

Chapter XI

*Sai, as Sagun Brahman -- Dr. Pandit's Worship -- Haji Sidik Falke
--Control over the Elements*

Let us now, in this Chapter, describe the manifested (Sagun) Brahman Sai. How He was worshipped and how He controlled the elements.

Sai as Sagun Brahman

There are two aspects of God or Brahman : (1) the Unmanifested (Nirgun) and (2) the Manifested (Sagun). The Nirgun is formless, while the Sagun is with form, though both denote the same Brahman. Some prefer to worship the former, some the latter. As stated in the Gita (chapter XII) the worship of the latter is easy and preferable. As man has got a form (body, senses, etc.), it is natural and easy for him to worship the God with form. Our love and devotion do not develop unless we worship Sagun Brahman for a certain period of time, and as we advance; it leads us to the worship (meditation) of Nirgun Brahman. So let us start with Sagun worship. Image, altar, fire, light, sun, water, Brahman are the seven objects of worship, but Sadguru is better than all these. Let us, on this occasion, bring to our mind the form of Sai, Who was non-attachment Incarnate, and Who was a resting-place for His whole-hearted devotees. Our faith in His words is the seat of Asan; and our Sankalpa (determination to start and finish the Puja) is the abandonment of all our desires. Some say that Sai was a Bhagwad-bhakta (devotee of the Lord), others say He was a Maha-Bhagwat (a great devotee), but to us He is God Incarnate. He was extremely forgiving, never irritable, straight, soft, tolerant and content beyond comparison. Though He looked embodied (as having the form), He was really dis-embodied, emotionless, unattached and internally free. The Ganges on its way to the sea, cools and refreshes the creatures affected with heat, gives life to the crops and trees, and quenches the thirst of many. Similarly Saints (Souls) like Sai, while they live their own life, give solace and comfort to all. Lord Krishna has said that 'the Saint is My soul, My living image, I am He or He is My pure form (Being).' This in-describable Shakti or Power of God, known as Pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, incarnated in the form of Sai in Shirdi. The Shruti (Taitiriya Upanishad) describes Brahman as Bliss. This, we read or hear daily in books, but the devout

people experienced this Brahman or Bliss in Shirdi. Baba, the support of all, required no prop or support (Asan) from anybody. He always used a piece of sack-cloth for His seat, which was covered with a small beautiful bed by His bhaktas and had a bolster placed by them as a rest to His back. Baba respected the feelings of His devotees and allowed them to worship Him as they liked. Some waved Chamara or fans before him, some played on musical instruments, some washed His hands and Feet, some others applied scent and chandan, some gave betelnut with leaves and other things, and some others offered naivaidya. Though He looked like living in Shirdi. He was present everywhere. This all-pervasiveness of His was daily experienced by His devotees. Our humble prostration to This all-pervasive Sadguru.

Dr. Pandit's Worship

One Dr. Pandit, a friend of Tatyasaheb Noolkar, once came to Shirdi for Baba's darshana. After saluting Baba, he stayed in the Masjid for some time. Baba asked him to go to Dadabhat Kelkar. He went to Dadabhat, by whom he was well received. Then Dababhat left his house for Puja and Dr. Pandit accompanied him. Dadabhat worshipped Baba. Nobody until then dared to apply sandal paste to Baba's forehead. Only Mhalsapati used to apply it to His throat. But this simple-hearted devout, Dr. Pandit, took Dabadhat's dish containing Puja-materials and taking sandal-paste out of it, drew a Tripundra, i.e. three horizontal lines on Baba's forehead. To the surprise of all, Baba kept silent without uttering a single word. Then Dababhat that evening asked Baba, "How is it, that though You object to the sandal-paste being applied by others to Your forehead, but You allowed Dr. Pandit to do so now?" Baba replied that Dr. Pandit believed Him to be the same as his Guru, Raghunath Maharaja of Dhopeswar, known as Kaka Puranik, and he applied the paste to His forehead, as he was doing to his Guru. Hence He could not object. On enquiry, Dr. Pandit told Dadabhat that he took Baba as his Guru Kaka Puranik, and hence he marked the Tripundra on Baba's forehead, as he did on his Guru's head.

Though Baba allowed the devotees to worship Him as they pleased, still sometimes, He acted in a strange way. Sometimes, He threw away the Puja-dish and was wrath Incarnate, then who could approach Him? Sometimes, He scolded the devotees, at times, He looked softer than wax, a statue of peace and forgiveness. Though He seemed to shake with anger and His red eyes rolled round and round, still, He was internally a stream of affection and motherly love.

