

Chapter XXXVII

Chavadi Procession

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

Preliminary

Blessed is Sai's life, blessed is His daily routine. His ways and actions are indescribable. Sometimes He was intoxicated with Brahmanand (divine joy), and at other times content with Self knowledge. Doing so many things sometimes, He was unconcerned with them. Though He seemed at times quite actionless (doing nothing) He was not idle or dozing; He always abided in His own Self. Though He looked calm and quiet as the placid sea, He was deep and unfathomable. Who can describe His ineffable nature? He regarded men as brothers, women as sisters and mothers. He was a perfect and perpetual celibate as everybody knows. May the understanding (knowledge), we got in His company, last long unto death. Let us ever serve Him with whole-hearted devotion to His feet. Let us see Him (God) in all beings and let us ever love His name.

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

Chavadi Procession

Baba's dormitory has been already described. One day He slept in the Masjid and on the next, in the Chavadi (a small building containing a room or two near the Masjid). This alternate sleeping in both these buildings went on till Baba's Mahasamadhi. From 10th December 1909 devotees began to offer regular worship to Baba in the Chavadi. This we will now describe with His grace. When the turn of retiring to the Chavadi came, people flocked to the Masjid and made bhajan in the mandap (courtyard) for a few hours. Behind them was a beautiful Ratha (small car), to the right a Tulsi-vrindavan and in front Baba, and between these the devotees fond of bhajan. Men and women who had a liking for the bhajan came in time. Some took Tal, Chiplis and Kartal, Mridang, Khanjiri and Ghol (all musical instruments) in their hands and conducted the bhajan. Sai Baba was the

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Magnet Who drew all the devotees to Him there. Outside in the open, some trimmed their divatyas, (torches), some decorated the palanquin, some stood with cane-sticks in their hands and uttered cries of victory to Baba. The corner was decorated with buntings. Round about the Masjid, rows of burning lamps shed their light. Baba's horse 'Shyamakarna' stood fully decorated outside. Then Taty Patil came with a party of men to Baba and asked Him to be ready. Baba sat quiet in his place till Taty came and helped Him to get up by putting his arm under Baba's arm-pit. Taty called Baba by the name of Mama. Really their relationship was extremely intimate. Baba wore on his body the usual kafni, took His satka (short stick) under His arm-pit and after taking His chilim (tobacco-pipe) and tobacco and placing a cloth over His shoulder became ready to start. Then Taty threw a golden-embroidered beautiful Shela (Shawl) over His body. After this Baba, moving a little the bundle of fuel-sticks lying behind with His right toe and then extinguishing the burning lamp with His right hand, started for the Chavadi. Then all sorts of musical instruments, tashe, band and horns and mridang, gave out their different sounds; and fire-works exhibited their different and various coloured views. Men and women singing Baba's name started walking, making bhajan to the accompaniment of mridang and veena. Some danced with joy and some carried various flags and standards. The Bhaldars announced Baba's name when He came on the steps of the Masjid. On the two sides of Baba stood persons, who held chavaris and others who fanned Baba. On the way were spread folds of cloth on which Baba walked on, being supported by devotees' hands. Tatyaba held the left hand and Mhalasapati the right and Bapusaheb Jog held the chhatra (umbrella) over His head. In this fashion Baba marched on to the Chavadi. The fully decorated red horse, named Shyamakarna led the way and behind him were all the carriers, waiters, musical players and the crowd of devotees. Hari-nama (the name of the Lord) chanted to the accompaniment of music rent the skies as also the name of Sai. In this manner the procession reached the corner when all the persons that joined this party seemed well-pleased and delighted.

On coming to this corner Baba stood facing the Chavadi and shone with a peculiar lustre. It seemed, as if the face of Baba glittered like dawn, or like the glory of the rising sun. Baba stood there with a concentrated mind, facing the north, as if He was calling somebody. All the instruments played their music while Baba moved His right arm up

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

and down for some time. Kakasaheb Dixit at this time came forward with a silver plate containing flowers besmeared with gulal (red powder) and threw them on Baba's body off and on. The musical instruments played their best at this juncture and Baba's face beamed with steady and added radiance and beauty, and all the persons drank this lustre to their hearts' content. Words fail to describe the scene and splendour of this occasion. Some times Mhalasapati began to dance being possessed or obsessed by some deity, but all were surprised to see that Baba's concentration was not in the least disturbed. With a lantern in his hand Tatya Patil walked on Baba's left side and Bhagat Mhalasapati on the right, holding with his hand the hem of Baba's garment. What a beautiful procession and what an expression of devotion! To witness this, men and women, poor and rich, flocked together there. Baba walked very slow. Bhaktas followed on both sides with love and devotion. With joy pervading the whole atmosphere of the place, the procession reached the Chavadi. That scene and those days are gone now. Nobody can see them now or in the future; still remembering and visualising that scene and sight, we can bring solace and comfort to our minds.

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

Nanasaheb Nimonkar held the Chhatra (umbrella) with its beautiful pendants which moved in a circle with its supporting stick. Bapusaheb Jog washed the feet of Baba in a silver dish and offered 'arghya' and worship with due formalities, then besmeared His arms with sandal paste, and offered tambul (betel-leaves). Baba sat on the asan (gadi), while Tatya and others kept standing and falling at His feet. When Baba sat on the gadi supporting Himself against the bolster, devotees on both sides waved chamars and fans.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Shama then prepared the chillim and handed it over to Tatyaba who drew a flame out of it by his breath and then gave it to Baba. After Baba had His smoke, it was given to Bhagat Mhalasapati and then it was passed round to all. Blessed was the inanimate chillim. It had first to undergo many ordeals of penance, such as being treated by pot-makers, dried in the open sun and burnt in fire and then it had the good fortune to get the contact of Baba's hand and His kiss. After this function was over, devotees put garlands of flowers on His neck and gave Him nose-gays and bunches of flowers for smelling. Baba who was dispassion or non-attachment incarnate, cared a fig for all these necklaces of jewels, and garlands of flowers and other decorations; but out of real love to His devotees, He allowed them to have their own way and to please themselves. Finally Bapusaheb Jog waved the arati over Baba, observing all formalities, the musical instruments playing thier auspicious tunes. When this arati was over, the devotees returned home one by one saluting Baba and taking His leave. When Taty Patil, after offering chillim, attar (scent) and rose-water, rose to depart, Baba said to him lovingly - "Guard Me, go if you like, but return sometimes at night and enquire after Me." Replying in the affirmative Tatyaba left the Chhavadi and went home. Then Baba Himself prepared His bed. He arranged 50 or 60 white chadders one upon another and thus making His bed, went to rest.

