

CHAPTER XXVIII

Sparrows Drawn To Shirdi

(1) Lakhamichand - (2) Burhanpore Lady - (3) Megha

Preliminary

Sai is not finite or limited. He dwells in all beings, from ants and insects to the God Brahma. He pervades all. Sai was well-versed in the knowledge of the Vedas, as well as in the science of Self-realisation. As He was proficient in both these, He was well-fitted to be the Sad-guru. Any one, though learned, but not able to awaken the disciples and establish them in Self-realisation, does not deserve to be called a Sadguru. Generally the father gives birth to the body, and death invariably follows life; but Sadguru does away with both life and death, and so he is more kind and merciful, than any body.

Sai Baba often said that-let His man (Devotee) be at any distance, a thousand koss away from Him, he will be drawn to Shirdi like a sparrow, with a thread tied to its feet. This Chapter describes the stories of three such sparrows.

(1) Lala Lakhamichand

This gentleman was first serving in the Railways and afterwards in Shri Venkateshwar Press in Bombay and thereafter in the firm of Messrs. Ralli Brothers as a munshi (clerk). He got the contact of Baba in 1910. One or two months before Christmas he saw in his dream at Santacruz (a suburb of Bombay) an old man with a beard, standing and surrounded by his Bhaktas. Some days later he went to the house of his friend. Mr Dattatreya Manjunath Bijur to hear the kirtan by Das Ganu. It was always the practice of Das Ganu to keep Baba's picture in front of the audience while making the kirtan. Lakhamichand was surprised to see that the features of the old man he saw in his dream, tallied exactly with those in the picture and thus he came to the conclusion, that the old man, he saw in his dream was Sai Baba himself. The sight of this picture, Das Ganu's kirtan and the life of the Saint Tukaram on which Das Ganu discoursed, all these things made a deep impression on his mind and he pined to go to Shirdi. It is always the experience of the Bhaktas that God always helps them in their search for Sad-guru and other spiritual endeavours. That very night at 8-00 p.m. a friend

named Shankarrao knocked at his door and asked him whether he would accompany him to Shirdi. His joy knew no bounds and he at once decided to go to Shirdi. He borrowed Rs.15/- from his cousin and after making due preparations left for Shirdi. In the train, he and his friend Shankar Rao did some Bhajan (sang religious songs) and enquired about Sai baba with some fellow passengers-four Mahomedans, who were returning to their place near Shirdi. They all told them that Sai baba was a great Saint living in Shirdi for many years. Then when they reached Kopergaon he wanted to buy some good guavas for offering to Baba, but he was so much enrapt with the scenery and sights there, that he forgot to purchase them. When they were nearing Shirdi, he was reminded of the guavas; just then he saw an old woman with a guava-basket on her head, running after the tanga. The tanga was stopped, and he gladly purchased some select fruits, when the woman said- "Take all the rest and offer them, on my behalf, to Baba". The facts, viz., that he had intended to purchase guavas, but that he had forgotten to do so, the old woman's encounter and her devotion to Baba, all these were a surprise to both friends; and Lakshmichand thought in his mind, that the old woman might be some relation of the old man, he saw in his dream. Then they drove on and came near Shirdi, and on seeing flags on the Masjid, the saluted them. With Puja materials in hand, they then went to the Masjid and worshipped Baba with due formality. Lakshmichand was much moved, and was extremely happy to see Baba. He was enrapt with Baba's Feet as a bee with a sweet smelling lotus. Then Baba spoke as follows:-

"Cunning fellow, he does bhajan on the way and enquires from others. Why ask others? Everything we should see with our own eyes; where is the necessity to question others? Just think for yourself whether your dream is true or not? Where was the necessity of the darshan by taking a loan from a Marwari? Is the heart's desire now satisfied?"

Hearing these words Lakhamichand was wonderstruck at Baba's omniscience. He was at a loss to know how Baba came to know about all the things that had happened enroute from his house to Shirdi. The chief thing to note in this respect is that Baba never liked people to run into debt for taking His darshan, or celebrating any holiday or making any pilgrimage.

