

Chapter 5 - Mahalasa - Importance Of Nama-Japa

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

Chapter 5

Mahalasa - Importance Of Nama-Japa

To be associated with God, “Nama” is the best instrument. Similarly in the vicinity of Saints and Vaishnavas one knows how to love God intensely. In short, (1) ‘Namasmaraṇa’ and (2) ‘Satsaṅg’ are the only two prominent paths to experience God and His Divine Love.

[1] Chanting the name of the Lord constantly and remembering Him at the same time,

[2] To remain in the company of Saints and God loving people.

Except for these two instruments others will lead to pain and agony. Jiva yearns for love; he wants love. Jiva is never isolated from God. One can experience God through Jiva only. God expresses Himself in diversity through Jivas. Jivan (Life) is like the Earth (Bhoomi). Bhoomi is already enriched with all essential ingredients. Life sprouts when it is necessary. When it does not germinate, it does not mean that the essential ingredients are absent. But it indicates that Jiva does not want them.

If the child is asked to choose between an ornament and a toy, it will definitely prefer a toy. It will show indifference towards ornaments, though they are more precious. Jiva behaves in the same way. He likes to be engrossed in Karmas (actions). Of course, pain and pleasure follow Karma and grow eventually. Then Jiva feels weary in engaging himself in Karma. Saints know that this process is bound to happen. To avoid this stage they have already suggested the above two paths. Namasmaraṇa and Satsaṅg. If Jiva adopts one of the two or both, he will be away from fatigue that comes due to Karma. His interest and inclination will then be towards love of God. To chant the name of God is to remember His love. When you remember Him, His love blossoms in your heart. You get pleasure of love. Through Satsaṅg, lamp of love is kindled in your mind. Then you need not climb the stairs of ‘Sadhana’ (Spiritual practice) step-by-step. As new lamp can be lighted from the first burning lamp, you can experience Chaitanya in the company of ‘Chaitanya’. This is Satsaṅg. We know, if one is in the company of addicted persons, he immediately becomes like them. Similarly Chaitanya directly affects your Chetana.

Satsaṅg and Namasmaraṇa are the only two aspects of Santa-Dharma. (Religion of Saints). Saint Dnyaneshwar has described and emphasized on these two, in his scripture, “Tirthawali”. He says Satsaṅg and Namasmaraṇa together make a highway to realization. This human body has been bestowed as a reward of meritorious deeds done by us in many lives. And to know our reality before death and merge in the supreme bliss is our sole duty. So we must sanctify every moment of our life in sacred thoughts, Satsaṅg and Namasmaraṇa. Namasmaraṇa is the easiest way to achieve the goal of life in this Kaliyug. After completing the scripture “Bhavartha Deepika” (i.e. Dnyaneshwari) saint Dnyaneshwar wrote a volume,

“Amrutanubhav” as suggested by his guru Nivrutti Nath. These two volumes are rather difficult for a commoner to digest. Therefore he wrote “Haripath” so that all could be benefited from it. Samarth Shirdi Sai Baba has given His precept through talking to common men in lighter mood. He was Parabrahma; so he was beyond Nama and Rupa. Only for the welfare of the devotees and common people He took on the form and the name. A close devotee, Mhalsapati was the first person to see Him and he called Him, “Aao Sai”. The same name was accepted by all the people from that very day. The word SAI includes two words; “SA + AAI.” The Marathi word Aai means mother. ‘Aai’ denotes ‘Sat-Pravrutti’, ‘Sad-Guru’ and ‘Paramatma’ (Pious attitude, Good Preceptor and God).

Prefix ‘SA’ means ‘with’ (SA= Sahit, in Marathi). So the word SAI means a person with all the pious attitudes of Aai concentrated in one. Soham represents Nirguna Nirakar’. (Attributeless and formless i.e. Paramatma) Similarly ‘Sai’ represents form taken by the attributes of ‘Aai’ (Mauli). Aai is the form of pure love. From Nirguna SAI came to Saguna for His devotees. Paramatma is Ananda-Swarupa. But He manifests through ‘Life’ He created. Thus Jiva and ‘Shiva’ (being and God), are interlinked from the time eternal. Jiva is created through Satya, Shiva and Ananda. Therefore Jiva strives for Ananda and seeks for it in both, the world and the highest truth (Prapancha and Almighty).

Importance of Namasmarana is beyond description. Great saint Narada had given the ‘Mantra’ (incantation) to Valya Koli. When the letters in word ‘Rama’ were interchanged, the word so formed was ‘Mara’ (as is written in Marathi) which means ‘Die’. But chanting continuously ‘Mara’ becomes ‘Rama’, the name of the God. Thus Valya Koli unknowingly uttered God’s name. But still the effect of Nama had to happen. God was pleased with the chanting of the name and Valya Koli became Valmiki Rishi, Namasmarana gives the fruits in whatever way you adopt it.