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

Chapter XXXVIII

Baba's Handi - Disrespect of Shrine - Kala or Hodge-Podge - Cup of Butter-Milk.

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

Preliminary

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Oh, blessed Sad-guru Sai, we bow to You, Who have given happiness to the whole world, accomplished the welfare of the devotees and have removed the affliction of those who have resorted to Your Feet. Being very liberal and being the protector and saviour of the Bhaktas who surrender themselves to You, You incarnate yourself in this world to oblige the people and do them good. The liquid essence of Pure Self was poured into the mould of Brahma and out of this has come out the crest-jewel of the saints-Sai. This Sai is Atmarama Himself. He is the abode of perfect divine bliss. Having Himself attained all objects of life, He made His devotees desireless and free.

Baba's Handi

Different sadhanas (means of accomplishments) are prescribed in our scriptures for different ages. Tapa (Penance) is recommended for Krita age, Jnana (Knowledge) for Treta age, Yajna (Sacrifice) for Dwapara age and Dana (Charity) for Kali (present) age. Of all the charities, giving food is the best one. We are much perturbed when we get no food at noon. Other beings feel similarly under similar circumstances. Knowing this, he who gives food to the poor and hungry, is the best donor or charitable person. The Taittiriya Upanishad says that "Food is Brahma; from food all the creatures are born and having been born, by food they live, and having departed, into food again they enter." When an Atithi (uninvited guest) comes to our door at noon, it is our bounden duty to welcome him by giving him food. Other kinds of charities, viz., giving away wealth, property and clothes etc., require some discrimination, but in the matter of food, no such consideration is necessary. Let anybody come to our door at noon, he should be served forthwith; and if lame, crippled, blind and diseased paupers come, they should be fed first and the able-bodied persons and our relations afterwards. The merit of feeding the former is much greater than that of feeding the latter. Other kinds of charities are imperfect without this Anna-dana (giving of food) as stars are without the moon, a necklace without its central medal, a crown without pinnacle, a tank without a lotus, bhajan without love, a married lady without the kumkum-mark, singing without a sweet voice or butter-milk without salt. Just as varan (Pulse-soup) excels all other dishes, Anna-dana is the best of all merits. Now let us see how Baba prepared food and distributed it.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

It has been stated before that Baba required very little food for Himself and what little He wanted, was obtained by begging from a few houses. But when He took it into His mind to distribute food to all, He made all preparations from beginning to end, Himself. He depended on nobody and troubled none in this matter. First He went to the bazar and bought all the things, corn, flour, spices etc., for cash. He did also the grinding. In the open courtyard of the Masjid, He arranged a big hearth and after lighting a fire underneath kept a Handi over it with a proper measure of water. There were two kinds of Handi, one small and the other big. The former provided food for 50 persons, the later for 100. Sometimes He cooked 'Mitthe Chaval' (sweet rice), and at other times 'pulava' with meat. At times in the boiling varan (soup), He let in small balls of thick or flat breads of wheat flour. He pounded the spices on a stone-slab, and put the thin pulverized spices into the cooking-pot. He took all the pains to make the dishes very palatable. He prepared 'Ambil' by boiling jawari-flour in water and mixing it with butter-milk. With the food He distributed this Ambil to all alike. To see whether the food was properly cooked or not, Baba rolled up the sleeve of His Kafni and put His bare arm in the boiling cauldron without the least fear, and churned (moved) the whole mass from side to side and up and down. There was no mark of burn on His arm, nor fear on His face. When the cooking was over, Baba got the pots in the Masjid, and had them duly consecrated by the moulvi. First He sent part of the food as prasad to Mhalasapati and Tatyapa Patil and then He served the remaining contents with His own hand to all the poor and helpless people to their hearts' content. Really blessed and fortunate must be those people who got food prepared by Baba and served by Him.

Somebody may raise a doubt here and ask - "Did Baba distribute vegetable and animal food as prasad alike to all His devotees?" The answer is plain and simple. Those who were accustomed to (take) animal food were given food from the Handi as prasad and those who were not so accustomed, were not allowed to touch it. He never created in them any wish or desire to indulge in this food. There is a principle well established that when a Guru himself gives anything as prasad, the disciple who thinks and doubts whether it is acceptable or otherwise, goes to perdition. In order to see how any disciple has imbibed this principle, Baba at times proposed tests. For instance, on an Ekadashi day He gave some rupees to Dada Kelkar and asked him to go in person to Korhalha to get

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

mutton from there. This Dada Kelkar was an orthodox Brahmin and kept all orthodox manners in his life. He knew that offering wealth, grain and clothes etc., to a Sad-guru was not enough but that implicit obedience to and prompt compliance with His order was the real Dakshina that pleased Him most. So Dada Kelkar dressed himself and started for the place. Then Baba called him back and said, "Don't go yourself, but send somebody." Then Dada sent servant Pandu for the purpose. Seeing him starting, Baba asked Dada to call him back and cancelled that programme. On another occasion Baba asked Dada just to see how the saltish 'Pulava' (mutton dish) was done. The latter said casually and formally that it was alright. Then Baba said to him - "Neither you have seen it with your eyes, nor tasted it with your tongue, then how could you say that it was good? Just take out the lid and see." Saying this Baba caught his arm and thrust it into the pot and added, "Draw out your arm and taking a ladle, put some quantity in the dish without caring for your orthodoxy and without blustering." When a wave of real love rises in a mother's mind, she pinches her child with her hand and when it begins to cry and shout, she hugs it close to her bosom. Similarly Baba, in a true motherly way pinched Dada Kelkar in this fashion. Really no saint or guru will ever force his orthodox disciple to eat forbidden food and defile himself thereby.

