

Chapter XXII

Rescues from Serpent-bites - (1) Balasaheb Mirikar (2) Bapusaheb Booty (3) Amir Shakkar (4) Hemadpant - Baba's Opinion Regarding Killing of Serpents.

Preliminary

How to meditate on Baba? No one has been able to fathom the nature or the form of the Almighty. Even the Vedas and the thousand-tongued Shesha are not able to describe it fully; but the devotees cannot but know and look at the form of the Lord, for they know that His Feet are the only means of their happiness. They know no other method of attaining the supreme goal of life, except meditating on the Holy Feet. Hemadpant suggests an easy way of devotion and meditation as follows:-

As the dark fortnight of every month wears out gradually, the moonlight also wanes in the same degree and on the newmoon day, we do not see the moon at all, nor do we get her light. Therefore, when the bright fortnight begins, people are very anxious to see the moon. On the first day, the moon is not seen and on the second day also she is not clearly visible. Then the people are asked to see the moon through an opening between the two branches of a tree, and when they begin to see through this aperture eagerly and after concentratedly, the distant small crescent of the moon comes, to their great delight, within their ken. Following this clue, let us try to see Baba's Light. Look at Baba's posture, how fine it is! He is sitting with His legs folded, the right leg held across the left knee. The fingers of His left hand are spread on the right-foot. On the right toe are spread His two fingers-the index and middle ones. By this posture Baba means to say, as it were-if you want to see My Light, be egoless and most humble and meditate on My toe through the opening between the two branches-index and middle fingers-and then you will be able to see My Light. This is the easiest means of attaining devotion.

Now let us turn for a moment to Baba's life. Shirdi had become a place of pilgrimage on account of Baba's stay. People

1. According to the Hinduism, the earth rests on the head of the Serpent God! Shesnaga, Who has 1000 heads.

from all quarters began to flock there, and both the rich and the poor began to be benefited in more ways than one and in some form or other. Who can describe Baba's boundless love and His wonderful natural knowledge and His all-pervasiveness? Blessed is he, who could experience one or all of these. Sometimes Baba observed long silence which was, in a way, His dissertation on Brahman; at other times He was Consciousness-Bliss Incarnate, surrounded by His devotees. Sometimes He spoke in parables, and at other times indulged in wit and humour. At times, He was quite unambiguous (clear) and at times He seemed enraged. Sometimes He gave His teachings in a nut-shell, at other times He argued at length. Many a time He was very plain. In this way, He gave varied instructions to many, according to their requirements. His life was, therefore, inscrutable, beyond the ken of our mind, beyond our intellect and speech. Our longing to see His face, to talk with Him and hear His Leelas was never satisfied; still we were overflowing with joy. We can count the showers of rain, encircle (tie) the wind in a leather bag, but who can gauge or measure His Leelas? Now we deal here with one aspect of them, viz. how He anticipated or forestalled the calamities of His devotees and warded them off in time.

Balasaheb Mirikar

Balasaheb Mirikar, son of Sirdar Kakasaheb Mirikar was Mamlatdar of Kopergaon. He was going on tour to Chitali. On the way he came to Shirdi to see Sai Baba. When he went to the Masjid and prostrated himself before Baba, usual conversation regarding health and other matters commenced, when Baba sounded a note of warning as follows:- "Do you know our Dwarakamayi?" As Balasaheb did not understand he kept quiet, Baba continued - "This is our Dwarakamayi, where you are sitting. She wards off all dangers and anxieties of the children, who sit on her lap. This Masjidmayi (its presiding Deity) is very merciful, she is the mother of the simple devotees, whom she will save in calamities. Once a person sits on her lap, all his troubles are over. He, who rests in her shade, gets Bliss". Then Baba gave him Udi, and placed His protecting hand on his head. When Balasaheb was about to depart, He again said- "Do you know the "Lamba Bava" (long gentleman), Viz. serpent?" And then closing the left arm like fist He brought it near the right elbow, and moving His left arm like the hood of a serpent, He said- "He is so terrible, but what can he do to the children of Dwarakamayi: When the Dwarakamayi (its presiding deity) protects, what can the serpent do?"

All who were present there, were curious to know the meaning

of all this and its reference to Mirikar, but none had the courage to ask Baba about this. Then Balasaheb saluted Baba and left the Masjid with Shama. Baba called Shama back and asked him to accompany Balasaheb, and enjoy the Chitali trip. Shama came to Balasaheb, and told him that he would go with him according to Baba's wish. Balasaheb replied that he need not come as it would be inconvenient. Sharma returned to Baba and told Him what Balasaheb said to him. Baba said, "Alright, do not go. We should mean well and do well. Whatever is destined to happen, will happen".

In the meanwhile Balasaheb thought over again, and calling Shama asked him to accompany him. Then Shama going again to Baba and taking His leave started with Balasaheb in the tanga. They reached Chitali at 9 P.M. and encamped in the Maruti temple. The office-people had not come; so they sat quiet in the temple, talking and chitchating. Balasaheb was sitting on a mat reading a newspaper. His Uparani (upper dhotar) was spread across his waist and on a part of it a snake was sitting unobserved. It began to move with a rustling sound which was heard by the peon. He brought a lantern, saw the snake and raised an alarm- 'serpent, serpent'. Balasaheb was frightened and began to quiver. Shama was also amazed. Then he and others moved noiselessly and took sticks and clubs in their hands. The snake got down slowly from the waist and it moved away from Balasaheb; it was immediately done to death. Thus this calamity, which was prophesied by Baba, was averted and Balasaheb's love for Baba was deeply confirmed.

