

Part 1 - Chapter 7 - Baba's Teachings

Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar

CHAPTER 7

Baba's Teachings [Bhagwad Gita as told to Nana.]

Lord Krishna who adorns Himself with a garland of basil leaves, had incarnated in a human body and appeared in Shirdi, in the form of Sai. Nobody knew anything about Him, His caste, His home town, or even His real name. He was the embodiment of Supreme Soul. One of the devotees called Him as Sai Baba, and He became known to everybody with the same name. He stayed in a Masjid, uttered the Mantra 'Allah Malik Hai', and blessed all with the words, 'Allah Bhala Karega'. From these points one was forced to infer that Baba was a Muslim. But some other features compel one to draw an opposite conclusion. Those features indicate that Baba was a Hindu; moreover a Brahmin-Sanyasi, an ascetic. Some of such features are listed below.

[1] Baba allowed His Brahmin devotees to worship Him and to perform waving of lights (Aarti). Morning worship was to be carried out by Mhalsapati, second by Sitaramji Dengele, and evening - worship by Mahadeo Chandorkar, son of Nanasaheb.

[2] Baba had constantly kept the fire alive in the masjid, which was called 'Dhuni'. This was totally against the Islam religion.

[3] Baba used to wear a Kafni, as Hindu ascetics did.

[4] Baba had not undergone circumcision, which was a compulsory ritual in Islam. Moreover, His ears were pierced.

[5] He used to chant the name of Narayan, who was believed to be the Creator of Universe according to Hindu Philosophy.

[6] Baba was a Sanskrit-Pandit. He taught Nanasaheb Chandorkar, the full text of Bhagwad Gita including grammar in it.

Is it necessary to waste our time and energy in indulging over the speculation about Baba's caste or creed etc.? Better to concentrate on His teachings.

One day Nanasaheb was busy in massaging Baba's feet. Simultaneously, he was humming softly to himself. Baba asked him, "What song are you singing?" He said, "It is not any song but a Sanskrit Shloka (Verse)"

Baba asked him to sing loudly. Nanasaheb chanted the verse in a loud voice. It was the thirty-fourth verse from chapter 4, from Bhagwad Gita.

Baba then suddenly asked him to explain the meaning of the verse. Nana was basically a well-read person. He had a special affinity for Sanskrit language. He thoroughly read interpretations and contemplated over Upanishads and Gita. gave brief summary follows, if you serve the philosophers and knowledgeable persons and ask questions again again, they

will surely advise you. Baba listened carefully and asked further, “Now tell me the meaning of each and every term”.

Nana did accordingly. Baba made him concentrate on the term Dnyanam from second line of the verse. He asked, “Could the term be replaced by any other term?” Nana thought for a moment and Nana replied, Yes, replaced by A-dnyanam’. Baba asked, “Can the verse meaningful if so?” Nana answered in the negative. He added, “In many interpretations, like, SankarBhashya, Anandgiri, Shankaranandi, Shridhari, Madhusudani, Neelakanthi, Dnyaneshwari etc. authors have taken the term dnyana only”.

Baba said, “I do not want to call it an untruth, whatever those authors have interpreted.” The meanings they have given is accepted by most of the people, but try to understand the meaning by replacing the above term by A-dnyanam’. “Dnyana (spiritual knowledge) is verbal discussion. So it cannot be imparted and advised through words. A-dnyana can be a matter of description. Knowledge is beyond words. After all what is Dnyana? Dnyana means, knowledge is not a separate and different thing from ignorance. As the destruction of darkness is light, destruction of ignorance is knowledge. Similarly, destruction of duality (dwait) is merging with God (a-dwait). As the placenta cloaks the embryo in the womb, or dust covers the shining mirror, or the moss blankets the water in the lake, or ash covers the ember, knowledge is cloaked by ignorance. When the outer covering is removed the inner matter is clearly visible”.

Thus Baba illustratively explained about knowledge and ignorance, in a wonderful way. What He suggested was very subtle, penetrating and invaluable. One day Anandchandra Gokulendra Bhagwan Sri Sai Baba told Nanasaheb, “If somebody requests you to render monetary help for the work to be done in the social interest, you should always give him all possible help. But, if you have no capacity to do that, or if you do not wish to, you should not get angry with him. Promise Me you will remember this”.

Nanasaheb assured Baba that he would follow whatever was told. Baba said, “Nana, This lesson appears to be easy, but it is difficult to practise”. Nanasaheb promised that still he would behave accordingly. After a period of few months an incident occurred, when Baba had to admonish Nanasaheb and remind him of his words. Details are as follows. There was a small temple of God Dattatreya at Kopargaon, which was on the way to Shirdi. Whenever Nana used to go to Shirdi he surely would visit the temple on the way to offer his obeisance to God Dattatreya. The caretaker of the temple got well acquainted with Nana. Nana held a good opinion about him.

