



CHAPTER V

Baba's Return with Chand Patil's Marriage-party – Welcomed and Addressed as "Sai" – Contact with Other Saints – His Attire and Daily Routine – The Story of the Padukas – Wrestling Bout with Mohiddin and Change in Life – Turning Water into Oil – The Pseudo Guru Javhar Ali.

Return with Chand Patil's Marriage-party.

As hinted in the last chapter, I shall now describe first, how Sai Baba returned to Shirdi after His disappearance.

There lived in the Aurangabad district (Nizam state), in a village called 'Dhoop', a well-to-do Mohammeden gentlman by name Chand Patil. While He was making a trip to Aurangabad, he lost his mare. For two long months, he made a diligent search, but could get no trace of the lost mare. After being disappointed, he returned from Aurangabad with the saddle on his back. After travelling four Kos and a half, he came on the way, to a mango tree at the foot of which sat a fakir (queer fellow). He had a cap on His head, wore Kafni (long robe) and had a Satka (short stick) under His arm, and He was preparing to smoke a Chillim (pipe). On seeing Chand Patil pass by, He called out to him and asked him to have a smoke and to rest a little. The queer fellow or Fakir asked him about the saddle. Chand Patil replied that, it was of his mare, which was lost sometime back. The Fakir asked him to make a search in the Nala close by. He went and the wonder of wonders! He found the mare there. He thought that this Fakir was not an ordinary man, but an Avalia (a great saint). He returned to the Fakir with the mare. The Chillim was ready for being smoked, but two things were wanting : (1) fire to light the pipe, and (2) water to wet the Chhapi (piece of cloth, through which smoke is drawn up). The Fakir took His prong and thrust it forcibly into the ground and out came a live ember, which He put on the pipe. Then, He dashed the Satka on the ground, from where water began to ooze. The Chhapi was wetted with that water, then wrung out and wrapped round the pipe. Thus, everything being complete, the Fakir smoked the Chillim and then, gave it also to Chand Patil. On seeing all this, Chand Patil was wonder-struck. He requested the Fakir to come to his home and accept his hospitality. Next day, He

went to Patil's house and stayed there for some time. Patil was a village-officer of Dhoop. His wife's brother's son was to be married and the bride was from Shirdi. So, Patil made preparations to start for Shirdi for the marriage. The Fakir also accompanied the marriage-party. The marriage went off without any hitch, the party returned to Dhoop, except the Fakir who stayed back in Shirdi, and remained there forever.

How the Fakir Got the Name 'Sai'

When the marriage-party came to Shirdi, it alighted at the foot of a Banyan tree in Bhagat Mhalsapati's field, near Khandoba's temple. The carts were loosened in the open courtyard of Khandoba's temple, and the members of the party descended one by one, and the Fakir also got down. Bhagat Mhalsapati saw the young Fakir getting down and accosted Him "YA SAI" (Welcome Sai)! Others also addressed Him as "Sai" and thenceforth, He became 'Sai Baba'.

Contact with Other Saints

Sai Baba began to stay in a deserted Masjid¹. One saint, named Devidas had been living in Shirdi, for many years before Baba came there. Baba liked his company. He stayed with him in the Maruti temple, in the Chavadi, and for some time lived alone. Then, came another saint by name Jankidas. Baba spent most of His time in talking with him, or Jankidas went to Baba's residence. So also, one Vaishya house-holder saint, from Puntambe by name Gangagir, always frequented Shirdi. When he first saw Sai Baba, carrying pitchers of water in both hands, for watering the garden, he was amazed and said openly, "**Blessed is Shirdi, that, it got this Precious Jewel.** This man is carrying water to-day; but He is not an ordinary fellow. As this land (Shirdi) was fortunate and meritorious, it secured this Jewel." So also, one famous saint by name Anandnath of Yewala Math², a disciple of Akkalkot Maharaj, came to Shirdi with some people when he saw Sai Baba, he said openly, "This is a Precious Diamond in reality. **Though He looks like an ordinary man, He is not a 'Gar' (ordinary stone), but a Diamond.** You will realize this in the near future." Saying this he returned to Yewala. This was said, while Sai Baba was a youngster.

