

Chapter V

Baba's Return with Chand Patil's Marriage - party - Welcomed and Addressed as "Sai" - Contact with Other Saints - His Dress and Daily Routine - The Story of the Padukas - Wrestling Bout with Mohdin and Change in Life - Turning Water into Oil - The Pseudo - Guru Javhar Ali.

Return with Chand Patil's Marriage - Party

As hinted in the last Chapter, I shall now describe first how Sai Baba returned to Shirdi after His disappearance.

There lived in the Aurangabad District (Nizam State), in a village called Dhoop, a well-to-do Mahomedan gentleman by name Chand Patil. While he was making a trip to Aurangabad, he lost his mare. For two long months, he made a diligent search but could get no trace of the lost mare. After being disappointed, he returned from Aurangabad with the saddle on his back. After travelling four Koss and a half, he came, on the way, to a mango tree under the foot of which sat a **RATNA** (queer fellow). He had a cap on His head, wore Kafni (long robe) and had a "Satka" (short stick) under His arm-pit and He was preparing to smoke a Chilim (pipe). On seeing Chand Patil pass by the way, He called out to him and asked him to have a smoke and to rest a little. The Fakir asked him about the saddle. Chand Patil replied that it was of his mare which was lost. The queer fellow or Fakir asked him to make a search in the Nala close by. He went and the wonder of wonders! he found out the mare. He thought that this Fakir was not an ordinary man, but an Aвалиа (a great saint). He returned to the Fakir with the mare. The Chilim was ready for being smoked, but two things were wanting; (1) fire to light the pipe, and (2) water to wet the chhapi (piece of cloth through which smoke is drawn up). The Fakir took His prong and thrust it forcibly into the ground and out came a live burning coal, which He put on the pipe. Then He dashed the Satka on the ground, from whence water began to ooze. The chhapi was wetted with that water, was then wrung out and wrapped round the pipe. Thus everything being complete, the Fakir smoked the Chilim and then gave it also to Chand Patil. On seeing all this, Chand Patil was wonderstruck. He requested the Fakir to come to his home and accept his hospitality. Next day He went to the Patil's house and stayed there for some time. The Patil was a village - officer of Dhoop. His wife's brother's son was to be married and the bride was

from Shirdi. So Patil made preparations to start for Shirdi for the marriage. The Fakir also accompanied the marriage-party. The marriage went off without any hitch, the party returned to Dhoop, except the Fakir alone stayed in Shirdi, and remained there forever.

How the Fakir Got the Name Sai

When the marriage - party came to Shirdi, it alighted at the foot of a Banyan tree in Bhagata Mhalsapati's field near Khandoba's temple. The carts were loosened in the open court-yard of Khandoba's temple. The carts were loosened in the open court-yard of Khandoba's temple, and the members of the party descended one by one, and the Fakir also got down. Bhagat Mhalsapati saw the young Fakir getting down and accosted Him "YA SAI" (Welcome Sai). Others also addressed Him as Sai and thence-forth he became known as Sai Baba.

Contact with Other Saints

Sai Baba began to stay in a deserted Masjid¹. One Saint named Devidas was living in Shirdi many years before Baba came there. Baba liked his company. He stayed with him in the Maruti temple, in the Chavadi, and some time lived alone. Then came another Saint by name Jankidas. Baba spent most of His time in talking with him, or Jankidas went to Baba's residence. So also one Vaishya house-holder Saint, from Puntambe by name Gangagir always frequented Shirdi. When he first saw Sai Baba, carrying pitchers of water in both hands, for watering the garden, he was amazed and said openly, "Blessed is Shirdi, that it got this precious Jewel. This man is carrying water to-day; but He is not an ordinary fellow. As this land (Shirdi) was lucky and meritorious, it secured this Jewel." So also one famous Saint by name Anandnath of Yewala Math², a disciple of Akkalkot Maharaj came to Shirdi with some Shirdi people. When he saw Sai Baba, he said openly, "This is a precious Diamond in reality. Though he looks like an ordinary man, he is not a ñgar' (ordinary stone) but a Diamond. You will realize this in the near future." Saying this he returned to Yewala. This was said while Sai Baba was a youngster.

