

CHAPTER XII

Baba's Teaching as to Siddhis

Baba had bhaktas at various stages of advancement, and he certainly knew at what stage and in what manner siddhis appeared. Baba gave some

advice to his bhaktas which might be recorded here. In the course of concentration on one's Guru or God or any other form of God, one gets more and more calm, placid, and in a certain number of cases, the latent powers of reflecting the minds of others, and the light of objects is spontaneously acquired. The first effect of such powers is to make a man proud and next full of desires for use of the powers to achieve earthly ends, and consequently tends to dip him deeper in the world of samsara and take him farther away from the main object of all sadhana, namely, God.

This is well known to students of Mahabharata Shanti Parva, where a certain sadhaka named Konganava acquired the power to use his glance as a terrible weapon by which he could burn up creatures or objects. Another acquired the immobility of body whereby birds in the air were induced to use tufted hair on his head as a place for building their nests. The latter was highly elated and jumped with joy that birds could nest in his head, and had to be taught later that this species of pride could only tend to degrade him and take him away from God. As for the former, Konganava, it is narrated that when he went under a tree to practise yoga, he saw a bird, up above him, and by darting a glance at it killed it and it fell down dead. Thinking no worse of himself for this performance, he proceeded as advised by a teacher, to two great jnanis so that he might learn jnana. One of these was a lady living with her husband and her children. When this Konganava arrived at her house, she took no note of him except bidding him 'be seated', and continued her anxious attendance on her husband and daily household duties. The man considered himself slighted and thinking very highly of himself on account of his powers, felt it was extremely improper on the part of that lady to treat him with such scant respect. While he was thinking so, the lady came near and he darted a fierce glance at her. At once the lady calmly asked 'O, Konganava, do you think I am the crane in the forest, that is, the crane which you killed in the forest?' The man was aghast. He could not imagine that a lady in a household could have the powers of knowing what happened to him and to the crane far away from her ken. He was duly humiliated by her utterance and then learnt that the duty a woman owed to her husband was primary, and those due to

guests, beggars, etc., were only secondary, and that a man who indulged in anger was far inferior to those who were able to keep their temper, and that the real end of life was to attain calmness by concentrating on God and one's primary duties with *anasakti* in a detached manner.

Corresponding to this there was a teaching by Baba, which we find in Baba's Charters & Sayings 338. A sishya of his, by pranayama and concentration, had developed clairvoyance. While he was in his puja room, he could see distinctly that his distant mill hidden away from his room by so many walls, streets, etc., was aflame. Naturally he felt exultant at the acquisition of this power. When his peon on his opening the door broke the news that his mill was on fire, he answered, 'Yes, I know it'. Some time later, this devotee went up to Shirdi along with his wife. Baba then addressed him 'Why are you gazing at the strumpet's performance? I can never exhibit tricks. It does not behove us to dally with a strumpet'. The wife understood nothing about Baba's references which were really to the meretricious attractions of siddhis acquired by pranayama. She thought that Baba referred to a fleshy concubine or a woman of the town. But the devotee fully understood that Baba referred to his being charmed by the acquisition of clairvoyant powers by the use of pranayama, and that Baba was giving him the warning which Gurus, as a rule, gave against people being carried away by Siddhis. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutra 52 and Sutra 38 the advice is given by the author of the Yoga Sutras that the ordinary worldly use of siddhi powers are really obstacles to Samadhi (which must of course be on God), though these powers are useful in the worldly state. This is expressed in Sutra 38, *Te samadhow Upasargah Vyuttane Siddhayah*.

Baba's Teaching as to Siddhis

Sutra 52 runs thus —

Sthanyupa nimantrane sanga smayakarnam punah anishtaprasangat.

This means, 'The yogi should not feel allured or flattered by the overtures of celestial beings for fear of evil again'. Sutra 52 has special reference to siddhis one of which says that a person having a particular siddhi can enjoy the pleasures of Gods in their celestial regions. Hence it is easy to see from both the

Sutras and in Baba's advice, the use of siddhis may be good or bad and both are referred to not only in Bhagavata, Skanda XI, but also in Baba's advice and actions. Baba gave a warning to a devotee who was just beginning to develop powers, which is just the stage at which curiosity, ambition and other worldly motives or desires arise from the appearance of siddhis within the grasp of the sadhaka or devotee. As for Baba's action, any one who has gone through this book would note that Baba made ample use of innumerable siddhi powers and, therefore, there is nothing wrong in the use of siddhi powers. All great ones including Sri Krishna have used their divine powers or siddhis. It is wrong to suppose that the use of superhuman powers by those is condemned as worthy of condemnation. But it is their use possessing them in such a way as to promote worldiness or cause degradation to the soul that is objected to. A man like Konganava or like the man on whose hair birds sat, gets elated and angry and thus loses his soul. That is the result of gazing at the meretricious attractions of siddhis with a worldly heart. Only in that case siddhis are strumpets and not in any other case. This is the chief point of Baba's teaching.