Sai Rama, Krishna, Hari... all these names are of the same Lord who has kindled Jivan-Jyoti in Jiva. Sai Baba in Shirdi is waiting for His devotees. Through His Leelas He is highlighting the importance of Nama in this Kali-Age. In Shirdi, there was a woman beggar, who was not completely insane but not normal also. At a very young age she was married to Namdev Sawant. Nobody knew more about her. She had no relatives. She used to be on pilgrimage constantly, travelling from one place to another, namely Pandharpur, Jejuri, Alandi, Changdev Newase and many other places in Maharashtra. She came to Shirdi and became a devotee of Sai Baba. All the time she would chant ‘Shai Baba’. It was her favourite Japa, Mantra and Nama. She was nearly 70-75 years of age when she first came to Shirdi. She would collect all sorts of flowers and thread them into a garland (Mala) Baba. He therefore called her Mhali, who used to give Mala. She would everyday, offer Mala to Baba with love and devotion. Baba too used to accept the garland given by her. He would give her food; but never gave her money.

Her way of living was not at all decent. She covered her toes with rags, always wore an old, torn sari. She never combed her hair. She looked like a complete insane person. But at the same time she was a poetess! Mhali was very talkative also. She had composed a long poem titled “Deva Shai Baba” with many stanzas (She used to call Him “Shai Baba”). Many other poems about Pandurang, river Chandrabhaga and Sai were composed by her. The necessary inspiration and ability she must have got from the Namasmarana Bhakti. In her poetry “Deva Shai Baba” she had praised and prayed to Sai Baba in a language of pure love, using different metaphors mainly similia. She was not educated; she could not read or write. But her poetry was full of deep meaning.

Sai Baba had given advice to Mahalasa (Mhali). His words carried implied meaning. Some examples are given here. He said to her,

[1] I will see to your welfare (Indirectly He had told her that it was a reward of her love and devotion. And she had nothing to worry about)

[2] I will give you ornaments (Your merits are the real ornaments).

[3] One rupee (He had referred to Adwaita. i.e. Jiva has come from Shiva, from Truth, from Sai).

[4] Two rupees (Dwaita to enjoy bliss, Shiva has created Purusha and Prakriti. 'Ekoham Bahusyam' Desires took the form of Prakriti and Aham (Ego) turned into Purusha).

[5] Five rupees (Five elements).

[6] Do not indulge in Karma (Karma, Sadhana are not necessary)

[7] Chant the name of Sai Baba (Namasmarana will take you Realization).

If you have the only habit of chanting Nama, the senses will shrink and will not demand pleasures. Then the body will be under your control and Aham (I am the doer) will completely be uprooted. Duality will dissolve and only oneness will remain. The six enemies, desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and jealousy will be under your command and the Paramatma will be with you. This is realization (AtmaDnyana). Fully contented and sunk in the Love, Jiva enjoys ultimate bliss. The God is beyond Dhyana and Dnyana. (Meditation and knowledge). He is out of reach, also by Japa and Tapa. (Rotating rosary and penance) But one can achieve Him by constant Namasmarana. Intense allegiance is expressed through Nama. God does not expect anything else than Bhava, steadfast devotion. Saint Dnyaneshwar says, for Deva, (God) there are Vedas (pristine scriptures) and for Jiva there is Deva. Jiva must keep singing the Nama through which God can surely be attained.

Sai Baba has given this experience to many of His devotees, who ceaselessly utter His name. The importance and magnitude of Nama is thus proven by Baba Himself. Through Nama, full moon of peace rises on the horizon of human life. Atmasukh and Premsohala (Realization and Divine Love) can be experienced through Namasmarana.

Meanings of some of the verses from Poetry "Deva Shai Baba" by Mahalasa are as follows:

1. Oh Baba, You are omnipotent; I am Your daughter. I offer my respect and surrender at Your Lotus-feet. Just glance at me once.
2. Sai Baba, I have love and devotion for You. I am grateful that You have blessed me.
3. I can see the abode of Sai from here. He distributes Pedhas (sweets) from a silver plate in His hand.
4. See, the masjid Dwarkamai, is so crowded! Why there is so much excitement? Oh, the police officer has come by in horsecart, for His darshan.
5. With a Ghatam ('Ghagar' earthen pot of water) I am walking fast, with anger. God Baba is following me, to console me.
6. Shirdi is a sacred town (as Baba stays here). I would like to be a broom to clean this pious land, as noble people and Saints often visit this place.

7. Sai Baba has always given me a support in my pain and agony. He has blessed me with moments of happiness.

8. Town Shirdi has earned fame because of God Sai Baba who fulfills the vow taken by His devotees.

9. Sai Baba takes bath in sun rays (Open air). There is big silver bowl (Ghangal) for His bath water.

10. God Sai Baba is very compassionate and good hearted. He gives legs to them who are lame and eyes to them who are blind.

We find that Mahalasa's language is not pure; her poetry has no perfect metre, nor rhythm. There are no metaphors. But her simple words of pure love and devotion are present in every single line. This makes her poetry worth reading.

END OF CHAPTER 5

The Story of the Cover Page Portrait of Lord Sai Baba

Mr. Madhusudan D. Kambali was one of the wellknown painters who painted a portrait of Lord Sai Baba on canvas and kept it in his studio. One night Lord Sai Baba appeared in his dream and directed him to hand over this portrait to Dr. Keshav Gawankar at his dispensary at Chinchpokali. The next day Mr. M. D. Kambali went as directed and when he met Dr. Gawankar, handed him the portrait but refused to accept any payment because it was Baba's dictum. The portrait thus remained at Dr. Gawankar's dispensary for a few days, Mr. M. D. Kambali paid another visit to Dr. Gawankar's dispensary and directed him to make a frame and install the portrait of Lord Sai Baba at his residence as he was instructed by Lord Sai Baba to convey the same.

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