

Chapter 6 - Thirst For God Realization

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

CHAPTER 6

THIRST FOR GOD-REALIZATION

God revealed Himself in Shirdi to give darshan of His splendour to His devotees. He adopted a Saguna-Sakar-Swarup to give them Anand (bliss). But if the mind is clean, pure and sacred then and only then, you can experience that bliss. God was waiting for His devotees to come to Shirdi. without devotees He felt lonely. That is why he inspired Nanasaheb Chandorkar to come to Him. Since 1892 he kept coming to Baba, till His Samadhi-Kaal in 1918. He came and became His best devotee. So strong a hood and love he had for Baba that he was known as 'Bhaktaraj'. (King among the devotees).

Those days, Nana was a personal assistant to the Collector of Nagar District. Once Appa Kulkarni from Shirdi went to Nagar for his office work. Baba had given a message for Nana with him. Appa then found out, who the collector's PA was, and told him to come to Shirdi. But Nana refused to come. Again Baba sent the same message and again there was a negative response from Nana. It repeatedly happened 2-3 times. At last Nana decided to go and see Baba. But he had doubts in his mind. Is Baba really a saint or an ordinary fakir? Or a petty magician? He thought whatever He might be but he should not go with empty hands. Nana knew that his pockets were empty. When he put his hand in his pocket he found a small packet in which there were few almonds and some crystals of sugar. Nana was surprised and thought, Baba could be a Sadhu. He has arranged that I should offer Him something.

When he saw Baba's peaceful and radiant face he felt satisfied. By God's grace the sun had risen on the horizon of his life. Waves in the ocean of the mind became tranquil and he asked Baba with choked throat, "Baba, why have You called me?" Baba said in His style, "Are there only a handful of people in this world? I did not call any of them. As I have called only you, there must be some reason! Is it not so?"

Nana asked, "What is it, Baba?" Baba said, "This is not our first meeting, mind well. We were together in last four births! You do not know about it but I know. This is the reason; do you understand? Whenever free, keep coming here".

Nana answered positively. In this way Nana came in Baba's vicinity. He had full faith in Baba. Nana served Him without any expectation (Nishkama Seva). He not only served Sai Baba but everyone around also and thus lived in their hearts forever. He renovated Dwarkamai Masjid which was in a dilapidated condition. Nana Nimonkar, Kondaji and Tukaram were the carpenters who did the work for Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Second important job he did, was to spread Sai Baba's name and fame in Western Maharashtra with the help of Dasganu Maharaj. That way people of Mumbai came in contact with Baba. (Please Refer 'Shiladhi', a book by the same auth more information about Dwarkamai.)

After coming to Shirdi, Baba was staying always in the Masjid. It was a very small structure. It had a very small elevated surface (Otta) or a veranda and a small room beyond it, where Baba used to sit. There used to be a Dhuni, a fire-place, in which fire was burning for 24 hours. That Dhuni is kept on even today. The ash from that sacred fire, Udi, was like a Prasad for devotees. Baba used to put Udi on the forehead of the visitors who then withdrew with satisfaction. Nanasaheb had set a particular order of places of darshan. Devotees would first go to Samadhi place of Baba's Guru, under the Neem tree. Then circumambulating the place they would go for Baba's darshan. If devotees observe the same custom today also, it will be more appropriate. First they should go to Guru's Samadhi-place and then take darshan of the portrait of Sai Baba in Dwarkamai and then the darshan of His Samadhi in Butiwada which is now known as the Samadhi Mandir.

Nanasaheb had become an ardent devotee of Baba. Every moment he was linked to Baba. He felt that he had no existence without Baba. Nanasaheb had done his B.A. and started serving as a clerk in Mamlatdar's office at Sangamner. On promotion he was transferred to Nagar district. In 1892 became P.A. to the Collector of Nagar. That was the first time he met Baba. Serving in different posts in different cities, he became a Deputy Collector Pune in 1908. From 1909 to 1915 he worked in the same capacity at Thane district and then retired from the job. All through his life he worked for Baba. (Ref: Chapter 9 of this book.) In 1921 he left his mortal body at Baba's Lotus feet. Knowing his immense love and devotion, Baba also showered His grace on Nanasaheb and saved him from many calamities. God fulfills the desires of His devotees. That is why He is called 'Purnakama'. He shows His Leelas (Divine play), as per the liking of the devotee. Nanasaheb had experienced many such Leelas of Baba. One of them which is most significant is given below.

