



SHRI SAI SATCHARITA

CHAPTER I

Obeisances — The story of grinding wheat and its philosophical significance.

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

(1) First, he makes obeisance to the God Ganesh¹ to remove all obstacles and make the work a success, and says that Sri Sai is God Ganesh Himself.

(2) Then, to goddess Saraswati² to inspire him to write the work and says that Shri Sai is one with this Goddess, and that He is Himself singing His own life.

(3) Then, to the Gods; Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar – the Creating, Preserving and Destroying deities respectively, and says that Sainath is one with them and He, the great teacher, will carry us across the river of worldly existence.

(4) Then, to his tutelary deity Narayan Adinath, who manifested himself in Konkan – the land reclaimed by Parashurama³, (Ram in the Hindi version) from the sea; and to the Adi (Original) Purush⁴ of the family.

(5) Then, to Bharadwaj Muni, into whose gotra (clan) he was born and also to various Rishis, Yagnyavalkya, Bhrgu, Parashar, Narad, Vedavyas, Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatkumar, Shuka, Shounak, Vishwamitra, Vasishtha, Valmiki, Vamadev, Jaimini, Vaishampayan, Nava Yogindra etc; and also modern saints, such as Nivrutti, Dnyanadev, Sopan, Muktabai, Janardan, Eknath, Namdev, Tukaram, Kanha, and Narahari etc.

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1. God Ganesh, a son of Lord Shiva, bears the head of an elephant and the body of a human being. When starting anything, He is worshipped by the Hindu.
 2. Saraswati – Goddess of Learning
 3. Parashuram – One of the Avatars or Incarnations of God (before Lord Ram)
 4. Purush – Man

(6) Then, to his grandfather, Sadashiv, father Raghunath, his mother, who left him in his infancy; to his paternal aunt, who brought him up, and to his loving elder brother.

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

(8) And lastly, to his Guru Shri Sainath – an Incarnation of Shri Dattatreya, Who is his sole refuge and Who will make him realize, that Brahma is the reality and the world an illusion; and incidentally, to all beings, in whom the Lord God dwells.

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

“It was some time after 1910 that I went, one fine morning, to the Masjid in Shirdi to have darshan of Sai Baba. I was wonder-struck to see the following phenomenon. After washing His mouth and face, Sai Baba began to make preparations for grinding wheat. He spread a sack on the floor, and thereon set a hand-mill. He took some quantity of wheat in a winnowing fan, and then, drawing up the sleeves of His kafni (robe), and taking hold of the peg of the hand-mill, started grinding the wheat, by putting a few handfuls of wheat in the upper opening of the mill and rotated it. I thought, “What business Baba had with the grinding of wheat, when He possessed nothing and stored nothing, and as He lived on alms!” Some people who had come there thought likewise, but none had the courage to ask Baba, what He was doing. Immediately, this news of Baba grinding wheat spread into the village, and at once men and women ran to the Masjid and flocked there to see Baba’s act. Four bold women, from the crowd, forced their way up and pushing Baba aside, forcibly took the peg or handle into their hands, and singing Baba’s Leelas started grinding. At first, Baba was enraged, but on seeing the women’s love and devotion, He was much pleased and began to smile. While they were grinding, they began to think that Baba had no house, no property, no children, none to look after and He lived on alms, and therefore, He did not require any wheat-flour for making bread or roti, what will He do with this large quantity of flour? Perhaps, as Baba is very kind, He will distribute the flour amongst us. Thinking in this way and while singing, they finished the grinding and

after putting the hand-mill aside, they divided the flour into four portions and began to remove them by taking one portion per head. Baba, Who was calm and quiet up till now, got wild and started abusing them saying, "Ladies, have you gone mad? Whose father's property are you looting away? Have I borrowed any wheat from you, so that you can safely take the flour? Now, do this! Take the flour and throw it on the village borders!" On hearing this, the women felt abashed and whispering amongst themselves, went to the outskirts of the village and spread the flour, as directed by Baba.

I asked the Shirdi people, "What was this that Baba did?" They replied that, as cholera epidemic was spreading in the village this was Baba's remedy for the same; it was not wheat, that was ground, but cholera itself was ground to pieces and pushed out of the village. From this time onward, the cholera epidemic subsided and the people of the village were happy. I was much pleased to know all this, but at the same time my curiosity was also aroused. I began to ask myself ... What earthly connection was there between wheat flour and cholera? What was the causal relation between the two, and how to reconcile them? The incident seems to be inexplicable. I should write something on this and sing to my heart's content Baba's sweet leelas, thinking in this way about this leela, my heart was filled with joy and I was thus, inspired to write Baba's life – The Sai Satcharita.

And as we know, with Baba's grace and blessings this work was successfully accomplished.

Philosophical Significance of Grinding

Apart from the meaning, which the people of Shirdi put on this incident of grinding wheat, there is, we think, a philosophical significance too. Baba lived in Shirdi for about sixty years and during this long period, He did the business of grinding almost every day – not, however, wheat alone, but the sins, the mental and physical afflictions and the miseries of His innumerable devotees. The two stones of His mill consisted of karma and bhakti; the former being the lower one and the latter, the upper one. The handle, with which Baba worked the mill, consisted of dhyān. It was the firm conviction of Baba that, knowledge or self-realization is not possible, unless there is the prior act of grinding of all our impulses, desires, sins; and of three gunas, viz.

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, and the Ahankar, which is so subtle and therefore, so difficult to get rid of.

This reminds us of a similar story of Kabir, who seeing a woman grinding corn, said to his Guru, Nipatniranjan, "I am weeping, because I feel the agony of being crushed under this wheel of worldly existence, like the corn in the hand-mill." Nipatniranjan replied, "**Do not be afraid, hold fast to the handle of knowledge of this mill, as I do, and do not wander far away from the same, but turn inward to the centre, and you are sure to be saved.**"

Bow to Shri Sai — Peace be to all