

Part 1 - Chapter 10 - Bhakt - Parayan Dasganu

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

Chapter 10

Bhakt - Parayan Dasganu

[A Staunch Devotee Dasganu]

Some devotees are constantly immersed in devotion. When they sing the glory of their beloved Lord they reach such heights of ecstasy, that they become speechless and are choked with emotions. Sometimes they shed tears, sometimes they laugh or dance too. All their behaviour is the outcome of their extreme devotion and love for God. Such devotees, not only make their lives pious but the world also becomes sacred because of them.

Gem amongst all the devotees, was Dasganu. He was one of the most dear devotees of Sai Baba. His story is given below as narrated by himself. It is a compilation of his different experiences with Baba, told by him at different times and to various people.

DASGANU SAYS,

I (Dasganu, real name, Ganpat Dattatraya Sahastrabuddhe), first went to Baba with Nanasaheb Chandorkar. I was not very keen about going to Him and have His darshan, as I did not have any sort of special feeling of respect for Baba. My mind was like a blank paper.

I was working in a Police Department while Chandorkar was a Deputy Collector. After a year or so, I happened to meet VamanShastri, who was a graduate of Madras University and a very religious and holy person. While he was staying at Saygonda, I was in his service, as a part of my duty. By close observation I developed high respect for him and chose him as my 'Moksha Guru'. I humbly requested him to initiate me by giving a 'Mantra' (Incantation) and accept me as a disciple. In those days I was a Shiva Bhakta, worshipper of Shiva. So he gave me a 'ShivaMantra' and advised me to recite it repeatedly. I casually asked him about his opinion of Sai Baba. He said, "When I was in Shirdi, I got a chance to spend 2/3 days in His Company. He is a great saint, no doubt. He is a worshipper of Sri Rama. Common people have not yet recognized His value. But in due course they will know who He is." When I heard such a high and respectful remark about Baba from him, my regards for Baba multiplied several times. Then I started visiting Shirdi very often.

Two years after my initiation, my Guru VamanShastri asked me to come to Bhusaval. He was thinking of going to Kashi for darshan of God Kashi Vishweshwar. He wanted to take 'Samadhi' after six month's stay in Kashi. (One of the most holy pilgrimage cities for Hindus). He had fixed the final day of leaving his mortal body. It was the 11th day of the dark fortnight of 'Jeshtha'. (Third month of the Hindu calendar). I received a telegram of his 'Samadhi' on the same day. Later, I also received an insured letter by post, which contained Rs. 500/- alongwith a copy of his will. He wanted me to carry forward the work that he had left incomplete. I conveyed all these details to Baba. Who gave me His approval. Since then I have been celebrating my Guru's death-anniversary every year till today.

I am a Kirtankar. It is my profession and my first love. I travel from town to town and constantly sing the glory of the Lord. I do not charge a single paisa for my Kirtan. I never circulate 'Thali' (A bowl for collecting money in the interval of my performance in-between Purvaranga and Uttarranga), or at the time of Aarti. I stay at the house of the host, who invites me for 'Kirtan'. In addition, I write spiritual books. Whatever little I earn, is sufficient for my subsistence. My needs are very few, as I am alone in my family; rather, I have no family in its worldly sense.

Baba gave money to many people. But I was not one of them. I never expected also. When Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Lokamanya Tilak, a national leader) came to Shirdi to see Baba, the importance of Shirdi Sansthan was taken notice of, by the Government and the public at large. People from Income tax Department became alert and planned audits. One of the officers came to Shirdi, to check the daily collection. First, he thought to impose tax on Sai Baba. But he saw Baba distributing all the collected money amongs the devotees; and no money left with Him at the end of the day. Then he turned his attention to those who were receiving money from Baba everyday They were Tatya Patil Kote, Badebaba, Bagiya and Bayaji Patil. All were picked up and made tax payers. Mhalsapati and I never received money from Baba. We were saved from the botheration of paying tax. Baba must have done it (not giving money) for us with good intention.

To save both of us Baba kept us away from that temptation. Though it was not money, Baba in reality had given me a lot. What He gave me was more valuable and more precious for me. He had given me spiritual wealth. He sowed the seed of faith in me and vigilantly He tried that it should be deep rooted day-by-day. The sapling of devotion should become firm and grow further in my mind. He taught many lessons to me and enriched my life with many beautiful spiritual experiences.

River Godavari, often called a Ganga, was three kilometers from Shirdi. One day I decided to go and take a holy dip in the river. Megha, a devotee, used to fetch water from this river, for Baba's 'Abhishek' (a kind of worship / sacred bath). He everyday used to sprinkle it on Baba's body.

I told Baba, "I am going to the river, to take a holy dip". Baba and said, "Ganga is here in my feet. You need not go elsewhere".

