

Part 1 - Chapter 3 - Shama

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Chapter 3

Shama

Dwarkamai in Shirdi is an ordinary masjid. It is a place where you will find Ananda (bliss), you are searching for. If there is any kind of ambrosia in life, you will find it here. The God who entertains His devotees with His Leelas (divine play), and Who is ready to rest in the cupped palms of His devotees, right here, in Dwarkamai. This is the abode of God, powers of a devotee are awakened, where one can experience the Atman and where his beloved God Sai Baba lived, to fulfill His mission. This is the sacred place 'Dwarkamai' (A place of pilgrimage), where Sai Baba left His mortal coil.

Just the neighbourhood of Dwarkamai, there was a Marathi School. A small house where children used to come to learn, so it was called 'a school'. One teacher named Madhavrao Balwant Deshpande was solely in charge of the job. Madhavrao frequently used to visit Dwarkamai to see Sai Baba. He used to fill the tobacco pipe (Chillum) for Baba and also used to enjoy a few puffs of it. Through this common habit, closeness between them increased and Baba attracted him more and more towards Him. After a few years this force of attraction became so powerful that Madhavrao left the teacher's job, also stopped giving medicines to the the ailing people, as he was doing previously, and engaged himself in the service of the devotees who came for Baba's darshan. He expected any sort of return for whatever he was doing. He was doing it without any selfish motive. How Baba could overlook his full devotion? Madhavrao received the reward for his work. Baba took him in the compass of friendship, offered him His proximity, which every devotee longed for. People always compared and described 'Sai-Madhav' friendship with 'Krishna Arjuna' simile. Baba always used to address Madhavrao as 'Shyama'. Baba had given many nicknames to different devotees. Shama was one of them. In this name there was a sweetness of love, nearness and intimacy of friendship.

In Sanskrit language word 'Shama' is an adjective to describe a dark complexion of a person or a thing (as cloud). That dark colour, which has a lustre, beauty and a mind attracting power, is denoted by "Shama". The word "Shama" has other meanings also.

- (1) 'Shama' means sacred herb basil (Tulsi)
- (2) 'Shyamakant' means Lord Shankar.
- (3) 'Shyamasunder' is Lord Shrikrishna.
- (4) 'Shamang' is the planet mercury (Budha, in Marathi).
- (5) 'Shyamkarna' means the sacred horse at the Ashwamedh Yajnya.

Gopis from Mathura, Vrindavan and Gokul used to worship Krishna by the name Shama. Sai also gave his own favourite name 'Shama' to Madhavrao, His dear devotee. That way He wanted to suggest that Madhav was none other than His own Vibhuti.

Marriage of the elder son of Shri Nanasaheb Chandorkar, another staunch devotee, was to be held at Gwalior. Nanasaheb himself gave an invitation to Baba. But Baba said, "Take My Shamyra with you." And His instruction was followed. In the similar way Kakasaheb Dixit, another devotee graced by Baba, had invited Baba for the marriage ceremony of his eldest son. Baba told the same thing to Dixit too. Both the marriages were attended by Madhavrao (Shama) the representative of Baba. This way, closeness and relation between Baba and Shama was revealed to all by Baba Himself.

Once Kakasaheb Dixit seemed very much disturbed when he came to Baba. He seemed to be somehow holding his tears back. Baba asked him compassionately "Kaka, come, what do you want? Tell me". Kakasaheb said, "Nothing, only your companionship, Baba." Baba immediately said, "Take my Shamyra and keep him with you. Be in his company. That is as good as being in My Company." Thereafter Kakasaheb remained with Madhavrao, as far as possible.

Once Shri Balasaheb Mirikar, who was a Mamlatdar of Kopergaon, came to Shirdi for Baba's darshan. When he asked for the permission to return, Baba said, "You can go; but take Shamyra with you". That time Mirikar was staying in Chitali village which falls in-between Daund and Manmad. Mirikar and Shama stayed in a Maruti Temple. At night one large snake accidentally crept over Mirikar's body. Awakening suddenly, he jerked away the serpent before it could bite. All other people there managed to kill the snake. Thus Mirikar was saved from the life-threatening calamity. Mirikar believed that he was saved only because of the presence of Madhavrao (Shama), who was a second form of Baba. Shrimant Bapusaheb Buti also used to pay respect to Madhavrao as he did to Baba.

