



CHAPTER XXVII

Favour shown by giving Bhagwat and Vishnu-sahastra-naam – Dixit's Vitthal Vision – Gita Rahasya – Khapardes

This chapter describes how Sai Baba favoured His devotees by granting them religious books, after he had touched and consecrated them, for paraayan (reading regularly) and certain other matters.

Preliminary

When a man takes a plunge into sea he gets the merit of bathing in all the tirthas and sacred rivers. Similarly, when a man takes refuge at the feet of the Sadguru, he gets the merit of bowing to the Trinity, i.e., Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh and also Para-Brahma. Victory be unto Shri Sai, the wish-fulfilling tree and the ocean of knowledge, who gives us self-realization. Oh Sai, create in us reverence for Your stories. Let the readers and audience devour them with the same relish, with which the chatak bird drinks the water from the clouds and becomes happy. While listening to Your stories, let them and their families get all the true and pious emotions, viz. let their bodies perspire, let their eyes be full of tears, let their breath be steady, let their minds be composed, let their hair stand on end, let them cry, sob and quiver, let their hostilities vanish. When these things happen, that is a sign of the grace of the Guru, dawning upon them. When these emotions grow in you, the Guru is most pleased, and will certainly lead you on the path of self-realization. The best way therefore, to get free from the shackles of Maya, is our complete and whole-hearted surrender to Baba. The Vedas cannot take you across the ocean of Maya. It is only the Sadguru who can do so, and make you see the God in all creatures.

Granting Consecrated Book

The various methods of imparting instructions, followed by Baba have already been noticed in the previous chapters. In this we shall deal with one aspect of it. It was the habit of some devotees to take to Baba some religious books, of which they wanted to make a special study and to receive the same back from Him, after they were touched

and consecrated by Him. While reading such books daily, they felt that, Baba was with them. Once Kaka Mahajani came to Shirdi with a copy of Eknathi Bhagwat. Shama took this book to read in the Masjid. There Baba took it from him, touched it and turning some pages here and there, gave it back to Shama and asked him to keep it with him. When Shama said that it belonged to Kaka and had to be returned to him, "No, no," replied Baba. "As I have given it to you, you better keep it, it will be of use to you." In this way many books were entrusted to Shama. Kaka Mahajani after a few days, came again with another copy of the same Bhagwat and gave it in Baba's hand. Then Baba gave it back as Prasad and asked him to preserve it well, and assured him that, it would stand him in good stead. Kaka accepted it with reverence.

Shama and Vishnu-sahasra-naam

Shama was a very intimate devotee of Baba and Baba wanted to favour him in a particular way by giving him a copy of Vishnu-sahasra-naam, as Prasad. This was done in the following way; once a Ramadas (follower of the Saint Ramadas) came to Shirdi and stayed there for some time. The routine he followed daily was as follows; he got up early in the morning, washed his face, bathed and then after wearing saffron-coloured clothes and besmearing himself with sacred ashes, read Vishnu-sahasra-naam (a book giving a thousand names in praise of Vishnu and held second in importance to Bhagwad Gita) and Adhyatma Ramayan (Esoteric version of Rama's story) with faith. He read these books very often. After some days, Baba thought of favouring and initiating Shama with Vishnu-sahasra-naam. He therefore called the Ramadas to Him and said to him that, He was suffering from intense stomach-pain and unless He took Sennapods (Sona-mukhi, a mild purgative drug) the pain would not stop; so he should please go to the bazaar (market) and bring the drug. The Ramadas closed his book and went to the bazaar. Then Baba came from His seat, to Ramdas's place of reading and took out the copy of Vishnu-sahasra-naam and after coming back to His seat said to Shama, "Shama, this book is very valuable and efficacious, so, I present it to you, you read it. Once I suffered intensely and My heart began to palpitate and My life was in danger. At that critical moment I hugged this book to My heart, and then Shama, what a relief it gave me! I thought that, Allah Himself came down and saved Me. So I give this to you, read it slowly, little by little, read daily one name at least and it will do you good." Shama replied,

that he did not want it and that the owner of it, the Ramadasi, who was a bad tempered, obstinate and irritable fellow would certainly pick up a quarrel with him; besides, being a rustic himself, he could not read distinctly the Sanskrit (Devanagari script) text of the book.