Nanasaheb's daughter was pregnant. She had come to her father's house for delivery. At the proper time she started getting labour-pains. Even after severe pains there was no progress. A nurse and a 'Vaidya' (a doctor practicing Ayurved), could not relieve her. The family members started praying 'Navachandi Hawan' (ritual of sacred fire) and chanting of Saptashati Path were started as a part of the prayer. But the patient was not relieved. Nanasaheb was praying fervently to Baba to help his beloved daughter, Mainatai. He was sure that if he gets the Udi and Aarti, his daughter would get respite. His tremendous faith was giving him support. He prayed, "Oh Lord, Oh Sai Ram of Shirdi, oh Megh-Shyama, Your Leelas are incredible. You are not a human being, but God Almighty. You are Vitthuraya of Pandharpur. To me You are the only hope. Baba, come quickly; rush to help me".

Saint Dnyaneshwar has said, "Hari is most beautiful in this world. Whatever beauty, goodness, glamour, glory and splendour we see in this world is Him, His manifestation! All sweetness in this universe is nothing else but Hari. Take an example of mango fruit. Its sweetness is Hari. We like that alphonso mango because we find Hari in it. And we are the fragment of the same Hari. So we enjoy the experience of meeting the Self through that sweetness. Sweetness is Brahma and the outer fruit is the Universe. Sweetness is the Truth and the world is a delusion. For giving the sweet experience to His devotees God is Brahma-Swarupa". Nana further prayed, "Oh, Sai-deva, You are the caretaker of the orphans, the tortured and the sufferers. If You come late I will be no more". Thus he was invoking Sai Baba. With these strong vibrations from Nanasaheb, Sai God was moved and His love for the devotee turned into action.

Sai Baba, in Shirdi, called for Ramgiri Buwa (Bapugir). He hailed from Khandesh. He had come to Shirdi for Baba's darshan and wanted to go back with His permission. Jamner, where Nana

was residing, was on his way home. Baba told him, "Bapu, you can go home now. But take a break on your way. Go to Jamner, to Nana's house. Just see to his welfare and then you can proceed further". Baba turned to Madhavrao Deshpande and said, "Shamya, you know the full text of Aarti written by Madhav Adkar; don't you?" When Shama nodded Baba added, "Copy it on a piece of paper and give it to Bapu for Nana". Baba also gave two packets of Udi to Bapugir, one for himself and one for Nana. He asked to deliver the packet and the Aarti-text to Nana at Jamner. Bapugir said awkwardly, "Baba, I have only two rupees in my pocket. How could I go to Jamner?" Baba assured him saying, "Do not worry. Everything will be smooth and comfortable". Then Bapugir left Shirdi without any hesitation or doubt in his mind.

Those days, there was no railway to Jamner. One had to get down at Jalgaon and then go to Jamner by hiring a bullock cart or other such rural vehicle. Out of two rupees, Bapugir spent one rupee and fourteen annas as a fare to Jalgaon. Thus only two annas were left (16 annas – 1 rupee, in old currency). It was not possible for him to hire any vehicle. Late in the night, the train reached Jalgaon. Bapugir was confused, not knowing what he should do. Just then he heard a call from a person, "Who is Bapugir coming from Shirdi"? "Yes, I am Bapugir" Saying so he strolled forward. The stranger asked to follow. With him Bapugir boarded the 'tonga' (Horse driven cart.) The stranger was riding the cart. Jamner was about 54 kilometers from Jalgaon. Bapugir observed that the stranger was well built, and was having a beard a moustache. The tonga also was in good condition. The horse was pulling cart very fast. They travelled the whole night and came to a stop early morning for a little rest. The stranger, who looked like an army soldier, took out some eatables, fruits and water. He requested Bapugir to share. Thinking that he might be a Muslim, Bapugir hesitated to eat and tried to avoid. The stranger recognized what was going on in the traveller's mind. He said, "Do not suspect; I am a Hindu, Garewal, Kshatriya, Rajput. Nana has sent this for you". Then Bapugir felt relaxed. Both of them finished eating and resumed the journey. At the day-break they came near Jamner. They saw the building which was Nanasaheb's office, Mamlatdar Kacheri. Bapugir asked the rider to stop the tonga and he went little away from the road side for emptying his bladder. When he turned back, there was no tonga, no horse or no soldier. Where could have everything gone? Bapugir thought, "How could he leave me and go like this?"