I felt dejected. I knew the theory that the source of river Ganga was the feet of Lord Narayan. But I wanted to enjoy 'Ganga-Snan'. How the hypothesis would give me that pleasure? unfaithful mind was wavering. Baba said, "Come here! Cup your palms below my toe, and see".

When I did so, water flowing from Baba's feet. The flow was slow but there was no room for any doubt. In a few minutes my cupped hands overflowing. I was very happy see the sacred Ganga flowing actually from Baba's feet. I sprinkled the holy water on my head and allover the body. Thus I obtained satisfaction of 'Ganga-Snan' in Shirdi itself, by Baba's grace.

I did not drink that water. Even I never used to drink 'Tirth' after Baba's Aarti in Mandir. Jog complained Baba about my refusal. But Baba was generous. He said, "Everyone is free to behave according to his faith and his school of thought. Do not trouble him if he does not drink the Tirth."

Baba was not staunch follower of traditions, but I was orthodox. I avoided eating onion in any form. On the contrary, Baba would rarely eat anything without onion. Once He told me to prepare hot 'Besan' with onion (Kanda-pithale). He instructed me to eat some at home. I agreed when the dish was ready, I just touched it with a finger and put a dot on my chin, making a line of it up to my lower lip. But I did not eat it. To observe Baba's order I had found solution, I thought.

After washing hands and face, I came to Dwarkamai with a tiffin of besan. Many devotees were sitting around Him. Before I could say anything Baba repeated the whole action done by me and said to others, "Have you seen how did he pretend? He put it on his chin. I showed you how. What is so bad in eating onion?"

I was abashed and apologetic. Then Baba tried to convince me that there was nothing wrong in eating onion. According to old tradition, onion was abandoned because of its pungent smell and passion-inducing effect. But Baba used to say, "Those who have enough capacity digest onion should eat it without any hesitation". To honour His advice I started eating onion except on the day of 'Ekadashi' (11th day each fortnight of month in lunar calendar). I followed this rule up to the day of His Nirwana.

I always yearned for the ultimate state in spirituality. Many times I prayed to Baba from the bottom of my heart, and told Him that I wanted to be realized soul like saint Namdev and other Saints. Every time when I requested, would say, "Wait and have patience".

In 1916, I asked Him, "Baba, You always postpone granting realization". He replied, "You are seeing Me; Isn't it? That itself is realization or 'Sakshatkar'. I am the Lord; I am the Parameshwar."

I argued, "You have given the same answer as I had expected. But I am not satisfied". Realisation was not my dish. I consoled my mind and left the thought. Baba took 'Samadhi' in 1918. I met many Saints thereafter. But I did not find satisfaction.

In 1919, I found a 'Sanyasi' who was staying in the hills and rocks near 'Nanded' town (city in Maharashtra). He was completely detached and would not establish any contact with anyone. He had no belongings of any kind and seemed to be 'Aparigrahi' (he who does not accumulate and store things). When I went for his darshan he avoided me, but he accepted the food items which I sent to him. Then I again went to him and asked, "Why don't you allow me to have your darshan and take 'Pada-Namaskar (prostration)?"

Sadhu: You are a Kirtankar (he who sings and describes the glory of the Lord); you try to awaken and guide people. But you are not free from ego.

Dasganu: How can I leave it? Everybody has ego.

Sadhu: You sent me those food-items; did you not have a pride, 'I have sent this? Was this not your ego?

Dasganu: There are three types of ego. Satwik, Rajasik and Tamasik. One must abandon Tamasik ego (He did not agree to my statement. He wanted me to leave all kinds of ego. He had a strong intuition power. He gathered everything that was going in my mind.).

Sadhu: You are writing biographies of Saints; is it not?

Dasganu: Yes; I am (Then he recited a few lines of my new songs which I had written just six days back; and naturally, not published anywhere till then. I was stunned to see his power of intuition. Our conversation went on.).

Sadhu: You received Gangajal, (water of river Ganga), from Sai Baba's feet, right?

Dasganu: Yes, I did.

Sadhu: What did you do with it?

Dasganu: I sprinkled it on my head and the whole body.

Sadhu: You did not drink it. Thought came to your mind, 'I am a Brahmin. To drink this water is a desecration for me... Am I right? What a strong ego! What sort of 'Kirtankar' are you?

After this reproof by him, I started going and spending a few hours with him everyday. People in the town, Nanded, found it very strange as he had never mixed with them. They started gossiping about our meetings. One of them, who was very arrogant, mischievous and troublesome, accompanied me to the Sadhu. The Sadhu asked him many questions and detected all his flaws and thus his immoral behaviour was completely exposed. He, who had come to test the Sadhu, ran away hiding his shameful face. The Sadhu became famous and people crowded around him for worship. But he did not want contacts and wanted to live in solitude. So one day he packed up and left the town without anybody's knowledge.

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