The Handi business went on for some time till 1910 and was stopped thereafter. As stated before, Das Ganu spread the fame of Baba by his kirtans far and wide in the Bombay Presidency and people from that part of the country began to flock to Shirdi, which became in a few days a place of pilgrimage. The devotees brought with them various articles for presentation and offered various dishes of food as naivedya. The quantity of naivedya offered by them was so much that the fakirs and paupers could feed themselves to their hearts' content, leaving some surplus behind. Before stating how naivedya was distributed, we shall refer to Nanasaheb Chandorkar's story showing Baba's regard and respect for local Shrines and deities.

Nanasaheb's Disrespect of a Shrine

By drawing inferences or guessing in their own way some people said that Sai was a Brahmin, and some that He was a Moslem. Really He belonged to no caste. No one knew definitely when He was born and in what community and who were His parents.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Then how could He be a Moslem or Brahmin? If He were a Moslem, how could He keep Dhuni fire ever burning in the Masjid, how could there be a Tulsi Vrindavan there, how could He allow the blowing of conches and ringing of bells and the playing of the musical instruments, how could He allow all the different forms of Hindu worship, there? Had He been a Moslem, could He have pierced ears and could He have been spent money from His pocket for repairing Hindu temples? On the contrary He never tolerated the slightest disrespect to Hindu Shrines and deities.

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

Kala (hodge-podge)

To revert to the distribution of the naivedya. - After the arati was over and after Baba sent away all the people with Udi and blessings, He went inside and sat with his back to the Nimbar for meals, with two rows of the Bhaktas, one on each side. The Bhaktas who brought naivedya thrust inside their dishes containing a variety of food such as Puris, Mande, Polis, Basundi, Sanza, fine rice etc., and kept waiting outside for prasad consecrated by Baba. All the foods were mixed in a hotch-potch and placed before Baba. He offered it all to God and consecrated it. Then portions of the same were given to the persons waiting outside and the rest was served to the inner party with Baba at the centre. The Bhaktas sitting in two rows then dined to their hearts' content. Baba asked Shama and Nanasaheb Nimonkar daily to serve the consecrated food to all the persons sitting

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

inside and look to their individual needs and comforts. This they did very carefully and willingly. Every morsel of the food thus partaken gave them nutrition and satisfaction. Such sweet, lovely and consecrated food it was! Ever auspicious and every holy!

Cup of Butter-Milk

Once Hemadpant had eaten his full in this company, when Baba offered him a cup of butter-milk. Its white appearance pleased him, but he was afraid that there was no space inside for it. He, however, took a sip which proved very tasty. Seeing his faltering attitude, Baba said - "Drink it all, you won't get any such opportunity hereafter." He drank it off then, but found that Baba's words were prophetic, for He passed away soon.

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

Chapter XXXIX & L

Baba's Knowledge of Sanskrit

His Interpretation of a Verse from Gita - Construction of the Samadhi Mandir.

This chapter (39) deals with Baba's interpretation of a verse from the Bhagawad-Gita. As some people believed that Baba knew not Sanskrit, and the interpretation was Nanasaheb Chandorkar's, Hemadpant wrote another chapter (50) refuting that objection. As the chapter No.50 deals with the same subject-matter, it is incorporated in this chapter.

Preliminary

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

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

other house-hold work. Blessed is their love, for they sang sweet songs which calm and pacify the minds of the singers and listeners.

Baba's Interpretation

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

Nanasaheb Chandorkar was a good student of Vedanta. He had read Gita with commentaries and prided himself on his knowledge of all that. He fancied that Baba knew nothing of all this or of Sanskrit. So, Baba one day pricked the bubble. These were the days before crowds flocked to Baba, when Baba had solitary talks at the Mosque with such devotees. Nana was sitting near Baba and massaging His Legs and muttering something.

Baba - Nana, what are you mumbling yourself?

Nana - Iam reciting a shloka (verse) from Sanskrit.

Baba - What shloka?

Nana - From Bhagawad-Gita

Baba - Utter it loudly.

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

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

'Tadviddhi Pranipatena Pariprashnena Sevaya,

Upadekshyanti Te Jnanam Jnaninastattwadarshinah'

Baba - Nana, do you understand it?

Nana - Yes.

Baba - If you do, then tell me.

Nana - It means this - "Making Sashtanga Namaskar, i.e., prostration, questioning the guru, serving him, learn what this Jnana is. Then, those Jnanis that have attained the real knowledge of the Sad-Vastu (Brahma) will give you upadesha (instruction) of Jnana."

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

Then Nana explained it word by word.

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

Nana - I do not know any other meaning for the word 'pranipata' than 'making prostration'.

Baba - What is 'pariprashna'?

Nana - Asking questions.

baba - What does 'Prashna' mean?

Nana - The same (questioning).

Baba - If 'pariprashna' means the same as prashna (question), why did Vyasa add the prefix 'pari'? Was Vyasa off his head?

Nana - I do not know of any other meaning for the word 'pariprashna'.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Baba - 'Seva', what sort of 'seva' is meant?

Nana - Just what we are doing always

Baba - Is it enough to render such service?

Nana - I do not know what more is signified by the word 'seva'.

Baba - In the next line "upadekshyanti te jnanam", can you so read it as to read any other word in lieu of Jnanam?

Nana - Yes.

Baba - What word?

Nana - Ajnanam.

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

Nana - No, Shankara Bhashya gives no such construction.

Baba - Never mind if it does not. Is there any objection to using the word "Ajnana" if it gives a better sense?

Nana - I do not understand how to construe by placing "Ajnana" in it.

Baba - Why does Krishna refer Arjuna to Jnanis or Tattwadarshis to do his prostration, interrogation and service? Was not Krishna a Tattwadarshi, in fact Jnana himself.

Nana - Yes He was. But I do not make out why he referred Arjuna to Jnanis?

Baba - Have you not understood this?

Nana was humiliated. His pride was knocked on the head. Then Baba began to explain -

(1) It is not enough merely to prostrate before the Jnanis. We must make Sarvaswa Sharangati (complete surrender) to the Sad-guru.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

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

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

If this is done, the Sad-guru will show you what the Janna referred to in the previous stanza is.

Nana did not understand what is meant by saying that a guru teaches ajnana.