Shama thought that Baba wanted to set him up against the Ramadasi by this act of His, but he had no idea, what Baba felt for him. Baba must have thought to tie this necklace of Vishnu-sahasra-naam round the neck of Shama, as he was an intimate devotee, though a rustic; and thus, save him from the miseries of worldly existence. **The efficacy of God's name is well-known. It saves us from all sins and bad tendencies, frees us from the cycle of births and deaths. There is no easier Sadhana than this. It is the best purifier of our mind. It requires no paraphernalia and no restrictions. It is so easy and so effective.** This Sadhana, Baba wanted Shama to practise, though he did not crave for it. So Baba forced this on him. It is also reported that long ago, Eknath Maharaj, similarly forced this Vishnu-sahasra-naam on a poor brahmin neighbour and thus saved him. The reading and study of this Vishnu-sahasra-naam is a broad open way of purifying the mind and hence, Baba thrust this on His devotee, Shama.

The Ramadasi returned soon with the Senna-pods. Anna Chincharikar, who was then present and wanted to play the part of Narad (the Celestial Rishi, who was well-known for setting up confrontations between gods and demons and vice versa), informed him of what had happened. The Ramadasi at once flared up. He came down at once on Shama with full fury. He said that it was Shama, who set Baba to send him away, under the pretext of stomach-ache, for bringing the medicine and thus took away the book. He began to scold and abuse Shama and remarked that if the book was not returned, he would dash his head . Shama calmly remonstrated with him but in vain. Then, Baba spoke kindly to him as follows : "Oh Ramadasi, what is the matter with you? Why are you so turbulent? Is not Shama our boy? Why do you scold him unnecessarily. How is it that you are so quarrelsome? Can you not speak soft and tender words? You read these sacred books daily and still your mind is agitated and your passions uncontrolled. What sort of a Ramadasi are you! You ought to be indifferent to all things. Is it not strange that you should possess this book so strongly? A true Ramadasi should have no 'Mamata' (attachment), but have

'Samata' (equality) towards all. You are now quarrelling with Shama, for a mere book. Go take your seat, books can be had in plenty with money, but not men; think well and be considerate. What worth is your book? Shama had no concern with it. I took it up Myself and gave it to him. You know it by heart. I thought Shama might read it and benefit thereby, and so I gave it to him."

How sweet were these words of Baba! soft, tender and nectar-like. Their effect was wonderful. The Ramadasi calmed down and said to Shama that he would take 'Panch-ratni Gita' in return. Shama was much pleased and said, "Why one, I shall give ten copies in return."

So the matter was ultimately settled. The question for consideration is 'Why should the Ramadasi press for Pancha-ratni Gita, a book, for which he never cared to know and why should he, who daily read religious books in the Masjid in front of Baba, quarrel with Shama before Him?' We do not know how to apportion the blame and whom to blame. We only say that, had this incident not happened, the importance of the subject, the efficacy of God's name and the significance of Vishnu-sahasra-naam would not have been brought home to Shama. So we see that Baba's method of teaching and initiating, was unique. In this case, Shama did gradually study the book and mastered its contents to such an extent that he was able to explain it to Professor G.G. Narke, M.A., of the College of Engineering, Poona, the son-in-law of Shriman Buti and a devotee of Baba.

Vitthal Vision

One day while Kakasaheb Dixit was in meditation, after his morning bath in his Wada at Shirdi, he saw a vision of Vitthal. When he went to see Baba afterwards, Baba asked him, "Did Vitthal Patil come? Did you not see Him? He is very elusive, hold Him fast otherwise, He will give you the slip and run away." Then at noon, a certain hawker came there with 20 or 25 pictures of Vitthal of Pandharpur, for sale. Mr. Dixit was surprised to see that the form of Vitthal, he saw in his meditation, exactly tallied with that in the picture, and he was also reminded of Baba's words. He, therefore, bought one picture most willingly and kept it in his shrine for worship.