A man has a Guru; and he may be his Kula Guru without any siddhi powers. When the man finds other Gurus possessed of siddhi powers, he is often tempted to give up his former Guru and resort to the latter. Baba's advice on this matter is 'Do not give up your Guru whatever may be the attractions of other Gurus.' If one has implicit faith in one's Guru and an earnest desire to pull oneself upward with that Guru, free from worldly attachments, one will have siddhi and satisfactory progress. Therefore, to a man called Pant, who came to Baba, having already a Guru (who had objected to his going to Baba because of the fact of his already having a Guru), Baba said, 'Pant, do not give up your Guru. Whatever may be the merits of other Gurus, we must never give up our own'. There are a few people who have studied the lives of great saints who led holy lives and have given the warning that meretricious attractions of siddhis should not be heeded. Their sishyas are sometimes apt to draw the conclusion that saints who exhibit powers and magicians who exhibit such powers for worldly objects are both in the same class, and that the saints mentioned above are not

worthy of regard. This is due to a confusion of ideas. Unfortunately a certain number of educated, even amongst Sanyasis, have not escaped this fallacy, and some of them occasionally asked this author whether Sai Baba who exhibited these chamatkars could be a *Parama Jnani*. The answer is *Parama Jnana* is not taken away when the *Parama Jnani* happens to be a *Samartha Sadguru* and has to use his divine powers for promoting the interests of his sishyas and other devotees. It is hardly necessary to labour this point, but the author has met a few well intentioned devotees of good saints who fell into this error, and that is why this has been written. There is no question of inferiority or superiority amongst saints merely by reference to the possession of siddhis. Possession of siddhis merely indicates advancement in concentration and sometimes they are an indication of *poorna laya* in Parabrahman. Therefore it is safest to avoid drawing hasty conclusions from their mere presence or absence in a saint.

Thinking that it would enhance the glories of Baba to put forward fantastic notions about his being an *ayonija*, that is, one who came into this world without entering into the womb of a woman, some people fall into the unfortunate habit of creating stories about Baba. The *Ayonija* theory, as already stated, has no shadow of support for it amongst the statements made by Baba himself in respect of his parents either in this Janma or any previous Janma.

Coming to siddhis also some people have circulated stories about Baba's use of various forms of siddhis. For instance, it is said that he performed Kandayoga, that is, separated the various parts of his body and kept them far apart and appeared as a dead body, and later on reunited those parts. It is unnecessary to discuss whether kandayoga is a case of mass hypnotism or individual hypnotism creating the impression in the mind of the beholder that the body is in pieces. Physiologically the body cannot be cut into a dozen pieces and kept apart for a long time and reunited at pleasure so as to form one organic whole, and hence the probabilities are very much in favour of this siddhi being the same as or similar to the obstruction to seeing - *antardhana* - following which heading, Patanjali says, a similar *antardhana* of ideas takes place. That is, a yogi

can make his entire body invisible to people or he can black out their ideas about his body.

We have seen magicians performing these tricks by mass hypnotism and suggestion, for example, the rope trick and stabbing the boy in the box. These are all cases of mass hypnotism and suggestion. But whether in the case of Baba there was really any kadayoga and what exactly it represented, are matters about which definite information is not available. Again it is said that Baba performed other yogic feats, that is, that he took out his entire entrails and placed them on a tree for drying up. These confound our notions of physiology and serve no useful purpose. We shall not discuss these further. About Ashtanga Yoga, it is not known whether Baba performed pranayama, etc., but very probably these would have come to him easily by faith in his All-powerful Guru. Various siddhis or mystic powers are shown by various sadhakas or Siddhas or magicians who use disembodied spiritis or evil spirits or petty elves, etc., for their purposes. The question has been raised what Baba's views were on this subject, and what Baba said about spirits at all. A young devotee asked Baba, 'Are there evil spirits that would harm us?' Baba's answer was that there were spirits but we had nothing to do with them. Those who are under the care of Baba or leading proper lives have nothing to fear from these unseen spirits. Baba has mentioned not infrequently several things about disembodied bodies, that is, *pretax*. That is, those recently died pass into a linga sarira and keep on life in that state for a certain time. Such spirits are not infrequently used by magicians like Mohamad Bay for giving them information about the contents of the minds of those they meet for their own worldly purposes. Baba referred to the existence of the spirits of disembodied persons, that is, spirits of those who recently died, and mentioned interesting facts about them.

The spirits of deceased people who are his bhaktas or who belong to his bhaktas families were drawn to Baba at the time of death, even though they may be dying very far away from Shirdi, where he lived when in the flesh. All the same, he drew them to himself, and he said of Sri M.B. Rege's child, 'That child is here (pointing to his heart), and it shall live here eternally'.

He said of Sri Upasanai Baba's third wife, who died about the beginning of February 1912, that she had come to him, and there was no necessity to do anything further to give her *sadgati*, as Upasani Baba was offering some Rs.10 for some ceremonies to be done by Baba to give her Sadgati, following evidently his usual Vaidiki ideas of funeral rites. Baba declined to receive the amount saying that she had already come to him and that all that had to be taken from Upasani, had already been taken. As for Mrs. S.B. Dhumal, some months after she died, Baba advised Mr. Dhumal to perform her Masik at Shirdi and promised to give her Sadgati on that occasion. That was accordingly done.

As for other spirits, Baba said that some spirits haunted tombs. There was a young girl, a playmate of Baba, who had died and who was haunting her tomb. Baba passed by that side and found her spirit there. Then he said that he spent some time by the side of the tomb, and then took her away with him to a pipal tree at or near Shirdi and placed her spirit there evidently for purposes of betterment of her soul.

As for evil spirits, fiends, etc., Baba knew of their existence and kept them at bay. No fiend could approach him, and persons possessed by fiends got released from such possession by being near Baba. Baba therefore advised his bhaktas to be free from all fear of spirits of any sort. When Baba was near, what had his children, the children of Dwarakamayee, to fear, whether from the living or from the spirits of the dead or from evil spirits like elves, Brahma Rakshas, etc.? His own Guru Gopal Rao Deshmukh had given salvation to a Brahma Rakshas that had formerly been a Brahmin miser, and Baba's vast powers and charity should have certainly enabled him to render similar help to any of his devotees who may have been placed in that same predicament.

Jai Sri Sai Ram