

Part 1 - Chapter 18 - What Was Baba's Denomination

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

CHAPTER 18

WHAT WAS BABA'S DENOMINATION?

He, who is constantly in the state of bliss; He, who rushes to help His devotees out of sheer love for them; He, who gives them darshan in their dreams or in their meditational trance, had appeared in Shirdi, with name and form, in flesh and blood, for the welfare and upliftment of the human race. He was the God, the Lord, the Almighty, Sai Baba of Shirdi. How could anybody put Him under the narrow classification of caste, creed, religion or denomination? Has anybody ever defined the colour of water? It appears to have the same colour, whichever is added to it.

Devotees of different castes and cultures and varied schools, used to come to Baba. They were worshippers of different Gods and had different beliefs. But He never dissuaded them from their own chosen Gods or persuasions. Baba was a transcendent Yogi, an Avatar, God Himself. Baba is immortal and eternal. He was in the past; He is there in the present and He will be there in the future. He is beyond time and space. The whole universe is his own creation. Then, who possesses the authority to decide His denomination?

[This is my – the author's – firm personal belief.]

Baba was a Yogi. He had yogic powers, extra sensory perception. Here are a few evidences regarding the matter.

[1] One evening, Krishna Shastri, Bhishma and other devotees offered Him Aarti, had His darshan and they withdrew with His permission. Next morning, they returned to Dwarkamai for darshan. Bhishma, Madhavrao Deshpande, Balawantrao Khaparde, Advocate Dhumal and Prof. Narke were in the group. Baba told them, "Last evening I had gone for a long walk".

The above devotees could not believe Him, as they were with Him the previous evening. They had offered 'Puja and Aarti'. Madhavrao could not hold back his words. He said, "Deva, (Oh! God) why are you bluffing us? We all were with you last evening. We offered Aarti before taking your leave. You were with us all the time. Then is it not a sheer lie?"

Baba assured him saying, "Shamya, (Madhavrao), believe Me. I do not speak lies. Remember, sitting in Dwarkamai, I never speak untruth".

After a while, a devotee from the neighbouring hamlet came to Dwarkamai. He told these people that Baba was present in his village the previous evening. Madhavrao and all others were astonished and they realised that Baba was omnipresent. He could attain as many forms as He wished and was present different at the same time.

[2] Once ugly, stray dog came to Mhalsapati. Saliva was trickling down from its mouth. Its whole appearance was filthy and nauseating. Mhalsapati took a stone and hit it, to get rid of it. Barking loudly with pain, the dog ran away.

Later when Mhalsapati went to Dwarkamai for Baba's darshan, He said, "I hopefully went to the Bhakta, (Baba used to call Mhalsapati by his name) but I had suffer beating with stones".

[3] One more experience happened with Balwantrao Khaparde. His home was away from Shirdi. One night, when all members of the house were asleep, Baba appeared in His dream. In the dream, He had a full course lunch, and He ate 'Vida' (rolled betel leaf with masala), sitting on a wooden swing. Then He left. The dream ended there. When fully awake he remembered every detail of the dream. He told Bhishma about it, when they met next morning.

Bhishma said, "If it is said Baba's message He will definitely give some hint about it, when we to Shirdi".

After a few days both of them went to Shirdi. The moment Baba saw them He said, "You offered me a lunch but forgot to give Dakshina". Balwantrao was convinced that Baba had visited his house that day. He politely asked, "How much Dakshina, Baba".

"Twentyfive rupees" Baba said. Balwantrao happily offered the money at His lotus feet.

[4] There was a devotee named Balakram Mankar. Baba commanded him to go to Machchindragad (hill fort) and do penance there. Baba gave him money for the fare etc. Mankar obeyed Baba's command and started the penance wholeheartedly after going to the God.

One day Baba physically appeared before him when he was fully conscious. Mankar took darshan and touched His feet in prostration. He asked, "Baba, why did you send me here?".

Baba said, "Your mind was not stable and calm when you were in Shirdi. So I had to guide you".

