



CHAPTER XXVI

*Stories of (1) Bhakta Pant (2) Harishchandra Pitale
(3) Gopal Ambadekar*

Preliminary

All the things, that we see in the universe are nothing but a play of Maya¹ – the creative power of the Lord. These things do not really exist. What really exists is the Absolute. Just as we mistake a rope or a garland for a serpent, on account of darkness, we always see the phenomena, i.e. things, as they outwardly appear, and not the Noumenon, which underlies all the visible things. It is only the Sadguru who opens the eyes of our understanding and enables us to see things in their true light and not as they appear. Let us therefore, worship the Sadguru and pray to him to give us the true vision, which is nothing but God-vision.

Inner Worship

Hemadpant has given us a novel form of worship. Let us, he says, use water in the form of tears of joy to wash the Sadguru's Feet, let us besmear His body with sandle-paste of pure love, let us cover His body with the cloth of true faith, let us offer eight lotus in the form of our eight Sattwik emotions and fruit in the form of our concentrated mind, let us apply to His head the Bukka (black-powder) in the form of devotion and tie the waistband of Bhakti and place our head at His feet.

After decorating the Sadguru with all ornamentation this way, let us offer our self to Him and wave chamar² of devotion to ward off heat. After such blissful worship, let us pray thus : Turn our mind inward, give us discrimination between the unreal and the real and non-attachment for all worldly things, and thus enable us to get self-realization. We surrender ourselves, body and soul (body-consciousness and ego) to You. Make our eyes Yours, so that we should never feel pleasure and pain. Control our body and mind as You wish. Let our mind rest at Your Feet."

1. Maya – Illusion

2. Chamar – Fan like object made up of animal hair

Now let us turn to the stories of this chapter.

Bhakta Pant

Once, it so happened that, a devotee by name Pant, a disciple of another Guru, had the good fortune of visiting Shirdi. He had no mind to go to Shirdi, but man proposes one way and God disposes the other. He was travelling in a B.B. & C.I. Rly¹ train, where he met many friends bound for Shirdi. They all asked him to accompany them and he could not say 'no.' They alighted at Mumbai, while Pant got down at Virar. There, he took the permission of his Guru for the Shirdi trip and after arranging for the expenses, left with the party for Shirdi. They all reached the place in the morning and went to the Masjid at about 11 a.m. On seeing the concourse of the devotees assembled for Baba's worship, they were all pleased but Pant suddenly got a fit and fell senseless. They were all frightened, still they tried their best to revive his senses. With Baba's grace after sprinkling water over his head, he regained his consciousness and sat upright as if he was just awakened from sleep. The Omniscient Baba, knowing that he was a disciple of another Guru, assured him and confirmed his faith in his own Guru, by addressing him as follows : "Come what may, leave not but stick to your own bolster (support, i.e. Guru) and ever remain steady with him." Pant, at once, knew the significance of this remark, and thus he was reminded of his Guru. This kindness of Baba, he never forgot in his life.

Harishchandra Pitale

There was a gentleman, by name Harishchandra Pitale in Mumbai. He had a son who suffered from epilepsy. He tried many allopathic and ayurvedic physicians but there was no cure. There remained only one way of remedy, viz. resorting to the saints. It has been stated in chapter XV that Das Ganu, by his inimitable and splendid Kirtans, spread the fame of Sai Baba in the Mumbai Presidency. Mr. Pitale heard some of these Kirtans in 1910 and learnt from the kirtans and others that Baba, with His touch and mere glance, cured many incurable diseases. Then a desire arose in his mind to see Sai Baba. Making all preparations and taking offerings and fruitbaskets, Mr. Pitale came to Shirdi with wife and children. He then went to the Masjid with them, prostrated before

