



CHAPTER X

Sai Baba's Mode of Life – His Sleeping-plank – His Stay in Shirdi – His Teachings – His Humility – Nanavali –The Easiest Path

Remember Him (Sai Baba) always with love, for He was ever engrossed in doing good to all, and always abided in His Self. To remember Him only, is to solve the riddle of life and death. This is the best and easiest of Sadhanas, as it involves no expenditure. A little exertion here brings great rewards. So, as long as our senses are sound, we should, minute by minute, practise this Sadhana. All other Gods are illusory, Guru is the only God. If we believe in Sadguru's holy feet, He can change our fortune for the better. If we serve him sincerely, we get rid of our worldly afflictions. **We need not study any philosophy, like the Nyaya¹ and the Mimansa. As we trust the helmsman in crossing rivers and seas, so, we have to trust our Sadguru in getting over the ocean of worldly existence.** The Sadguru looks to the intense feeling and devotion of his devotees, endows them with knowledge and eternal bliss.

In the last chapter, Baba's mendicancy and devotees' experiences and other subjects are dealt with. Let the readers now read, where and how Baba lived, how He slept and how He taught etc.

Baba's Wonderful Bed-stead

Let us first see where and how Baba slept, Mr. Nanasaheb Dingle brought for Sai Baba, a wooden plank, about 4 arms in length and only a span in breadth, for sleeping upon. Instead of keeping the plank on the floor and then sleeping on it, Baba tied it like a swing to the rafters of the Masjid with old shreds or rags and commenced to sleep upon it. The rags were so thin and worn out that it was a wonder, how they could bear or support the weight of the plank itself, let alone the weight of Baba. But, somehow or other it was Baba's sheer Leela that the worn out rags did sustain the plank, along with the weight of Baba on it. On the four corners of this plank, Baba lighted Panatis (earthen lamps), one at each corner and kept them burning the whole night. It was a sight for the gods to see Baba sitting or sleeping on this plank! It was a wonder to all, how Baba got up and down the plank. Out of curiosity,

1. Nyaya – Justice

many observers kept watching the process of mounting and dismounting, but none succeeded. As crowds began to swell, so as to detect this wonderful feat, Baba one day broke the plank into pieces and threw it away. Baba had all the eight Maha Siddhis (powers) at His command. He neither practised nor craved for them. They came to Him naturally, as a result of His spiritual perfection.

Manifestation of Brahma

Though, Sai Baba looked like a man, three cubits and a half in length, still He dwelt in the hearts of all. Inwardly, He was unattached and indifferent but outwardly, He longed for mass welfare. Though, inwardly, an abode of peace, He looked outwardly restless. Inwardly, He had the state of Brahma, outwardly he seemed engrossed in the world. Some times He looked on all with affection and at times He threw stones at them; some times He scolded them, while at times He embraced them and was calm, composed, tolerant and well-balanced. He always abided and was engrossed in the Self, and was well-disposed towards His Bhaktas. He always sat on one Asan and never travelled. His 'satka' was a small stick, which He always carried in His hand. He was calm and thought-free. He never cared for wealth and fame, and lived on alms. Such a life He led. He always uttered "Allah Malik" (God is the real owner). Entire and unbroken was His love for the Bhaktas. He was the mine or store-house for self-knowledge and full of Divine Bliss. Such was the Divine Form of Sai Baba, boundless, endless and undifferentiated. One principle, which envelopes the whole universe (from a stone to Brahma), incarnated in Sai Baba. The really meritorious and fortunate people got this treasure-grove in their hands, while those people, who not knowing the real worth of Sai Baba, took Him to be a mere human being, were indeed unfortunate.

