



CHAPTER XXIV

*Baba's Wit and Humour – Chana Leela (1)
Hemadpant (2) Sudama (3) Anna Chinchanihar vs.
Maushibai*

Preliminary

Unless we surrender our ego to the feet of our Sadguru, we will not succeed in our undertaking. If we become egoless, then, our success is assured.

By worshipping Sai Baba, we attain both the objects – worldly and spiritual, and are fixed in our true nature and get peace and happiness. Therefore, those who want to accomplish or gain their welfare, should respectfully hear Sai Baba's Leelas or stories, and meditate on them. If they do this, they will easily attain the object of their life and get bliss.

Generally, all people like wit and humour but they do not like that jokes should be cut at their expense. But Baba's method was peculiar; when it was accompanied with good gestures, it was very interesting and instructive, and the people therefore did not mind, even if they were held up to the ridicule. Hemadpant gives his own instance below.

Chana Leela

In Shirdi, a special bazaar was held every Sunday and people from the neighbouring villages came there, erected booths and stalls in the open street and sold their wares and commodities. Every noon the Masjid was crowded, but on Sunday, it was crowded to suffocation. On one such Sunday Hemadpant sat in front of Baba, shampooing His Legs and muttering God's name. Shama was on Baba's left, Vamanrao to His right. Shriman Buti and Kakasaheb Dixit and others were also present there. Then Shama laughed and said to Annasaheb, "See that some grains seem to have stuck to the sleeve of your coat!" So saying he touched the sleeve and found that, there were some grains. Hemadpant straightened his left fore-arm to see what the matter was, and to the surprise of all, some grains of gram came rolling down and were picked up by the people, who were sitting there.

This incident furnished a subject-matter for joke. Everybody present

began to wonder and said something or other, as to how the grains found their way into the sleeve of the coat and lodged there so long. Hemadpant also could not guess. When nobody could give any satisfactory explanation in this matter, and everybody was wondering about this mystery, Baba said as follows :

“This fellow (Annasaheb) has got the bad habit of eating alone. Today is a bazaar-day and he came here chewing grams. I know, his habit and these grams are a proof of it. What wonder is there, in this matter?”

Hemadpant, “Baba, I never know of eating things alone; then, why do You shoulder this bad habit on me? I have never yet seen Shirdi bazaar. I never went to the bazaar today, then how could I buy grams and how could I eat them if I had not bought them? I never eat anything unless I share it with others present around me at the time of my meals.”

Baba, “It is true that, you give to the persons present but if none be near-by, what could you or I do? But do you remember Me before eating? Am I not always with you? Then do you offer Me anything before you eat?”

Moral

Let us mark and note carefully, what Baba has taught us by this incident. He has advised us that, before the senses, mind and intellect enjoy their objects, first He should be remembered, and if this be done, it is in a way by making an offering to Him. The senses etc. can never remain without their objects, but if those objects are first offered to the Guru, the attachment for them will naturally vanish. In this way, all the Vrittis (subtle thoughts) regarding desire, anger, avarice etc. should first be offered and directed to the Guru, and if this practice be followed, the Lord will help you in eradicating all the Vrittis. When before enjoyment of the objects, you think that Baba is present, the question, whether the object is fit to be enjoyed or not, will at once arise. Then the object, that is not fit to be enjoyed, will be shunned and in this way our vicious habits or vices will disappear, and our character will improve. Then love for the Guru will grow and pure knowledge will sprout up. When this knowledge grows, the bondage of body-consciousness (we are the body) will snap and our intellect will be merged in spirit-consciousness (we are the spirit). Then we shall get bliss and contentment. There is no

difference between Guru and God. He who sees any difference in them, finds God nowhere. So leaving aside all ideas of difference, we should regard Guru and God as one; and if we serve our Guru, as stated above, God will be certainly pleased and by purifying our minds will give us self-realization. To put the matter in a nut-shell, we should not enjoy any object with our senses etc., without first remembering our Guru. When the mind is trained in this way, we will be always reminded of Baba and our meditation on Baba will grow apace. The Sagun Form of Baba will ever be before our eyes and then, devotion, non-attachment and salvation will all be ours. When Baba's Form is thus fixed before our mental vision, we forget hunger, thirst and this Sansar (world), the consciousness of worldly pleasures will disappear and our mind shall attain peace and happiness.

Sudama's Story

When the above story was being narrated, Hemadpant was reminded of a similar story of Sudama, which illustrates the same principle and therefore, it is given here.