All these examples confirm that Baba-Shama pair was like a duo of Krishna and Arjuna from Mahabharat. Baba addressed Madhav as Shamyra, always in singular and Shama also called Baba as 'Deva' again in singular only. This indicated the closeness in their friendship. (Note: Elders and respected people are addressed in the plural in all Indian languages.)

How sweet sounding is the word 'Deva'. It simply resembles the word 'Aai' (The mother). Sweetness of the word Aai is incredible. It integrates all the love, compassion, sacredness and all other highest emotions. Deva also carries the same meaning Aai. In fact, God is known as the Mother of the human race. When anybody calls out Aai, Aai, he is surely calling God for help. Even an atheist, who does not believe God, will also shout "Oh God" or "Aai Aai Ga..." (Oh mother), when in calamity or in pain. So, it is not surprising that devotees call their deities with the name Aai or Deva. Arjuna also sometimes lovingly called Krishna as Deva. He used to talk to Him in singular too. Such was their love.

Once Arjuna said to Krishna, "Deva, once You tell me to remain in Brahma-state and at the same time You also tell to fight a war. Is it not Your hypocrisy? Don't You ashamed of imposing dual policy upon me?" Such straightforward daring words can come only out of sheer love. In the similar way Shama had enough boldness while talking to Baba. Once a devotee brought tender, baked and hot corn grains (Hurda) for Baba. Baba took some in His palm and said to Shama, "Shamyra, take it. This for you", Madhavrao replied in anger, 'Deva, don't You feel little ashamed in saying this? Today is 'Ekadashi' (11th day of the Lunar Calendar) and I am on fast. Still You are telling me to commit a sin by eating these Jowar-grains? I will not obey You.

Baba answered, "Okay baba, as you please, I won't insist." Only out of fervent love can one talk in this manner, as Shama was talking with Baba or Arjuna with Krishna. One more example Arjuna asked Krishna, "Deva, once You told me to follow 'Sankhya Yoga' and You tell me to observe 'Karmayoga'. What is the exact truth in these two? Which Yoga should we follow?" Arjuna added, "If You are in favour of both paths, it becomes very difficult for the ignorant people like us. Your advice itself is bewildering us". Krishna gave simple clarification to Arjuna's courageous statement. "Karma Yoga is definitely more beneficial than Sankhya, though both are true".

The relation between a devotee and the Lord is worth noticing and remembering. One day, one devotee asked Baba, "Should we eat an onion on Ekadashi (11th of the Lunar Calendar)." Baba answered, "No, you should not eat". The devotee further expressed his doubt, "Onion, is an underground stem; then why should it be banned?" Baba then "Okay, then go ahead and eat".

Madhavrao was present there, listening to the conversation. He was taken aback by this dual talk and said, "What is this You are talking, Deva? You are not guiding properly and firmly. You said, don't eat onion and then You allow to eat it. What can we infer from this diplomacy? Basically we are uneducated, ignorant people and so come to seek Your advice. But are you not deceiving us?" Baba looked at him saying, "Shamya, sitting in Dwarkamai, I never speak untruth. Mind you! I swear by you".

Madhavrao said, "Now, at least, clarify the matter about onion". Baba made it clear, "Firstly, you should not eat onion on Ekadashi. But if you cannot restrain, you should eat it whole and not a piece of it. Those who are able to digest the whole, only they should eat. Others should not eat. That's all". Turning to Shama He continued, "Now go, and take this Udi before going". Onion is just a symbol in the conversation. Onion promotes sex-desire and vasanas are the main obstacles in the path of spirituality. Readers must understand the significance of Baba's advice.