Baba's Dress and Daily Routine

In his young days, Sai Baba grew hair on His head; never had His head shaved. He dressed like an athlete. When He went to Rahata (3 miles from Shirdi), He brought with Him small plants of Merry Gold, Jai and Jui, and after cleaning, he planted and watered them. A devotee

1. Mosque

2. Monastery

by name Vaman Tatya supplied Him daily with two earthen pitchers. With these Baba Himself used to water the plants. He drew water from the well and carried the pitchers on His shoulders. In the evening the pitchers were kept at the foot of the Neem tree. As soon as they were placed there, they were broken, as they were made of raw earth and not baked. Next day, Tatya supplied two fresh pitchers. This course went on for 3 years; and with Sai Baba's toil and labour, there grew a flower-garden. On this site, at present, stands the big mansion - Samadhi Mandir of Baba, which is now frequented and used by so many devotees.

The Story of Padukas (foot-prints) under the Neem Tree

A devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj by name Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar worshipped the photo of Akkalkot Maharaj. He once thought of going to Akkalkot (Sholapur District), taking the darshana of the Padukas (foot-prints) of the Maharaj and offering his sincere worship there; but before he could go there, he got a vision in his dream. Akkalkot Maharaj appeared in the vision and said to him - "Now Shirdi is my resting place, go there and offer your Worship." So Bhai changed his plan and came to Shirdi, worshipped Baba, stayed there for six months and was happy. As a reminiscence of this vision etc., he prepared the Padukas and installed them on an auspicious day of Shravan, Shaka 1834 (1912 A.D.) under the Neem tree with due ceremonies and formalities, conducted by Dada Kelkar and Upasani. One Dixit Brahmin was appointed for worship, and the management was entrusted to devotee Sagun.

Complete Version of this Story

Mr. B.V. Deo, Retired Mamalatdar of Thana, and a great devotee of Sai Baba, made enquired about this matter with Sagun Meru Naik and Govind Kamlakar Dixit and has published a full version of the Padukas in Sai Leela Vol. 11, No. 1, page 25. It runs as follows:

In 1834 Shaka (1912 A.D.) one Doctor Ramarao Kothare of Bombay came to Shirdi for Baba's darshana. His compounder; and his friend, Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar, accompanied him. The compounder and Bhai became intimate with Sagun Meru Naik and G.K. Dixit. While discussing things, these persons thought that there must be some memorial of the fact of Sai Baba's first coming to Shirdi and sitting under the holy Neem tree. They thought of installing Baba's Padukas there and were going to make them of some rough stones. Then Bhai's friend, the compounder, suggested that if this matter be made known

to his master, Dr. Ramarao Kothare, who would prepare nice Padukas for this purpose. All liked the proposal and Dr. Kothare was informed of it. He came to Shirdi and drew a plan of the Padukas. He went to Upasani Maharaj in Khandoba's temple, and showed him his plan. The latter made many improvements, drew lotuses, flowers, conch, disc, man etc., and suggested that the following SHLOKA (verse) regarding Neem tree's greatness and Baba's Yogi powers be inscribed. The verse was as follows:

"Sada Nimbarvrikshasya mooladhiwasat,
Sudhasravinam tiktamapi-apriyam tam,
Tarum Kalpavrikshadhikam sadhayantam
Namameeshwaram Sadgurum Sai Natham" *

Upasani's suggestions were accepted and carried out. The Padukas were made in Bombay and sent to Shirdi with the compounder. Baba said that they should be installed on the Pournima (15th) of Shravan. On that day at 11 a.m., G.K. Dixit brought them on his head from Khandoba's temple to the Dwarkamai (Masjid) in procession. Baba touched the Padukas, saying that these are the feet of the Lord and asked the people to instal them, under foot of the Neem tree.

