

Chapter 9 - Dissemination

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

CHAPTER 9

Dissemination

Love is the embodiment of Ananda, Bliss. Heart of a devotee gets filled to the brim with love for the Lord; bliss overflows and the devotee floats in Anand Loka. Kirtan-NamasanKirtan (to sing and describe the glory of the Lord) brings us the bliss. In the ninth chapter of Bhagwad-Gita, verses (shlokas) 13 to 34", described the grandeur of knowledge and devotion (Dnyana and Bhakti), by Lord Krishna. He says, "Those who do Bhakti after Dnyana (Realization), never deviate from Me and it is called Ananya-Bhakti (Umwavering total devotion)".

KirtanBhakti and NamaBhakti have been adopted and still observed in Varkari Sampradaya (Varkari denomination/sect) of Pandharpur. Dancing while singing the Name, chanting "RAMA-KRISHNA-HARI" and discourses on spiritual subjects are the different aspects of Kirtan-Bhakti. It brings all the common people together. It helps them to forget the worldly pains and purify themselves. This gives happiness not only to the orators but also to the listeners.

Saint Dnyaneshwar has also glorified the Kirtan-Bhakti. Bhagwan Krishna says, "May be, you will not find Me in Vaikunth, or in Surya-Loka or even in the minds of Yogis. But wherever My devotees are singing My name I am surely present there". True devotees do not expect any worldly gain or benefit or name, fame and status; They do not desire even the pleasure of this Loka or heaven. They are just fully immersed in devotion (Bhakti), dancing and singing the name of Almighty. Devotion itself is their sole pleasure. For them, Moksha, their ultimate desire, also becomes secondary. Knowledge, devotion and morality in their fullest sense are found only in such devotees, described above.

Kirtans and Pravachans were the two effective devices for propagating Hindu Dharma. And the agents were the Kirtankar and Pravachanakar. (Those who form Kirtan, Pravachan, and tell the stories from Mythology.) They were good performers. They used to narrate the biographies of great Saints, Mahatmas, National figures and all deities in an interesting manner and focus attention of common people towards goodness in the world. That way they were educating the people in all aspects, worldly, political, scientific and spiritual. They are the real Gurus (preceptors) of the society. Therefore Kirtan Pravachan are very important among the performing arts, which not only entertain but educate and help to elevate people's lives. In our culture 'Kirtan Sanstha' is quite an old entity and Kirtan-Pravachan are our old traditions.

Shivaji Maharaj had a special interest for both. Listening to the great sacred scriptures from the Puranik has definitely influenced Shivaji Maharaj's achievements and contribution in the annals of history.

Today the Kirtan-Sanstha has become very insignificant because of the negligence of the society. Common people are turning their back towards this art. Scarcity of good 'Haridas' (Kirtankar) is also one of the main reasons for people's indifference. Of course vice-versa of the above statement is also true. Kirtankar do not get any encouragement or status in the society, nor are they respected as they should be. However there are exceptions to it, like Dasganu Maharaj, J. Patwardhan, Sonopant Dandekar, Dhunda Maharaj and so on.

Dasganu Maharaj

(Ganpat Dattatreya Sahastrabuddhe)

Dasganu Maharaj was a very good poet. He used to write "Lavanis" for Tamasha, a folk dance of Maharashtra. Nanasaheb Chandorkar took him to Sai Baba for the first time. Together they propagated Baba's teachings, His magnitude and His Avatarhood. At the beginning Baba was famous upto Pune, Nagar, Sholapur; but He was little known in Konkan and Mumbai region. Dasganu Maharaj did the job of spreading Baba's name and fame with full devotion and vigour. Once Baba told him, "Ganu, you call the modern personalities. Nana will manage further things".

Not knowing, what exactly Baba meant by His words, Dasganu asked Kakasaheb Dixit about it. He said, "Baba wants you to write the biographies of the modern age Saints. Nanasaheb will look after the printing etc".

Dasganu was not sure that he could do that job. With a complex in mind, he went to Dwarkamai to see Baba. He prostrated at Baba's feet and said, "Please forgive me, Baba. But You know I am an illiterate person. How can I do this big job?"

Baba said, "Nothing I will listen to. Take a paper and a pen, and start writing. I know you can do it. Take this Udi, go and start." Thus Baba blessed him.

