



CHAPTER XXVIII

Sparrows Drawn to Shirdi

(1) *Lakshnichand* (2) *Burhanpore Lady* (3) *Megha*

Preliminary

Sai is not finite or limited. He dwells in all beings, from ants and insects to the God Brahma. He pervades all. Sai was well-versed in the knowledge of the Vedas, as well as in the science of self-realization. As He was proficient in both these, He was well-fitted to be the Sadguru. Any one though learned, but not able to awaken the disciples and establish them in self-realization, does not deserve to be called a Sadguru. Generally, the worldly parents give birth to the body but death invariably follows life; but Sadguru does away with both life and death and so he is more kind and merciful than anybody.

Sai Baba often said that – **let His man (Devotee) be at any distance, a thousand kos away from Him, he will be drawn to Shirdi, like a sparrow, with a thread tied to its feet.** This chapter describes the stories of three such sparrows.

(1) Lala Lakshnichand

This gentleman was first serving in the Shri Venkateshwar Press in Mumbai, then in the railway department and afterwards in the firm of Messrs Ralli Brothers & Co., as a Munshi (clerk). He came in Baba's contact in 1910. One or two months before Christmas he saw in his dream at Santacruz (a suburb of Mumbai) an old man with a beard, standing and surrounded by his Bhaktas. A few days later he went to the house of his friend, Mr. Dattatreya Manjunath Bijur to hear the Kirtan by Das Ganu. It was (and is) always the practice of Das Ganu to keep Baba's picture in front of the audience, while doing the Kirtan. Lakshnichand was surprised to see that the features of the old man he saw in his dream, tallied exactly with those in the picture and thus, he came to the conclusion that the old man he saw in his dream, was Sai Baba Himself. The sight of this picture, Das Ganu's Kirtan and the life of the Saint Tukaram on which Das Ganu discoursed, all these things made a deep impression on his mind and he decided to go to

Shirdi. It is always the experience of the bhaktas, that God always helps them in their search for Sadguru and other spiritual endeavours.

That very night, a friend named Shankararao knocked at his door and asked him whether he would accompany him to Shirdi. His joy knew no bounds and he at once decided to go to Shirdi. He borrowed Rs. 15/- from his cousin and after making due preparations left for Shirdi. In the train he and his friend Shankararao did some bhajan (sang religious songs) and enquired about Sai Baba with some fellow passengers-four Mohammedans who were returning to their place near Shirdi. They all told them that Sai Baba was a great Saint living in Shirdi for many years. When they reached Kopergaon, he wanted to buy some good guavas as offering to Baba, but he was so rapt in the scenery and sights there, that he forgot to purchase them. When they were nearing Shirdi he was reminded of the guavas, just then he saw an old woman with a guava-basket on her head running after the tonga. The tonga was stopped, and he gladly purchased some fruits, when the woman said, "Take all the rest and offer them on my behalf to Baba". The facts viz. that he had intended to purchase guavas but had forgotten to do so, the old woman's encounter and her devotion to Baba, all these were a pleasant surprise to both the friends, and Lakhshmichand thought in his mind that the old woman might be some relation of the old man he saw in his dream. Then they drove on and came near Shirdi, and on seeing flags on the Masjid, they saluted them. With puja materials in hand they went to the Masjid and worshipped Baba with due ritual. Lakhshmichand was much moved and was extremely happy to see Baba. He wrapped himself around with Baba's Feet, as a bee with a sweet smelling lotus. Then Baba spoke as follows :

"Cunning fellow he does bhajan on the way and enquires from others, why ask others? Everything we should see with our own eyes; where is the necessity to question others? Just think for yourself whether your dream is true or not? Where was the necessity of the darshan by taking a loan from a marwari? Is the heart's desire now satisfied?"

Hearing these words Lakhshmichand was wonderstruck at Baba's omniscience. He was at a loss to know how Baba came to know about all the things that had happened en-route from his house to Shirdi. The chief thing to note in this respect is that Baba never liked people to borrow or take loan for His darshan or celebrating any holiday or making any pilgrimage.

