



CHAPTER VIII

Importance of Human Birth – Sai Baba begging Food – Baijabai’s Service – Sai Baba’s Dormitory – His Affection for Khushalchand.

As hinted in the last chapter, Hemadpant now explains at length in his preliminary remarks, the importance of human birth and then proceeds to relate, how Sai Baba begged His food; how Baijabai served Him; how He slept in the Masjid, with Tatyia Kote Patil and Mhalsapati and how He loved Khushalchand of Rahata.

Importance of Human Birth

In this wonderful universe, God has created millions (84 lakhs¹ according to Hindu shastra calculation) of creatures (including Gods, demi-gods, insects, beasts and men) inhabiting heaven, hell, earth, ocean, sky and other intermediate regions. Of these, those creatures or souls, whose merits preponderate, go to heaven and live there till they enjoy the fruits of their actions and when this is done, they are cast down; while those souls, whose sins or demerits preponderate, go down to hell and suffer the consequences of their misdeeds for as long as they deserve it. When their merits and demerits balance each other, they are born on earth as human beings and are given a chance to work out their salvation. Ultimately, when their merits and demerits both are worked out completely, they get their deliverance and become free. To put the matter in a nutshell, souls get their birth or transmigration according to their deeds and evolvement.

Special Value of the Human Body

As we all know, four things are common to all the creatures, viz., food, sleep, fear and sexual union. In the case of man, he is endowed with a special faculty, viz, knowledge, with the help of which he can attain God-vision, which is impossible in any other species. It is for this reason that gods envy the human species and aspire to be born as men on earth, so as to get their final deliverance.

Some say that there is nothing worse than the human body, which is full of filth, mucus, phlegm and dirt and which is subject to decay,

1. 10 Lakhs = 1 million

disease and death. This is true to a certain extent, but in spite of these drawbacks and defects, the special value of the human body is – that man has got the capacity to acquire knowledge. It is only due to the human body or on account of it, that one can think of the perishable and transitory nature of the body itself and of the world, and have aversion for sense-enjoyments, and can discriminate between the unreal and the real, and thus attain God-vision. So, if we reject or neglect the body, because it is filthy, we lose the chance of God-vision and if we indulge it and run after sense-enjoyments, because it is precious, we go to hell. The proper course, therefore, for us to pursue, is the following; that the body should neither be neglected nor fondled, but should be properly cared for, just as a traveller on horse-back takes care of his horse on the way, till he reaches his destination and returns home. Thus, the body should ever be used or engaged to attain God-vision or self-realization, which is the supreme end of life.

It is said that, though God created various kinds of creatures, He was not satisfied, for none of them was able to know and appreciate His work. So he had to create a special being – man, and endow him with a special faculty, viz, Knowledge; and when He saw that man was able to appreciate His Leela, marvellous work and intelligence, He was highly pleased and satisfied. (Vide, Bhagawat, 11-9-28) So really, it is fortunate to get a human body, better still to be born in a Brahmin family and best, to get an opportunity of being close to Sai Baba's Feet and surrendering to Him.

Man's Endeavour

Realizing how precious human life is and knowing that death is certain and may snatch us at any time, we should be ever alert to achieve the object of our lives, we should not make the least delay, but make every possible haste to gain our object, just as a king leaves no stone unturned to seek his lost son. So with all earnestness, we should strive to attain our end, i.e. self-realization. Casting aside laziness, warding off drowsiness, we should day and night meditate on the self. If we fail to do this, we reduce ourselves to the level of beasts.

How to Proceed?

The most effective and speedy way to gain our object is to approach a worthy saint or sage – Sadguru, who has himself attained God-vision. What cannot be achieved by hearing religious discourses and study of

religious texts is easily obtained in the company of such worthy souls. Just as the sun only gives light, which all the stars put together cannot do, so the Sadguru alone imparts spiritual wisdom, which all the sacred books and sermons cannot do. His movements and simple talks give us 'silent' advice. The virtues of forgiveness, calmness, disinterestedness, charity, benevolence, control of mind and body, egolessness etc. are observed by the disciples, as they are being practised in such pure and holy company. This enlightens their minds and lifts them up spiritually. Sai Baba was such a Sage or Sadguru. Though He acted as a Fakir (mendicant), He was always engrossed in Self. He always loved all beings, in whom He saw God or Divinity. By pleasures He was not elated. He was not depressed by misfortunes. A king and a pauper were the same to Him. He Whose glance would turn a beggar into a king, used to go begging food from door to door in Shirdi, and let us now see how He did it.