1. Masjid – Mosque

2. Math – Monastery

Baba's Dress and Daily Routine

In His young days, Sai Baba grew the hair on His head, never had His head shaved. He dressed like an athlete. When He went to Rahata (3 miles from Shirdi), He brought with Him small plants of Merrigold, Jai and Jui, and after cleaning them He planted and watered them. A devotee, by name Vaman Tatya, supplied Him daily with two unbaked earthen pitchers. With these Baba Himself used to water the plants. He drew water from the well and carried the pitchers on His shoulders. In the evening, the pitchers were kept at the foot of the Neem tree. As soon as they were placed there, they broke as they were made of mud and not baked. Next day, Tatya supplied two fresh pitchers. This course went on for 3 years, and with Sai Baba's toil and effort, there grew a garden. On this site, at present, stands the big mansion – Samadhi Mandir of Baba, which is now frequented by so many devotees.

The Story of Padukas (foot-prints) under the Neem Tree

A devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj, by name Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar, worshipped the photo of Akkalkot Maharaj. He once thought of going to Akkalkot (Solapur district), take the darshan of the Padukas (foot-prints) of the Maharaj and offer his sincere prayer there, but before he could go there, he got a vision in his dream. Akkalkot Maharaj appeared in the vision and said to him, "Now, Shirdi is my resting place, go there and offer your worship!" So, Bhai changed his plan and came to Shirdi, worshipped Baba, stayed there for six months and was happy. As a reminiscence of this vision etc., he prepared the Padukas and installed them on an auspicious day of Shravan, Shaka 1834 (1912 A.D.) under the Neem tree with due ceremonies and formalities, conducted by Dada Kelkar and Upasani. One Dixit Brahmin was appointed for worship, and the management was entrusted to devotee Sagun.

Complete Version of this Story

Mr. B.V. Dev, retired Mamlatdar of Thana, and a great devotee of Sai Baba, made enquiries about this matter with Sagun Meru Naik and Govind Kamlakar Dixit and has published a full version of the Padukas in Sai Leela, Vol. 11, No. I, page 25. It runs as follows :

In 1834 Shaka (1912 A.D.) one Doctor Ramrao Kothare of Mumbai

came to Shirdi for Baba's darshan. His compounder and his friend, Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar, accompanied him. The compounder and Bhai became intimate with Sagun Meru Naik and G.K. Dixit. While discussing things, these persons thought that, there must be some memorial of Sai Baba's first advent at Shirdi and his sitting under the holy Neem tree. They thought of installing Baba's Padukas there, and were going to make them of some rough stone. Then, Bhai's friend, the compounder, suggested that, if this matter was made known to his master, Dr. Ramrao Kothare, he would prepare nice Padukas for this purpose. All liked this proposal and Dr. Kothare was informed of it. He came to Shirdi and drew a plan of the Padukas. He went to Upasani Maharaj in Khandoba's temple and showed him his plan. The latter made many improvements, drew lotus, flowers, conch, disc, mace etc. and suggested that, the following Shloka (verse), regarding Neem tree's greatness and Baba's Yogic powers be inscribed. The verse was as follows :

**“Sada Nimbavrikshasya mooladhiwasaat,
Sudhasthravinam tiktamapiapriyam tam,
Tarum Kalpavrikshadhikam sadhayantam
Namameeshwaram Sadgurum Sai Natham”***

Upasani's suggestions were accepted and carried out. The Padukas were made in Mumbai and sent to Shirdi with the compounder. Baba said that they should be installed on the Pournima (15th) of Shravan. On that day at 11 a.m., G.K. Dixit brought them on his head from Khandoba's temple to the Dwarkamai (Masjid) in a procession. Baba touched the Padukas, saying that, these are the Feet of the Lord, and asked the people to install them at foot of the Neem tree.

