

CHAPTER XXXI

The Passing Away In Baba's Presence of - (1) Sannyasi Vijayanand - (2) Balaram Mankar - (3) Noolkar - (4) Megha - and (5) The Tiger.

In this Chapter Hemadpant describes the passing away of certain persons and a tiger in Baba's presence.

Preliminary

The last wish or thought that a man has at the hour of death, determines his future course. Shri Krishna has said in Gita (VIII-5-6) that "he who remembers Me in his last moments, comes verily to Me, and he that meditates otherwise at that time goes to what he looks for." We cannot be certain that we can entertain a particular good thought at our last moment, for, more often than not, we are more likely to be frightened and terrified by many causes. Hence constant practice is necessary for enabling us to fix our mind on any desired good thought at any or the last moment. All Saints, therefore, recommended us to always remember God and chant His name always, so that we may not be puzzled when the time for departure comes. The devotees on their part surrender themselves completely to the Saints, fully believing that the all-knowing Saints would guide and help them in their last moments. A few such cases will be noted here.

(1) Vijayanand

A Madrasi Sannyasi named Vijayanand started on a pilgrimage to Manasa-Sarovar. En route, hearing Baba's fame, he halted at Shirdi. There he met one Somadevaji Swami of Hardwar and enquired of him about the particulars of the Manasa-Sarovar trip. The Swami told him that the Sarovar was 500 miles above the Gangotri and described to him the difficulties of the journey, viz. plenty of snow and the change of dialect every 50 koss and the suspicious nature of the people of Bhutan who give a lot of trouble to the pilgrims on the way. Hearing this, the Sannyasi was dejected and cancelled the trip. Then when he went to Baba and prostrated himself before Him, Baba got enraged and said, "Drive out this useless Sannyasi, his company is of no use". The Sannyasi did not know Baba's nature. He felt discomfited, but sat there watching things that were going on. It was the morning Darbar and the Masjid was overcrowded. Baba was being worshipped in various ways.

Some were washing His Feet, some taking the Tirth (holy water) from His toe and drinking it heartily and some touching their eyes with it, some were applying sandal-paste, and some scents to His body. And all were doing these things forgetting the distinction of caste and creed. Though Baba got enraged with him, he was filled with affection for Baba and he did not like to leave the place.

He stayed in Shirdi for two days when he got a letter from Madras stating that his mother was very ill. He felt very dejected and wanted to be by his mother's side; but he could not leave without Baba's permission. So he saw Baba with the letter in hand and asked for His permission to return home. The omniscient Baba knowing the future said to him - "If you so loved your mother, why did you take Sannayasa? Fondness or attachment ill becomes an ochre garb. Go and sit quiet at your lodging, wait with patience for a few days. In the Wada there are many robbers, bolt your doors, be very vigilant, the thieves will carry everything. Wealth and prosperity are transient and the body is subject to decay and death. Knowing this, do your duty, leaving all attachment to the things of this world and next. He who does this and surrenders himself to the Feet of Hari (Lord) will get free from all troubles and attain bliss. The Lord runs and helps him who remembers and meditates on Him with love and affection. Your store of past merits is considerable, so you have come here. Now attend to what I say and realise the end of your life. Being desireless, begin from tomorrow the study of Bhagwat. Do three 'saptahas' i.e. three reading during three weeks, conscientiously. The Lord will be pleased with you and destroy your sorrows, your illusions will vanish and you will get peace." Seeing that his end was approaching, Baba prescribed that remedy and made him read 'Ramavijaya' which pleases the God of death. Next morning after bathing and other purifying rites he commenced to read Bhagwat in a secluded part in the Lendi garden. He completed two readings and thereafter felt much exhausted. He returned to the Wada and stayed in his lodging for two days and on the third day he breathed his last on Fakir (Bade) Baba's lap. Baba asked the people to preserve the body for a day for a good reason. The police afterwards came and on making proper enquiries gave permission for the disposal of the body. It was buried in a proper place, with due rites. In this way Baba helped the Sannyasi and ensured him Sadgati (salvation).