Sanza

At noon when Lakhshnichand was sitting for meals he got some sanza (wheat-pudding), from a devotee as prasad. He was pleased to have it. Next day also he expected it, but got nothing. So he was anxious to get it again. Then on the third day at the noon Arati time, Bapusaheb Jog asked Baba, what Naivaidya he should bring. Baba told him to bring sanza. Then, the bhaktas brought two big potfuls of sanza. Lakhshnichand was very hungry and there was some pain in his back. Then, Baba said to him, "It is good that you are hungry take sanza and some medicine for the pain in the back." He was again wonderstruck to see that Baba again read his mind and spoke out what was passing therein. How Omniscient was He!

Evil eye

During this visit, he (Lakhshnichand) also witnessed one night the procession to the Chavadi. Baba then suffered much from cough. He thought that this suffering of Baba might be due to somebody's evil eye. Next morning when he went to the Masjid, Baba spoke to Shama as follows, "I suffered last night from cough; is it due to some evil eye? I think that somebody's evil eye has worked on Me and so I am suffering". In this case Baba spoke out what was going on in the mind of Lakhshnichand.

On seeing these proofs of Baba's omniscience and kindness to His bhaktas, he fell prostrate at Baba's Feet and said, "I am much blessed with Your darshan. Ever be kind and merciful to me and protect me always. There is no other God to me in this world except You, let my mind be ever rapt in Your Bhajan and Feet, let Your grace protect me from the miseries of the world and let me ever chant Your name and be happy."

After getting Baba's Udi and blessings he returned home with his friend, much pleased and contented, and was singing Baba's glory on the way. He remained a staunch devotee of Baba then onwards and always sent garlands of flowers, camphor and dakshina with any person of his acquaintance bound for Shiridi.

(2) Burhanpore Lady

Now, let us turn to another sparrow (devotee). One lady in Burhanpore saw in her dream Sai Baba coming to her door and begging khichadi (rice cooked with dal and salt) for His meals. On waking up she saw nobody at her door. However, she was pleased with the vision and told it to all, including her husband. He was employed in the postal department and when he was transferred to Akola, both husband and wife, who were devout persons decided to go to Shirdi. Then on a suitable day they left for Shirdi and after visiting Gomati Tirth on the way, reached Shirdi and stayed there for two months. Every day they went to the Masjid, worshipped Baba and passed their time happily. The couple came to Shirdi to offer khichadi as Naivaidya but for the first 14 days somehow or other, it could not be offered. The lady did not like this delay or tardiness. Then on the 15th day she came at noon to the Masjid with her khichadi. There she found that Baba and others were already sitting for meals and that the curtain was down. Nobody dared enter in when the curtain was down but the lady could not wait. She lifted up the curtain and entered. Strange to say that Baba seemed that day hungry for khichadi and wanted that thing first, and when the lady came in with the dish Baba was delighted and began to eat morsel after morsel of khichadi. On seeing the earnestness of Baba in this respect, everybody was wonderstruck and those, who heard the story of khichadi were convinced about His extraordinary love for His devotees.

(3) Megha

Now let us go to the third sparrow; Megha of Viramgaon was a simple and illiterate Brahmin cook of Rao Bahadur H.V. Sathe. He was a devotee of Shiva and always chanted the five syllabled mantra 'Namah Shivay'.* He did not know the Sandhya nor its chief mantra, the Gayatri. Rao Bahadur Sathe was interested in him, taught him the Sandhya and the Gayatri. Sathe told him that Sai Baba of Shirdi was the embodied form of God Shiva and made him start for Shirdi. At Bharuch Railway station he learnt that Sai Baba was a Muslim, and his simple and orthodox mind was much perturbed at the prospect of bowing down to a Muslim, and he prayed to his master not to send him there. His master however insisted on his going there and gave him a letter of introduction