Baba - How is Jnana Upadesh, i.e., imparting of realization to be effected? Destroying ignorance is Jnana. (cf. Verse-Ovi-1396 of Jnaneshwari commenting on Gita 18-66 says - "removal of ignorance is like this, Oh Arjuna, If dream and sleep disappear, you are yourself. It is like that." Also Ovi 83 on Gita V-16 says - "Is there anything different or independent in Jnana besides the destruction of ignorance?")* Expelling darkness means light. Destroying duality (dwaita) means non-duality (adwaita). Whenever we speak of destroying Dwaita, we speak of Adwaita. Whenever we talk of destroying darkness, we talk of light. If we have to realise the Adwaita state, the feeling of Dwaita in ourselves has to be removed. That is the realization of the Adwaita state. Who can speak of Adwaita while remaining in Dwaita? If one did, unless one gets into that state, how can one know it and realise it?

Again, the Shishya (disciple) like the Sad-guru is really embodiment of Jnana. The difference between the two lies in the attitude, high realization, marvellous super-human Sattva (beingness) and unrivalled capacity and Aishwarya Yoga (divine powers). The Sad-guru is Nirguna, Sat-Chit-Ananda. He has indeed taken human form to elevate mankind and raise the world. But his real Nirguna nature is not destroyed thereby, even a bit. His beingness (or reality), divine power and wisdom remain undiminished. The disciple also is in fact of the same swarupa. But, it is overlaid by the effect of the samaskaras of innumerable births in the shape of ignorance, which hides from his view

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

that he is Shuddha Chaitanya (see B.G. Ch. V-15). As stated therein, he gets the impressions - "Iam Jiva, a creature, humble and poor." The Guru has to root out these offshoots of ignorance and has to give upadesh or instruction. To the disciple, held spell-bound for endless generations by the ideas of his being a creature, humble and poor, the Guru imparts in hundreds of births the teaching - "You are God, you are mighty and opulent." Then, he realizes a bit that he is God really. The perpetual delusion under which the disciple is labouring, that he is the body, that he is a creature (jiva) or ego, that God (Paramatma) and the world are different from him, is an error inherited from innumerable past births. From actions based on it, he has derived his joy, sorrows and mixtures of both. To remove this delusion, this error, this root ignorance, he must start the inquiry. How did the ignorance arise? Where is it? And to show him this is called the Guru's upadesh. The following are the instances of Ajnana :-

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

Unless these errors are exposed to his view, the disciple cannot learn what is God, jiva, world, body; how they are inter-related and whether they are different from each other, or are one and the same. To teach him these and destroy his ignorance is this instruction in Jnana or Ajnana. Why should Jnana be imparted to the jiva, (who is) a Jnanamurti? Upadesh is merely to show him his error and destroy his ignorance.

Baba added :- (1) Pranipata implies surrender. (2) Surrender must be of body, mind and wealth; Re: (3) Why should Krishna refer Arjuna to other Jnanis? "Sadbhakta takes every thing to be Vasudev (B.G.VII-19 i.e., any Guru will be Krishna to the

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

devotee) and Guru takes disciple to be Vasudev and Krishna treats both as his Prana and Atma (B.G.7-18, commentary of Jnanadev on this). As Shri Krishna knows that there are such Bhaktas and Gurus, He refers Arjuna to them so that their greatness may increase and be known.

Construction of the Samadhi-Mandir

Baba never talked, nor ever made any fuss about the things which He wanted to accomplish, but He so skillfully arranged the circumstances and surroundings that the people were surprised at the slow but sure results attained. The construction of the Samadhi-mandir is an instance in point. Shriman Bapusaheb Booty, the famous multi-millionaire of Nagpur lived in Shirdi with his family. Once an idea arose in his mind that he should have a building of his own there. Sometimes after this, while he was sleeping in Dixit's Wada, he got a vision. Baba appeared in his dream and ordered him to build a Wada of his own with temple. Shama who was sleeping there, got also a similar vision. When Bapusaheb was awakened, he saw Shama crying and asked him why. The latter replied that in his vision Baba came close to him and ordered distinctly - "Build the Wada with the temple. I shall fulfill the desires of all. Hearing the sweet and loving words of Baba, I was overpowered with emotion, my throat was choked, my eyes were overflowing with tears, and I began to cry." Bapusaheb was surprised to see that both their visions tallied. Being a rich and capable man, he decided to build a Wada there and drew up a plan with Madhavarao (Shama). Kakasaheb Dixit also approved of it. And when it was placed before Baba, He also sanctioned it immediately. Then the construction-work was duly started and under the supervision of Shama, the ground floor, the cellar and the well were completed. Baba also on his way to and from Lendi suggested certain improvements. Further work was entrusted to Bapusaheb Jog and when it was going on, an idea struck Bapusaheb Booty's mind that there should be an open room or platform and in the centre the image of Murlidhar (Lord Krishna with the flute) be installed. He asked Shama to refer this matter to Baba and get His consent. The latter asked Baba about this when He was just passing by the Wada. Hearing Shama, Baba gave His consent saying, "after the temple is complete I will come there to stay" and staring at the Wada He added - "after the Wada is complete, we shall use it ourselves, we

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

shall live, move and play there, embrace each other, and be very happy." Then Shama asked Baba whether this was the auspicious time to begin the foundation-work of the central room of the Shrine. The latter answered in the affirmative. Shama got a coconut broke it and started the work. In due time the work was completed and an order was also given for making a good image of Murlidhar. But before it was ready, a new thing turned up. Baba became seriously ill and was about to pass away. Bapusaheb became very sad and dejected, thinking that if Baba passed away, his Wada would not be consecrated by the holy touch of Baba's Feet, and all his money (about a lakh of rupees) would be wasted away. But the words "Place or keep Me in the Wada" which came out of Baba's mouth just before His passing away, consoled not only Bapusaheb, but one and all. In due time Baba's holy body was placed and preserved in the central shrine meant or designed for Murlidhar and Baba Himself became Murlidhar and the Wada thus became the Samadhi-mandir of Sai Baba. His wonderful life is unfathomable.