A day earlier, one Parsi devotee of Mumbai, named Pastha Sheth, sent Rs. 25/- by money order. Baba gave this sum for the installation

* सदा निंबवृक्षस्य मूलाधिवासात् ।
सुधास्त्राविणं तिक्तमप्यप्रियं तम् ।
तरुं कल्पवृक्षाधिकं साधयन्तम् ।
नमामीश्वरं सद्गुरुं साईनाथम् ॥

Translation

I bow to the Lord Sai Nath, Who by His constant stay at the foot of the Neem tree, though bitter and unpleasant, made it was yet oozing nectar (the oozing of this tree is called 'Amrut', i.e., nectar, on account of its healing properties) – superior than the Kalpavruksha (wish – fulfilling tree).

of the Padukas. The total expense of installation came up to Rs. 100/-, out of which Rs. 75/- were collected by subscriptions. For the first 5 years, G.K. Dixit worshipped the Padukas daily and then, this was done by Laxman Kacheshwar Jakhadi. In the first five years, Dr. Kothare sent Rs. 2 per month for lighting the lamp and he also sent the railing round the Padukas. The expense of bringing the railing from the station to Shirdi (Rs. 7-8-0)¹ (presently Rs. 7.50 p.) and roofing was paid by Sagun Meru Naik. Now, Jakhadi (Nana Pujari) does the worship, and Sagun Meru Naik offers the Naivaidya and lights the evening lamps.

Bhai Krishnaji was originally a devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj. He had come to Shirdi at the installation of the Padukas, in Shaka 1834 on his way to Akkalkot. He wanted to go to Akkalkot, after taking the darshan of Baba. He asked Baba's permission for this. Baba said, "Oh, what is there in Akkalkot? Why do you go there? The Maharaj of that place is here, Myself." Hearing this, Bhai did not go to Akkalkot. He came to Shirdi off and on, after the installation of the Padukas.

Mr. B.V. Dev concluded that, Hemadpant did not know these details. Had he known them, he would not have failed to depict them in his Satcharita.

Wrestling Bout with Mohiddin Tamboli and Change in Life style

To return to other stories of Baba. There was a wrestler in Shirdi, by name Mohiddin Tamboli. Baba and he did not agree on some points, and both had a fight. In this Baba was defeated. Thenceforth, Baba changed His dress and mode of living. He donned Kafni, wore a Langot (waist band) and covered His head with a piece of cloth. He took a piece of sack-cloth for His bed, and was content with wearing torn and worn out rags. He always said that "Poverty is better than kingship, far better than Lordship. The Lord is always brother (befriender) of the poor." Gangagir was also very fond of wrestling. Once while he was wrestling, a similar feeling of dispassion descended over him, and at the proper time he heard the voice of an adept saying that he should wear out his body, playing with God. So, he too gave up Sansara and turned towards God-realization. He established a Math on the banks of the river, near Puntambe, and lived there with

1. (Rs. 7-8-0) – Prior to 1957, the Indian rupee was equal to 16 annas and 1 anna was equal to 4 paise.

his disciples.

Sai Baba did not mix and speak with the people. He only gave answers, when he was questioned. By day he always sat under the Neem tree, some times in the shade of a Babool tree, near the stream, on the outskirts of the village. In the afternoon, He used to walk at random and go at times to Nimgaon. There, He frequented the house of Balasaheb Denge. Baba loved Mr. Balasaheb. His younger brother, named Nanasaheb had no son, though he married a second wife. Balasaheb sent Nanasaheb for taking darshan of Sai Baba, and after some time with His grace Nanasaheb got a son. From that time onwards, people began to come in large numbers to see Sai Baba, and His fame began to spread and reached Ahmednagar, from thence, Nanasaheb Chandorkar and Keshav Chidamber, and many others began to come to Shirdi. Baba was surrounded by His devotees during day, and slept at night in an old and dilapidated Masjid. Baba's paraphernalia at this time, consisted of a Chillim, tobacco, a 'Tumrel' (tin pot), long Kafni, a piece of cloth round His head, and a Satka (short stick), which He always kept with Him. The piece of white cloth on the head was twisted like matted hair, and flowed down from the left ear on the back. This was not washed for weeks. He wore no shoes, no sandals. A piece of sack-cloth was His seat for most of the day. He wore a coupin (waist-cloth-band) and for warding off cold, he always sat in front of a Dhuni (sacred fire) facing south, with His left hand resting on the wooden railing. In that Dhuni, He offered an oblation of egoism, desires and always uttered "Allah Malik" (God is the sole owner). The Masjid, in which He sat, was only of two room dimensions, where all devotees came and saw Him. After 1912, there was a change. The old Masjid was repaired and a pavement was constructed. Before Baba came to live in this Masjid, He lived for a long time in a place Takia, where with Ghungru (small bells) tied on His ankles, Baba danced beautifully and sang with tender love.

