



CHAPTER XXI

Stories of (1) V.H. Thakur (2) Anantrao Patankar and (3) Pandharpur Pleader

In this chapter, Hemadpant relates the stories of Vinayak Harishchandra Thakur, B.A., Anantrao Patankar of Poona and a pleader from Pandharpur. All these stories are very interesting, which, if very carefully read and grasped, will lead the readers on to the spiritual path.

Preliminary

It is a general rule that, it is our good luck in the form of accumulation of merits of past births, that enables us to seek the company of saints and benefit thereby. As an illustration of this rule, Hemadpant gives his own instance. He was a resident magistrate of Bandra, a suburb of Mumbai, for many years. A famous Mohammedan saint, named Pir Moulana, was living there and many Hindus, Parsis and many others, who followed different religion used to go to him and take his darshan. His Mujavar (priest), by name Yunus, pressed Hemadpant many a time, for going to see him; but for one reason or the other, he was not able to see him. After many years, his turn came and he was called to Shirdi, where he was permanently enrolled in Sai Baba's Darbar. Unfortunate fellows do not get such contact of the saints. It is only the fortunate ones that get it.

Institution of Saints

There have been institutions of saints in this world, from time immemorial. Various saints appear (incarnate) themselves in various places to carry out the missions allotted to them, but though they work in different places they are, as it were one. They work in unison under the common authority of the Almighty Lord, and know fully well, what each of them is doing in his place and supplement his work where necessary. An instance illustrating this is given below.

Mr. Thakur

Mr. V.H. Thakur, B.A., was a clerk in the Revenue Department

and he once came to a town, named Vadgaon, near Belgaon (South Mysore country) along with a survey party. There he saw a Kanarese saint (Appa) and bowed before him. The saint was explaining a portion from the book 'Vichar Sagar' of Nischal Das (a standard work on Vedanta) to the audience. When Thakur was taking his leave to go he said to him, "You should study this book and if you do so, your desires will be fulfilled and when you go to the north in the discharge of your duties in future, you will come across a great Saint by your fortune, and then he will show you the future path and give rest to your mind and make you happy."

Then he was transferred to Junnar, where he had to go by crossing Nthane Ghat. This Ghat was very steep and difficult, and no other conveyance, other than a buffalo, was of use in crossing it. So he had to take a buffalo-ride through the Ghat, which was much inconvenient to him. Thence he was transferred on promotion to Kalyan and there, he got acquainted with Nanasaheb Chandorkar. He heard much about Sai Baba from him and wished to see Him. Next day, Nanasaheb had to go to Shirdi and he asked Thakur to accompany him. He could not do so, as he had to attend the Thana Civil Court for a civil case. So Nanasaheb went alone. Thakur went to Thana, but there the case was postponed. Then he repented for not accompanying Nanasaheb. Still he left for Shirdi and when he reached there, he found that Nanasaheb had left the place the previous day. Some of his other friends, whom he met there, took him to Baba. He saw Baba, fell at His Feet and was overjoyed. His eyes were full of tears and his hair stood on end. Then after a while, the omniscient Baba said to him, "The path of this place is not so easy as the teachings of the Kanarese saint Appa, or even as the buffalo-ride in the Nthane Ghat. In this spiritual path you have to put in your best exertion, it is very difficult." When Thakur heard these significant words, which only he knew, he was overwhelmed with joy. He came to know that, the word of the Kanarese saint had turned true. Then joining both hands and placing his head on Baba's Feet, he prayed that, he should be accepted and blessed. Then, Baba said, "What Appa told you was all right but these things have to be practised and lived. Mere reading won't do. You have to think and carry out what you read, otherwise it is of no use. Mere book-learning, without the grace of the Guru and self-realization is of no avail." The theoretical portion was read from the work 'Vichar Sagar' by Thakur but the practical way was shown to him at Shirdi. Another story given below,

will bring out this truth more forcibly.

Anantrao Patankar

One gentleman from Poona by name Anantrao Patankar, wished to see Baba. He came to Shirdi and took Baba's darshan. His eyes were satisfied and he was much pleased. He fell at Baba's Feet and after performing proper worship said to Baba, "I have read a lot, studied Vedas, Vedants and Upanishads, and heard all the Puranas but still, I have not got any peace of mind so I think all my reading was useless. Simple ignorant devout persons are better than myself. Unless the mind becomes calm, book learning is of no avail. I have heard from many people that, You easily give peace of mind to so many people by Your mere glance and potent word so I have come here, please take pity on me and bless me." Then Baba told him a parable, which was as follows :

Parable of Nine Balls of Stool (Nava-vidha Bhakti)

'Once a merchant came here. Before him a mare passed her stool (nine balls of stool). The merchant intent on his quest, spread the end of his Dhotar and gathered all the nine balls in it, and thus he got concentration (peace) of mind.'

