

Chapter IX

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

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

Characteristic of Shirdi - Pilgrimage

One special peculiarity of Shirdi-pilgrimage was this, that none could leave Shirdi, without Baba's permission; and if he did, he invited untold sufferings, but if any one was asked to quit Shirdi, he could stay there no longer. Baba gave certain suggestions or hints, when Bhaktas went to bid good-bye and take leave. These suggestions had to be followed. If they were not followed or were departed from, accidents were sure to befall them, who acted contrary to Baba's directions. We give below a few instances.

Tatya Kote Patil

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

European Gentleman

One European gentleman of Bombay once came to Shirdi, with an introductory note from Nanasahab Chandorkar, and with some object in view. He was comfortably accommodated in a tent. He wanted to kneel before Baba and kiss His hand. Therefore, he tried thrice to step into the Masjid, but Baba prevented him from doing so. He was asked to sit in the open court-yard below and take Baba's darshan from there. Not pleased with this reception he got, he wanted to leave Shirdi at once and came to bid good-bye. Baba asked him to go the next day and not to hurry. People also requested him to abide by Baba's direction. Not listening to all this, he left Shirdi in a tanga. The horses ran at first all right, but when Sawul well was passed, a bicycle came in front, seeing which the horses were frightened and ran fast. The tanga was turned topsy-turvy and the gentleman fell down and was dragged some distance. He was immediately released; but had to go and lie in Kopargaon hospital for the treatment of the injuries. Because of such experiences all people learnt the lesson, that those who disobeyed Baba's instruction met with accidents in one way or the other, and those who obeyed them were safe and happy.

The Necessity of Mendicancy

Now to return to the question of mendicancy. A question may arise in the minds of some that if Baba was such a great personage - God in fact, why should He have recourse to the begging bowl, all His lifetime? This question may be considered and replied from two standpoints. (1) Who are the fit persons, who have a right to live by the begging-bowl? Our Shastras say that those persons, who, getting rid of, or becoming free from the three main Desires, viz. (1) for progeny, (2) for wealth, (3) for fame, accept Sannyas, are the fit persons to live by begging alms. They cannot make cooking arrangements and dine at home. The duty of feeding them rests on the shoulders of house-holders. Sai Baba was neither a house-holder nor Vanaprastha. He was a celibate sannyasi, i.e., sannyasi from boyhood. His firm conviction was that the universe was His home, He was the Lord Vasudeo - the Supporter of the universe and the Imperishable Brahman. So He had the full right to have recourse to the begging-bowl. (2) Now from the standpoint of (1) Pancha-soon - five sins and their atonement. We all know that in order to prepare food-stuffs and meals, the householders have to go through five actions or processes, viz. (1) Kandani-Pounding, (2) Peshani-Grinding, (3) Udakumbhi - Washing pots, (4) Marjani - Sweeping and cleaning, (5) Chulli-Lighting hearths. These processes involve destruction of a lot of small insects and creatures, and thus the householders incur a lot of sin. In order to atone for this sin, our Shastras prescribe five kinds of sacrifices, viz. (1) Brahma-Yajna, (2) vedadhyayan - offerings to Brahman or the study of the Vedas. (3) Pitra-Yajna-offerings to the ancestors, (4) Deva-Yajna - offerings to the Gods, (5) Bhoota-Yajna-offerings to the beings, (6) Manushya-Atithi-Yajna-offerings to men or uninvited guests. If these sacrifices, enjoined by the Shastras are duly performed, the purification of their minds is effected and this helps them to get knowledge and self-realization. Baba, in going from house to house, reminded the inmates of their sacred duty, and fortunate were the people, who got the lesson at their homes from Baba.

Devotee's Experiences

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

Tarkhad Family (father and son)

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

Next day (Saturday) Mr. Tarkhad got up early, took his bath and before proceeding with the Puja, prostrated himself before the Shrine and said - "Baba, I am going to perform the Puja exactly as my son has been doing, but please let it not be a formal drill." After he performed the Puja, he offered a few pieces of lump-sugar as naivedya (offering), which were distributed at the time of the lunch.

That evening and on Sunday, everything went on well. The following Monday was a working day and it also passed well. Mr. Tarkhad, who had never performed Puja like this in all his life, felt great confidence within himself, that every thing was passing on quite satisfactorily according to the

promise given to his son. On Tuesday, he performed the morning Puja as usual and left for his work. Coming home at noon, he found that there was no Prasad (sugar) to partake of, when the meal was served. He asked the servant - cook, who told him that there was no offering made that morning, and that he had completely forgotten then to perform that part of the Puja (offering naivedya). After hearing that he left his seat and prostrated himself before the Shrine, expressed his regret, at the same time chiding Baba for the want of guidance in making the whole affair a matter of mere drill. Then he wrote a letter to his son stating the facts and requested him to lay it before Baba's feet and ask His pardon for his neglect.

This happened in Bandra at Tuesday noon.

At about the same time, when the noon Arati was just about to commence in Shirdi, Baba said to Mrs. Tarkhad, "Mother, I had been to your house in Bandra, with a view to having something to eat. I found the door locked. I somehow got an entrance inside and found to My regret, that Bhau (Mr. Tarkhad) had left nothing for Me to eat. so I have returned from there without eating anything."

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

Both these letters crossed each other and were delivered to the respective parties the next day.

Is this not astonishing?

Mrs. Tarkhad

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

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

In December 1915 A.D., one Govind Balaram Mankar wanted to go to Shirdi to perform the obsequies of his father. Before he left, he came to see Mr. Tarkhad. Then Mrs. Tarkhad wanted to send something with him to Baba. She searched the whole house but found nothing, except a Peda, which had already been offered as naivedya. Mr. Mankar was in mourning. Still out of great devotion to Baba, she sent the Peda with him, hoping that Baba would accept and eat it. Govind went to Shirdi and saw Baba, but forgot to take the Peda with him. Baba simply waited. When again he went to Baba in the afternoon, he went empty-handed without the Peda. Baba could wait no longer and, therefore, asked him straight, "What did you bring for me?" "Nothing" was the reply. Baba asked him again. The same reply came forth again. Then Baba asked him the leading question, "Did

not the mother (Mrs. Tarkhad) give some sweetmeat to you for Me at the time of your starting?" The boy then remembered the whole thing. He felt abashed, asked Baba's pardon, ran to his lodging, brought the Peda and gave it to Baba. As soon as Baba got it in His hand. He put it into His mouth and gulped it down. Thus the devotion of Mrs. Tarkhad was recognized and accepted. "As men believe in Me, so do I accept them" (Gita, 4-11) was proved in this case.

Baba Fed Sumptuously, -- How?

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

Moral

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

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all