Sanza

At noon when Lakhamichand was sitting for meals he got some sanza (wheat-pudding) from a devotee as Prasad. He was pleased to have it. Next day also he expected it, but got nothing. So, he was

anxious to get it again. Then on the third day at the noon Arati time, Bapusaheb Jog asked Baba, what naivedya he should bring. Baba told him to bring sanza. Then the Bhaktas brought two big potfuls of sanza. Lakshamichand was very hungry and there was some pain in his back. Then Baba said to him - "It is good that you are hungry, take sanza and some medicine for the pain in the back." He was again wonderstruck to see that Baba again read his mind and spoke out what was passing therein. How omniscient was He!

Evil eye

On this occasion, he once witnessed one night the procession to the chavadi. Baba then suffered much from cough. He thought that this suffering of Baba might be due to somebody's evil eye. Next morning when he went to the Masjid Baba spoke to Shama as follows - "I suffered last night from cough; is it due to some evil eye? I think that somebody's evil eye has worked on me and so I am suffering". In this case Baba spoke out what was passing in Lakshamichand's mind.

On seeing these proofs of Baba's omniscience and kindness to His Bhaktas, he fell prostrate at Baba's Feet and said - "I am much pleased with your darshan. Ever be kind and merciful to me and protect me always. There is no other God to me in this world except Your Feet. Let my mind be ever rapt in Your Bhajan and Feet. Let Your grace protect me from the miseries of the world and let me ever chant Your name and be happy".

After getting Baba' Udi and blessing he returned home with his friend, much pleased and contented and singing Baba's glory on the way. He remained a staunch devotee of baba afterwards and always sent garlands of flowers, camphor and Dakshina with any person of his acquaintance bound for Shirdi.

(2) Burhanpore Lady

Now let us turn to another sparrow (Baba's word meaning devotee). One lady in Burhanpore saw in her dream Sai Baba coming to her door and begging kichadi (rice cooked with dal and salt) for His meals. On awakening she saw no body at her door. However, she was pleased with the vision and told it to all including her husband. He was employed in the Postal Department and when he was transferred to Akola, both husband and wife, who were devout, decided to go to Shirdi. Then on a suitable day they left for Shirdi and after visiting Gomati Tirth on the way, reached Shirdi and stayed

there for two months. Every day they went to the Masjid, performed Baba's worship and passed their time happily. The couple came to Shirdi to offer Khichadi as naivedya but for the first 14 days, somehow or other, it could not be offered. The lady did not like this delay. Then on the 15th day she came at noon to the Masjid with her khichadi. There she found that Baba and others were already sitting for meals, and that the curtain was down. Nobody dared enter in when the curtain was let down, but the lady could not wait. She threw up the curtain with her hand and entered. Strange to say that Baba seemed that day, hungry for khichadi and wanted that thing first and when the lady came in with the dish, Baba was delighted, and began to eat morsel after morsel of khichadi. On seeing the earnestness of Baba in this respect, everybody was wonderstruck and those, who heard the story of khichadi, were convinced about His extraordinary love for His devotees.

(3) Megha

Now let us go to the third and bigger 'sparrow'. Megha of Viramgaon was a simple and illiterate Brahmin cook of Rao Bahadur H. V. Sathe. He was a devotee of Shiva and always chanted the five syllabled mantra 'Namah Shivaya'.* He did not know the Sandhya nor its chief mantra, the Gayatri. Rao Bahadur Sathe was interested in him, got him taught the Sandhya and the Gayatri. Sathe told him that Sai Baba of Shirdi was the embodied form of the God Shiva and made him start for Shirdi. At the Broach Railway station he learnt that Sai Baba was a Moslem and his simple and orthodox mind was much perturbed at the prospect of bowing to a Moslem, and he prayed to his master not to send him there. His master, however, insisted on his going there and gave him a letter of introduction to his (Sathe's) father-in-law, Ganesh Domodar, alias Dada Kelkar at Shirdi, to introduce him to Sai Baba. When he reached Shirdi and went to the Masjid, Baba was very indignant and would not allow him to enter. "Kick out the rascal!" roared Baba, and then said to Megha - "You are a high caste Brahmin and I am a low Moslem; you will lose your caste by coming here. So get away." Hearing these words Megha began to tremble. He was wondering as to how Baba had come to know about what was passing in his mind. He stayed there for some days, serving Baba in his own way, but was not convinced. Then he went home. After that he went to Tryambak (Nasik District)

* నమఃశివాయ

This is a prayer done by a Brahmin after his thread ceremony.

