



CHAPTER XXII

Rescues from Serpent-bites (1) Balasaheb Mirikar (2) Bapusaheb Buti (3) Amir Shakkar (4) Hemadpant – Baba's Opinion regarding Killing of Serpents

Preliminary

How to meditate on Baba? No one has been able to fathom the nature or the form of Almighty. Even the Vedas and the thousand-tongued Shesha¹ are not able to describe it fully, the devotees also cannot know but only look at the form of the Lord, for they know that, His Feet are their only refuge. They know no other method of attaining the supreme goal of life, except meditating on the Holy Feet. Hemadpant suggests an easy way of devotion and meditation as follows :

As the dark fortnight of every month wears out gradually, the moonlight also wanes in the same degree and on the newmoon day, we do not see the moon at all. Therefore, when the bright fortnight begins, people are very anxious to see the moon. On the first day the moon is not seen and on the second day she emerges as a thin crescent. Then the people are asked to see the moon through the opening, between the two branches of a tree; and when they begin to see through this aperture eagerly, the distant small crescent of the moon comes to their sight. Following this instance, let us see Baba's form. Look at Baba's posture, how fine it is! He is sitting with His legs folded, the right leg held across the left knee. The fingers of His left hand are spread on the right foot. On the toe are spread His two fingers – the index and middle ones. By this posture Baba seems to say – if you want to see My true form, be egoless and most humble, and meditate on My toe through the opening between – index and middle fingers – and then you will be able to see My Light.

Now let us turn to Baba's life. Shirdi had become a place of pilgrimage, on account of Baba's stay there. People from all quarters began to flock there and both the rich and the poor, began to be benefitted in more ways than one. Who can describe Baba's boundless love and His wonderful knowledge and His all-pervasiveness? Blessed is he, who could experience these. Some times Baba observed long silence, which was in a way, His dissertation on Brahma; at other times, He was Pure Consciousness – Bliss Incarnate, surrounded by His devotees.

1. According to the Hinduism, the earth rests on the head of the Serpent Sheshnag, Who has 1000 heads.

Some times He spoke in parables and at other times, indulged in wit and humour. At times He was quite calm and at times He seemed enraged. Some times He gave His teachings in a nut-shell, at other times, He argued at length. Many a time, He was very direct. In this way He gave varied instructions to many, according to their requirements. His life was therefore, inscrutable, beyond the ken of our mind, intellect and speech. Our longing to see His face, to talk with Him and hear His Leelas, was never satisfied, still we were overflowing with joy. We can gauge the showers of rain, capture the wind in a leather bag but who can measure His Leelas? Now, we deal here with one aspect of them, viz. how He anticipated or forestalled the calamities of His devotees and warned them in time.

Balasaheb Mirikar

Balasaheb Mirikar, son of Sardar Kakasaheb Mirikar, was Mamlatdar of Kopergaon. He was going on tour to Chitali. On the way he came to Shirdi, to see Sai Baba. When he went to the Masjid and prostrated himself before Baba, the usual conversation, regarding health and other matters commenced, when Baba sounded a note of warning, "Do you know our Dwarakamai?" As Balasaheb did not understand, he kept quiet Baba continued, "This is our Dwarakamai, where you are sitting. She wards off all dangers and anxieties of the children, who sit on her lap. This Masjidmai (its presiding Deity) is very merciful, she is the merciful mother of the simple devotees, whom she will save in calamities. Once a person sits on her lap, all his troubles are over. He who rests in her shade, gets Bliss." Then Baba gave him Udi and placed His hand on his head. When Balasaheb was about to depart, He again said, "Do you know the 'Lamba Baba' (long gentleman), viz. serpent?" And then, closing the left fist He brought it under the right elbow and moving His left arm like the hood of a serpent, said, "He is so terrible, but what can he do to the children of Dwarakamai! When the Dwarakamai (its presiding Deity) protects, what can the serpent do?"

All who were present there, were curious to know the meaning of all this and its reference to Mirikar, but none had the courage to ask Baba about this. Then Balasaheb saluted Baba and left the Masjid with Shama. Baba called Shama back, and asked him to accompany Balasaheb and enjoy the Chitali trip. Shama came to Balasaheb and told him that he would go with him, according to Baba's wish. Balasaheb replied that he need not come, as it would be inconvenient. Shama returned to Baba and told Him what Balasaheb said to him. Baba said, "Alright, do not go. We should mean well and do well. Whatever is destined to happen, will happen."

In the meanwhile, Balasaheb thought it over again and calling Shama, asked him to accompany him. Then Shama went again to Baba and after taking His leave started with Balasaheb in the tonga. They reached Chitali at 9 P.M. and encamped in the Maruti temple. The office-people had not come so they sat in the temple, talking and chitchating. Balasaheb was sitting on a mat, reading a newspaper. His Uparani (upper Dhotar) was spread across his waist and on it a snake was sitting unnoticed. It began to move with a hissing sound, which was heard by the peon. He brought a lantern, saw the snake and raised an alarm, "serpent, serpent." Balasaheb was frightened and began to quiver. Shama was also stunned. Then, he and others moved quietly and took sticks and clubs in their hands. The snake slowly came down the waist and moved away from Balasaheb and it was immediately done to death. Thus this calamity, which was prophesied by Baba, was averted and Balasaheb's devotion in Baba was confirmed.