Shri Krishna and His elder brother, Balaram, were living with a co-student, named Sudama, in the ashram of their Guru, Sandipani. Once Krishna and Balaram were sent to the forest for bringing fuel. Then the wife of Sandipani sent Sudama also for the same purpose, with some quantity of grams for the three. When Krishna met Sudama in the forest, he said to him, "Dada, I want water, as I am thirsty." Sudama replied, "No water should be drunk on an empty stomach so, it is better to rest a while." He did not say that he had got grams with him and that Krishna should take some. As Krishna was tired, He lay down for rest on the lap of Sudama and was soon snoring. On seeing this, Sudama took out the grams and began to eat. Then Krishna suddenly asked him, "Dada, what are you eating, what is this chitter-chatter sound?". He replied, "What is there to eat? I am shivering with cold and my teeth are chattering. I can't even repeat Vishnu-sahasra-naam." Hearing this, the Omniscient Krishna said, "I just had a dream, in which I saw a man eating things of another, and when asked about this, he said, 'What dust should he eat', meaning thereby that he had nothing to eat? The other man said, 'Let it be so.'" Dada, this is only a dream. I know that you won't eat anything without Me, under the influence of the dream I asked you what you were eating?" If Sudama had known the Omniscient Shri Krishna and His Leelas, he would not have acted as he did. Therefore, he had to suffer for what he did.

Though he was a chum of Shri Krishna, he had to pass his later life in utter poverty. But when he later offered Krishna a handful of parched rice, earned by his wife with her own labour, Krishna was pleased and gave him a golden estate to enjoy. This story should be remembered by those, who have the habit of eating things alone, without partaking them with others.

The Shruti also emphasizes this lesson, and asks us to offer things first to God and then enjoy them, after they are renounced by Him. Baba also has taught us the same lesson in His inimitable and humorous way.

Anna Chinchanikar vs. Maushibai

Hemadpant now describes another witty incident, in which Baba played a peace-maker's part. There was one devotee by name Damodar Ghanashyam Babare, alias Anna Chinchanikar. He was simple, rustic and straightforward. He cared for nobody, always spoke plainly and carried all dealings in cash. Though he looked outwardly harsh and uncompromising, he was goodnatured and guileless. So Sai Baba loved him. He has willed away all his property to Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi. One day like others, serving Baba in their own way, this Anna was shampooing the left arm of Baba, which rested on the Kathada (railing). On the right side, one old widow named Venubai Koujalgi, whom Baba called 'mother' and all others called Maushibai,¹ was serving Baba in her own way. This Maushibai was an elderly woman of pure heart. She clasped the fingers of both her hands round the trunk of Baba and was at this time massaging Baba's abdomen. She did this so forcibly that Baba's back and abdomen became flat and Baba moved from side to side. Anna on the other side was steady but Maushibai's face moved up and down with her strokes. Once it so happened that, her face came very close to Anna's. Being of a witty disposition she remarked, "Oh, this Anna is a lewd fellow, he wants to kiss me. Even being so old with grey hair, he feels no shame in kissing me." These words enraged Anna and he pulled up his sleeves and said, "You say that I am an old bad fellow, am I quite a fool? It is you who has picked up a quarrel with me." All the persons present there were enjoying this encounter between them. Baba Who loved both of them equally and wanted to pacify them, managed the affair very skillfully. Lovingly He

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः — ईश-उपनिषद्

1. Maushibai – Mother's sister (aunt)

said, "Oh Anna, why are you unnecessarily raising this hue and cry? I do not understand what harm or impropriety is there, when the mother is kissed?" Hearing these words of Baba, both of them were satisfied, and all the persons laughed merrily and enjoyed Baba's wit to their heart's content.

Baba's Characteristics – His Dependency on Bhaktas

Baba allowed His devotees to serve Him in their own way and did not like any other persons interfering in this. To quote an instance, the same Maushibai was, on another occasion kneading Baba's abdomen. Seeing the force used by her, all other devotees felt nervous and anxious. They said, "Oh mother be more considerate and moderate, otherwise you will break Baba's arteries and nerves." At this Baba got up at once from His seat and dashed His Satka on the ground. He got enraged and His eyes became red like a live embers. None dared to stand before Baba. Then He took hold of one end of the Satka with both hands and pressed it in the hollow of His abdomen. The other end He fixed to the post and began to press His abdomen against it. The Satka which was about two or three feet in length, seemed all ready to go into the abdomen and the people feared that, the abdomen would be ruptured in a short time. The post was fixed and immovable and Baba began to go closer and closer to it, and clasped the post firmly. Every moment the rupture was expected and they were all dismayed, did not know what to do and stood dumb with wonder and fear. The other devotees wanted only to give a hint to the Maushibai to be moderate in her service and not cause any trouble or pain to Baba. They were surprised to see that, their well-intentioned effort had resulted in this crisis, and they could do nothing but to wait and watch. Fortunately, Baba's rage soon cooled down. He left the Satka and resumed His seat. From this time onward the devotees took the lesson that, they should not meddle with anybody but allow him to serve Baba as he chooses, as He was capable to gauge the merits and worth of the service rendered unto Him.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all