Arjuna once asked Krishna, "You said that You had told Sankhya and Karma Yoga to the SunGod long ago before You told these to me. But I don't believe this. SunGod is very old and exists from time immemorial. And You are so young in comparison. Then how and when could You tell it to him? I think it's a sheer bluff!" (Refer Dnyaneshwari, Chapter 4)

Krishna answered, "Arjuna, both of us have gone through many births before this one. I remember them all, but you are unaware of them. This is the only difference". Madhavrao once asked Baba, "Deva, where will Ganpatrao Narke get the job?" Baba predicted, "He has to stay in Pune only". Madhavrao guessed that Ganpatrao would find a permanent job in Pune. But there popped up another chance for Narke. Alongwith Dr. Pillay he went to Baba. There was an offer for a job in Brahmadesh (now Myanmar). Dr. Pillay asked Baba if Narke would become permanent in this new service. Baba again answered affirmatively. Shri. Narke told this to Madhavrao and both were confused, because Baba was equally positive for both, Pune and Brahmadesh. Madhavrao took Narke again to Baba and asked "Deva, finally which is the exact truth? The one You told me? Or, that You told to Shri Pillay?" Baba said, "The one which I told you is true" Dr. Pillay again asked to confirm, but Baba's answer did not change.

Once Madhavrao raised a question, "Deva, it is written in the Ramayana, that at the time of war, with Ravan, Ram had built a bridge across the sea; and He had an army of one crore monkeys! Is it the truth, Deva?" Baba said, "Absolutely! It is true and Ram was also a truth!

Believe Me, Shamyā". Madhavrao asked, "Such a huge number of monkeys! Where and how did they sit, Deva? It's beyond my imagination". Baba told him. "All of them were sitting on trees like tiny ants."

"Tiny ants? Have you seen it with Your own eyes, Deva?" asked Madhavrao. Baba asserted, "Yes, yes, Shamyā, I have seen it with my own eyes." Madhavrao said, "How can this be true, Deva? I am sorry to say that You are bluffing! I am seeing You since the day You came here. You were in Your teens. Even there was no sign of moustache! Then how could You have gone to see an army of monkeys?"

Baba tried to convince him saying, "Shamyā, both of us have passed through many generations and many births. I remember them all but you do not". The same answer Krishna had given to Arjuna. Madhavrao asked, "What was Your age then?" Baba said "Same as I am now."

Madhavrao pursued further, "Is it true, Deva?" Baba asked him, "What do you think, am I telling a lie sitting in Dwarkamai? Whatever I have told you is absolutely true, Shamyā, I swear by you." Once Lord Krishna had also sworn to Arjuna. (Refer Dnyaneshwari 18-1368) No doubt the same Lord had manifested here in Shirdi and was staying in Dwarkamai. People were pouring into Shirdi to have His darshan and a prasād of grace from Prabhu Sai.

Everyday donations offered in Dwarkamai would go upto Rs. 400/- to Rs. 500/-. Devotees used to offer money to Baba as 'Dakshina'. But Baba did not keep anything for Himself. He used to distribute the whole amount amongst the devotees. Tatya Patil, Badebaba, Ramchandra Patil, Bayaji Patil, and many others used to receive small amounts from Baba. Madhavrao never received any money from his God. Actually he was a very favourite and dear devotee of Baba. Once, with a note of disappointment he said to Baba, "Deva, people say You are very generous minded. And they are right! You give land to some people; You find bride for others, You bless the childless by giving them a child; some others are provided chances for education; some are showered with money by You; but what about us? We live in Your vicinity: so to Your Lotus Feet, but we are facing adversities and calamities. You never give a single paisa to me even for having a puff of tobacco. Why is it so? I know You are a very naughty, playful and a mean God. No one will find a 'God' like You in this whole world. Wrapping a rag around the head, You sit constantly near the fire (Dhuni), smoke the pipe (Chillum) and beg for Your food. How can You give anything to a person like me? I know You are a mean, miserly, God. You pose Yourself as a God. But who has made You God? We have given You that status! Otherwise You were just a fakir Whom no one cared for."

So many things were said to Baba by Shama in despair. Howsoever Shama talked to Baba, he would always respect Him in his mind. After listening to all his talk Baba said to him at the end, "Shamyā, this money or material things are not for you; do you understand Me? But something special is awaiting you". Madhavrao understood the hidden meaning of what Baba said and kept quiet.

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