

Chapter II

Object of Writing the Work - Incapacity and Boldness in the Undertaking - Hot Discussion - Conferring Significant and Prophetic Title of Hemadpant - Necessity of a Guru.

In the last Chapter, the author mentioned in the original Marathi book that he would state the reason that led him to undertake the work, and the persons qualified to read the same and such other points. Now in this chapter, he starts to tell the same.

Object of Writing the Work

In the first chapter, I described Sai Baba's miracle of checking and destroying the epidemic of Cholera by grinding wheat and throwing the flour, on the outskirts of the village. I heard other miracles of Sai Baba to my great delight, and this delight burst forth into this poetic work. I also thought, that the description of these grand miracles of Sai Baba would be interesting, and instructive to His devotees; and would remove their sins, and so I began to write the sacred life and teachings of Sai Baba. The life of the saint is neither logical nor dialectical. It shows us the true and great path.

Incapacity and Boldness in Undertaking the Work

Hemadpant thought that he was not a fit person to undertake the work. He said, "I do not know the life of my intimate friend nor do I know my own mind, then how can I write the life of a saint or describe the nature of Incarnations, which even the Vedas were unable to do? One must be a saint himself, before he could know other saints, then how can I describe their glory? To write the life of a saint is the most difficult, though one may as well measure the depth of the water of the seven seas or enclose the sky with cloth-trappings. I knew, that this was the most venturous undertaking, which might expose me to ridicule. I, therefore, invoked Sai Baba's grace.

The premier poet-saint of Maharashtra, Shri Jnaneshwar Maharaj, has stated that the Lord loves those who write the lives of saints; and the saints also have a peculiar method of their own of getting the service, which the devotees long for, successfully accomplished. The

saints inspire the work, the devotee becomes only an indirect cause or instrument to achieve the end. For instance, in 1700 Shaka year¹, the poet Mahipati aspired to write the lives of saints. Saints inspired him, and got the work done; so also in 1800 Shaka year,² Das Ganu's service was accepted. The former wrote 4 works-Bhakta Vijaya, Santa Vijaya, Bhakta Leelamrit and Santa Kathamrit, while the latter wrote two - "Bhakta Leelamrit and Santa Kathamrit", in which the lives of modern Saints were described. In chapters 31,32,33 of Bhakta Leelamrit and in chapter 57 of Santa Kathamrit, the sweet life and teachings of Sai Baba are very well depicted. These have been separately published in Sai Leela Magazine, Nos. 11 and 12, Vol. 17; the readers are advised to read these chapters. So also Sai Baba's wonderful Leelas are described in a small decent book named Shri Sainath Bhajana Mala by Mrs. Savitribai Raghunath Tendulkar of Bandra. Das-Ganu Maharaj also has composed various sweet poems on Sai Baba. A devotee named Amidas Bhavani Mehta, has also published some stories of Sri Baba in Gujarathi; some Nos. of Sainath Prabha, a magazine published by Dakshina Bhiksha Sanstha of Shirdi, are also published. Then the question of objection comes in, that while so many works regarding Sai Baba are extant, why should this (Satcharita) be written? and where is its necessity?

The answer is plain and simple. The life of Sai Baba is as wide and deep as the infinite ocean; and all can dive deep into the same and take out precious gems (of knowledge and Bhakti), and distribute them to the aspiring public. The stories, parables, and teachings of Sai Baba are very wonderful. They will give peace and happiness to the people, who are afflicted with sorrows and heavily loaded with miseries of this worldly existence, and also bestow knowledge and wisdom, both in the worldly and in spiritual domains. If these teachings of Sai Baba, which are as interesting and instructive as the Vedic lore, are listened to and meditated upon, the devotees will get, what they long for, viz., union with Brahman, mastery in eight-fold Yoga, Bliss of meditation etc. So I thought, that I should call these stories together that would be my best Upasana. This collection would be most delightful to those simple souls, whose eyes were not blessed with Sai Baba's darshana. So, I set about collecting Sai Baba's teachings and expressions - the outcome of His boundless and natural self-realization. It was

1. 1700 SA + 78 = 1778 A.D.

A.D.+ 57 = Vikrami year

2. 1878 A.D.