Balakram then completed the period of the penance as instructed by Baba. He came to Pune station from Machchindragad, as he wanted to proceed to Mumbai. He stood in the queue at the window to buy a ticket for Dadar. A strange looking person, almost naked, wearing only a piece of cloth around his waist, just to save his modesty and a rough woolen blanket on his shoulder, was at the window. He bought a ticket for Dadar. He turned, and asked Balakram, "Where do you want to go?"

"To Dadar". Balakram replied. He requested, "Please don't buy a ticket. I have just purchased it; but I have changed my mind. I have cancelled my plan to travel. Now this ticket is of no use to me. You take this; it is for Dadar".

Saying so he hurriedly left the place. Balakram stood stunned with the ticket in hand. He knew that Baba had come in disguise of that strange man. He was moved by Baba's compassion. Balakram earned Baba's grace and became His famous devotee.

[5] Shri Laxman Pradhan alias Bhausahab, came to Sai Baba, with a message from Shri Madhavnath Maharaj, who resided in Chitrakut Sansthan. His message was in a coded language. Pradhan conveyed Maharaj's message to Baba. He (Pradhan) said, "There is a message from Madhavnath Maharaj but I am not directly told what it is". He asked me to tell

you these words Baba smiled and said, “Nath has sent his disciple to Me. I must take care of and protect him”. Baba asked him to sit closer to Him and then said, “I had with Me, many donkeys loaded with gold. But I was robbed on the way and everything was taken away. It is very difficult to stay in such locality where thieves and dacoits rob you. My brother (Madhavnath) wants Me to teach you this lesson. That is why he has sent you to Me; that too with a coded language”.

Madhavnath Maharaj had already advised Laxmanrao and his advice carried the same inner meaning, as Baba had said. Laxmanrao was surprised to notice the similarity in the thoughts of the two great persons. He was convinced that Baba knew everything. He thought, Maharaj has purposely sent me to Baba and advised me through Him. Only a Goldsmith can pierce one’s ears. Baba then said to Pradhan, “Let us have Madhavnath’s ‘Prasadam’ today. So be quick”. Pradhan then arranged for cooking the food and had lunch together with Baba. After that he asked for the permission to leave. Baba said, “Tell my brother as I say, to surrender and remain in that state is very difficult. Tell him that I have given you this advice”. Thus Baba had suggested His oneness with Madhavnath Maharaj. Pradhan gathered the implied meaning of Baba’s message and he returned to Chitrakut Sansthan.

[6] Madhavrao Deshpande (Shama), was given the charge of managing the system of visitors coming to Shirdi. But one morning he had left Shirdi for Mumbai, together with Bhausahab Dixit. A few white collared people like Bapusaheb Jog, Balasaheb Mate and Neelkanth Sahastrabuddhe were in Shirdi. On the same day, some high class people like Commissioner of Central province Mr. Cartis and his wife, Collector of Ahmednagar district Mr. MacNeil and Native Assistant to Mr. Cartis RaoBahadur Ramachandra Narayan (Bhausahab) Joglekar were coming to Shirdi.

By intuition, Baba knew that they are coming. He said to Himself reluctantly, “They are coming to ‘see Me’. Why do they want to see Me? I am just a ‘Nanga Fakir’. (an ordinary man with no wealth or belonging.) Those around Him were puzzled as they saw no strangers approaching. But in next few minutes they saw the officers going to Chawadi passing by Dwarkamai. Then people understood the meaning of what Baba had said. When they reached Chawadi, Joglekar found that there was only one person of his acquaintance, Balasaheb Mate. Joglekar requested Mate that he should ask Baba to finish His morning rites as early as possible, and not to keep the high-class people waiting. But Balasaheb refused. He convinced Joglekar that it would be disgraceful, for He was an Avatar and no one could dictate Him like that. All of them just sat waiting for Baba to come out from masjid. When Mrs. Cartis saw Him coming she greeted Baba in her typical English manner. She requested Him that she wanted to talk a few words with Him. Baba said, “Wait for half an hour”. Baba then went for alms as per His routine. When He came back Mrs. Cartis again requested Him. This time Baba said, “Wait for one hour”. Saying so He entered the masjid. Thus, all those high class officers returned empty handed. Even then Mr. Cartis was promoted to a higher post within a year.