1. B.B.C. & C.I. Rly. – The then Bombay Baroda and Central India Railway – Now Western Railway.

Baba and placed his sick son at Baba's Feet. No sooner did Baba see the child, then an untoward thing happened. The son immediately revolved his eyes and fell down senseless. His mouth began to throw foam and his whole body began to perspire profusely, and it seemed as if he was breathing his last. Seeing this, the parents became very nervous and upset. The boy used to get such fits very often, but this fit seemed to persist long. Tears began to flow ceaselessly from the mother's eyes and she began to wail, that, her condition was like that of a person, who being afraid of the robbers ran into a house, which collapsed on him; or like a cow fearing a tiger, ran into the hands of a butcher; or like a traveller, who being tormented by the heat of the sun went to take refuge under a tree, which fell upon him; or like a devout person going for worship into a temple, which collapsed upon him. Baba comforted her saying, "Do not wail like this, wait a bit, have patience, take the boy to your lodgings, he will come to his senses within half an hour." They did as directed by Baba and found that, His words came true. As soon as he was taken into the Wada, the boy recovered and all the Pitale family, and others were very happy, and all their doubts disappeared. Then Mr. Pitale went with his wife to see Baba and prostrated himself before Him very humbly and respectfully and sat shampooing His Legs and mentally thanking Baba for His kind help. Baba then smilingly said, "Have not all your thoughts, doubts and apprehensions calmed down now? Hari (Lord) will protect him, who has got faith and patience." Mr. Pitale was a rich and well-to-do gentleman. He distributed sweet-meats on a large scale and offered to Baba excellent fruits and Pan (betel-leaves). Mrs. Pitale was a very pious lady, simple, loving and faithful. She used to sit near the post, gazing at Baba with tears of joy flowing down from her eyes. Seeing her amicable and loving nature, Baba was much pleased with her. Like Gods, saints are always dependent on their devotees, who surrender and worship them with their heart and soul. After passing some happy days in Baba's company, the Pitale family came to the Masjid to take Baba's leave to depart. Baba gave them Udi and blessings and called Mr. Pitale close to him and said, "Bapu, I had given you Rs. two before, now I give you Rs. three; keep these in your shrine for worship and you will be benefitted." Mr. Pitale accepted these as prasad, prostrated himself again before Baba and prayed for His blessings. A thought arose in his mind that, as this was his first visit to Shirdi, he could not understand what Baba meant, when He said that He had given Rs. two previously. He was curious to have this mystery solved; but Baba kept silent. When Mr. Pitale

returned to Mumbai, he narrated to his old mother, all that had happened at Shirdi and the mystery about Baba's giving him Rs. two earlier. The mother also did not understand the mystery but thinking seriously about this, she was reminded of an old incident, which solved the mystery. She said to her son, "As you now went to Sai Baba with your son, so had your father done, when he took you to Akkalkot for the darshan of the Maharaj there, many years ago. That Maharaj was also a Siddha, Perfect Yogi, omniscient and gracious. Your father was devout and his worship was accepted. He then gave your father Rs. two for being kept in the shrine and worshipped. Your father worshipped them till his death; but thereafter the worship was neglected and the rupees were lost. After some years the memory of these two rupees also disappeared and now, as you are very fortunate, the Akkalkot Maharaj has appeared to you in the form of Sai Baba just to remind you of your duties and worship to ward off all dangers. Now beware henceforth, leave all doubts and bad thoughts, follow your ancestors and go on worshipping the family gods and the rupees, and take pride in the blessing of the saints. Sai Samartha has kindly revived the spirit of Bhakti in you, cultivate it to your benefit." Hearing the remarks of the mother, Mr. Pitale was very much delighted. He came to know and was convinced about the all-pervasiveness of Baba and the significance of His darhsan. Then onwards, he became very careful about his conduct.

Mr. Ambadekar

Mr. Gopal Narayan Ambadekar of Poona was a devotee of Baba. He served for ten years in the Abkari department¹ in the Thana district and in Javhar state, from where he had to retire. He tried to get some other job but he did not succeed. He was overtaken by other calamities and his condition grew from bad to worse. He passed 7 years in this condition, visiting Shirdi every year and placing his grievance before Baba. In 1916, his plight became worst and he decided to commit suicide in Shirdi. So he came there with his wife and stayed for two months. One night while sitting in a bullock cart in front of Dixit Wada he resolved to end his life by throwing himself into a well close-by. But Baba wished to do something else. A few paces from this place there was a hotel and its proprietor Mr. Sagun, a devotee of Baba, came out and accosted him thus : "Did you ever read Akkalkot Maharaj's life?" Ambadekar took this book from Sagun and began to read it. Casually,

1. Abkari department – Excise deptt.

or we may say providentially he came across a story, which was to this effect; during the life time of Akkalkot Maharaj, a certain devotee suffered very much from an incurable disease and when he could no longer endure the agony and pain, he became desperate and in order to end his miseries threw himself one night into a well. Immediately, the Maharaj came there and took him out with his own hands and advised him thus : **“You must bear the fruit-good or bad-of your past actions; if it is incomplete, suicide won’t help you. You have to take another birth and suffer again; so instead of killing yourself, why not suffer for some time and finish up the fruit of your past deeds and be done with it once and for all?”**

Reading this appropriate and timely story, Ambadekar was much surprised, and moved. Had he not got Baba’s hint through the story, he would have been no more. On seeing Baba’s all-pervasiveness and benevolence, his faith in Him was confirmed and he became a staunch devotee. His father was a devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj and Sai Baba wanted him to walk in his father’s footsteps and continue his devotion to Him. He then got Sai Baba’s blessings and his prospects began to improve. He studied astrology and gained proficiency in it, and thereby improved his lot. He was able to earn sufficient money and passed his later-life in ease and comfort.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all