Bapusaheb Buti

A great astrologer, named Nanasaheb Dengle, told Bapusaheb Buti, who was then in Shirdi, "Today is an inauspicious day for you, there is danger to your life." This made Bapusaheb restless. When they as usual came to Masjid, Baba said to Bapusaheb, "What does this Nana say? He foretells death for you. Well, you need not be afraid. Tell him, "Let us see, how death kills." Then, later in the evening Bapusaheb went to his privy, for easing himself, where he saw a snake. His servant saw it and lifted a stone to strike at it. Bapusaheb asked him to get a big stick, but before the servant returned with the stick, the snake was seen moving away and soon disappeared. Bapusaheb remembered Baba's words of fearlessness.

Amir Shakkar

Amir Shakkar was a native of the village Korhale, in Kopergaon Taluka. He belonged to the butcher caste. He worked as a commission agent in Bandra (Mumbai) and was well-known there. He once suffered from rheumatism, which gave him much pain. He then remembered Allah (God), left his business and went to Shirdi and prayed to Baba to relieve him from his malady. Baba then stationed him in the Chavadi. The Chavadi was then a damp unhealthy place, unfit for such a patient. Any other place in the village or Korhale itself would have been better for Amir, but Baba's word was the command the chief medicine. Baba did not allow him to come to the Masjid, but fixed him in the Chavadi every morning and evening; every alternate day Baba went to the Chavadi in a procession and slept there, so, Amir got Baba's contact

very often. Amir stayed there for full nine months and then, he got a disgust for the place. So one night he stealthily left the place and came to Kopergaon and stayed in a dharmashala. There he saw an old dying Fakir, who asked him for water. Amir brought it and gave it to him. As soon as he drank it, he passed away. Now Amir was in a fix. He thought that, if he went and informed the authorities, he would be held responsible for the death, as he was the first and sole informant and knew something about it. He repented for his action, viz. leaving Shirdi without Baba's permission and prayed to Baba. He then determined to return to Shirdi and same night he retreated, remembering and muttering Baba's name all the way and reached Shirdi before day-break, and became free from anxiety. Then he lived in the Chavadi in perfect accordance with Baba's wishes and orders, and got himself cured. One night it so happened that, Baba cried at midnight. "Oh Abdul, some devilish creature is dashing against the side of my bed." Abdul came with a lantern, examined Baba's bed but found nothing. Baba asked him to examine carefully all the place and began to strike the ground with His Satka. Seeing this Leela of Baba, Amir thought that, Baba might have suspected some serpent there. Amir could know by close contact with Baba, the meaning of His words and actions. Baba then saw near Amir's cushion, something moving. He asked Abdul to bring in the light and when he brought it, he saw the serpent coiled up there, moving its head up and down. Thereupon, the serpent was immediately beaten to death. Thus, Baba gave timely warning and saved Amir's life.

Hemadpant (Scorpion and Serpent)

(1) At Baba's recommendation Kaksahab Dixit was daily reading the two works of Shri Eknath Maharaj, viz. Bhagwat and Bhavartha Ramayan and Hemadpant had the good fortune to be one of the audience, when the reading of the works was going on. Once, when a portion from the Ramayan relating to Hanuman's testing Rama's greatness according to his mother's instructions, was being read, all the listeners were spell-bound. Hemadpant was one of them. A big scorpion (none knew, where it came from), jumped and sat on the right shoulder of Hemadpant, on his Uparani (upper Dhotar). First it was not noticed, but as the Lord protects those who are intent on hearing His stories, he casually cast a glance over his right shoulder and noticed it. It was dead silence not a bit moving here or there. It seemed as if, it also enjoyed the reading. Then by the Lord's grace, Hemadpant, without disturbing the audience, took the two ends of his Dhotar, folded them and brought them together enclosing the scorpion within. Then he went out and threw it in the garden. (2) On another occasion, some persons were sitting in the upper floor of Kaksahab's Wada, just before nightfall,

when a serpent crept through a hole in the window-frame and sat coiled up. A light was brought. Though it was first dazzled, yet it sat still and moved its head up and down. Then many persons rushed there with sticks and cudgels, but as it sat in an awkward place, no blow could be dealt. But hearing the noises of men, the serpent went out hastily through the same hole. Then all the persons present there felt relieved.

Baba's Opinion

One devotee, named Muktaram, then said that it was good that the poor creature escaped. Hemadpant challenged him, saying that serpents should better be killed. There was a hot discussion between them – the former contending that serpents and such creatures, should not be killed, the latter that they should be. As night came on, the discussion came to an end without any decision being arrived at. Next day, the question was referred to Baba, Who gave His settled opinion as follows, "God lives in all beings and creatures, whether they be serpents or scorpions. He is the Great Wirepuller of the world, and all beings, serpents, scorpions etc. obey His command! Unless He wills it nobody can do any harm to others. The world is all dependent on Him and no one is independent. So we should take pity and love all creatures, leave off killings and be patient. The Lord (God) is the Protector of all.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all