Sai Baba, who inspired me in this matter; in fact, I surrendered my ego at His feet, and thought that my path was clear; and that He would make me quite happy here, and in the next world.

I could not myself ask Sai Baba to give me permission for this work; so I requested Mr. Madhavrao Deshpande alias Shama, Baba's most intimate devotee, to speak to Him for me. He pleaded for my cause and said to Sai Baba, "This Annasaheb wishes to write Your biography, don't say that You are a poor begging Fakir, and there is no necessity to write it, but if You agree and help him, he will write or rather, Your feet (grace) will accomplish the work. Without Your consent and blessing, nothing can be done successfully." When Sai Baba heard this request, He was moved and blessed me by giving me His Udi (sacred ashes) and placing His boon-bestowing hand on my head said :- "Let him make a collection of stories and experiences, keep notes and memos; I will help him. He is only an outward instrument. I should write Myself My autobiography and satisfy the wishes of My devotees. He should get rid of his ego, place (or surrender) it at My feet. He who acts like this in life, him I help the most. What of My life-stories? I serve him in his house in all possible ways. When his ego is completely annihilated and there is left no trace of it, I Myself shall enter into him and shall Myself write My own life. Hearing my stories and teachings will create faith in devotees' hearts and they will easily get self - realization and Bliss; let there be no insistence on establishing one's own view, no attempt to refute other's opinions, no discussions of pros and cons of any subject."

The word 'discussion' put me in mind of my promise to explain the story of my getting the title of Hemadpant and now I begin to relate the same. I was on close friendly terms with Kakasaheb Dixit and Nanasaheb Chandorkar. They pressed me to go to Shirdi and have Baba's darshana, and I promised them to do so. But something in the interval turned up, which prevented me from going to shirdi. The son of a friend of mine at Lonavala fell ill. My friend tried all possible means, physical and spiritual, but the fever would not abate. At length he got his Guru to sit by the bed-side of his son, but this too was of no avail. Hearing this, I thought ěwhat was the utility of the Guru, if he could not save my friend's son? If the Guru can't do anything for us, why should I go to Shirdi at all? Thinking in this way, I postponed my Shirdi-trip; but the inevitable must happen and it happened in my case as follows : - Mr. Nanasaheb Chandorkar, who was a Prant Officer, was going on tour to Bassein. From Thana he came to Dadar and was waiting for a train bound for Bassein.

In the meanwhile, a Bandra Local turned up. He, sat in it and came to Bandra; and sent for me and took me to task for putting off my Shirdi trip. Nana's argument for my Shirdi trip was convincing and delightful, and so I decided to start for Shirdi, the same night. I packed up my luggage and started for Shirdi. I planned to go to Dadar and there to catch the train for Manmad, and so I booked myself for Dadar and sat in the train. While the train was to start, a Mahomedan came hastily to my compartment and seeing all my paraphernalia, asked me where I was bound to. I told him my plan. He then suggested that I should straight go to Boribunder, and not get down at Dadar, for the Manmad Mail did not get down at Dadar at all. If this little miracle or Leela had not happened, I would not have reached Shirdi next day as settled, and many doubts would have assailed me. But that was not to be. As fortune favoured me, I reached Shirdi the next day before 9 or 10 A.M. Mr. Bhausahab (Kaka) Dixit was waiting for me there. This was in 1910 A.D., when there was only one place, viz., Sathe's Wada for lodging pilgrim devotees. After alighting from the Tonga, I was anxious to have darshana, when the great devotee, Tatyasaheb Noolkar returned from the Masjid and said that Sai Baba was at the corner of the Wada, and that I should first get the preliminary darshana and then, after bath, see Him at leisure. Hearing this I ran and prostrated before Baba and then my joy knew no bounds. I found more than what Nana Chandorkar had told me. All my senses were satisfied and I forgot thirst and hunger. The moment I touched Sai Baba's feet, I began a new lease of life. I felt myself much obliged to those who spurred and helped me to get the darshana; and I considered them as my real relatives, and I cannot repay their debt. I only remember them and prostrate (mentally) before them. The peculiarity of Sai Baba's darshana, as I found it, is that by His darshana our thoughts are changed, the force of previous actions is abated and gradually non-attachment of dispassion towards worldly objects grows up. It is by the merit of actions in many past births that such darshana is got, and if only you see Sai Baba, really all the world becomes or assumes the form of Sai Baba.