Mr. Patankar could not make out the meaning of this story so, he asked Ganesh Damodar alias Dada Kelkar, "What does Baba mean by this?" He replied, "I too do not know all that Baba says and means but at His inspiration I say what I come to know. The mare is God's grace and the nine balls excreted are the nine forms or types of Bhakti, viz. (1) Shravan (hearing); (2) Kirtan (praying); (3) Smaran (remembering); (4) Padasevan (resorting to the feet); (5) Archan (worship); (6) Namaskar (bowing); (7) Dasya (service); (8) Sakhyam (friendship); (9) Atmanivedan (surrender of the self). These are the nine types of Bhakti. If any of these is faithfully followed, Lord Hari will be pleased and manifest Himself in the home of the devotee. All the Sadhanas, viz. Japa (vocal worship), Tapa (penance), Yoga practice and studying the scriptures and expounding them are quite useless, unless they are accompanied by Bhakti, i.e. devotion. Knowledge of the Vedas or fame as a great Dnyani and mere formal Bhajan (worship) are of no avail. What is wanted is full devotion. Consider yourself as the merchant or seeker after the truth, and be anxious and eager like him to collect or cultivate the nine

types of devotion. Then, you will attain stability and peace of mind.”

Next day when Patankar went to Baba for salutation, he was asked whether he collected the ‘nine balls of stool.’ Then he said that he being a poor fellow, should first be graced by Baba and he would be able to collect them. Then Baba blessed and comforted him, saying that he would attain peace and welfare. After hearing this, Patankar became overjoyed and happy.

The Pandharpur Pleader

We shall close this chapter with a short story showing Baba’s omniscience and His using it for correcting people and setting them on the right path. Once a pleader from Pandharpur came to Shirdi, went to the Masjid, saw Sai Baba, fell at His Feet and without being asked offered some Dakshina and sat in a corner, eager to hear the talk, that was going on. Then Baba turned His face towards him and said, “How cunning the people are! They fall at the Feet, offer Dakshina, but abuse behind me. Is it not amazing?” This cap (remark) fitted the pleader and he had to wear (take) it. None understood the remark. The pleader grasped it but kept silent. When they returned to the Wada, the pleader said to Kakasaheb Dixit, “What Baba remarked was perfectly right. The dart (remark) was aimed at me, it was a hint to me, that I should not indulge in reviling or scandalizing others (calling names). When the sub-judge or munsiff of Pandharpur (Mr. Noolkar) came and stayed here for the improvement of his health, a discussion about this matter was going on in the bar-room at Pandharpur. It was said or discussed there, whether the ailments from which the sub-judge suffered were, ever likely to be got rid of without medicines, by merely going after Sai Baba, and whether it was proper for an educated man like the sub-judge to take recourse to such methods. The sub-judge was taken to task, i.e. he was criticised, as also Sai Baba. I also took part in this affair and now, Sai Baba showed the impropriety of my conduct. This is not a rebuke to me but a favour, a lesson, that I should not indulge in any scandal or slander of others, and not interfere unnecessarily in others’ affairs.”

Shirdi is about 50 Kos (Kos = 3 miles = 4.8 km) from Pandharpur

still Baba, by His omniscience, knew what transpired there in the bar-room. The intervening places – rivers, jungles and mountains – were no bar to His all-perceiving sight and He could see or read the hearts of all, and there was nothing secret or veiled from Him. Everything, far or near, was open and clear to Him as broad as daylight. Let a man be far or near, he cannot avoid the all-pervading gaze of Sai Baba. From this incident, the pleader took the lesson that, he should never speak ill of others or unnecessarily criticise. Thus, his evil tendency was completely got rid of and he was set on the right path.

Though, the story refers to a pleader, still it is applicable to all. All should therefore, take this lesson to heart and benefit thereby.

Sai Baba's greatness is unfathomable, so are His wonderful Leelas. His life is also such, for He is Para-Brahma (Almighty God) Incarnate.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all