His Stay in Shirdi and Probable Birth-date

None knew or knows the parents and the exact date of birth of Sai Baba; but it can be approximately determined by His stay in Shirdi. Baba first came to Shirdi when he was a young lad of sixteen and stayed there for three years. Then, all of a sudden, He disappeared for some time. After some time, He reappeared in the Nizam state, near Aurangabad and again came to Shirdi, with the marriage-party of Chand Patil, when He was about twenty years old. Thence, He stayed in Shirdi for an unbroken period of sixty years, after which Baba took His Maha-samadhi in the year 1918. From this, we can say that the year

of Baba's birth is approximately 1838 A.D.

Baba's Mission and Advice

Saint Ramdas (1608-1681) flourished in the 17th century, and fulfilled to a great extent his mission of protecting cows and Brahmins against the Yavanas (Mohammedens); but within two centuries after him, the split between the two communities – Hindus and Mohammedens widened up and Sai Baba came to bridge that gulf. His constant advice to all was to this effect. "Ram (the God of the Hindus) and Rahim (the God of the Mohammedens) were one and the same; there was not the slightest difference between them then, why should their devotees fall out and quarrel among themselves? You ignorant folk, join hands and bring both the communities together, act sanely and thus, you will gain your object of national unity. It is not good to dispute and argue. So, don't argue, don't emulate others. Always consider your interest and welfare. The Lord will protect you. Yoga, sacrifice, penance and knowledge are the means to attain God. If you do not succeed in this by any means, in vain is your birth. If anyone does any evil unto you, do not retaliate. If you can do anything, do some good unto others." This in short was Sai Baba's advice to all, and this will stand us in good stead both in material and spiritual matters.

Sai Baba as Sadguru

There are many so-called Gurus, who go about from house to house with cymbals and Vina in their hands, and make a show of their spirituality. They blow Mantras into the ears of their disciples and extract money from them. They profess to teach piety and religion to their disciples, but are themselves impious and irreligious. Sai Baba never thought of making the least show of His worth (piety). He had no Body-consciousness but He had great love for His disciples. There are two kinds of Gurus (1) 'Niyat' (appointed or fixed) and (2) 'Aniyat' (unappointed or general). The latter by their advice develop the good qualities in us, purify our hearts and set us on the path of salvation; but contact with the former, dispels our sense of dualities (sense of difference), and establishes us in Unity by making us realize "Thou art that". There are various Gurus imparting to us various kinds of worldly knowledge but he, who fixes us in our Nature (Self) and carries us beyond the ocean of worldly existence, is the Sadguru. Sai Baba was

* (1) नियत (2) अनियत

such a Sadguru. His greatness is indescribable. If anybody went to take His darshan, He, without being asked, would give every detail of his past, present and future. He saw Divinity in all beings. Friends and foes were alike to Him. Disinterested and balanced, He obliged the evil-doers as well as the pious. He was the same in prosperity and adversity. No doubt ever touched Him. Though, He acted through the body He was, not in the least, attached to His body or house. Though, He looked embodied, He was really unembodied, i.e., free from gross existence.

Blessed are the people of Shirdi, who worshipped Sai as their God. While eating, drinking, working in their backyards and fields, and doing various household works, they always remembered Sai and sang His glory. They knew no other God except Sai. What to speak of the sweetness of the love of the women of Shirdi! They were quite ignorant but their pure love inspired them to compose poems or songs in their simple rustic language. Letters of learning they had none, still one can discern real poetry in their simple songs. It is not intelligence, but love, that inspires real poetry as such. Real poetry is the manifestation of true love, and this can be seen and appreciated by intelligent listeners. Collection of these folk-songs is desirable and by Baba's wish some fortunate devotee may undertake the task of compiling and publishing these folk-songs, either in the Sai Leela magazine or separately in a book.