and stayed there for a year and a half. Then again he returned to Shirdi. This time, at the intercession of Dada Kelkar, he was allowed to enter the Masjid and stay in Shirdi. Sai Baba's help to Megha was not through any oral instruction. He worked upon Megha internally (mentally) with the result that he was considerably changed and benefited. Then Megha began to look upon Sai Baba as an incarnation of Shiva. In order to worship Shiva, bela leaves are required and Megha used to go miles and miles every day to bring them and worship his Shiva (Baba). His practice was to worship all the Gods in the village, and then come to the Masjid, and after saluting Baba's gadi (asan) he worshipped Baba, and after doing some service (shampooing His Legs) drank the washings (Tirth) of Baba's Feet. Once it so happened that he came to the Masjid, without worshipping God Khandoba, as the door of the temple was closed. Baba did not accept his worship, and sent him again, saying that the door was open then. Megha went, found the door open, worshipped the Deity and then returned to Baba as usual.

Ganges-Bath

On one Makar-Sankranti day, Megha wanted to besmear the body of Baba with sandal-paste and bathe Him with Ganges water. Baba was first unwilling to undergo this operation, but at his repeated requests, He consented. Megha had to traverse a distance of eight koss (going and returning) to bring the sacred water from the Gomati river. He brought the water, made all preparations for the bath at noon and asked Baba to get ready for the same. Then Baba again asked him to be freed from his bath saying that, as a Fakir He had nothing to do (or gain) with Ganges water; but Megha did not listen. He knew that Shiva is pleased with a bath of Ganges water and that he must give his Shiva (Baba) that bath on that auspicious day. Baba then consented, came down and sat on a pat (wooden board) and protruding his head said - "Oh Megha, do at least this favour; head is the most important organ of the body, so pour the water over that only-it is equivalent to the full or whole bath." "Al-right" said Megha and lifting the water pot up, began to pour it on the head but in doing this he was so much overwhelmed with love that he cried out 'Har Gange' and emptied the pot on the whole body. He kept the pot aside and began to look at Baba, but to his surprise and amazement he found that Baba's head was only drenched but the body quite dry.

Trident and Pindi

Megha worshipped Baba in two places; in the Masjid he worshipped Baba in person and in the Wada, Baba's big picture, given

by Nanasaheb Chandorkar. This he did for 12 months. Then in order to appreciate his devotion and confirm his faith, Baba gave him a vision. Early one morning when Megha was still lying down on his bed with eyes closed but internally awake, he saw clearly Baba's Form. Baba knowing him to be awake threw Akshata (rice-grains marked red with Kumkum) and said, "Megha, draw a Trident" and disappeared. Hearing Baba's words, he eagerly opened his eyes but did not see Baba, but saw only rice grains spread here and there. He then went to Baba, told Him about the vision and asked permission to draw Trident. Baba said - "Did you not hear My words asking you to draw Trident? It was no vision but direct order and My words are always pregnant with meaning and never hollow." Megha said - "I thought you woke me up, but all the doors were closed, so I thought it was a vision". Baba rejoined - "I require no door to enter. I have no form nor any extension; I always live everywhere. I carry on, as a wirepuller, all the actions of the man who trusts Me and merges in Me."

Megha returned to the Wada, and drew a red Trident on the wall near Baba's picture. Next day a Ramadasi Bhakta came from Poona, saluted Baba and offered Him Pindi (an image of Shiva). At this time Megha also turned up there. Baba said to him - "See, Shankar has come, protect (i.e., worship) Him now." Megha was surprised to see Pindi following Trident immediately. Then also in the Wada, Kakasaheb Dixit was standing with a towel on his head after having taken his bath, and was remembering Sai, when he saw a Pindi before his mental vision. While he was wondering about this, Megha came and showed him the Pindi presented to him by Baba. Dixit was happy to know that the Pindi exactly tallied with the One he saw a few minutes before in his vision. In a few days after the drawing of the Trident was complete, Baba installed the Pindi near the big picture which Megha was worshipping. The worship of Shiva was dear to Megha and by arranging the drawing of the Trident and the installation of the Pindi, Baba confirmed his faith therein.

After continuous service of Baba for many years, doing regular worship and Arati every noon and evening, Megha passed away in 1912. Then Baba passed His hands over his corpse and said - "**This was a true devotee of Mine.**" Baba also ordered that at His own expense the usual funeral dinner should be given to the Brahmins, and this order was carried out by Kakasaheb Dixit.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all