

Part 1 - Chapter 15 - Five Laddus

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

CHAPTER 15

FIVE LADDUS

A Hindi verse by Devnath, says, “Mera main janoon...” (It’s my experience). Translation of a few lines from the verse, “I have received ‘medicinal eye drops’ from my guru, by which my vision has been cleared. He has shown me the way to go back to my origin. He has blessed me and wiped off my bad Karmas (actions). Without the sun and the moon there is a light in my life (i.e. light of knowledge). He has offered me to taste a glass of ambrosia, by giving me the knowledge of eternal Atma. He blessed me with detachment and taught me that I am alone in this world, to the extent that I myself am the guru and the disciple, two in one. This is the grace of my guru Govindnath that he has allowed me (Devnath) to become one with him. The whole experience of bliss is beyond any description. But I know it of heart, Mera main hi janoon...” my heart

In the verse it is stated that one can enjoy the fruits of Sadhana only by guru’s grace. If a pinch of sugar is tasted one can only say that it is sweet. But he cannot analyse the sweetness. He is unable to describe what he means by that word. He only can say, “I know it, but I cannot explain it”. When a devotee is engrossed in actions (Karmas), or he perceives something, or hears something he should feel that Gopal Krishna Sai, the God, is signalling and beckoning him with love. He should fill, not only the senses (Indriyas) but also mind, intellect and Chitta with Sai principle.

A ‘Mumukshu’ (he who wills for liberation) should always pray for such a state. When devotees listen to the glory of God sung by others or read scriptures, they have the feeling of His proximity. For the limited period they feel His presence in their heart. But how to achieve it constantly is the cause of their worry. “What meritorious deeds I must do to have Him permanently near me?” Is the question that always haunts him. Being in the vicinity of the holy men (Satsang), he starts yearning for God and then He comes and appears before the yearning devotee in the form of guru.

Shri K. J. Bhishma was staying at Bori, a hamlet in Nagpur district. He was a widower and never thought of a remarriage even on the advice of many friends. He was not at all interested in temporal matters. But his mind was not calm. He tried to engage himself in agriculture, with the help of some friends. Still he could not steady his mind. Some years rolled by. In 1908 A.D., it was a full-moon night of the month of Shravan (second month of rainy season in Marathi calendar), he saw a dream. In the dream he saw a dark man whose body was covered with orange-coloured paste. He had applied sandal-wood paste in three vertical lines on his forehead. He was wearing wooden sandals (Paduka) which were adorned with flowers as if recently worshipped. The strange man gave a news-paper to Bhishma. The latter asked him, who he was inquisitively at it. He could read the words “SATCHIDANAND”. When he again had a careful look, he noticed, “LEARN THE MANTRA”. Bhishma wanted to ask the meaning, but the dream ended with a knock on the door.

He wrote down the details of the dream so as to find the proper significance. He himself was unable to establish any relevance. One day a Sadhu, (ascetic), who was a devotee of God Ganesh, came to his house. Bhishma told him about the dream. The Sadhu replied, "It is simple! Satchidanand is your guru. He has given you the Mantra".

After a few days, Bhishma casually went to Amaravati, a town near Nagpur, to see Dabdasahab Khaparde. He was going to Shirdi. The programme was planned previously. Bhishma joined him and both went to have darshan of Sai Baba. When Bhishma touched His feet He exclaimed "Jai Satchidanand". joined His palms in greeting gesture (Namaskar). Bhishma was surprised as well as confused. 'Is He the same person whom I saw in the dream? But He looked to be a Vaishnava and Sai Baba seems to be a Muslim.' Bhishma thought in his mind. 'But if they are the two different persons, how has He taken the name of Satchidanand?' He remained quiet.

In Dwarkamai, all Brahmins also used to drink the holy water (Tirth) collected by washing Sai's feet. But Bhishma did not drink it. Baba used to smoke tobacco Chillum (pipe) and pass it on to someone else to have a puff. One day many devotees had gathered at Dwarkamai, when Bhishma entered. One of the devotees the Chillum lighted the Chillum and gave it to Baba. He just held it to his lips and passed it to Bhishma asking him to smoke. He did so, only to follow His order. Baba said to him, "Do know? I wander in all places, in all cities as, Mumbai, Pune, Satara, Nagpur... this and that. All these cities are enveloped by Rama." Immediately He changed the topic. Turning to Bhishma He said in complaining tone, "You eat and finish all the laddus. Very selfish. You do not spare single one for Me. Is it not? This time you must give Me five laddus, OK?" (Laddu, is a kind of sweet).

Baba's sentences had a positive impact on his mind and he was convinced that SaiNath and the Dream-man were one and the same. With devotion he prostrated at Baba's feet, and drank the holy water, which he had refused earlier. Baba touched his head to bless him. Bhishma felt very happy and contented. He must have said in his mind, "Mera mai janoon."

Baba used to demand Dakshina (money as offering) from devotees. But He would utilize it for charity. Why did He want laddus? Baba had asked for five laddus. Bhishma was worried as to how to manage for preparation away from his home. He had to depend on somebody else's help. He also concentrated on the number 'five'. Why five laddus? Did the number have any significance? A whole day and night passed in thinking. Suddenly he got an inspiration to write two lines of poem, a Shloka. He wrote the poem. Just then Kakasaheb Dixit came there. He read the poem and went to Dwarkamai for Sai darshan. After some time Bhishma too came for darshan. Baba curiously asked, "Have you brought laddus for Me?"

Bhishma kept quiet, but Kakasaheb said, "Laddus are in the making process". Baba was pleased and at rest. Bhishma could not gather the meaning of their conversation. Becoming restless he said, "Kaka, what do you mean by, 'Laddus are in the making'? I haven't even made primary arrangements". Kaka answered, "Look, Dear friend! Baba does not want the common laddus". You showed me the poem you wrote, right? Those are the laddus', Baba wants. Thus the riddle of laddus was solved. Bhishma came home and returned to Baba next morning with five couplets (Shlokas). When he gave the paper to Baba, He asked to read the poems to Him. Bhishma did so and said, "I could write only five. Not a single more".

Baba then put His hand on Bhishma's head. To his surprise, he got an instant inspiration to write the next couplet. He read out that fresh one to Him. This went on for quite a long time

and many poems were composed by Bhishma with Baba's grace. Bhishma offered all his writings at His Lotus feet. A compiled book was then printed and published. The title was, "Sainath Sagunopasana". The earnings from the sale of the books were donated for the purpose of 'Protection of Cows'. Bhishma was intensely yearning for the 'pure knowledge' or the Realization. But how to reach that stage? How to attain it? Nobody had any authority to guide him in this matter. It was beyond verbal description.

In spite of it, some signs of 'Sakshatkar' (Realisation) are mentioned in a book, 'The constructive Survey of the Upanishads', written by a Bhaktiyogi and a philosopher, Dr. Rambhau Ranade. In the last chapter 'Mysticism' he has referred to some paragraphs from Shwetashwatar and BruhadAranyaka Upanishads which state, "Fog, smoke, orange coloured attires, a red coloured insect like Indragop, flames, lightning or thunderbolt, a lotus flower are some of the signs of Sakshatkar".

But Dr. Ranade further disagrees with these sayings of Upanishads, as he firmly believes in the grace of God. Without the grace of God, Sakshatkar is impossible, he says. He has supported his statements by giving the excerpts from Mandukopanishad. But to see the Light and to hear some unidentified sound (Anahata Nada) can be taken as pre-intimations of future Sakshatkar, the Realization. He has no objection over that point.

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