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

Chapter XL

Stories of Baba

- (1) Attending Mrs.Deo's Udyapan Ceremony as a Sannyasi with two Others (Trio) and -
- (2) Hemadpant's House in the Form of His Picture.

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

Preliminary

Blessed is Shri Sai Samartha who gives instructions in both temporal and spiritual matters to His devotees and makes them happy by enabling them to achieve the goal of their life, - Sai He who when places His hand on their heads transfers His powers to them

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

and thus destroying the sense of differentiation, makes them attain the Unattainable Thing. - He who embraces the Bhaktas who prostrate themselves before Him with no sense of duality or difference. He becomes one with the Bhaktas as the sea with the rivers when they meet it in the rainy season and gives them His power and position. It follows from this that he who sings the Leelas of God's Bhaktas is equally or more dear to Him than one who sings the Leelas of God only. Now to revert to the stories of this chapter.

Mrs.Deo's Udyapan Ceremony

Mr.B.V.Deo was a Mamlatdar at Dahanu (Thana District). His mother had observed 25 or 30 different vows and a Udyapan (concluding) ceremony in connection therewith was to be performed. This ceremony included the feeding of 100 or 200 Brahmins. Mr.Deo fixed a date for the ceremony and wrote a letter to Bapusaheb Jog asking him to request Sai Baba on his behalf to attend the dinner of the ceremony, as without His attendance the ceremony would not be duly completed. Bapusaheb Jog read out the letter to Baba. Baba noted carefully the pure-hearted invitation and said - "I always think of him who remembers Me. I require no conveyance, carriage, tanga, nor train nor aeroplane. I run and manifest myself to him who lovingly calls me. Write to him a pleasing reply that three of us (the trio), Myself, yourself and a third will go and attend it." Mr.Jog informed Mr.Deo of what Baba said. The latter was much pleased, but he knew that Baba never went to any place except Rahata, Rui and Nimgaon in person. He also thought that nothing was impossible to Baba as He was all-pervading and that He might suddenly come, in any form He likes and fulfill His words.

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

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

About a month afterwards, the Sannyasi came in a tanga and stopped in front of Mr.Deo's house at about 10 a.m. Deo thought that he came for subscriptions. Seeing him busy with the preparations of the ceremony, the Sannyasi said that he had come not for money but for meals. Deo said - "Alright, very glad, you are welcome, the house is yours." The Sannyasi - "Two lads are with me." Deo - "Well, come with them." As there was time (2 hours) for dinner, Deo enquired where he should send for them. He said that it was not necessary as he would come himself at the appointed time. Deo asked him to come at noon. Exactly at twelve noon, the Trio came and joined the dinner party and after feeding themselves went away.

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

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

Hemadpant's Shimga Dinner

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

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

In 1917 on the full-moon morning, Hemadpant had a vision. Baba appeared to him in his dream in the form of a well-dressed Sannyasi, woke him up, and said that He would come to him for meals that day. This awakening constituted a part of the dream. When he fully awoke, he saw no Sai nor any Sannyasi. But when he began to recollect the dream, he remembered each and every word the Sannyasi uttered in his dream. Though he was in contact with Baba for seven years and though he always meditated on Baba, he never expected that Baba would come to his house for meals. However, being much pleased with Baba's words, he went to his wife and informed her that being the Holi day, a Sannyasi guest was coming for meals and that some more rice should be prepared. She enquired about the guest, who he was and whence he was coming. Then not to lead her astray and not to cause any misunderstanding he gave her the truth, i.e., told her about the dream. She doubtfully asked whether it was possible that Baba should come there (Bandra) from Shirdi, leaving the dainty dishes there for accepting their coarse food. Hemadpant then assured her that Baba might not come in person but He might attend in the form of a guest and that they would lose nothing if they cooked some more rice.

After this, preparations for the dinner went on and it was quite ready at noon. The Holika-worship was gone through and the leaves (dishes) were spread and arranged with 'Rangoli' marks around them. Two rows were put up with a central seat between them for the guest. All the members of the family - sons, grandsons, daughters and sons-in-law etc., came and occupied their proper seats and the serving of the various articles commenced. While this was being done, everybody was watching for the guest, but none turned up though it was past noon. Then the door was closed and chained; the anna-shuddhi (ghee) was served. This was a signal to start eating. Formal offering to the Vaishwadeva (Fire), and Naivedya to Shri Krishna were also over and the members were about to begin, when foot-steps in the staircase were distinctly heard. Hemadpant went immediately and opened the door and saw two men there: (1) Ali Mahomed and (2) Moulana Ismu Mujavar. These two persons, seeing that meals were ready and all the members were about to begin eating, apologized to Hemadpant and requested him to excuse their interference. They said - "You left your seat and came running to us, others are waiting for you, so please take this your *Thing* and I shall relate all the wonderful tale

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

about it later on at your convenience." So saying he took out from his arm-pit a packet wrapped in an old newspaper cover and placed it on the table. Hemadpant uncovered the packet and saw, to his great wonder and surprise, a big nice picture of Sai Baba. Seeing it, he was much moved, tears ran from his eyes and hair stood on end all over his body, and he bent and placed his head on the feet of Baba in the picture. He thought that Baba had blessed him by this miracle or Leela. Out of curiosity he asked Ali Mahomed whence he got this picture. He said that he bought it from a shop and that he would give all the details about it some time afterwards and wished that as all the members were waiting for him, he should go and join them. Hemadpant thanked him, bade them good-bye and returned to the dinning-hall. The picture was placed on the central seat reserved for the guest and after the due offering of the Naivedya, the whole party commenced eating and finished it in proper time. Seeing the beautiful form in the picture everybody was extremely pleased and wondered how all this happened.

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

Chapter XLI

Story of the Picture - Stealing the Rags and Reading of Jnaneshwari.

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

Nine years after the occurrence of the incident depicted in the last chapter, Ali Mahomed saw Hemadpant and related to him the following story.

