



CHAPTER XXXI

The Passing Away in Baba's Presence of (1) Sanyaasi Vijayanand (2) Balaram Mankar (3) Noolkar (4) Megha (5) The Tiger

In this chapter Hemadpant describes the passing away of certain devotees and a tiger in Baba's presence.

Preliminary

The last wish or thought that a man has at the hour of death, determines his future course. Shri Krishna has said in Gita (VIII-5-6) that, "he who remembers Me in his last moments, comes verily to Me; and he who meditates otherwise, at that time, goes to what he longs for." We cannot be certain that we can entertain a particular good thought at our last moment, for more often than not, we are more likely to be frightened and terrified by death. Hence constant practice is necessary for enabling us to fix our mind on any desired good thought at any moment. All saints, therefore, recommend us to remember God and chant His name always, so that we may not be perplexed or perturbed, when the time for departure comes. The devotees on their part surrender themselves completely to the saints, fully believing that the saints would guide and help them in their last moments. A few such cases will be noted here.

(1) Vijayanand

A Sanyaasi from Chennai, named Vijayanand started on pilgrimage to Mansarovar. En route on hearing Baba's fame, he halted at Shirdi. There, he met one Somadevaji Swami of Hardwar and enquired from him about the Mansarovar trip. The Swami told him that the Sarovar was 500 miles above Gangotri, and described to him the difficulties of the journey, viz. plenty of snow and the change of dialect every 50 kos and the suspicious nature of the local people, who give a lot of trouble to the pilgrims on the way. On hearing this the Sanyaasi was dejected and cancelled the trip. Then, when he went to Baba and prostrated himself before Him, Baba got enraged and said, "Drive out this useless Sanyaasi, his company is of no use." The Sanyaasi did not know Baba's nature. He felt discomfited but sat there watching things that were

going on. It was the morning Darbar, and the Masjid was overcrowded. Baba was being worshipped in various ways. Some were washing His Feet, some taking the Tirth (holy water) and drinking it heartily, and some touching their eyes with it; some were applying sandal-paste and some scents to His body. And all were doing these things forgetting the distinction of caste and creed. Though, Baba got enraged with him he was filled with affection for Baba and he did not feel like leaving the place.

He stayed in Shirdi for two days, when he got a letter from Chennai, stating that his mother was very ill. He felt very dejected and wanted to be by his mother's side, but he could not leave without Baba's permission to return home. The Omniscient Baba knowing the future said to him, "If you so loved your mother, why did you take Sanyaas? Attachment makes misuse of an ochre garb. Go and sit quiet at your lodging, wait with patience for a few days. In the wada there are many robbers, bolt your doors and be very vigilant, the thieves will carry everything. Wealth and prosperity are tansient and the body is subject to decay and death. While knowing this, do your duty leaving all attachment with the things of this world and next. He who does this and surrenders himself to the Feet of Hari (Lord) will get free from all troubles and attain Bliss. The Lord runs and helps him, who remembers and meditates on Him with love and affection. Your store of past merits is considerable so you have come here. Now attend to what I say and realize the goal of your life. Begin from tomorrow the study of Bhagwat. Do three 'Saptahs', i.e. three readings during three weeks, conscientiously. The Lord will be pleased with you and will destroy your sorrows, your illusions will vanish and you will get eternal peace." On seeing that his end was approaching, Baba prescribed this remedy and made him read 'Ramavijaya', which pleases the God of death. Next morning, after bathing and other purifying rites he commenced to read Bhagwat at a secluded spot in the Lendi garden. He completed two readings, and thereafter felt much exhausted. He returned to the wada and stayed in his lodging for two days, and on the third day he breathed his last, on Fakir (Bade) Baba's lap. Baba asked the people to preserve the body for a day for a reason. The police afterwards came and on making proper enquiries gave permission for the disposal of the body. It was buried in a proper place with due rites. In this way Baba helped the Sanyaasi and ensured him Sadgati (salvation).

