

Chapter XLIX

Stories of (1) Hari Kanoba - (2) Somadeva Swami - (3) Nanasaheb Chandorkar.

Preliminary

The Vedas and the Puranas cannot sufficiently praise (describe) Brahma or Sad-guru; then how can we, who are ignorant, describe our Sad-guru Shri Sai Baba? We think that it is better for us to keep quiet in this matter. In reality the observance of the vow of silence is the best way of praising the Sad-guru; but the good qualities of Sai Baba make us forget our vow of silence and inspire us to open our mouth. Good dishes taste flat if there be no company of friends and relations to partake of the dishes with us, but when they join us, the dishes acquire additional flavour. The same is the case with the Sai Leelamrit - the nectar in the form of Sai's leelas. This nectar we cannot partake alone. Friends and brothers have to join us - the more the better.

It is Sai Baba Himself that inspires these stories and gets them written as He desires. Our duty is to surrender completely to Him and meditate on Him. Practising penance is better than pilgrimage, vow, sacrifice, and charity. Worshipping Hari (Lord) is better than penance, and meditation on the Sad-guru is the best of all. We have, therefore, to chant Sai's name by mouth, think over His sayings in our mind, meditate on His form, feel real love for Him in our heart and do all our actions for His sake. There is no better means than this for snapping the bondage of samsar. If we can do our duty on our part as stated above, Sai is bound to help and liberate us. Now we revert to the stories of this chapter.

Hari Kanoba

A gentleman of Bombay named Hari Kanoba heard from his friends and relations many Leelas of Baba. He did not believe in them as he was a doubting Thomas. He wanted to test Baba himself. So he came to Shirdi with some Bombay friends. He wore a lace-bordered turban on his head and a new pair of sandals on his feet. Seeing Baba from a distance he thought of going to Him and prostrating himself before Him. He did not know what to do with his new sandals. Still going to some corner outside in the open courtyard, he placed them there and went in the Masjid and took Baba's darshan. He made a reverential bow to Baba, took udi and prasad from Baba and returned. When he reached the corner he found that his sandals had disappeared. He searched for them in vain and returned to his lodging very much dejected.

He bathed, offered worship and naivedya and sat for meals, but all the while he was thinking about nothing but his sandals. After finishing his meals, he came out to wash his hands when he saw a Maratha boy coming towards him. He had in his hand a stick, on the top of which was suspended a pair of new sandals. He said to the men who had come out to wash their hands that Baba sent him with this stick in hand and asked him to go on the streets crying - "Hari Ka Beta. Jari Ka Pheta" and told him that "If anybody claims these sandals, first assure yourself that his name is Hari and that he is the son of Ka, i.e., Kanoba, and that he wears a lace-bordered turban and then give them to him." Hearing this, Hari Kanoba was pleasantly surprised. He went ahead to the boy and claimed the sandals as his own. He said to the boy that his name was Hari and that he was the son of Ka (Kanoba) and showed him his lace-bordered turban. The boy was satisfied and returned the sandals to him. Hari Kanoba wondered in his mind saying that his lace-bordered turban was visible to all and Baba might have seen it, but how could he know his name Hari and that he was the son of Kanoba, as this was his first trip to Shirdi. He came there with the sole object of testing Baba and with no other motive. He came to know by this incident that Baba was a great Satpurush. He got what he wanted and returned home well-pleased.

