



CHAPTER XLIX

Stories of (1) Hari Kanoba (2) Somadev Swami (3) Nanasahab Chandorkar

Preliminary

When even the Vedas and the Puranas cannot sufficiently praise (describe) Brahma or Sadguru, then, how can we, ignorant describe our Sadguru, Shri Sai Baba? We think that, it is better for us to keep quiet in this matter. In reality, the observance of the vow of silence is the best way of praising the Sadguru; but the divine qualities of Sai Baba make us forget our vow of silence and inspire us to open our mouth. Tasteful dishes lose their taste, if there is no company of friends and relatives to partake the dishes with us; but when they join us, the dishes acquire additional flavour. The same is the case with the Sai Leelamrit – the nectar in the form of Sai's Leelas. This nectar we cannot partake alone. Friends and brothers have to join us – the more the better.

It is Sai Baba Himself Who inspires these stories and gets them written, as He desires. Our duty is to surrender completely to Him and meditate on Him. Practising penance is better than pilgrimage, vow, sacrifice, and charity. Worshipping Hari (Lord) is better than penance; and meditation on the Sadguru is the best of all. We have, therefore, to chant Sai's name think over His sayings in our mind, meditate on His Form, feel true love for Him in our heart, and do all our actions for His sake. There is no better means than this for snapping the bondage of this Sansar. If we can do our duty on our part, as stated above, Sai is bound to help and liberate us. Now, we revert to the stories of this chapter.

Hari Kanoba

A gentleman of Mumbai, named Hari Kanoba heard from his friends and relatives many Leelas of Baba. He did not believe in them, as he had a doubting mind. He wanted to see Baba himself. So, he came to Shirdi with some Mumbai friends. He wore a lace bordered turban on his head and a new pair of sandals on his feet. On seeing Baba from a distance, he thought of going to Him and prostrating himself before Him. He did not know, what to do about his new sandals. After going to one corner in the open courtyard, he placed them there and went in the Masjid and had Baba's darshan. He made a reverential bow to Baba, took Udi and Prasad from Baba and returned. When he reached

the corner, he found to his utter dismay that his sandals had disappeared. He searched for them in vain; and returned to his lodging, very much dejected.

He bathed, offered worship and Naivaidya and sat down for meals, but all this while he was thinking about nothing but his sandals. After finishing his meals, he came out to wash his hands, when he saw a Maratha boy coming towards him. He held in his hand a stick, at the end of which was hanging a pair of new sandals. He said to the men, who had come out to wash their hands that, Baba sent him with this stick in hand and asked him to go on the streets crying "Hari Ka Beta. Jari Ka Pheta" and that, "If anybody claims these sandals, first assure yourself that, his name is Hari and that, he is the son of 'Ka', i.e., Kanoba; and that, he wears a lace-bordered turban; and then, give them over to him." On hearing this, Hari Kanoba was pleasantly surprised. He went ahead to the boy and claimed the sandals as his own. He said to the boy that his name was Hari, and that, he was the son of 'Ka' (Kanoba); and showed him his lace bordered turban. The boy was satisfied and returned the sandals to him. Hari Kanoba wondered in his mind that his lace-bordered turban was visible to all, and Baba might have seen it; but how could he know that his name was Hari, and that he was the son of Kanoba, as this was his first trip to Shirdi. He came there with the sole object of testing Baba, and with no other motive. He came to know by this incident that, Baba was a great Satpurush. He got what he wanted, and returned home well-pleased.

Somadev Swami

Now, hear the story of another man, who came to try Baba. Bhaiji, brother of Kakasaheb Dixit was staying at Nagpur. When he had gone to the Himalayas in 1906 he made an acquaintance with one Somadev Swami of Hardwar at Uttar Kashi, down the Gangotri valley¹. Both took down each other's names in their diaries. Five years later Somadev Swami came to Nagpur and was Bhaiji's guest. There, he was pleased to hear the Leelas of Baba, and a strong desire arose in his mind to go to Shirdi and see Him. He got a letter of introduction from Bhaiji and left for Shirdi. After passing Manmad and Kopergaon, he took a Tonga and drove to Shirdi. As he came near Shirdi, he saw two flags floating high over the Masjid in Shirdi. Generally, we find different behaviour, different mode of living and different outward paraphernalia with different saints. But, these outward signs should never be our standards to judge the worth of a saint. But, with Somadev Swami, it was different.