(2) Balaram Mankar

There was a house-holder devotee of Baba, by name Balaram Mankar. When his wife passed away he got dejected and entrusting his household to his son, left home and came to Shirdi and lived with Baba. Being pleased with his devotion Baba wanted to give a good turn to his life and He did it in this way. He gave him Rs. 12/- and asked him to go and live in Machhindragad (District Satara). Mankar was first unwilling to go and stay away from Baba, but Baba convinced him that he was giving the best course for him, and asked him to practise meditation thrice a day in the Gad¹. On believing in Baba's words Mankar went to the Gad. He was much pleased with the serenity, pure water, healthy air and the surroundings of the place, and began to practise assiduously the meditations, as recommended by Baba. After some days he got a revelation. Generally, bhaktas get revelation in their Samadhi or trance states but in Mankar's case, he got it when he came down to his ordinary consciousness from his trance. Baba appeared to him in person. Not only that Mankar saw Him, but he also asked Him why he was sent there. Baba replied, "In Shirdi many thoughts and ideas began to rise in your mind and I sent you here to bring your unsteady mind to rest. You thought that I was in Shirdi with a body, composed of the five elements and three and a half cubits in length. Now you see and determine for yourself whether the person you see here now is the same you saw at Shirdi. It is for this reason that I sent you here." Then after the period was over, Mankar left the Gad and proceeded to his native place Bandra. He wanted to travel by rail from Poona to Dadar, but when he went to the booking office to get a ticket he found it very much crowded. He could not get his ticket soon, when a villager with a Langoti (piece of cloth) on his waist and Kambali on his shoulder turned up and said, "Where are you going?" "To Dadar," replied Mankar. Then, he said, "Please, take this Dadar ticket of mine, as I have some urgent work here, I have cancelled my Dadar trip." Mankar was very glad to receive the ticket and was taking out money from his pocket when the rustic disappeared in the crowd. Mankar tried to find him out in the crowd but in vain. He waited for him till the train left the station but found no trace of him. This was the second revelation Mankar got in a strange form. Then Mankar after visiting his home, again returned to Shirdi and remained there at Baba's Feet following

1. Gad (Fort) – Machhindragad

His bidding and advice. In the end he was very fortunate to leave this world in the presence of Baba.

(3) Tatyasaheb Noolkar

Hemadpant gives no particulars regarding Tatyasaheb Noolkar except the bare mention of the fact that he gave up his ghost in Shirdi. A brief summary of his account that appeared in the Sai Leela magazine is given here.

Tatyasaheb was a sub-judge at Pandharpur in 1909, when Nanasaheb Chandorkar was Mamalatdar there. Both met often and exchanged words. Tatyasaheb did not believe in saints, while Nanasaheb respected them. Nanasaheb often told him the Leelas of Sai Baba and pressed him to go to Shirdi and see Baba. Noolkar finally agreed to go to Shirdi on two conditions : (1) he must get a Brahmin cook and (2) he must get good Nagpur oranges for the presentation. Both these conditions were providentially fulfilled. A Brahmin came to Nanasaheb for service and he was sent to Tatyasaheb, and a fruit parcel containing 100 beautiful oranges was received by Tatyasaheb, the consigner being unknown. As the conditions were fulfilled Tatyasaheb had to go to Shirdi. At first Baba was much enraged with him. But, by and by Tatyasaheb got such experiences that he was convinced that Baba was God Incarnate. So he was enamoured of Baba and stayed there till his death. As his end was approaching sacred literature was read out to him, and at the last hour Baba's Pada-tirth was brought and given to him for drinking. Baba on hearing of his death said, "Oh, Tatyasaheb went ahead of us, he won't be reborn."

(4) Megha

The story of Megha has been already described in chapter 28. When Megha died all the villagers followed the funeral procession. Baba also accompanied them and showered flowers on Megha's body. After the obsequies were performed, tears flowed from Baba's eyes, and like an ordinary mortal Baba showed Himself overcome with grief and sorrow. Then covering the body with flowers and crying like a near relation Baba returned to the Masjid.

Many saints have been seen giving Sadgati to men but Baba's

greatness is unique. Even an animal like tiger came to Baba's Feet for being delivered from demerits. It is this story which will be narrated now.

(5) Tiger¹

Seven days before Baba passed away a wonderful incident occurred at Shirdi. There came a country-cart and stopped in front of the Masjid. A tiger was on the cart, fastened with iron chains with its agonised face turned to the rear. It was suffering from some painful malady. Its keepers – three Derveshis – had been taking it from place to place and making money by exhibiting it. It was the means of their subsistence. They tried all sorts of remedies to cure it from the malady it was suffering from, but all in vain. Then they heard of Baba's fame and came to Him with the animal. They got it down with chains in their hands and made it stand at the door. It was naturally fierce besides being disease-ridden. So it was restless. The people began to look at it with fright and amazement. The Derveshis told Baba everything about the animal and with His consent brought it before Him. As it approached the steps it retreated on account of the awe of Baba, and hung its head down. When both saw each other, it got on to the step and looked at Baba with affection. Immediately, it moved the tuft of its tail and dashed it thrice against the ground, and then fell down senseless. On seeing it dead the Derveshis were much dejected and full of sorrow, but on proper thought they came to terms with it. They considered that as the animal was diseased and nearing its end it was very meritorious on its part that it met its death at the Feet of Baba. It was their debtor and when the debt was paid off it was free and met its end at Sai's Feet. When any creatures bow down their heads at saints' feet and meet death they are liberated. Unless they have got a good store of merit on their account, how could they get such a meritorious end?

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all

1. This tiger is buried in Shirdi in front of Mahadev temple.