After a few days, the caretaker requested Nana to bear the expenditure of building a ghat on the bank of the river where the temple was located. He said that it was for the convenience of the devotees for taking bath or washing feet before they entered the shrine. He himself was a poor fellow and to spend that much was out of his capacity. Many times he tried to convince Nana, but Nana always avoided. On one occasion, when the caretaker insisted tenaciously, Nana said, “See, I cannot bear the expenses of building a ghat of full length. But I can spend for the ghat of 10-12 steps which will be of the width of the temple”. The caretaker was satisfied with the offer as something was better than nothing. After this conversation, Nana went to Shirdi and then back to Nagar.

Few days later, Nanasaheb again made a plan of going to Shirdi. One of his relatives Mr. Binivale decided to accompany him. That time Nanasaheb thought that he should avoid going to Dattatreya temple. He feared that the caretaker then would demand Rs. 300/- from him,

towards the expenses of building ghat. So he decided to go directly to Shirdi. He chose a bypass road for the purpose. Binivale also supported the idea. On the way, they had to face many difficulties. When they went in the bushes for urination, many opuntia-thorns hurt them. Both of them suffered and the journey was strenuous and painful. Somehow they reached Shirdi.

When they went for Baba's darshan, Baba avoided to talk to or even to look at them. When Nana urged Him to tell the reason of His hostile mood, the omniscient Baba angrily said, "Nana, because that caretaker would have demanded money, you chose to come here by different path. You avoided to take the darshan of Dattatraya, which you had never done before. Is it the way you are following My teachings? If you had no money, you could have plainly told him. He would not have punished you for your candour. But you played a trick and had forgone even the darshan of God, which was your regular practice. But I am happy you got the punishment. You have suffered lots of thorn-injuries. Why should I talk to a person like you, who turns back from his word?" Nanasaheb was stunned by the experience of Baba's omniscience. He admitted that he had made a mistake, and he would now repeat that behaviour again. He asked for Baba's pardon.

Consciousness manifests itself everywhere in nature. It can be experienced through plumage of a peacock, notes of the singing birds, and fragrance of flowers. Who else than Him creates the silky hair of a baby when it is in the womb of the mother? Who gives it the 'Prana-shakti' (life force) when it is in the embryo state? That is HE. He manifests Himself as the Prana-sakti. That is the seed principle of every creation. Forms may differ, but principle is the same. This seed-principle and the three gunas (attributes) together form living and non-living constituents of the creation. As the small stone in a mango fruit contains the characters of a mango tree, seed principle and the attributes bring the variety in nature. Through destruction also we can experience His power and one can also sense Him in tranquility. Loud, voluminous noise of His destruction dance and sweet, gentle notes of music, both are only His different expressions. He is also present in trees as the conscious sensitivity. In this way He expresses Himself through each grain and every atom.

Jagadishchandra Sai of Shirdi was trying to convince Nanasaheb that He was present in every being, let him be rich person or a beggar, even a cat or a dog. I am always with you, in one form the other. That was what He wanted to teach.

Baba explained to Nanasaheb as to how one should interact with any beggar. He said, "If any beggar demands something give him whatever you can and whatever you wish. But if he is not satisfied with that, say no to him very softly. Do not talk angrily or authoritatively. This rudeness comes because your money power! Beware of it".

Nanasaheb agreed to it and left for his home town Kalyan, near Mumbai. Few months rolled by Nanasaheb's wife had made flour of mixed roasted grains (Bhajani) for preparation of Thalipith', a delicious Maharashtrian dish. That same day a beggar woman came to his house and asked for alms. Someone in the house brought few eatables for her, but she refused. She said that she would not accept anything else but the flour, bhajani. She was given small bowlful of bhajani then. She insisted for more. Maisahib (wife of Nana) came out and fulfilled her demand by giving still more quantity. But she was not satisfied. Maisahib then agreed to give half of the prepared quantity. But she did not accept the proposal. She said she wanted all the bhajani that was prepared. Maisahib lost her temper. She harshly said, "You seem to be overwise and greedy. If you want, take half the quantity; or better quit."

Maisahib went upstairs and told the whole story to Nanasaheb who hurriedly came down to the front door. He said to his servant, "She is a beggar; still how supercilious she is. She wants the whole stuff. That means she is shameless also. Ask her to accept whatever we are giving. And if she does not agree, throw her out". The woman said, "If you are not ready to give all of it, I do not want it at all. And do not speak of throwing me out; I am leaving voluntarily". She went away.

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