1. In Garhwal region of Uttaranchal.

As soon as, he saw the flags flying, he thought, "Why should a saint take a liking for the flags? Does this denote saint-hood? It implies the saint's hankering after fame." Thinking thus, he wished to cancel his Shirdi trip and said to his fellow travellers that he would go back. They said to him, "Then, why did you come so far? If your mind became restless by the mere sight of the flags, how much more agitated would you be on seeing the Rath, the palanquin, the horse and all other paraphernalia in Shirdi?" The Swami got more confounded and said, "Not Sadhu with horses, palanquins and tom-toms have I seen, and it is better for me to return than visit such a Sadhu." After saying this he started to return. The fellow-travellers pressed him not to do so but to proceed. They asked him to stop his inconsistent way of thinking and told him that the Sadhu, i.e., Baba did not care a bit for the flags and other paraphernalia, nor for the name. It was the people, His devotees who, kept up all this paraphernalia out of love and devotion to Him. Finally, he was persuaded to continue his journey, go to Shirdi and see Baba. When he went and saw Baba from the courtyard, he melted inside, his eyes were full of tears, his throat was choked, and all his evil and crooked thoughts vanished. He remembered his Guru's saying that, "That is our abode and place of rest, where the mind is most pleased and settled." He wished to roll himself in the dust at Baba's Feet and when he approached Baba, the latter got wild and cried aloud, "Let all our humbug (paraphernalia) be with us, you go back to your home, beware! If you come back to this Masjid again. Why take the darshan of One, Who flies a flag over His Masjid? Is this a sign of sainthood? Remain here not a moment." The Swami was taken aback by surprise. He realized that, Baba read his heart and spoke it out. How Omniscient He was! He knew that, he was least intelligent, and that, Baba was noble and pure. He saw Baba embracing somebody, touching someone with his hand, comforting others, staring kindly at some, laughing at others, giving Udi-Prasad to some, and thus pleasing and satisfying all. Why should he alone be dealt so harshly? After thinking seriously, he came to realize that, Baba's conduct responded exactly to his inner thought; and that, he should take a lesson from this and improve; and that Baba's wrath was a blessing in disguise. It is needless to say that later on, his faith in Baba was confirmed, and he became a staunch devotee of Baba.

Nanasaheb Chandorkar

Hemadpant concludes this chapter, with a story of Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Nanasaheb was once sitting in the Masjid with Mhalsapati and others, a Mohammeden gentleman from Bijapur came, with his

family, to see Baba. On seeing veiled ladies with him, Nanasaheb wanted to go away, but Baba prevented him from doing so. The ladies came and took the darshan of Baba. When one of the ladies removed her veil for saluting Baba's Feet, Nanasaheb, who had a glimpse of her face, was so much smitten with her beauty that he wished to see her face again. Knowing Nana's restlessness of mind, Baba spoke to him after the lady had left the place, "Nana, why are you getting agitated in vain? Let the senses do their allotted work or duty, we should not meddle with their work. God had created this beautiful world, and it is our duty to appreciate its beauty. The mind will get steady and calm slowly and gradually. When the front door was open, why go by the back one? When the heart is pure, there is no difficulty, whatsoever. Why should one be afraid of anyone, if there be no evil thought in us? The eyes may do their work, why should you feel shy and tottering?"

Shama was there, and he could not follow the meaning of what Baba said. So, he asked Nana about this on their way home. Nana told him about his restlessness at the sight of the beautiful lady, how Baba knew it and advised him about it. Nana explained Baba's meaning as follows, "That our mind is fickle by nature, it should not be allowed to get wild. The senses may get restless, the body, however, should be held in check, and not allowed to be impatient. Senses run after objects of desire but we should not follow them and crave for them. By slow and gradual practice, restlessness can be conquered. We should not be swayed by the senses, though they cannot be completely controlled. We should curb them, rightly and properly, according to the need of the occasion. Beauty is the subject of sight, we may fearlessly look at the beauty of objects. There is no room for shyness or fear. Only, we should never entertain evil thoughts. Making the mind desireless, observe God's works of beauty. In this way, the senses will be easily and naturally controlled, and even in enjoying objects you will be reminded of God. If the outer senses are not held in check, and if the mind be allowed to run after objects and be attached to them, our cycle of births and deaths will not come to an end. With Vivek (discrimination) as our charioteer, we will control the mind, and shall not allow the senses to go astray. With such a charioteer, we reach the Vishnu-pada – the final abode, our real Home, from where there is no return."

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all