Baba's Humility

Lord or Bhagwan is said to have six qualities, viz. (1) Fame, (2) Wealth, (3) Non-attachment, (4) Knowledge, (5) Grandeur and (6) Liberality. Baba had all these in Him. He incarnated in flesh, for the sake of Bhaktas. Wonderful was His grace and kindness, for He drew the devotees to Him, or how else could one have known Him. For the sake of His Bhaktas Baba spoke such words, the Goddess of Speech could not utter. Here is a specimen. Baba spoke very humbly as follows : "Slave of slaves I am your debtor. I am satisfied at your darshan. It is a great favour that I saw your feet. I am an insect in your excreta. I consider Myself blessed thereby." What humility is this!

Though, outwardly Baba seemed to enjoy sense-objects, He had not the least flavour in them, nor even the consciousness of enjoying them. Though, He ate, He had no taste and though, He saw, He never

felt any interest in what He saw. Regarding passion, He was as perfect a celibate as Hanuman. He was not attached to anything. He was pure consciousness, the resting place of desire, anger, envy and other feelings. In short, He was disinterested, free and perfect. A striking instance may be cited in illustration of this statement.

Nanavali

There was in Shirdi, a very quaint and queer fellow, by name Nanavali. He looked to Baba's work and affairs. He once approached Baba, Who was seated on His Gadi (seat) and asked Him to get up, as he wanted to occupy the same. Baba, at once got up and left the seat, which he had occupied. After sitting there a while Nanavali got up, and asked Baba to resume His seat. Then, Baba sat down and Nanavali fell at His feet. Baba did not show the slightest displeasure in being dictated to or ousted.

This Nanavali loved Baba so much that, he breathed his last, on the thirteenth day of Baba's Maha-samadhi.

The Easiest Path : Hearing the stories of the saints and being in their company

Though, Sai Baba acted outwardly like an ordinary man, His action showed extraordinary wisdom and skill. Whatever He did, was done for the good of His devotees. He never prescribed any Asan, regulation of breathing or any rites to His Bhaktas, nor did He blow any Mantra into their ears. **He told them to leave off all cleverness, and always remember "Sai" "Sai". If you did that, He said, all your shackles would be removed and you would be free.** Sitting through five fires, sacrifices, chantings, eight-fold Yoga are possible for the Brahmins only, they are of no use to the other classes. The function of the mind is to think, it cannot remain without thinking for a minute. If you give it a sense-object, it will think about it. If you give it Guru, it will think about Guru. You have heard most attentively the grandeur of Sai. This is the natural remembrance of Sai. Hearing the stories of the saints is not so difficult, as the other Sadhanas, mentioned above. They (stories) remove all fear of this Sansar (worldly existence) and take you on to the spiritual path. So, listen to these stories, meditate on them and assimilate them. You may attend to your worldly duties, but give your mind to Sai and His stories, and then, He is sure to bless you. This is the easiest path, but why do not all take to it? The reason is that

without God's grace, we do not get the desire to listen to the stories of saints. With God's grace everything is smooth and easy. Hearing the stories of the saints is, in a way, keeping their company. The importance of the company of the saints is very great. It removes our body-consciousness and egoism, destroys completely the chain of our birth and death, cuts asunder all the knots of the mind and takes us to God, Who is pure consciousness. It certainly increases our non-attachment to sense-objects and makes us quite indifferent to pleasures and pains, and leads us onward on the spiritual path. If you have no other Sadhana, such as uttering God's name, worship or devotion etc. but if you take refuge in them (saints) whole-heartedly, they will carry you off safely across the ocean of worldly existence. It is for this reason that the saints manifest themselves in this world. Even sacred rivers such as the Ganges, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri etc., which wash away the sins of the world, desire that the saints should come to them, for a bath and purify them. Such is the grandeur of the Saint. It is on account of the store of merit in past births that we have attained the feet of Sai Baba.

We conclude this chapter with meditation on Sai's Form. He, the graceful and handsome Sai, standing on the edge of the Masjid and distributing Udi to each and every Bhakta, with a view to his welfare, He, Who thinks of the world as an illusion and Who is ever engrossed in Supreme Bliss – before Him, we humbly prostrate ourselves.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all