rama-Navami festival had commenced, and the cradle was put on for that purpose. Then Baba took a garland from the 'Nimbar' (nitche), and placed it round his neck and sent another garland for Bhishma. Then commenced the Kirtan. When it came to a close, loud sounds of "Victory to Rama" went up; and Gulal (red - powder) was thrown up all round, amidst band and music. Everybody was overjoyed, when suddenly roaring was heard. The red-powder thrown promiscuously all round, went up, somehow entered Baba's eyes. Baba got wild and began to scold and abuse loudly. People got frightened by this scene and took to their heels. Those intimate devotees, who knew Baba well, took these scoldings and outpourings of Baba, as blessings in disguise. They thought that when Rama was born, it was proper for Baba to get wild and enraged to kill Ravana; 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. Radha-Krishna Mai was rather afraid; and thought that Baba might break her cradle, and she asked Mahajani to get 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 finished. Next day, another 'Kirtan' and Gopal-Kala ceremony (an earthen pot containing parched rice mixed with curds is hung, only to be broken after the 'Kirtan', and the contents distributed to all, as was done by Lord Krishna amongst His cow-herd (friends), were performed, and then Baba allowed the cradle to be removed. While the Rama-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 Rama-Navami festival.

From next year (1913), the items in the programme of Rama-Navami began to increase. Radha-Krishna Mai started a 'Nama-Saptah' (singing the glory of God's name continuously day and night for seven days), from 1st of Chaitra, For this, all devotees took part by turns, and she also joined it, sometimes early in the morning. As Rama-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 met accidentally Balabuva Mali, who was known as modern Tukaram, and got him to do the 'Kirtan' that year. The next year (1914), another Balabuva Satarkar of Brihadsiddha Kavate, District Satara, could not act as a Haridas in his own town, as plague was prevailing in his town, 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 labour. 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 uptill now.

Since 1912, this festival began to grow gradually year-by-year. From the 8th to 12th of Chaitra, Shirdi looked like a beehive 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 Radha-Krishna Mai turned Shirdi into a Sansthan (State). Paraphernalia increased. A beautiful horse, a palanquin, chariot and many silver things, 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 as before. It is to be noted that both the Hindus and Mahomedans have been working in unison in both the processions, and during the entire festival, there has been no hitch or quarrel between them at all so far. First about 5000-7000 people used to collect, but that figure went up to 75000 in some years; still there was no outbreak of any epidemic or any riots worth the name during so many past 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 put the Masjid in order. 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. First, Baba was unwilling to allow them to have these works done, but with the intervention of Mhalsapati, a local devotee of Baba, His permission was secured. When the pavement was completed in one night in the Masjid, 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 labour and effort. The open space in front of the Masjid was very small and inconvenient. Kakasaheb Dixit wanted to extend it and put on it a roofing. At great expense, he got iron-posts, and 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 the neck of Tatya Patil. He took by force Tatya'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. Tatya also was much frightened. None knew what was going to happen to Tatya, and none dared to interfere. Bhagoji Shinde, the leper devotee of Baba, made a little bold advance, but he was pushed out by Baba. Madhavrao was also similarly treated, he being 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 shopkeeper, got from him an embroidered Pheta and Himself tied it on Tatya's head, as if he was being given a special honour. All the people were wonderstruck to see this strange behavior of Baba. They were at a loss to know, what enraged Baba so suddenly and what led Him to assault Tatya Patil, and why His anger cooled down, the next moment. Baba was sometimes very calm and quiet and talked sweet things with love, but soon after, with or without any pretext, 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 Mahomedan will be taken up; and His Yogic practices and powers, and other matters will be dealt with.