Somadeva Swami

Now hear the story of another man who came to try Baba. Bhaiji, brother of Kakasaheb Dixit was staying at Nagpur. When he had gone to the Himalayas in 1906 A.D., he made an acquaintance with one Somadeva Swami of Haradwar at Uttarkashi down the Gangotri valley. Both took down each other's names in their diaries. Five years afterwards Somadeva Swami came to Nagpur and was Bhaiji's guest. There he was pleased to hear the Leelas of Baba and a strong desire arose in his mind to go to Shirdi and see Him. He got a letter of introduction from Bhaiji and left for Shirdi. After passing Manmad and Kopergaon, he took a tanga and drove to Shirdi. As he came near Shirdi he saw two high flags floating over the Masjid in Shirdi. Generally we find different ways of behaviour, different modes of living and different outward paraphernalia with different saints. But these outward signs should never be our standards to judge the worth of the saints. But with Somadeva Swami it was different. As soon as he saw the flags flying, he thought - "Why should a saint take a liking for the flags, does this denote sainthood? It implies the saint's hankering after fame." Thinking thus he wished to cancel his Shirdi trip and said to his fellow travellers that he would go back. They said to him - "Then why did you come so long? If your mind gets restless by the sight of the flags, how much more agitated would you be on seeing in Shirdi the Ratha (car), the palanquin, the horse and all other paraphernalia?" The Swami got more confounded and said - "Not a few such Sadhus, with horses, palanquins and tom-toms have I seen and it is better for me to return than see such Sadhus." Saying this he started to return. The fellow-travellers pressed him not to do so, but to proceed. They asked him to stop his *crooked* way of thinking and told him that the Sadhu, i.e., Baba did not care a bit for the flags and other paraphernalia, nor for fame. It was the people, His devotees that kept up all this paraphernalia out of love and devotion to Him. Finally he was persuaded to continue his journey, go to Shirdi and see Baba. When he went and saw Baba from the courtyard, he was melted inside, his eyes were full of tears, his throat was choked and all his evil and crooked thoughts vanished. He remembered his Guru's saying that - 'that is our abode and place of rest where the mind is most pleased and charmed.' He wished to roll himself in the dust of Baba's Feet and when he approached Baba, the latter got wild and cried aloud - "Let all our humbug (paraphernalia) be with us, you go back to your home, beware if you come back to this Masjid. Why take the darshan of one who flies a flag over his Masjid? Is this a sign of sainthood? Remain here not a moment." The Swami was taken aback by surprise. He realized that Baba read his heart and spoke it out. How omniscient He was! He knew that he was least intelligent and that Baba was noble and pure. He saw Baba embracing somebody, touching someone with his hand, comforting others, staring kindly at some, laughing at others, giving udi prasad to some and thus pleasing and satisfying all. Why should he alone be dealt with so harshly? Thinking seriously he came to realize that Baba's conduct responded exactly to his inner thought and that he should take a lesson from this and improve; and that Baba's wrath was a blessing in disguise. It is needless to say that later on, his faith in Baba was confirmed and he became a staunch devotee of Baba.

Nanasaheb Chandorkar

Hemadpant concludes this chapter with a story of Nanasaheb Chandorkar. When Nanasaheb was once sitting in the Masjid with Mhalasapati and others, a Mahomedan gentlemen from Bijapur came with his family to see Baba. Seeing gosha (veiled) ladies with him, Nanasaheb wanted to go away, but Baba prevented him from doing so. The ladies came and took the darshan of Baba. When one of the ladies removed her veil in saluting Baba's feet and then resumed it again, Nanasaheb, who saw her face, was so much smitten with her rare beauty that he wished to see her face again. Knowing Nana's restlessness of mind, Baba spoke to him after the lady had left the place as follows - "Nana, why are you getting agitated in vain? Let the senses do their allotted work, or duty, we should not meddle with their work. God has created this beautiful world and it is our duty to appreciate its beauty. The mind will get steady and calm slowly and gradually. When the front door was open, why go by the back one? When the heart is pure, there is no difficulty, whatsoever. Why should one be

afraid of any one if there be no evil thought in us? The eyes may do their work, why should you feel shy and tottering?"

Shama was there and he could not follow the meaning of what Baba said. So he asked Nana about this on their way home. Nana told him about his restlessness at the sight of the beautiful lady, how Baba knew it and advised him about it. Nana explained Baba's meaning as follows - "That our mind is fickle by nature, it should not be allowed to get wild. The senses may get restless, the body, however, should be held in check and not allowed to be impatient. Senses run after objects, but we should not follow them and crave for their objects. By slow and gradual practice restlessness can be conquered. We should not be swayed by the senses, but they cannot be completely controlled. We should curb them rightly and properly according to the need of the occasion. Beauty is the subject of sight; we should fearlessly look at the beauty of objects. There is no room for shyness or fear. Only we should never entertain evil thoughts. Making the mind desireless, observe God's works of beauty. In this way the senses will be easily and naturally controlled and even in enjoying objects you will be reminded of God. If the outer senses are not held in check and if the mind be allowed to run after objects and be attached to them, our cycle of births and deaths will not come to an end. Objects of sense are things harmful. With Viveka (discrimination) as our charioteer, we will control the mind and will not allow the senses to go astray. With such a charioteer we reach the Vishnu-pada, the final abode, our real Home from which there is no return."

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all