Gita Rahasya

Baba always loved those, who studied Brahma-vidya (metaphysics) and encouraged them. To give an instance, once Bapusaheb Jog received a post-parcel. It contained a copy of Gita Rahasya by Lokamanya Tilak. Taking it under his armpit he came to the Masjid and prostrated before Baba, when the parcel fell at Baba's Feet. Baba enquired what it was. It was opened then and there, and the book was placed in Baba's hand. He turned some pages here and there for a few minutes and took out a rupee from His pocket, placed it on the book and handed the same with the rupee to Jog and said to him, "Read this completely and you will be benefitted."

Mr. and Mrs. Khaparde

Let us close this chapter with a description of the Khapardes. Once Dadasaheb Khaparde came with his family and lived in Shirdi for some months. (The diary of his stay has been published in English in the Shri Sai Leela Magazine, I Volume.) Dadasaheb was not an ordinary man. He was the affluent and the most famous advocate of Amaravati (Berar) and was a member of the council of state, Delhi. He was intelligent and a very good speaker. Still he dared not open his mouth before Baba. Most devotees spoke and argued with Baba off and on but only three, viz. Khaparde, Noolkar and Buti, kept always silent. They were meek, modest, humble and good-natured. Dadasaheb, who was able to expound Panchadashi (Well-known Sanskrit treatise on the Adwait Philosophy by the famous Vidyananya) to others, uttered no word, when he came to the Masjid before Baba. A man, however learned he may be even in Vedas, fades away before one, who has realized Brahma and becomes one with it. Learning cannot stand before self-realization. Dadasaheb stayed for four months but Mrs. Khaparde stayed for seven. Both were highly pleased with their Shirdi stay. Mrs. Khaparde was faithful and devout, and loved Baba deeply. Every noon she brought naivaidya herself, to the Masjid and after it was accepted by Baba, she used to return and take her meals. On seeing her steady and firm devotion, Baba wanted to exhibit it to others. One noon she brought a dish containing Sanza (wheat-pudding), purees, rice, soup, and Kheer (sweet rice) and other sundry articles to the Masjid. Baba Who usually waited for hours, got up at once, went up to His seat and removing the cover from the dish, began to partake of the things zealously. Shama

then asked Him, "Why this partiality? At times You throw away dishes of others, and do not care to look at them; but this appeals to You earnestly. Why is the dish brought by this lady so sweet? This intrigues us." Baba then explained, "This food is really extra-ordinary. In former birth this lady was a merchant's fat cow yielding much milk. Then, she disappeared and took birth in a gardener's family, then in a Kshatriya family and married a merchant. Then she was born in a Brahmin family. I saw her after a very long time, let Me take some sweet morsels of love from her dish." After saying this, Baba did full justice to her dish, washed his mouth and hands, belched out as He was fully satisfied and resumed His seat. Then, she bowed down and began to shampoo Baba's Legs and He began to talk with her and knead her arms which were shampooing His Legs. On seeing this reciprocal service, Shama began to joke and said, "It is going on well, it is a wonderful sight to see God and His bhakta serving each other." After being pleased with her sincere service, Baba asked her in low and fascinating tone to chant 'Rajaram, Rajaram' then and always and said, "If you do this, your life's object will be achieved, your mind will attain peace and you will be immensely benefitted." To persons unfamiliar with spiritual matters, this might appear as a polite zesture, but really it was not so. It was a case of what is technically called, 'Shakti-paat', i.e. transference of power from the Guru to the disciple. How effective were Baba's words! In an instant they pierced her heart and remained there.

This case illustrates the nature of the relations, that should subsist between the Guru and the disciple. Both should love and serve each other, as One. There is no distinction nor any difference between them. Both are One, and one cannot live without the other. The disciple placing his head at the Guru's feet is a gross or outward vision; really and internally they are both One and the same. Those who see any difference between them, are yet unripe and not perfect.

Bow to Shri Sai – Peace be to all