

Part 1 - Chapter 1 - Our Anna

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

Chapter 1: Our Anna

Dear Readers,

Most of the Shirdi-Sai devotees know about Late Dr. K. B. Gawankar, alias Anna. By his devotion and grace, we, the Gawankar family members were fortunate to get Sai Baba's darshan, after Baba had taken Samadhi. Shri Anna had given a full account to saint Ramachandra Krishna Kamat, through a detailed letter. Saint Kamat was also known as Anna Kamat, who was a resident of Chandgad, Durga Mandir, Marshel, Goa. The same letter which Anna Gawankar wrote to saint Anna Kamat, has been specially included below. I am sure it will attract our reader's interest.

Humbly yours,

Pramod K. Gawankar

Kurla, Mumbai

The Letter

27 January 1954

|| Sri Sai-Ganesh ||

|| Sri Sat Guru-Nath ||

I, Dr. K. B. Gawankar, pay my humble Pranams at the feet of Shrimant Pitaji Annasaheb Kamat.

Rajeshri Mandake has already informed you that we all reached here safely.

Acknowledgement receipt is already with us. With Shri Mandake and a group of some friends and family members, I had been to Shirdi on 16 January 1954. I returned back to Kurla, alongwith my daughter Tilottama, on the very next day. Shri Mandake stayed at Shirdi for one more day and then went to Sakori for darshan of Mataji. With happy and contented mind he went to Nasik, stayed at that pilgrim place for eight days as the moon eclipse event was to occur. After that he returned to Kurla. He has received the letter that you wrote to him. I had been to Shirdi with some purpose in my mind. Actually Shirdi is like my Mother's town. As a married woman longs to visit her mother's house, I am always eager to go to Shirdi and see Baba, my Mother. This time also I met Baba, but with a tinge of anger in my mind. No doubt the anger was the love in disguise. I told the Mother, "Are you feeling happy to see this child of Yours in grief? When I am totally surrendered to You, who else except You will console me? Everyday I hear the news from all over, that You give darshan to many of Your followers. Your foot-prints appear miraculously in some devotee's house, and so on! But what about me? Have I committed any grave mistake or a sin? Why can You not appear and talk to me at least in my dream? Or You must be testing my faith in You. Oh Mother, how can a child come out successfully through such tests, if its mother is not teaching it? It is Your wish to let me live or

die; but at least say only once to me that I am Yours. I belong to You, oh Mother, please listen to my earnest prayer”

Then I prayed to Sai, sitting before his Samadhi. I completed recitation of 21 cycles of ‘Atharva Shirsha’ (sacred Mantras) sitting there. The priest gave me a Coconut, Pedhas and Til-Gul (some sort of sweets). My wife Sushilabai had given me 5 ‘Laddus’ made up of Til-Gul as an offering to Baba’s Samadhi. But before I could offer it, Baba gave me the same Prasadam through the priest. Was it not His “Leela’ to assure me His acceptance of my offering?

It was Monday, 18th January 1954. It was the night of lunar eclipse. In pre-eclipse hours, at about 10:30 p.m., I was sitting in my bed praying as usual, with all lights off. In my prayer to Baba, I said, “I had told you what my guru had assured me, when he took Samadhi.” He had said, “I am going now; but do not think that you are an orphan. You will come in contact with three noble souls. The third amongst them will give you a spiritual elevation. The first of the three was Shri Keshavdatta Maharaj and the second ‘Satpurush’ was saint Ramchandra Krishna Kamat. Who the third one now? It’s up to You to decide!”

Everybody in the house was asleep as it was 10:30 in the night. I heard someone calling me “Doctor, Oh Doctor” I heard three calls. I opened the door saying, “Who is that?” To my surprise, I saw a person clad in an orange robe. I immediately recognized him and asked him to enter. Impatiently and loudly he said, “I am very hungry. Are you going to feed me? Or, shall I go?”

I requested him, “Food will be ready in a short while. Till then, please be seated.” Instead of entering the house he preferred to sit in the balcony leaning back on the railings. He was sitting just opposite to Sai Baba’s photo the balcony, which was in the living room. I asked him as to what he would like, roti or rice. Restlessly he said, “Whatever! Do anything of your choice. But see, I am very hungry. Don’t keep me waiting.”

I went to the kitchen and asked my wife to prepare rotis and chutney. As I came out to sit opposite him I took a chance to glance at him. Oh! What a glowing face it was! He had a beard. His eyes were so sparkling that they would mesmerize anyone looking at him. Rest of the body was covered under his bright orange robe. He must not be over twenty-five; I guessed and was of medium height. He was intermittently uttering, “Shripad, Shrivallabh”.