Surprised, Bapugir started walking towards Nana's office which he had seen from a distance. It was closed but a person gave him Nana's home address. Finally he reached Nanasaheb's house. He gave Udi and the Aarti text to Nana, who was overwhelmed by Baba's grace. Immediately he asked his wife to apply Udi to their daughter and to give it mixed with water, for drinking. Mainatai was still in labour. Nanasaheb lighted a ghee lamp (Niranjan) and started singing the Aarti before Baba's photo. Bapugir then asked Nana, "Where is the tonga and the rider, whom you sent to Jalgaon station, for me? I must thank you for sending him there". Nanasaheb was confused. He asked with surprise, "Which tonga? I did not send anybody. Even, I was not aware that you were coming. Then how could I send a tonga?" Within a moment both of them understood what had happened. Bapugir told Nana every detail about how he reached Jamner. They were in tears of gratitude. It was nothing but Leela of Sai Baba Who could do anything for His dear devotees.

Every small happening in above event has been confirmed and found true. Madhavrao Deshpande, Deo (Baba's Bal), Advocate Dhumal from Nasik, Prof. Narke (M.A., M.Sc.) from Pune had interviewed Ramgir Buwa Gosan and Nana's elder son Vasudeo. So there does not remain any chance for doubts about this miracle. At present, when Baba is not in His body,

His Udi bring about many miracles. Baba still appears physically and gives darshan to His devotees. (Experience of the author is given in Chapter One of this book)

The above event proves that Baba was and is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. It confirms that Baba was and is 'Purna-Brahma'. Earlier, Saints Namdeo and Gaurang Prabhu had tasted the 'Prasadam' of Prema-Bhava (Love) towards God. They had shared it with many devotees. Nanasaheb Chandorkar too was fortunate to experience the love of Lord Sai Baba. Nanasaheb had immense love for Baba. He had an obsession for His Bhagwan. Seeing his "Ananya-Bhakti" (unwavering faith) Baba always rushed to his help whenever he needed it. Once Nanasaheb fell ill because of a big abscess on the buttock. He tried many remedies but to no avail. For any matter of complaint, big or small, Nana used to go to his 'Supreme Court', Baba. But then he had determined, "This time I will not trouble Baba and ask for comfort. Come what may."

He started taking treatment from a doctor as well as from a vaidya. But there was no relief. Finally the decision of surgery was taken. Nana was to be taken to Mumbai for the operation. He was extremely scared of surgery. Because of the insistence of his friends and unbearable pain he somehow made up his mind. When he was examined by the doctor from Mumbai, Nanasaheb was clearly told that the surgery was quite risky as the abscess had grown big and was deep rooted. The doctor promised to come back the next day.

Nana prayed to Baba intensely before going to bed. He kept Baba's photograph near his head. He was more or less sure that he was close to death. The surgeon came next day with all the preparations for the surgery. Nana's pain, and fear were at their peak. Few minutes before the operation there happened a miracle. Nanasaheb was sleeping on the stomach and the back was towards the ceiling. By coincidence a piece of broken earthen tile (Koul, in Marathi, used to cover the roof), fell exactly and directly on the abscess and it was instantly punctured. Flow of infected blood and pus started oozing out. Nanasaheb felt extremely relieved. Seeing what had happened, the surgeon then declared that no surgery was needed. After providing a simple medical help the surgeon left the place.

A few days later, after recovery, Nanasaheb came to Shirdi and went to Dwarkamai for Baba's darshan. Baba said, "You had determined not to trouble Me. But finally I had to intervene. I had to reach to the abscess and puncture it." Nanasaheb was very happy when Baba confirmed His intervention as he had prayed for. His eyes were full of tears. He thought "Baba is not merely his Guru but He was his "Guru-Maa' (Mother). Her compassion is boundless and Her power is beyond imagination. Unbelievable is the Leela of The Lord and incredible is the loyalty of the devotee.

END OF CHAPTER 6

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