One day while wandering in the streets of Bombay he bought the picture from a street-hawker; then he framed and set it on a wall in his house at Bandra (suburb of Bombay). As he loved Baba, he daily took darshana of it. Three months before he gave the picture to Hemadpant, he was suffering from an abscess or swelling on his leg for which an operation was performed and he was convalescing in the house of his brother-

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

in-law, Mr. Noor-Mahomed Peerbhoy in Bombay. For three months his house in Bandra was closed; and nobody was living there. Only the pictures of the famous Baba Abdul Rahiman, Moulanasahab Mahomed Hussain, Baba Sai, Baba Tajudin and other saints (living) were there. The wheel of time did not even spare these. He was lying sick and suffering in Bombay. Why should the pictures suffer there (in Bandra)? It seems that they have also their ins and outs (births and deaths). All the pictures met their fate, but how Sai Baba's picture escaped it, nobody had been able to explain to me up till now. It shows the all-pervasiveness, omnipresence of Sai and His inscrutable power.

He got a small picture of Saint Baba Abdul Rahiman from Mahomed Hussain Thariyatopan many years ago. He gave it to his brother-in-law, Noor-Mahomed Peerbhoy and it was lying on his table for eight years. Once the latter saw it, took it to a photographer and got it enlarged to life-size and distributed copies of the same amongst his relations and friends, including Ali Mahomed who fixed it up in his Bandra house. Noor-Mahomed was a disciple of Saint Abdul Rahiman and when he went to present the picture to his Guru in an open darbar held by him, the Guru got wild and ran to beat him, and drove him out. He felt very sorry and dejected. He thought that he lost so much of his money, and incurred his Guru's displeasure and anger. As his Guru did not like image-worship, he took the enlarged picture with him to the Appollo Bunder and, after hiring a boat, went in it and drowned it in the sea. He requested the friends and relations to return their copies and after getting them (6 in all) back, had them thrown by a fisherman in the Bandra sea. At this time Ali Mahomed was in his brother-in-law's house. He was told by him that his suffering would come to an end if he would soon drown the pictures of the saints in the sea. Hearing this, Ali Mahomed sent his Mehta (Manager) to his Bandra house and got all the pictures of the saints in his house thrown into the sea.

When Ali Mahomed returned home after two months, he was surprised to find Baba's picture on the wall as before. He did not understand how his Mehta took away all the pictures except this. He immediately took it out and kept it in his cupboard, fearing that if his brother-in-law saw it, he would do away with it. While he was thinking how it should be disposed of, and who would keep it and guard it well, Sai Baba Himself as it were, suggested to him that he should see and consult Moulana Ismu Mujavar and abide by his opinion. He saw the Moulana and told him everything. After mature consideration

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

they both decided that the picture should be presented to Annasaheb (Hemadpant) and that he would protect it well. Then they both went to Hemadpant and presented the picture in the nick of time.

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

Stealing the Rags and Reading of Jnaneshwari

Mr.B.V.Deo who was Mamlatdar of Dahanu (Thana District) wished for a long time to read Jnaneshwari - (the well-known Marathi commentary on the Bhagawad-Gita by Jnaneshwar), along with other scriptures. He could read daily one chapter of the Bhagawad-Gita, and some portion of other books; but when he took Jnaneshwari in hand, some difficulties cropped up and he was precluded from reading it. He took three months' leave, went to Shirdi and thence to his home at Pound for rest. He could read there other books but when he opened Jnaneshwari, some evil or stray thoughts came crowding in his mind and stopped him in the effort. Try however he might, he was not able to read even a few lines of the book with ease. So he resolved in his mind that when Baba would create love for the book and would order him to read it, he would begin and not till then. Then in the month of February 1914 he went with his family to Shirdi. There Jog asked him whether he daily read Jnaneshwari. Deo said that he was desirous of reading it, but he was not successful and that only when Baba would order him to read it, he would commence. Jog then advised him to take a copy of the book and present it to Baba and to start the reading after it was consecrated and returned by Him. Deo then replied that he did not want to resort to this device, as Baba knows his heart. Would He not know his desire and satisfy it by giving him a clear order to read?

Deo then saw Baba and offered one rupee as Dakshina. Baba asked for Rs. 20/- which he gave. At night, he saw one Balakram and enquired how he secured Baba's devotion and grace. Balakram told him that he would communicate everything next day after arati. When Deo went for darshana next day, Baba asked for Rs.20/- which he gave

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

willingly. As the Masjid was crowded, Deo went aside and sat in a corner. Baba asked him to come close and sit with a calm mind, which Deo did. Then after the noon-arati was over and after the men dispersed, Deo saw again Balakram and asked him his previous history, what Baba told him and how he was taught meditation. Balakram was going to reply when Baba sent one Chandru, a leper devotee to call Deo to Him. When Deo went to Baba, the latter asked him when and with whom and what he was talking. He said that he talked with Balakram and heard from him His fame. Then Baba asked again Rs.25/- as Dakshina which Deo gladly gave. Then Baba took him inside and sitting near the post charged him saying - "You stole away My rags without My knowledge." Deo denied all knowledge of the rags, but Baba asked him to make a search. He searched but found none. Then Baba got angry and said - "There is nobody here, you are the only thief, so grey-haired and old, you came here for stealing." After this Baba lost His temper, got terribly wild, gave all sorts of abuses and scoldings. Deo remained silent and watching, and thought that he might get a beating also. After about an hour or so, Baba asked him to go to the Wada. He returned to the Wada and told Jog and Balakram all that had happened. Then in the after-noon Baba sent for all and Deo also, and said that His words might have pained the old man (Deo) but as he committed the theft, He could not but speak out. Then Baba asked again for Rs. 12/- Deo collected the amount, paid it and prostrated himself before Him. Then Baba said to him - "What are you doing?" "Nothing" replied Deo. Then Baba - "Go on daily reading the Pothi (Jnaneshwari), go and sit in the Wada, read something regularly every day and while reading, explain the portion read, to all with love and devotion. I am sitting here ready to give you the whole gold-embroidered Shella (valuable cloth), then why go to others to steal rags, and why should you get into the habit of stealing?"

