

4. Sai, the Saviour of the Ganesh Murti

Live Experiences of the Tarkhad Family with Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi

"Om Sainathaya Namaha."

In the Sandalwood Mandir there is also one small marble Murti. of Lord Ganesh. This is a unique Murti as the Lord's Trunk is turned towards his right. The Murti is placed on a silver shrine. Separately made for the same. The story of the Ganesh Murti is very interesting and therefore I feel like stating the same for you all readers. Of course the existence of the Ganesh Murti is for such a long time, the credit goes to Shirdi Sai Baba, which I will now narrate to you all.

My grandfather use to pay visit to an antique shop near Regal Theatre in Mumbai. On one such visit, while going round the shop he heard an English gentleman bargaining with the shopkeeper. My grandfather was rather curious that an English gentleman was bargaining so he took an active interest in the same. The bargain was for a beautiful marble Murti of Lord Ganesh. It was 9 inch tall sitting in a lotus flower and painted very appropriately in various colors. The shopkeeper was asking for Rs.15/-and was giving the justification that it is from Somnath Temple and very antique hence the price tags. The English gentleman had started the offer with Rs.5/- and then went on to Rs.8/-. My grandfather now got attracted towards that deal, He inquired with the Englishman, out of sheer curiosity as to what he intend to do with the Murti. The Englishman replied that the beautiful marble stone he would use as a paperweight on his desk. On hearing that my grandfather became very angry. He took out Rs.100/-note from his wallet and gave it to the shopkeeper. He told him to take Rs80/- (i.e. ten times the offer of the Englishman) and pack the Murti for him. He declared that he would not allow his God to be used as paperweight to anyone. On further inquiry with the shopkeeper he learnt that the Murti was from the main entrance gate of the Somnath Temple and hence very antique. On reaching home he declared that he would wish to place the Murti in the Sandalwood Mandir so that along with Sai pooja it will also get worshiped which in any case is much better than being used Paperweight. The family members agreed with his suggestion. On opening the pack my grandmother realized that the Murti had a trunk turned on the right side and this type of Lord Ganesh (Siddhwnayaka) are generally not kept in the house for pooja as it calls for observance of very strict discipline in all household activities. They then consulted the priest who advised that they can worship the Murti on condition that every Ganesh Chaturthy day they will repaint the same and they can not perform the immersion of the same. Tarkhads were happy for such solution and on the following Ganesh Chaturthy day they brought a Silver Shrine for the Murti and consecrated the same ceremoniously in the Sandalwood Mandir. From then onwards on every Hartalika (one day prior to Ganesh Chaturthy day) my father would remove the old paint of the Murti with turpentine. Then give scent water bath to it,. Each one of us would participate in it and then repaint the same. On Ganesh Chaturthy day he would re consecrate it back on its Silver Shrine and we all would perform the pooja. I remember when I was young my school friends use to ask me whether we get Ganapati in our house. I use to tell them that our Ganapati is permanent. They would not understand me then. So Tarkhads were transformed from

Prarthanasamajist to Idol Worshipers.

This Ganesh Murti in our house was once put to an acid test by my grandmother. My grandfather who was well known in the textile industry got an assignment from Maharaja of Baroda to set up a textile mill in his state. They therefore shifted to Baroda and were given accommodation in a bungalow on the bank of a river. In one rainy season it rained heavily overnight and by the time it was morning their bungalow was under water. This was a new experience for them. My grandmother was scared as the water level was rising hour after hour. The steps to the bungalow were submerged in the water except the last step. My grandmother then brought a flat copper vessel and placed it on the last step. Then she lifted the "Vighnaharta" from the Silver Shrine and placed it in the copper vessel and declared that if the Murti submerges in the water then she would proceed to perform the immersion ceremony of Lord Ganesh in the same waters. Of course her solemn intentions were that Lord should save them from that dangerous situation. I think only the staunch devotees can dare to venture into such dare devil acts and possibly God likes them. The water level rose further and touched the copper vessel and stopped rising any further. After 3 to 4 hours later the water level receded and they were all happy. Their "Vighnaharta" had come to their rescue, as they desired. In that year they performed the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations for five days instead of one and half days.

I will proceed further to narrate one more incident about this Ganesh Murti. This incidence would throw some light on the title of this chapter. On one Hartalika day (incidentally dear readers my grandmother passed away on Hartalika day) while removing the old paint the part of the right hand of the Murti got dislocated from the elbow onwards. My father was very scared because as per Hindu religion one cannot worship damaged Murti. However by now it had become integral part of the family and they would be reluctant to part with it. They decided to go through the celebrations and then seek advice from Sai Baba. Thus they proceeded to Shirdi. Dear readers is it not an unfair act on their part? They had never involved Baba so far in their business of Lord Ganesh and now in times of distress they wanted his help. On that occasion when they were in Dwarkamai Baba was unusually silent with them. They had realized their mistake and were feeling guilty about not involving Baba from the beginning. They were internally seeking his pardon for it. They waited patiently. Then as the crowd in the Dwarkamai receded Baba called them near. He addressed "Oh mother in the event our son undergoes a fractured hand we do not throw him out of our house. On the contrary we feed him and nourish him well so that he reaches the manhood." No sooner they heard this, they instantly fell at his feet and profusely thanked him. Dear readers I do not find suitable words to describe Baba's wisdom.. He was really an "Antardnyani" in the true sense of the term so that he could read what is going on in your mind.

Great were those Baba's Leelas and great were these mother and son. This is how Baba saved the Ganesh Murti, which continues to be with the Tarkhad family for seeking their worship till date.

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