

Part 1 - Appendix E - Who Is Sai Baba?

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

APPENDIX-E

WHO IS SAI BABA?

When a person in some family gets name, fame and eminence, his family becomes famous all over. Not only that, but the city or town in which that family resides also becomes renowned and immortal in the History. The town Shirdi in Ahmednagar district is one of such fortunate places. Being such a small town its name is on the tip of the tongue of Maharashtrian people who are the followers of Bhagwat Dharma. These days the name of Shirdi is echoing from all corners of our country, Bharat (India). What is the reason? Because a supreme personality, an Avatar Sri Sai Baba had adorned it by His presence. As if He put a golden crown on the pinnacle of small town Shirdi. Today Shirdi is a sacred place of pilgrimage, because of His nobility and His magnitude.

Saintliness is an attribute of the body (Deha). It is self-existent. Love manifests through experience. One's own love creates eagerness to meet his self. As fluidity is a natural characteristic of water, similarly to manifest and to become one with the self is an attribute of love. There is no being who is not self-loving. But its manifestation is through body. Love manifests itself through body (in a spiritual sense). This manifestation takes the form of Saintliness. Therefore Saintliness is self-existent. It is not to be brought from outside. Fragrance of rose spreads on its own; it pleases all. Aroma of love also delights in the same way. Body and Saintliness cannot be separated. Saints are manifestation of love. Love and its perception cannot be two different things. Sri Sai Baba came to Shirdi and stayed there. Who was Sai Baba? What was He? He was the embodiment of love. As though crystallized love had taken the form of Sai Baba. To please and to love were his dispositions. He was Love and Bliss moving and walking on Earth. He was Mahatma. He was an Avatar. How could a common mortal human being know about His reality? His family, His name was not known to anybody. Who's descendent was He? Who were His mother and father? Which town did He hail from? Which was His birthplace? Answers to these questions have still remained behind the veil.

One can only guess that He was in close contacts of Mughal-reigned region (Mogalai), in those days. Many times He spoke about the places, which were the parts of that region. Some of them are Selu, Jalna, Manvad, Pathari, Parbhani, Naurangabad (Aurangabad), Beed, Bidar, etc. Once a person from Pathari came for Baba's darshan. Baba asked a lot many questions regarding Pathari. He showed close concern about some prominent figures in that town. So we can guess that He was well informed about Pathari. But there is no reliable proof to say that He was born there.

Once Baba had told to saint-poet Dasganu Maharaj, "I have come from Selu". Selu was in Taluka Parbhani, which was in Mogalai that time. Dasganu kept touring from town to town, to perform Kirtans*. When he went to Selu he enquired with the people of Selu about Baba. What he gathered was as follows:

There was an old Sadhu (an ascetic) in Selu. He was seen training a young fakir. Some villagers were against him. Once they became violent and threw stones and hurt him. The young fakir managed to run away. So he was saved. Dasganu came back from Selu. He gave written report to Baba, expecting clarification and authenticity from Him. But Baba just took the papers and kept quiet saying, "Okay".

(*Kirtan is, singing glory of God and telling the stories from Mythology. It is a way of educating the people and inculcating values in them.)

Ramgir Gosavi was one of the devotees of Baba. He had given the following account to Balkrishna Vishwanath Deo (from Thane). "It was a no moon day and a day of Solar Eclipse. Badebaba (a fakir from Malegaon), was distributing money in masjid as it was customary to do so on the occasion of eclipses". I too received one and a half rupee from Badebaba. Then I went for Baba's darshan. He asked me, "What have you received from Badebaba?" I showed Him the money. He saw it taking it in His hand and gave it back to me. All of a sudden He started talking, without any introduction and told me about Himself. He said, "Do you know, I was brought up in Mahur. But people there, started troubling Me. I got fed up. Then I left Mahur, and went to Girnar. There also people bothered Me and I had to go to Mount Abu. There too people vexed Me to My capacity. Then I shifted to Akkalkot. But I was not spared by those people also. They pestered Me so much that I went to Doulatabad. There I met our Janya (Janardan Swami). He sincerely served Me. I was pleased with his service. Then I went to Pandharpur. But I got bored and weary. So finally I came to Shirdi. Now I prefer to stay here only".

These details were told by Ramgir Gosavi to B. V. Deo. With reference to the above information, it can be concluded that Baba stayed in first six places as God Datta-swarup and in last two places he was in SriKrishna-swarup. Baba has shown same Leelas as written in Srimad Bhagwat and other Puranas. (Mythological books). The concurrence indicates that Baba was none other than Krishna.