Deo was much pleased to hear the words of Baba, for He asked him to start reading Pothi (Jnaneshwari). He thought that he got what he wanted and that he could read the book with ease thenceforth. He again prostrated himself before Baba and said that he surrendered himself to Him and that he should be treated as a child and be helped in his reading. He realized then what Baba meant by 'stealing the rags'. What he asked Balakram constituted the 'rags' and Baba did not like his behaviour in this respect. As He was ready to answer any question, He did not like him to ask others and make

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

unnecessary enquiries and therefore He harassed and scolded him. Deo thought that He really did not 'harass and scold' him but taught that He was ready to fulfill his desires, and there was no use asking others in vain. Deo took these scoldings as flowers and blessings and went home satisfied and contented.

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

Chapter XLII

Baba's Passing Away

Previous Indication - Averting Death of Ramachandra Dada Patil and Tatya Kote Patil - Charity to Laxmibai Shinde - Last Moment.

This chapter describes the Passing away of Baba.

Preliminary

The stories given in the previous chapter have shown that the light of Guru's grace removes out fear of the mundane existence, opens the path of salvation and turns our misery into happiness. If we always remember the feet of the Sad-guru, our troubles come to an end, death loses its sting and the misery of this mundane existence is

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

obliterated. Therefore those who care for their welfare should carefully listen to these stories of Sai Samarth, which will purify their minds.

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

Previous Indication

The readers up till now heard the stories of Baba's life. Let them now hear attentively Baba's Passing away. Baba got a slight attack of fever on 28th September, 1918. The fever lasted for 2 or 3 days, but afterwards Baba gave up his food and thereby He grew weaker and weaker. On the 17th day, i.e., Tuesday, the 15th October 1918, Baba left His mortal coil at about 2-30 p.m. (Vide Professor G.G. Narke's letter, dated 5th November 1918, to Dadasaheb Khaparde, published in "Sai Leela" magazine, Page 78, first year). Two years before this, i.e., in 1916, Baba gave an indication of His Passing away, but nobody understood it then. It was as follows:- On the Vijayadashmi (Dasara) day Baba at once got into wild rage in the evening when people were returning from 'Seemollanghan' (crossing the border or limits of the village). Taking off His head-dress, kafni and langota etc., He tore them and threw them in the Dhuni before Him. Fed by this offering, the fire in the Dhuni began to burn brighter and Baba shone still brighter. He stood there stark naked and with His burning red eyes shouted - "You fellows, now have a look and decide finally whether Iam a Moslem or a Hindu." Everybody was trembling with fear and none dared to approach Baba. After some time Bhagoji Shinde, the leper devotee of Baba, went boldly near Him and succeeded in tying a langota (waist-band) round His waist and said - "Baba, what is all this? To-day is the Seemollanghan, i.e., Dasara Holiday." Baba striking the ground with His satka said - "This is my Seemollanghan (crossing the border)." Baba did not cool down till 11-00 p.m. and the people doubted whether the chavadi procession would ever take place that night. After an hour Baba resumed His normal condition and dressing Himself as usual attended the chavadi procession as described before. By this incident Baba gave a suggestion that Dasara was the proper time for Him to cross the border of life, but none understood its meaning. Baba gave also another indication as follows:-

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Averting Death of Ramachandra and Tatya Patil

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

Ramachandra Dada soon left his bed and was on his legs. Time passed quickly. The month of Bhadrapad of Shaka 1840 (1918 A.D.) was ending and Ashwin was in sight. True to Baba's word, Tatya fell sick and was bed-ridden; and so he could not come for Baba's darshana. Baba was also down with fever. Tatya had full faith in Baba and Baba in Lord Hari, who was His Protector. Tatya's illness began to grow from bad to worse and he could not move at all but always remembered Baba. The predicament of Baba began to grow equally worse. The day predicted, i.e., Vijayadashami was impending and both Ramachandra Dada and Bala Shimpi were terribly frightened about Tatya and with their bodies trembling and perspiring with fear, thought that as predicted by Baba, Tatya's end was nigh. Vijayadashami dawned and Tatya's pulse began to beat very slow and he was expected to pass away shortly. But a curious thing happened. Tatya remained, his death was averted and Baba passed away in his stead. It seemed as if there was an exchange. People said that Baba gave up His life for Tatya; why He did so? He alone knows as His ways are inscrutable. It seems, however, that in this incident, Baba gave a hint of His passing away, substituting Tatya's name for His.

Next morning (16th October) Baba appeared to Das Ganu at Pandharpur in his dream and said to him - "The Masjid collapsed, all the oilmen and grocers of Shirdi

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

teased me a lot, so I leave the place. I therefore came to inform you here, please go there quickly and cover me with 'Bhakkal' flowers." Das Ganu got the information also from Shirdi letters. So he came to Shirdi with his disciples and started bhajan and kirtan and sang the Lord's name, all through the day before Baba's samadhi. Himself weaving a beautiful garland of flowers studded with Lord Hari's name he placed it on Baba's samadhi and gave a mass-feeding in Baba's name.

Charity to Laxmibai

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

Baba Pervading All Creatures

This Laxmibai Shinde was a good and well-to-do woman. She was working in the Masjid day and night. Except Bhagat Mhalasapati, Tatya and Laxmibai, none was allowed to step in the Masjid at night. Once while Baba was sitting in the Masjid with Tatya in the evening, Laxmibai came and saluted Baba. The latter said to her - "Oh Laxmi, I am very hungry." Off she went saying - "Baba, wait a bit, I return immediately with bread." She did return with bread and vegetables and placed the same before Baba. He took it up and gave it to a dog. Laxmibai then asked - "What is this, Baba, I ran in haste, prepared bread with my own hands for You and You threw it to a dog without eating a morsel of it; You gave me trouble unnecessarily." Baba replied - "Why do you grieve for nothing? The appeasement of the dog's hunger is the same as Mine. The dog has got a soul; the creatures may be different, but the hunger of all is the same, though some speak and others are dumb. Know for certain, that he who feeds the hungry, really serves Me with food. Regard this as an axiomatic Truth." This is an ordinary incident but Baba thereby propounded a great spiritual truth and showed its practical application in

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

daily life without hurting anybody's feelings. From this time onward Laxmibai began to offer Him daily bread and milk with love and devotion. Baba accepted and ate it appreciatingly. He took a part of this and sent the remainder with Laxmibai to Radha-Krishna-Mai who always relished and ate Baba's remnant prasada. This bread-story should not be considered as a digression; it shows, how Sai Baba pervaded all the creatures and transcended them. He is omnipresent, birthless, deathless and immortal.