As I was sitting before him, started talking me. He gave his advice and counselled me. He was talking three languages, Marathi and English. He said, “Always serve your guru. Guru is higher than Sai Baba. Do not just say Sai Ram or Rama. Say Satchidanand Sadguru Sai Baba. Say Shri Ram, not just Rama. Do Japa as Shriram, Sitaram, Ramakrishna, and Vasudev-Hari. Do it 108 times”.

Just then rotis and chutney were ready. It was brought together with a jug of water, “What the time?” He asked, “It is Eleven” I replied. “Okay. There is one person and more are accompanying. Let them come”

Then he took dish of rotis and some Udi (sacred ash) them. He left the dish aside. He started to talk and advised further. There are four types of Snanas (Bath)

Agni-Snana: Bathing in sunlight or fire

Bhasma-Snana: to apply ash all over the body.

Vayu-Snana: to bathe in wind i.e. to wander open air.

Bhagirathi-Snana: To bathe with water, all of you do. I always keep wandering and constantly do Vayu-Snana. All of you are doing Bhagirathi-Snana”.

He switched over to another topic. Emotions and actions should go hand in hand. Best action is service to the people. You serve Sai. Serve your Guru. “Do Seva and eat Meva” (serve your guru and get benefit). You have served your guru that is why have every privilege to eat Meva (sweet dish actual meaning is, you enjoy His grace). Follow this principle. Don’t listen to people’s comments. If happen hear them by chance, let it pass out through second ear, that is why you are given two ears. Follow your mind i.e. your intuition. Your conscience speaks through the intuition”.

He repeatedly advised to serve guru and do his Seva. He further added, “Sadguru is at the highest level. He lives inside you. Sri Sai has sown the seed, which had developed into a sapling and now it has grown up into a tree. People are interested in fruits. Let them enjoy. But you don’t try to taste them. For you Meva is better (Seva will fetch it for you). A dish made up of leaves (Patraval) is always porous. Liquid is bound to leak from those pores. Let whatever runs out. Be alone. Serve your guru. Do not call me Sai Baba. No one becomes Sadhu by merely dying his clothes in orange colour stone i.e. Geru. Do you know what Geru is? How was it formed? It is a condensed blood of Kartik Swami, understand?”

I interrupted him by saying, “You are Sai Baba! I am sure. You are Sai. Today you cannot deceive me. I am convinced you are surely my Sai Baba!”

“No, I am not” he said, “I am wandering in forests. I am not Sai. I know you are constantly engaged in His service. I watch you always. Don’t you happen to see me?”

I pushed to talk, “No, but You are my Sai Baba. Your face resembles His I will show you His photograph. I will just get it for You”. Saying so I went inside and brought it. He held the photograph in his hand, had a quick look and only laughed. Ignoring the photo, he said, “Yesterday I saw you in Dwarkamai. I ate ‘laddus’ of Til-Gul (Sesame and Jaggery). Then I came here bound by the thread of love. Every year at Sankranti, I eat laddus from you, but without your notice. (Sushilabai had first time sent the laddus to Shirdi as offerings. She knew that other devotees used to send a full tin box of laddus for Baba; but she could not afford it. She had a complex for her inability to send that much quantity. That is why she had sent only five pieces.) Again I tried to pursue him. “Where have you come from?” He exclaimed, “Me?” He added further as if talking to himself, “Where have I come from? I cannot say. I came from somewhere and will go somewhere I don’t know...”

I tried to probe again, “May I know your good name, please?” In reply. He asked the question, “You want to know my name? It’s ‘Vanachar’ (a forest wanderer), or ‘Vayumitra’ (merely wind); also ‘Gagan-Netra’ (sky is my eye). Also ‘Brahmamitra’ (I am a friend of Brahma). And, do you want to know what I eat? I eat ‘Panchpatra’. Are you satisfied now?” By the word ‘Panchpatra’ he probably wanted to indicate towards five elements.

All above names He repeated thrice. Changing the subject He said, “Remove those rings from your fingers”. (I was wearing two rings; one was embossed with Baba’s symbol and the other with a gem of Saturn. I did not remove any of those at that time). Suddenly He asked me what the time was. I replied, “It is ten to twelve (midnight)”. He continued the conversation.

Dear readers, hope you are enjoying the spiritual treat that we have served you all with.
Please leave your views about the book in the comments below. We will be highly obliged.

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