Turning Water into Oil

Sai Baba was very fond of lights. He used to borrow oil from shopkeepers, and keep lamps burning the whole night in the Masjid and temple. This went on for some time. The Baniyas¹, who supplied oil gratis, once met together and decided not to give Him oil. When, as

1. Baniyas – Shopkeepers

usual, Baba went to ask for oil, they all gave Him a distinct "No". Unperturbed, Baba returned to the Masjid and kept the dry wicks in the lamps. The Banias were watching Him with curiosity. Baba took the Tumrel (tin pot), which contained very little (a few drops) oil, put water into it and drank it, and then, forced it out to fall into the container. After consecrating the tin-pot in this way, He again took the water from the tin-pot and filled all the lamps with it and lighted them. To the surprise and dismay of the watching Banias, the lamps began to burn and kept burning the whole night. The Banias repented and apologized and Baba forgave them, and asked them to be more truthful in future.

The Pseudo Guru Javhar Ali

Five years after the wrestling bout above-mentioned, one Fakir from Ahmednagar, by name Javhar Ali, came to Rahata with his disciples and stayed in Bakhhal (spacious room) near Virabhadra temple. The Fakir was learned, could repeat the whole Quran and had a sweet tongue. Many religious and devout people of the village came to him and began to respect him. With the help of the people, he started to build an Idgah (a walled enclosure, in which Mohammedans pray on Id day), near the Virabhadra temple. There was some quarrel about this affair, on account of which Javhar Ali had to leave Rahata. Then, he came to Shirdi and lived in the Masjid with Baba. People were captured by his sweet talk, and he began to call Baba his disciple. Baba did not object and consented to be his Chela (disciple). Then, both Guru and Chela decided to return to Rahata and live there. The Guru (teacher) never knew his Disciple's worth, but the Disciple knew the shortcomings of the Guru, still He never disrespected him, observing carefully his duties. He even served the master in various ways. They used to come to Shirdi off and on, but their main stay was in Rahata. The loving devotees of Baba in Shirdi did not like that Baba should stay away from them in Rahata. So they went in a deputation to bring Baba back to Shirdi. When they met Baba near the Idgah and told the purpose for which they came, Baba said to them that the Fakir was an angry, ill-tempered fellow, he would not leave Him and that, they should better go back to Shirdi without Him before the Fakir returned. While they were thus talking, the Fakir turned up and was very angry with them for trying to take away his Disciple. There was some hot discussion and altercation, and it was finally decided that both the Guru and Chela should return to Shirdi. And so, they returned and lived in Shirdi. But,

after a few days, the Guru was tested by Devidas and he was found wanting. Twelve years before Baba arrived in Shirdi with the marriage-party, this Devidas, aged about 10 or 11 years, came to Shirdi and lived in the Maruti temple. Devidas had fine features and brilliant eyes, and he was dispassion incarnate and a Dhyani¹. Many people, namely Taty Kote, Kashinath and others regarded him as their Guru. They brought Javhar Ali in his presence, and in the discussion that followed, Javhar was worsted and fled from Shirdi. He went and stayed in Bijapur and returned after many years to Shirdi, and prostrated himself before Sai Baba. The delusion, that, he was Guru and Sai Baba, his Chela, was cleared away and as he repented, Sai Baba treated him with respect. In this case Sai Baba showed by His conduct, how one should get rid of egoism and do the duties of a disciple to attain the highest end, viz., self-realization. This story is told here according to the version given by Mhalsapati (a great devotee of Baba).

In the next chapter Ram Navami Festival², the Masjid, its former condition and later improvement in it etc. will be described.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

1. Dhyani – Learned

2. Ram Navami Festival – This festival is celebrated in the honour of Lord Ram.