Taking it as Baba's order, Dasganu wrote a number of books which include biographies of different Saints and scripts on many subjects which were useful for Kirtans.

Besides these books, he has also written three important books, 'Santa Kathamrut', 'Bhakti-Leelamrut' and 'Bhakti-Saramrut'. In all these scriptures, he has described and sung the glory of Sai Baba.

Though Dasganu Maharaj was staying in this mundane world, constantly used to be in the state of the of contemplation of God. He tried to explain the spiritual things that were not very easily comprehensible to a common man. in most simple way. He looked equally upon the people. He always remained contemplating upon Parabrahma.

Dasganu Maharaj spread Baba's teachings very effectively. Most of the time used he to be out of Shirdi. Going from town to town he brought many people on the path of devotion. To convince people about Baba's greatness, to create curiosity Him and inspire them to love Baba, through his Kirtans, was the prime aim of his life, and he considered it as his sacred duty. He was a good poet. His kirtans used to be very interesting and captivating. During his performance, he used to get immersed totally in the flow of devotion and he would spellbound his audience in the same flowing 'river or devotion'. In this manner he awakened the people and led them to the path of spirituality. He had full support of Baba's blessings.

Damodar Vaman Athavale (Damu Anna), too was Baba's devotee who used to accompany Dasganu Maharaj in Kirtan. He had a very sweet voice. His singing brought liveliness to the

Kirtans.

DamuAnna hailed from Konkan. Because of poverty he shifted to Kalyan. Nanasaheb Chandorkar gave him patronage. Previously Dasganu alone used to perform Kirtans. But Chandorkar thought that DamuAnna's accompaniment would add to its virtue. And it did so happen. As stated above, he had sweet voice and he was handsome too. His personality was fit for acting in theatre. But destiny had planned otherwise and he came to Nanasaheb. It was Nana's idea to bring Dasganu and DamuAnna together. He had imagined that this combination would add colours to the Kirtans and the dissemination of teachings of Baba would be more effective. Really it was just sugar added to pure milk.

Damu Anna was very good at Marathi language. His hand-writing was also very nice. He had learnt little Sanskrit too. He had a retentive memory. All scripts and poetry written by Dasganu, were memorised easily by him. He had written poems and songs about Baba. DamuAnna's (Anant Swami) is now taking the Kirtan tradition further.

Dasganu had portrayed the biographies of many Saints by his blessed poetry. I, the author of this book, (Dr. Gawankar) was fortunate to have an opportunity of listening to it from this great poet himself. His poetry was like a spontaneous stream springing from the heart, quenching the thirst and leaving people happy and pleased. Sometimes I had experienced a feeling, as if I were drowned and lost in the ocean of bliss.

Baba had asked Dasganu to follow the tradition of Naradiya-Kirtan'. One day he went to see Baba, in usual dress code of Kirtankar. (Angarakha, Uparne and Pheta) Baba did not approve it at all. He said, "Why do you dress like this when you follow Naradiya tradition? Go and change it." Dasganu politely acted according to His orders. He placed the dress at Baba's Lotus feet. Wherever, Dasganu performed he attracted large crowd. In 1916, Sai Baba Himself put a garland around Dasganu's neck on Ram-Navami-day. It was a sign of honour given by Him for the noble work he was doing.

Anant Damodar Athavale was Dasganu's disciple. He took the tradition of Kirtan further. In present days also, water from the river Ganges is brought to the Samadhi place of Baba, at Shirdi where Kirtan is performed. The festival is really a worth-watching event. Shirdi Sansthan supervises the management. SanKirtan of Saints takes you to divine presumption. Affluence and grandeur of Sat-Chit-Anand is in the divine 'Nada' (Sound) of San-Kirtan. It also nourishes Yoga, Dharana, Sanyama (Control), and Sanghatana (Association).

Dasganu Maharaj had helped many to attain Samadhi-stage through his SanKirtan for which he stands apart from all other disciples of Baba. "Chant while working and work while chanting" was the easy string which could bind people together and each of them to God. In Bhagwat Dharma, there are three sources of experiencing love:

- 1] Devotion to Sai Vitthal.
- 2] Namasmaran (Constantly chanting God's name while visualising the form.)
- 3] Hari-Kirtan (Performing and listening to Kirtan with focused attention.)

Though these three appear to be different, in reality they are one and will take you to the same goal.

END OF CHAPTER 9

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