(2) Balaram Mankar

There was a house-holder devotee of Baba by name Balaram

Mankar. When his wife passed away, he got dejected and entrusting his household to his son, left his home and came to Shirdi and lived with Baba. Being pleased with his devotion, Baba wanted to give a good turn to his life and He did this in this wise. He gave him Rs. 12/- and asked him to go and live in Macchindragad (District Satara). Mankar was first unwilling to go and stay away from Baba, but Baba convinced him that he was giving the best course for him and asked him to practise meditation thrice a day on the Gada¹. On believing in Baba's words, Mankar came to the Gad. He was much pleased with the lovely sight, pure water, healthy air and the surroundings of the place, and began to practice assiduously the meditations as recommended by Baba. After some days he got a revelation. Generally Bhaktas get revelation in their Samadhi or trance states, but in Mankar's case he got it, when he came down to his ordinary consciousness from his trance. Baba appeared to him in person. Not only that Mankar saw Him, but he also asked Him why he was sent there. Baba replied - "In Shirdi many thoughts and ideas began to rise in your mind and I sent you here to rest your unsteady mind. You thought that I was in Shirdi with a body composed of the five elements and three and a half cubits in length, and not outside of it. Now you see and determine for yourself whether the person you see here now is the same you saw at Shirdi. It is for this reason that I sent you here." Then after the period was over, Mankar left the Gada and proceeded to his native place Bandra. He wanted to travel by rail from Poona to Dadar, but when he went to the booking office to get a ticket, he found it very much crowded. He could not get his ticket soon, when, a villager with a langoti (piece of cloth) on his waist and kambali on his shoulder turned up and said - "Where are you going?" "To Dadar." replied Mankar. Then he said - "Please take this Dadar ticket of mine; as I have some urgent business here, I have cancelled my Dadar trip." Mankar was very glad to receive the ticket, and was just taking out money from his pocket, when the rustic disappeared in the crowd. Mankar tried to find him out in the crowd, but in vain. He waited for him till the train left the station, but found no trace of him. This was the second revelation Mankar got in a strange form. The Mankar, after visiting his home, again returned to Shirdi and remained there at Baba's Feet, always following His bidding and advice. In the end, he was very fortunate to leave this world, in the presence, and with the blessings of Baba.

1. Gada (Fort)- Macchindragada

(3) Tatyasaheb Noolkar

Hemadpant gives no particulars regarding Tatyasaheb Noolkar, except the bare mention of the fact that he up his ghost in Shirdi. A brief summary of his account that appeared in the Sai Leela magazine is given here.

Tatyasaheb was a Sub-Judge at Pandharpur in 1909, when Nanasaheb Chandorkar was Mamalatdar there. Both met often and exchanged talks. Tatyasaheb did not believe in saints, while Nanasaheb loved them. Nanasaheb often told him the Leelas of Sai Baba and pressed him to go to Shirdi and see Baba. He finally agreed to go to Shirdi on two conditions:- (1) he must get a Brahmin cook, and (2) must get good Nagpur oranges for the presentation. Both these conditions were providentially fulfilled. A Brahmin came to Nanasaheb for service and he was sent to Tatyasaheb and a fruit parcel containing 100 beautiful oranges was received by Tatyasaheb, the consigner being not known. As the conditions were fulfilled, Tatyasaheb had to go to Shirdi. At first Baba was much enraged with him. But by and by Tatyasaheb got such experiences that he was convinced that Baba was God incarnate. So he was enamoured of Baba and stayed there till his death. As his end was approaching, sacred literature was read out to him and at the last hour Baba's Pada-tirth was brought and given to him for drinking. Baba on hearing of his death, said, "Oh, Tatyasaheb went ahead of us, he won't be reborn."

(4) Megha

The story of Megha has been already described in Chapter 28. When Megha died, all the villagers followed the funeral procession. Baba also accompanied them and showered flowers on Megha's body. After the obsequies were performed, tears flowed from Baba's eyes and like an ordinary mortal, Baba showed Himself overcome with grief and sorrow. Then covering the body with flowers and crying like a near relation, Baba returned to the Masjid.

Many Saints have been seen giving Sadgati to men, but Baba's greatness is unique. Even a cruel animal like a tiger came to Baba's feet for being saved. It is this story which will be narrated now.

(5) Tiger ¹

Seven days before Baba passed away, a wonderful incident occurred at Shirdi. There came a country-cart and stopped in front of

1. This tiger is buried in Shirdi

the Masjid. A tiger was on the cart, fastened with iron chains, with its fierce face turned to the rear. It was suffering from some pain or agony. Its keepers - three Derveshis - were taking it from place to place and making money by exhibiting it. It was the means of their subsistence. They tried all sorts of remedies to cure it from the malady it was suffering from, but all was in vain. Then they heard of Baba's fame and came to Him with the animal. They got it down the chains in their hands and made it stand at the door. It was naturally fierce, besides, disease ridden. So it was restless. The people began to look at it with fear and amazement. The Derveshies went in, told Baba everything about the animal and with His consent, brought it before Him. As it approached the steps, it was taken aback on account of the lustre of Baba and hung its head down. When both saw each other, it got on the step and looked at Baba with affection. Immediately it moved the tuft of its tail and dashed it thrice against the ground and then fell down senseless. On seeing it dead the Derveshis were first much dejected and full of sorrow, but on mature thought they came to their senses. They considered that as the animal was diseased and nearing its end, it was very meritorious on its part that it should meet its death at the feet and in the presence of Baba. It was their debtor, and when the debt was paid off it was free and met its end at Sai's Feet. When any creatures bow down their heads at saints' feet and meet death, they are saved; and unless they have got a good store of merit on their account, How could they get such a happy end?

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all