All the above incidents reveal the extra sensory perception power of Baba. Some modern thinking people do not believe its existence. But Shrimant Yashwant Vyankatesh Kolhatkar, in his book ‘Sri Bhagwat-Artha-darshan’, has exemplified and proved that such miracles are possible. Chhandogya Upanishad (Vol.2: incantation 4) says, “Blissful Soul of a realized person can come out of the body anytime and it unites with the eternal flame of light. To reach this state it is not always necessary, to leave the body lifeless or unconscious”.

One day Baba told Neelkanth Sahastrabuddhe, that he should pay obeisance to Tatyaba and also to Bapusaheb. To do so was not at all below dignity. Another day he asked Kakasaheb Dixit, "Did Vithoba Patil visit you today?" Kaka was astonished to know Baba's powers, as he had not told it to anybody. Baba warned him saying "He (Vithoba) will not remain at one place. You have to tie Him to a wooden peg fixed to the ground". The point was, Baba already knew that Kaka had a darshan of God Vitthal, on that day. Same day an unknown person came with the photographs of idol of Vitthal which was in Pandharpur. He showed them to Baba and Kaka. With tears of joy Kaka said that he had seen the same form. This was also Baba's miracle (Leela).

In another incident, Kaka asked Baba, "I have finished reading 'Hari Varada', a sacred book. Which book should I read now? Or can I go for a second reading of the same book?" Baba said, "Now read a 'Vrundavan Pothi' by saint Eknath". It was mysterious. Dixit, Jog or Kelkar did not know about such a 'Pothi' by Eknath. They knew his other famous books.

[1] Chatuhshloki Bhagwat

[2] Rukhmini Swayamvar

[3] Chiranjiv Pada

[4] Nath Bhagwat

[5] Bhavartha Ramayana

These five books are very famous and known to all. Except these, Abhang and Bharud are also his popular poetry. Few more small books are written by him. Those are:

[1] Hastamalak

[2] Shukashtak

[3] Swaatmabodh

[4] Anand Lahari

[5] Anubhavanand

[6] Mudra Vilas

[7] Laghu Gita... etc.

But Vrundavan-Pothi could not be found. Everybody thought, only Baba could unveil the mystery of His own words. Kaka Dixit thought that it must be Nath Bhagawat. He took the epic to Baba. He scanned through the pages and immediately said, "This is the same Vrundavan-Pothi, which I asked you to read". When Kaka started reading he came to a stanza which stated, "This book does not explain only the eleventh chapter; but it contains Vrundavan of thirty-one chapters. Lord ShriKrishna is present here in subtle form. He is there with all His glory and His Swanand-swarupa".

Kakasaheb read the verse (Ovi) containing the word Vrundavan and he felt very happy as Baba's words were proved to be true. Baba also gave darshan in a dream to Nanasaheb Chandorkar. He saw Him singing Bhajan. The meaning of the words was obvious; "Let us go to Pandharpur; my beloved, Vithoba dwells there in Pandharpur". Nanasaheb also enjoyed the grace of Baba, showered on him in his dream.

All this description shows that Baba was giving importance and priority to “Varkari Sampradaya”. In a way He was supporting Bhagawat-Dharma.

Baba started Ram Navami festival in Shirdi. (It is still celebrated every year till today.) Previously it was celebrated in a simple way. Very few people knew about it. Baba Himself used to participate. In the morning of Ram Navami He would wash the entire floor of Dwarkamai. At noon He would bring some oil and light the earthen lamps. Then the sacred red powder (Gulal) would be sprinkled on the lamps, on the fire (Dhuni), in every corner of Dwarkamai, and on the arch of the masjid. Gradually the importance of this celebration increased. Singing Ram-Katha and glory of Rama (Kirtan) became an inevitable part of the festival. All these items were presented before Baba. Ramajanma, distribution of ‘Prasadam’, were the main attractions. The whole programme used to end with Kala-Kirtan.

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