Immediately, He called out His devotees and said, that He ever angry with His devotees; that if mothers kicked their children and if the sea turned back the rivers, He would neglect the devotees' welfare; that He, the slave of His devotees, always stood by them, and responded to them, whenever they called upon Him, and that He always longed for their love.

Haji Sidik Falke

There was no knowing, when Baba would accept a devotee. That depended on His sweet will. Sidik Falke's story is to the point. One Mahomedan gentleman by name Sidik Falke of Kalyan, after making a pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina, came to Shirdi. He lived in a Chavadi, facing north, and sat in the open court-yard of the Masjid. For nine months, Baba ignored him, and did not allow him to step into the Masjid. Falke felt much disconsolate, and did not know what to do. Somebody advised him not to be disappointed; but to try to approach Baba through Shama (Madhavarao Deshpande), a close and intimate devotee of Baba. He told him that as they approach the God Shiva through his servant and devotee, Nandi, so Baba should be approached through Shama. Falke liked the idea and implored Shama to intercede for him. Shama agreed and on a convenient occasion spoke to Baba about him thus:- "Baba, why don't You allow the old Haji to step into the Masjid, while so many persons freely come and go, after taking Your darshan; why not bless him once?" Baba replied "Shama, you are too young to understand things. If the Fakir (Allah) does not allow, what can I do? Without His grace, who will climb into the masjid? Well, go to him and ask him whether he will come to the narrow footpath near the Barvi well." Shama went and returned with an affirmative answer. Again Baba said to Shama, "Ask him whether he is willing to pay me the sum of Rs. 40,000/- in four instalments." Shama went and returned with the answer that he was willing to pay even 40 lacs. Again Baba said to Shama- "We are going to butcher a goat in the Masjid, so ask him, whether he would like to have mutton, haunch or testicles of the goat." Shama returned with the answer that the Haji would be happy to receive a small crumb from Baba's kolamba (mudpot). Hearing this Baba got excited and with His hands threw away the earthen jars and kolamba and straightway advanced to the Haji and lifting His Kafni up with His hands said - "Why do you brag and fancy yourself great and pose yourself as an old Haji? Do you read Koran like this? You are proud of you pilgrimage to Macca, but you do not know me." Being thus scolded, the Haji was confounded. Baba

then went back to the Masjid, purchased a few baskets of mangoes and sent them to the Haji. Then again Baba went to the Haji and taking out Rs.55/- from His pocket, gave them in the Haji's hand. Thenceforth, Baba loved the Haji, invited him for meals and the Haji, thereafter, came into the Masjid whenever he liked. Baba gave him at times some rupees, and thus the Haji was enlisted in Baba's Durbar.

Baba's Control over the Elements

We shall close this Chapter after describing two incidents showing Baba's control over the elements. (1) Once at evening time, there was a terrible storm at Shirdi. The sky was overcast with thick black clouds. The winds began to blow forcibly; the clouds roared and the lighting began to flash, and the rains began to descend in torrents. In a short time, the whole place was flooded with water. All the creatures, birds, beasts and men got terribly frightened; and they all flocked to the Masjid for shelter. There are many local deities in Shirdi, but none of them came to their help. So they all prayed to Baba - their God, Who was fond of their devotion, to intercede and quell the storm. Baba was much moved. He came out and standing at the edge of the Masjid, addressed the storm in a loud and thunderous voice - "Stop, stop your fury and the calm." In a few minutes the rains subsided, the winds ceased to blow, and the storm came to a stop. Then the moon rose in the sky, and the people then went back home well-pleased, (2) On another occasion at noon the fire in the Dhuni began to burn brightly, its flames were seen to be reaching the rafters above. The people who were sitting in the Masjid did not know what to do. They dared not to ask Baba to pour water or do anything to quench the flames. But Baba soon came to realize, what was happening. He took up His Satka (short stick) and dashed it against a pillar in front, saying - "Get down, Be calm." At each stroke of the Satka, the flames began to lower and slow down; and in a few minutes the Dhuni became calm and normal.

This is our Sai, an Incarnation of God. He will bless any man who will prostrate and surrender himself to Him. He, who will read the stories of this Chapter daily with faith and devotion, will soon be free from all calamities; not only this, but always attached and devoted to Sai, he will get very soon God-vision: all his desires will be fulfilled and being ultimately desireless, he will attain the Supreme. Amen!

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all