



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

At the end of the last chapter, it was briefly 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, that none could leave Shirdi, without Baba's permission and if he did, he invited troubles; but if any one was asked to quit Shirdi, he could stay there no longer. Baba gave certain suggestions or hints, when devotees 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. We give below a few instances.

Tatya Kote Patil

Tatya Kote was once going in a tonga to Kopargaon bazaar. He came in haste to the Masjid, saluted Baba, and said that he would go to Kopargaon bazaar. Baba said, "Don't make haste, stop a little, forget the bazaar, don't go out of the village". On seeing his anxiousness to go, Baba asked him to take Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande), with him. Not minding this direction, Tatya Kote immediately drove off his tonga. Of the two horses, one, which cost Rs. 300/-, was very active and restless. After passing Sawli Vihir, 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 tonga, which met with a similar accident.

European Gentleman

One European gentleman of Mumbai once came to Shirdi, with an

introductory note from Nanasaheb 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 courtyard below and take Baba's darshan from there. Not pleased with the 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 instructions. Not listening to all this he left Shirdi in a tonga. The horses ran all right but when Sawli Vahir was passed, a bicycle came in front, on seeing which the horses were frightened and ran fast. The tonga turned topsy-turvy and the gentleman fell down, and was dragged over some distance. He was immediately rescued, but had to go and lie in Kopargaon hospital, for the treatment of his injuries. Such experiences were legion, and people learnt the lesson, that those who disobeyed Baba's instructions, 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 manifest, why should He have taken recourse to begging bowl throughout His life? This question may be considered and replied from two standpoints. (1) Who are the people, who have a right to live by the begging-bowl? Our Shastras say that those persons, who, after getting rid of or becoming free from the three main desires, viz. (1) for progeny, (2) for wealth, (3) for fame, and accept Sanyaas, are the fit persons to live by begging alms. They cannot make cooking arrangements and dine at their home. The duty of feeding them is laid on the shoulders of house-holders. Sai Baba was neither a house-holder nor Vanaprastha. He was a celibate Sanyaasi, i.e. Sanyaasi from boy-hood. His firm conviction was that the universe was His home He was the Lord Vasudeva – the Supporter of the universe and the Imperishable Brahma. So, He had full right to take recourse to begging. (2) Now, from the standpoint of *Panchasoona – five sins and their atonement. We all know that in order to prepare food-stuffs and meals, the house-holders 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

* पंचसूना – (1) कंडणी (2) पेषणी (3) उदकुंभी (4) मार्जनी (5) चुल्ली

involve destruction of a lot of small insects and creatures; and thus, the house-holders incur sin. In order to atone for his sins, our Shastras prescribe six kinds of sacrifices,* viz., (1) Brahma Yagnya, (2) Vedadhyayan – offerings to Brahman or the study of the Vedas, (3) Pitri Yagnya – offerings to the ancestors, (4) Dev Yagnya – offerings to the Gods, (5) Bhoota Yagnya – offerings to the beings, (6) Manushya Atithi Yagnya – 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.

Devotees' Experiences

Now to return to the other more interesting subject ... Lord Krishna has said in the Bhagvad Gita (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 intended really 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 bring it to Him and then accepted it, and blessed the devotee. A few instances are given below.

Tarkhad Family (father and son)

Mr. Ramachandra Atmaram 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 summer vacation there; but the son was unwilling to go, as he thought that, in case, he left his home in 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 picture. However, on his father's giving an assurance under oath that, he would perform the worship exactly as his son was doing, the mother and the son left for Shirdi on a Friday night.

Next day (Saturday) Mr. Tarkhad got up early, took his bath and before proceeding with the Puja, prostrated himself before the Shrine

* (1) ब्रह्मयज्ञ (2) वेदाध्ययन (3) पितृयज्ञ (4) देवयज्ञ (5) भूतयज्ञ (6) मनुष्य (अतिथि) यज्ञ

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." Saying so, he performed the Puja and offered a few pieces of lump-sugar as Naivaidya (offering). The sugar was distributed at lunch time .

That evening and next day-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, as per the promise given to the son. Next 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 to perform that part of the Puja (offering Naivaidya). At this, 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 at Baba's Feet, and ask His pardon for his neglect.

This happened in Bandra at about Tuesday noon.

At about the same time, when the noon Arati was about to commence in Shirdi, Baba said to Mrs. Tarkhad, "Mother, I had been to your house in Bandra, with a view to have something to eat. I found the door locked. I, somehow, got an entry and found to My regret that Bhau (Mr. Tarkhad) had left nothing to eat for Me. So, I have returned with my hunger unappeased".

The lady did not understand this but the son, who was close – by, understood the whole thing that there was something wrong with the Puja in Bandra and he therefore, requested Baba to permit him to go home. Baba refused this, 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 wonderful?

Mrs. Tarkhad

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

Once Mr. Raghuvir Bhaskar Purandare of Bandra, a great devotee of Baba started for Shirdi with family. Mrs. Tarkhad went to Mrs. Purandare and gave her two brinjals and requested her to prepare Bharit of one brinjal 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 sitting for meals. Baba found the Bharit very tasty. So, He distributed it to all and said that, He wanted Kacharya now. A word was sent to Radhakrishnamai that, Baba wanted Kacharya. 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 entrusted with the duty of serving Kacharya. Everybody then came to know the significance of Baba's enquiry regarding Kacharya and was wonder-struck at Baba's all-pervasive knowledge.

In December, 1915, 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 Pedha, which had already been offered as Naivaidya. The boy Govind was in mourning. Out of great devotion to Baba, she sent the Pedha with him, hoping that Baba would accept and eat it. Govind went to Shirdi and saw Baba but forgot to take the Pedha with him. Baba simply waited. When again he went to Baba in the afternoon, he went empty-handed, without the Pedha. Baba could wait no longer and did ask 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 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 Pedha 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 recognised 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 being served, when a hungry dog turned up there and began to bark. 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, My famished Pranas (life-forces) have been satisfied. Ever 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 understand at first 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 brimmed 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 Gita and the Bhagawat, all exhort us to perceive God or Divinity in all the creatures. By the instance, given at the end of this chapter and other 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