No one can affirm if Baba was a Hindu Brahmin or a Muslim by birth. The kin-devotees of Baba always described Him to be a tall handsome and fair, with radiant eyes and face. His long hands touched His knees. (AajanuBaahu). He was conversant with many languages and His method of precept was unique. He had super-human qualities. All these features lead them (kin devotees) to the conclusion that His birth was a spontaneous happening. (A-yonija). It may be difficult to accept this for the non-devotees: but the Author (Dr. Gawankar) does not find any difficulty believing "spontaneous birth'. Once Baba had told to one His close devotees, Hari Sitaram a solicitor, "Now, when I shall go, shall return as eight-year-old boy." SriKrishna was born, nearly five thousand years ago, He appeared as an eight-year-old boy in front of Mother Devki. She was amazed; but she knew He was the Lord Himself. She requested Him to take the form of a baby, so that she could fondle Him and enjoy her motherhood. (Author of this book, Dr. K. B. Gawankar had an opportunity to stay with Baba for three days.)

Samadhi place of Guru Vyenkusa (Baba's Guru) is at Selu, presently in Marathwada. Vyenkusa was a Brahmin by caste. Baba told to His devotee, Nanasaheb Chandorkar, "My Guru has given Me this brick". He showed the brick and added, "This is very special and precious for Me, as it is given by My Guru. This brick is My real companion, My life-partner". Baba attentively used to take care of that brick. When He would sleep he always rested His head on it.

Sometime between 1909 and 1913, Kashibai Kanitkar had gone for Baba's darshan. During conversation Baba Himself told her, (Pointing the fore finger towards His chest), "I am a Brahmin, pure Brahmin. I have no connection with any black thing. I am a Brahmin; how black people will step in here? They dare not. This Brahmin will lead lacs of people on path to salvation. I will lead them to their destination. This masjid belongs to a Brahmin. Even a shadow of black person will not be allowed to enter this Dwarkamai". (The term black indicates bad tendencies. People with bad tendencies.)

One can, therefore, infer that Baba was a Brahmin. (Term Brahmin here, does not represent the caste. How could Baba think and express such a narrow view, when He is the Creator of this Universe? In spirituality, the four castes express the four kinds of people, according to their tendencies and virtues. Bhagwad Gita says, "Any human being can perform any of job suitable to his/her tendencies and virtues".)

Not in a common social sense, but according to the definition of a Brahmin that is quoted in 'ManuSmruti', an ancient scripture, (In chapter 1 and stanza 31, the above holy book) states: "Person may be 'shudra' by birth, but if he is well-cultured and he does good actions (Sat-Karmas), if he progresses on the spiritual path and acquires knowledge of Brahma, then he is a real Brahmin and no more "Shudra' (a lower caste)". (It implies that if a person is Brahmin by birth but he is engaged in bad Karmas and deviated from spiritual path, he is no more a Brahmin but is degraded to the lower rank.)

Here ManuSmruti openly accepts that every human being is eligible for Vedic Knowledge and can strive for AatmaDnyana, irrespective of his caste and creed. Anybody who knows Brahma can be called a 'Brahmin'. (Sanskrit proverb: Brahma Janati Iti Brahmanah.)

According to the definition Baba was a Brahmin or He is a Brahmin, to be more appropriate. He never called the masjid 'a masjid'. He always referred to it as Dwarkamai; or sometimes Dwaravati; or MashidMai or Dwarka.

Once Baba asked Kashibai, who had come to Shirdi from Kopargaon, "Do you know Sakharam of AnagaonKawad? Sakharam was my Guru-brother. Same Guru was teaching both of us. In Guru's Ashram (Math), we had planted mango trees together. I had sent two mango fruits to Kopargaon for you. They were from the same trees. Did Datta give you those fruits?"

When she went back to Kopargaon and visited the 'Datta' (God Dattatraya) temple, the priest gave her two mango fruits, which were of 'Grafted' (Kalami) type. Following inferences can be drawn from the above incident.

Sakharam Maharaj Kawadkar and Baba were Guru-brothers. The same Guru taught them. Both of them had planted mango saplings in the Ashram, which were of grafted kind. Two fruits of the same mango tree were sent to Kopargaon by Baba for Kashibai, at the hands of the priest of Dattatraya temple. When he went to Kopargaon and met Kashibai, he gave her the fruits.

Information about Sakharam Maharaj can be gathered from his biography written by Ramkrishna buva Mate in 1871. Mate was one of the well known devotees of Sakharam Maharaj. He was a learned person as well as a Yogi. Being a dear devotee of Maharaj, he was showered with the grace of his guru. He had the privilege to be called his 'disciple'. Mate first went to his guru in 1860 and was with him till he (Maharaj) took Samadhi in 1867. Mate was present there at the time of Samadhi. After 3 years he wrote his guru's biography. He had

included his own experiences in the book and also the information he gathered from others. Mate has humbly mentioned that he has written it according to his limited intelligence.

Biography of Sakharam Maharaj was written later in 1893 by Mr. Apte too. But he had mostly taken the support of Mate's book. There is a very little difference in the language and a rare variation about the details are found.

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