Bapusaheb Booty

A great astrologer named Nanasaheb Dengale told one day Bapusaheb Booty, who was then in Shirdi, "To-day is an inauspicious day for you, there is a danger to your life". This made Bapusaheb restless. When they, as usual, came to Masjid, Baba said to Bapusaheb- "What does this Nana say? He foretells death for you. Well, you need not be afraid. Tell him boldly "Let us see how death kills." Then later in the evening Bapusaheb went to his privy for easing himself where he saw a snake. His servant saw it and lifted a stone to strike at it. Bapusaheb asked him to get a big stick, but before the servant returned with the stick, the snake was seen moving away and soon disappeared. Bapusaheb remembered with joy Baba's words of fearlessness.

Amir shakkar

Amir Shankar was a native of the village Korale, in Kopergaon

Taluka. he belonged to the butcher caste. He worked as a commission agent in Bandra, and was well-known there. He once suffered from Rheumatism, which gave him much pain. He was then reminded of God, and so, he left his business and went to Shirdi, and prayed to Baba to relieve him from his malady. Baba then stationed him in the Chavadi, which was then a damp unhealthy place, unfit for such a patient. Any other place in the village, or Korale itself would have been better for Amir, but Baba's word was the deciding factor and the chief medicine. Baba did not allow him to come to the Masjid, but fixed him in the Chavadi, where he got very great advantage. Baba passed via Chavadi every morning and evening; and every alternate day Baba went to the Chavadi in a procession and slept there. So Amir got Baba's contact very often easily. Amir stayed there for full nine months, and then, somehow or other, he got a disgust for the place. So one night he stealthily left the place and came to Kopergaon and stayed in a Dharmashala. There he saw an old dying Fakir, who asked him for water. Amir brought it and gave it to him. As soon as he drank it, he passed away. Then Amir was in a fix. He thought that if he went and informed the authorities, he would be held responsible for the death as he was the first and sole informant, and knew something about it. He repented for his action, viz. leaving Shirdi without Baba's leave, and prayed to Baba. He then determined to return to Shirdi, and that same night he ran back, remembering and muttering Baba's name on the way, and reached Shirdi before day-break, and became free from anxiety. Then he lived in the Chavadi in perfect accordance with Baba's wishes and orders, and got himself cured. One night it so happened that Baba cried at midnight- "Oh Abdul, some devilish creature is dashing against the side of My bed". Abdul came with a lantern, examined Baba's bed but found nothing. Baba asked him to examine carefully all the place and began to strike ground with His satka. Seeing this Leela of Baba, Amir thought that Baba might have suspected some serpent had come there. Amir could know, by close and long contact, the meaning of Baba's words and actions. Baba then saw near Amir's cushion something moving. He asked Abdul to bring in the light, and when he brought it, he saw the coil of serpent there, moving it head up and down. Thereupon the serpent was immediately beaten to death. Thus Baba gave timely warning and saved Amir.

Hemadpant (Scorpion and Serpent)

(1) At Baba's recommendation Kakasaheb Dixit was daily reading the two works of Shri Eknath Maharaj, viz., Bhagwat and

Bhawartha Ramayana and Hemadpant had the good fortune to be one of the audience when the reading of the works was going on. Once when a portion from the Ramayana relating to Hanuman's testing Rama's greatness, according to his mother's instructions, was being read, all the listeners were spell-bound. Hemadpant was one of them. A big scorpion (none knew where it came from), jumped and sat on the right shoulder of Hemadpant, on his Uparani (upper dhotar). First it was not noticed, but as the Lord protects those, who are intent on hearing His stories, he casually cast a glance over his right shoulder and noticed it. It was dead silence, not a bit moved here or there. It seemed as if, it also enjoyed the reading. Then by the Lord's grace, Hemadpant without disturbing the audience, took the two ends of his dhotar, folded them, and brought them together, enclosing the scorpion within. Then he went out, and threw it in the garden. (2) On another occasion some persons were sitting in the upper floor of Kakasaheb's Wada, just before nightfall, when a serpent crept through a hole in the window frame and sat coiled up. A light was brought. Though it was first dazzled, yet it sat still and only moved its head up and down. Then many persons rushed there with sticks and cudgels, but as it sat in an awkward place, no blow could be dealt. But hearing the noises of men, the serpent went out hastily through the same hole. Then all the persons there felt relieved.

Baba's Opinion

One devotee named Muktaram, then said that it was good that the poor creature escaped. Hemadpant challenged him saying that serpents should better be killed. There was a hot discussion between them - the former contending that serpents, and such creatures, should not be killed, the latter that they should be. As night came on, the discussion came to an end, without any decision being arrived at. Next day, the question was referred to Baba, who gave His settled opinion as follows:- "God lives in all beings and creatures, whether they be serpents or scorpions. He is the Great Wirepuller of the world, and all beings, serpents, scorpions etc., obey His command. Unless He will it, nobody can do any harm to others. The world is all dependent on Him, and no one is independent. So we should take pity and love all creatures, leave off adventurous fights and killings and be patient. The Lord (God) is the Protector of all.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all