* (□) नमः शिवाय

to his (Sathe's) father-in-law, Ganesh Damodar, alias Dada Kelkar at Shirdi, to introduce him to Sai Baba. When he reached Shirdi and went to the Masjid, Baba was very indignant and would not allow him to enter. "Kick out the rascal" roared Baba and then said to Megha, "You are a high caste Brahmin and I am a low Muslim, you will lose your caste by coming here. Just get away!" On hearing these words Megha began to tremble. He was wondering, as to how Baba had come to know about what was passing in his mind. He stayed there for some days serving Baba in his own way but was not convinced. Then he went home and then to Tryambak (Nasik district) and stayed there for a year and a half. Then again he returned to Shirdi. This time at the intercession of Dada Kelkar he was allowed to enter the Masjid and stay in Shirdi. Sai Baba's help to Megha was not through any oral instruction. He worked upon Megha internally (mentally) with the result that he was considerably changed and benefitted. Then Megha began to look upon Sai Baba as an Incarnation of Shiva. In order to worship Shiva bel leaves are required and Megha used to go miles and miles every day to bring them and worship his Shiva (Baba). His practice was to worship all the deities in the village and then come to the Masjid, and after saluting Baba's Gadi (Asan) he worshipped Baba and after doing some service (shampooing His Legs) drank the washings (Tirth) of Baba's Feet. Once it so happened that he came to the Masjid without worshipping Khandoba, as the door of the temple was closed. Baba did not accept his worship and sent him back again saying that the door was open then. Megha went found the door open, worshipped the Deity, and then returned to Baba as usual.

Ganges Bath

On one Makar Sankranti day Megha wanted to besmear the body of Baba with sandal-paste and bath Him with Ganges water. Baba was first unwilling to undergo this but at his repeated requests He consented. Megha had to traverse a distance of eight Kos¹ (going and returning) to bring the sacred water from the Godavari river. He brought the water, made all preparations for the bath at noon and asked Baba to get ready for the same. Then, Baba again asked him to be spared from this bath saying that as a Fakir He had nothing to do with Ganges water but

1. Kos = 3 miles = 4.8 Kms

Megha did not listen to Him. He knew that Shiva is pleased with Abhishek (Sacred Bath) on that auspicious day. Baba then consented, came down and sat on a wooden board and projecting His head said, "Oh Megha do at least this favour, head is the most important organ of the body, so pour the water over that only – it is equivalent to the whole bath". "All right", said Megha and lifting the water pot up began to pour it on the head but in doing this, he was so much overwhelmed with love that he cried out, "Har Har Gange" (Hail goddess Ganga) and emptied the pot on the whole body. He kept the pot aside and began to look at Baba, but to his surprise and amazement he found that only Baba's head was drenched while the body quite dry.

Trident and Pindi

Megha worshipped Baba at two places : in the Masjid he worshipped Baba in person and in the Wada, Baba's big picture given by Nanasaheb Chandorkar. This he did for 12 months. Then in order to appreciate his devotion and confirm his faith Baba gave him a vision. One morning when Megha was still lying down on his bed with eyes closed but internally awake he saw clearly Baba's Form. Baba knowing him to be awake threw akshata (rice-grains marked red with Kumkum) and said, "Megha, draw a Trident!" and disappeared. Hearing Baba's words he eagerly opened his eyes, saw no Baba there but only rice grains spread here and there. He then went to Baba, told Him about the vision and asked permission to draw Trident. Baba said, "Did you not hear My words asking you to draw Trident? It was no vision but direct order, My words are always pregnant with meaning and never hollow." Megha said, "I thought you woke me up but all the doors were closed so I was doubtful and thought it to be a vision." Baba rejoined, "I require no door to enter. I have no form; I always live everywhere. As a wire-puller I carry on all the actions of the man who trusts Me and merges in Me."

Megha returned to the Wada and drew a red Trident on the wall near Baba's picture. Next day a Ramadas bhakta came from Poona, saluted Baba and offered Him Pindi (a phallic image of Shiva). At this time Megha also turned up there. Baba said to him, "See, Shankar has come, protect (i.e. worhsip) Him now!" Megha was pleasantly surprised to see Pindi. Also in the Wada Kakasaheb Dixit was standing with a towel on his head after having taken his bath and was remembering Sai

when he saw a Pindi in his mental vision. While he was wondering about this Megha came and showed him the Pindi presented to him by Baba. Dixit was happy to know that this Pindi exactly tallied with the one he saw a few minutes before in his vision. In a few days after the drawing of the Trident was complete, Baba installed the Pindi near the big picture, which Megha was worshipping. The worship of Shiva was dear to Megha and by the drawing of the Trident and the installation of the Pindi, Baba confirmed his faith therein.

After continuous service of Baba for many years, doing regular worship and Arati every noon and evening Megha passed away in 1912. Then Baba passed His hands over his mortal remains and said, "This was a true devotee of Mine" Baba also ordered that at His own expense the funeral dinner should be given to the Brahmins, and this order was carried out by Kakasaheb Dixit.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all