Baba Begging Food

Blessed are the people of Shirdi, in front of whose houses, Baba stood as a beggar and called out, "Oh Mai, give Me a piece of bread!" and spread out His hand to receive the same. In one hand He carried a Tumrel (tinpot) and in the other a Zoli or Choupadari, i.e., a rectangular piece of cloth. He visited certain houses daily. Liquid or semi-liquid things, such as soup, vegetables, milk or butter-milk, were received in the tinpot, while cooked rice, bread and such solid things were taken in the Zoli. Baba's tongue knew no taste, as He had acquired control over it. So how could He care for the taste of different things mixed up together? Whatever things He got in His Zoli and in the tinpot, were mixed together and partaken by Baba to His heart's content. Whether particular things were tasty or otherwise, was never noticed by Baba, as His tongue was devoid of the sense of taste altogether. Baba begged till noon, but His begging was very irregular. Some days He went a few rounds on other days up to twelve noon. The food thus collected was kept in a Kundi, i.e., earthen pot. Dogs, cats and crows freely ate from it and Baba never drove them away. The woman who swept the floor of the Masjid, took some 10 or 12 pieces of bread to her house and nobody prevented her from doing so. How could He, Who, even in dreams never warded off cats and dogs by harsh words and signs, refuse food to poor helpless people? Blessed indeed is the life of such a Noble Person! People in Shirdi took Him in the beginning for a mad Fakir. He was known in the village by this name. How could one, who lived on alms by begging a few crumbs of bread, be revered and

worshipped? But this Fakir was very liberal of heart, detached and charitable. Though He looked restless from outside, He was firm and steady inside. His way was inscrutable. Still in that small village, there were a few kind and blessed people, who recognized and regarded Him as a Great Soul. One such person's account is given below.

Baijabai's Brilliant Service

Tatya Kote's mother, Baijabai, used to go to the woods every afternoon with a basket on her head containing bread and vegetables. She roamed in the jungles kos (about 3 miles) after kos, trampling bushes and shrubs in search of the mad Fakir and after finding Him, fell at His Feet. The Fakir sat calm and motionless in meditation, while she placed a leaf before Him, spread her things-eatables, bread, vegetables etc. thereon, and fed Him. Wonderful was her faith and service. Every day she roamed at noon in the jungles and insisted upon Baba to partake of the lunch. Her service, Upasana or penance, by whatever name we call it, was never forgotten by Baba till the end. Remembering fully what service she rendered, Baba benefitted her son significantly. Both the son and the mother, had great faith in the Fakir, Who was their God. Baba often said to them that "Fakiri (mendicacy) is real, Lordship (riches) is transient." After some years Baba stopped going into the woods and began to live in the village, and take His food in the Masjid thus, Baijabai's troubles of roaming in the jungles ended.

Dormitory of Trio

Ever blessed are the saints, in whose heart Lord Vasudeva dwells and fortunate indeed are the devotees, who get the benefit of the company of such saints. Two such fortunate fellows, Tatya Kote Patil and Bhagat Mhalsapati, equally shared the company of Sai Baba. Baba also loved them both. These three persons slept in the Masjid with their heads towards the east, west and north, and with their feet touching one another's at the centre. After spreading their beds, they lay on them, chitchatting and gossiping till late at night. If any one of them showed any signs of sleep, others would wake him up. For instance, if Tatya began to snore, Baba at once got up and shook him from side to side and pressed his head. If it was Mhalsapati, He pulled him close, stroked his legs and patted his back. In this way for a period of 14 years, Tatya, leaving his parents at home, slept in the Masjid on account of his deep love for Baba. How happy and never to be forgotten were those days! How to measure that love and how to value the grace of Baba! After the

passing away of his father, Tatyā took charge of the household affairs and began to sleep at home.

Khushalchand of Rahata

Baba loved Ganpat Kote Patil of Shirdi. He loved Chandrabhansheth Marwadi of Rahata equally. After the demise of this Sheth, Baba loved his nephew Khushalchand equally or perhaps more, and looked after his welfare, day and night. Some times in a bullock cart, at other times in a tonga¹, with intimate devotees Baba went to Rahata. People of that village would come out with band and music and receive Baba at the gate of the village and prostrate before Him. Then He was taken into the village with great honour and ceremony. Khushalchand took Baba to his house, seated Him on a comfortable seat and gave Him a good meal. Then they talked freely and merrily for some time, after which Baba returned to Shirdi, giving delight and blessings to all.

Shirdi is midway and equi-distant from Rahata on one side (south) and Nimgaon on the other (north). Baba never went beyond these places during His life time. He never saw any train nor travelled by it. Still He knew exactly the timings of arrivals and departures of all trains. Devotees who acted according to Baba's instructions given at the time of taking His leave, fared well, while those who disregarded them, suffered many a mishap and accident. More about this and other matters will be told in the next chapter.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

NOTE – An incident, given at the end of this chapter, showing Baba's love for Khushalchand, how He asked one afternoon Kakasaheb Dixit to go to Rahata and fetch Khushalchand to Him, and at the same time appeared before Khushalchand in his noon-nap asking him to come to Shirdi, is not given here as it is described in the book (Sat Charita) later on (chapter 30).

1. Tonga is a horse pulled coach used in India.