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

Being so watchful and conscious, Baba also took other precautions in His last moment. In order that He should not be embroiled or entangled with love and affection for His devotees, He ordered them all to clear off. Kakasaheb Dixit, Bapusaheb Booty and others were in the Masjid anxiously waiting upon Baba, but He asked them to go to the Wada and return after meals. They could not leave Baba's presence, nor could they disobey Him. So with heavy hearts and heavy feet they went to the Wada. They knew that Baba's case was very serious and that they could not forget Him. They sat for meals, but their mind was elsewhere, it was with Baba. Before they finished, news came to them of Baba's leaving the mortal coil. Leaving their dishes, they ran to the Masjid and found that Baba rested finally on Bayaji's lap. He did not fall down on the ground nor did He lie on His bed, but sitting quietly on His seat and doing charity with His own hand threw off the mortal coil. Saints embody themselves and come into this world with a definite mission and after that is fulfilled they pass away as quietly and easily as they came.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

Chapters XLIII & XLIV

Baba's Passing Away (Continued)

Preparation - Samadhi-Mandir - Breaking of the Brick - 72 Hours' Samadhi - Jog's Sannyas - Baba's Nectar-like Words.

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

Previous Preparation

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

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

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Laxmibai Shinde, Baba said that He did not feel well there (in the Masjid) and that He should be taken to the Dagadi (stone) Wada of Booty, where He would be alright. Saying these last words, He leaned on Bayaji's body and breathed His last. Bhagoji noticed that His breathing had stopped and he immediately told this to Nanasaheb Nimonkar who was sitting below. Nanasaheb brought some water and poured it in Baba's mouth. It came out. Then he cried out loudly 'Oh Deva.' Baba seemed just to open His eyes and say 'Ah' in a low tone. But it soon become evident that Baba had left His body for good.

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

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

On Wednesday morning Baba appeared to Laxman Mama Joshi in his dream and drawing him by His hand said - "Get up soon; Bapusaheb thinks that I am dead and so he won't come; you do the worship and the Kakad (morning) arati." Laxman Mama was the village astrologer and was the maternal uncle of Shama. He was an orthodox Brahmin and daily first worshipped Baba in the morning and then all the village deities. He had full faith in Baba. After the vision he came with all the pooja materials and not minding the protests of the moulvis, did the Pooja and the Kakad arati with all due formalities and went away. Then at noon Bapusaheb Jog came with all others and went through the noon-arati ceremony as usual.

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

Paying due respect to Baba's words the people decided to place His body in the Wada and started digging the central portion there. In the evening of Tuesday the Sub-Inspector came from Rahata and others from other places turned up and they all agreed to the proposal. Next morning Amirbhai came from Bombay and the Mamlatdar from Kopergaon. The people seemed divided in their opinion. Some insisted on interring His body in the open field. The Mamlatdar therefore took a general plebiscite and found that the proposal to use the Wada secured double the number of votes. He, however, wanted to refer the matter to the Collector and Kakasaheb Dixit got himself ready to go to Ahmednagar. In the meanwhile, by Baba's inspiration there was a change in the opinion of the other people and all the people unanimously voted for the proposal. On Wednesday evening Baba's body was taken in procession and brought to the Wada and was interred there with due formalities in the garbha, i.e., the central portion reserved for Murlidhar. In fact Baba became the Murlidhar and the Wada became a temple and a holy shrine, where so many devotees went and are going now to find rest and peace. All the obsequies of Baba were duly performed by Balasaheb Bhate and Upasani, a great devotee of Baba.

Breaking of the Brick

Some days before Baba's departure, there occurred an ominous sign foreboding the event. There was, in the Masjid an old brick on which Baba rested His hand and sat. At night time He leaned against it and had His asan. This went on for many years. One day, during Baba's absence, a boy who was sweeping the floor, took it up in his hand, and unfortunately it slipped from thence fell down broken into two pieces. When Baba came to know about this, He bemoaned its loss, crying - "It is not the brick but My fate that has been broken into pieces. It was My life-long companion, with it I always meditated on the Self, it was as dear to Me as My life, it has left Me to-day." Some may raise here a question - "Why should Baba express this sorrow for such an inanimate thing as a brick?" To this Hemadpant replies that saints incarnate in this world with the express mission of saving the poor helpless people, and when they embody themselves and mix and act with the people, they act like them, i.e., outwardly laugh, play and cry like all other people, but inwardly they are wide awake to their duties and mission.

72 Hours' Samadhi

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

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

From this and other accounts, let the readers consider whether Sai Baba was the three and a half cubits' body that He occupied for some years and that He left thereafter or He was the Self inside. The body, composed of the five elements is perishable and transient, but the Self within is the *thing* - Absolute Reality which is immortal and intransient. The pure Being, Consciousness or Brahma, the Ruler and Controller of the senses and mind is the *thing* Sai. This pervades all things in the universe and there is no space without it. For fulfilling His mission He assumed the body and after it was fulfilled, He threw away the body (the finite aspect), and assumed His infinite aspect. Sai ever lives, as also the previous Incarnation of God Datta, Shri Narsimha Saraswati of Ganagapur. His Passing away is only an outward aspect, but really He pervades all animate and inanimate things and is their Inner Controller and Ruler. This can be, and is even now experienced by many who surrender themselves completely to Him and worship Him with whole-hearted devotion.

Though it is not possible for us to see Baba's form now, still if we go to Shirdi, we shall find His beautiful life-like portrait adorning the masjid. This has been drawn by Shamrao Jaykar, a famous artist and well-known devotee of Baba. To an imaginative and devout spectator this portrait can give even to-day the satisfaction of taking Baba's darshana. Though Baba has no body now, He lives there and everywhere, and will effect

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

the welfare of the devotees even now as He was doing before when He was embodied. Saints like Baba never die, though they look like men, they are in reality God Himself.

Bapusaheb Jog's Sannyas

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

Baba's Nectar-like words

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

Day 6 - Chapters XXXVII – XLIV, L

and with no trace of them, you should surrender yourself to Me Who am seated in your heart."

Who is this ME?

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

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all