Hot Discussion

On the first day of my arrival in Shirdi, there was a discussion between me and Balasaheb Bhate regarding the necessity of a Guru. I contended, "Why should we lose our freedom and submit to others? When we have to do our duty, why a Guru is necessary? One must try his best and save himself. What can the Guru do to a man who does nothing but sleeps indolently?" Thus I pleaded freewill,

while Mr. Bhate took up the other side, viz., Destiny, and said, "Whatever is bound to happen must happen; even great men have failed, man proposes one way, but God disposes the other (contrary) way. Brush aside your cleverness; pride or egoism won't help you." This discussion, with all its pros and cons went on for an hour or so, and as usual no decision was arrived at. We had to stop the discussion ultimately as we were exhausted. The net result of this was that I lost my peace of mind and found that unless there is strong body-consciousness and egoism, there would be no discussion; in other words, it is egoism which breeds discussion.

Then when we went to the Masjid with others, Baba asked Kakasaheb Dixit the following:-

"What was going on in the (Sathe's) Wada? What was the discussion about?" and staring at me, Baba further added, "What did this Hemadpant say?"

Hearing these words, I was much surprised. The Masjid was at a considerable distance from Sathe's Wada where I was staying and where the discussion was going on. How could Baba know our discussion unless He be omniscient and Inner Ruler of us all?

Significant and Prophetic Title

I began to think why Sai Baba should call me by the name Hemadpant. This word is a corrupt form of Hemadripant. This Hemadripant was a wellknown Minister of the kings Mahadev and Ramadev of Devgiri of the Yadav dynasty. He was very learned, good-natured and the author of good works, such as Chaturvarga Chintamani (dealing with spiritual subjects) and Rajprashasti. He invented and started new methods of accounts and was the originator of the Modi (Marathi Shorthand) script. But I was quite the opposite, an ignoramus, and of dull, mediocre intellect. So I could not understand why the name or title was conferred upon me, but thinking seriously upon it, I thought that the title was a dart to destroy my ego, so that, I should always remain meek and humble. It was also a compliment paid to me for the cleverness in the discussion.

Looking to the future history, we think that Baba's word (calling Mr. Dabholkar by the name Hemadpant) was significant and prophetic, as we find that he looked after the management of Sai Sansthan very intelligently, kept nicely all the accounts and was also the author of such a good work "Sai Satcharita", which deals with

such important and spiritual subjects as Jnana, Bhakti and dispassion, self-surrender and self-realization.

About the Necessity of a Guru

Hemadpant has left no note, no memo about what Baba said regarding this subject, but Kakasaheb Dixit has published his notes regarding this matter. Next day after Hemadpant's meeting with Sai Baba, Kakasaheb went to Baba and asked whether he should leave Shirdi. Baba Said, "Yes". Then someone asked - "Baba, where to go?" Baba said, "High up." Then the man said, "How is the way?" Baba said, "There are many ways leading there; there is one way also from here (Shirdi). The way is difficult. There are tigers and wolves in the jungles on the way." I (Kakasaheb) asked - "But Baba, what if we take a guide with us?" Baba answered, - "Then there is no difficulty. The guide will take you straight to your destination, avoiding wolves, tigers and ditches etc. on the way. If there be no guide, there is the danger of your being lost in the jungles or falling into ditches." Mr. Dabholkar was present on this occasion and he thought that this was the answer Baba gave to the question whether Guru was a necessity (Vide Sai Leela Vol. I, No.5, Page 47); and he thereupon took the hint that no discussion of the problem, whether man is free or bound, is of any use in spiritual matters, but that on the contrary real Paramartha is possible only as the result of the teachings of the Guru, as is illustrated in this chapter of the original work in the instances of great Avatars like Rama and Krishna, who had to submit themselves to their Gurus, Vasishtha and Sandipani respectively, for getting self- realization and that the only virtues necessary for such progress are faith and patience. (Vide Sai Satcharita, Ch. II, 191-92).

Bow to Shri Sai — Peace be to all