A day before, one Parsi devotee of Bombay named Pastha Shet sent Rs.25/- by money order. Baba gave this sum for the installation of the Padukas. The total expense of installation came up to Rs.100/- out of which Rs.75/- were collected by subscriptions. For

సదాఽంబ వృక్షా మూలాధివాసకః ।
సుధాస్రవణమ్ తిక్తాపి ధ్రియంతమ్ ।
తం కల్పవృక్షాధికం సదాయంతమ్ ।
నవమీశ్వరం సద్గురం నమోనమః ॥

Translation:

I bow to the Lord Sai Nath, who by His constant stay at the foot of the Neem tree, made, it - which though bitter and unpleasant was yet oozing nectar (the oozing of this tree is called Amrit, i.e. nectar, on account of its healing properties) - better than the Kalpa-Vriksha (wish - fulfilling tree).

the first 5 years, G.K. Dixit worshipped the Padukas daily and then this was done by Laxman Kacheshwar Jakhadi. In the first five years, Dr. Kothare sent Rs. 2 per month for lighting and he also sent the railing round the Padukas. The expense of bringing the railing from the station to Shirdi (Rs. 7-8-0)¹ (presently Rs.7.50p) and roofing was paid by Sagun Meru Naik. Now, Jakhadi (Nana Pujari) does the worship and Sagun Meru Naik offers the naivaidya and lights the evening lamps.

Bhai Krishnaji was originally a devotee of Akkalkot Maharaj. He had come to Shirdi at the installation of the Padukas, in Shaka 1834 on his way to Akkalkot. He wanted to go to Akkalkot after taking the darshana of Baba. He asked Baba's permission for this. Baba said - "Oh, what is there in Akkalkot? Why do you go there? The incumbent Maharaj of that place is here, Myself." Hearing this Bhai did not go to Akkalkot. He came to Shirdi off and on, after the installation of the Padukas.

Mr. B.V. Deo concluded that Hemadpant did not know these details. Had he known them, he would not have failed to depict them in his Sat-charita.

Wrestling Bout with Mohdin Tamboli and Change in Life

To return to other stories of Baba. There was a wrestler in Shirdi, by name Mohdin Tamboli. Baba and he did not agree on some items, and both had a fight. In this Baba was defeated. Thenceforth, Baba changed His dress and mode of living. He donned Kafni, wore a Langot (waist band) and covered His head with a piece of cloth. He took a piece of sack-cloth for His seat, sack-cloth for His bed and was content with wearing torn and worn out rags. He always said that "Poverty is better than Kingship, far better than Lordship. The Lord is always brother (befriender) of the poor." Gangagir was also very fond of wrestling. While he was once wrestling, a similar feeling of dispassion came over him, and at the proper time he heard the voice of an adept, saying that he should wear out his body, playing with God. So he too gave up Samsara and turned towards God-realization. He established a math on the banks of the river near Puntambe, and lived there with disciples.

Sai Baba did not mix and speak with the people. He only gave answers when he was questioned. By day he always sat under

1. Prior to 1957, the Indian rupee was equal to 16 annas and 1 anna was equal to 4 paisa.

the Neem tree, sometimes under the shade of a branch of a Babul tree near the stream at the outskirts of the village. In the afternoon, He used to walk at random and go at times to Ningaon. There He frequented the house of Balasaheb Dengale. Baba loved Mr. Balasaheb. His younger brother, named Nanasaheb, had no son, though he married a second wife. Balasaheb sent Nanasaheb for taking darshana of Sai Baba, and after some time with His grace, Nanasaheb got a son. From that time onwards, people began to come in numbers to see Sai Baba, and His fame began to spread and reached Ahmednagar; from thence Nanasaheb Chandorkar and Keshav Chidamber, and many others began to come to Shirdi. Baba was surrounded by His devotees during day; and slept at night in an old and dilapidated Masjid. Baba's paraphernalia at this time consisted of a Chilim, tobacco, a "Tumrel" (tin pot), long flowing Kafni, a piece of cloth round His head, and a Satka (short stick), which He always kept with Him. The piece of white cloth on the head was twisted like matted hair, and flowed down from the left ear on the back. This was not washed for weeks. He wore no shoes, no sandals. A piece of sack-cloth was His seat for most of the day. He wore a coupin (waist-cloth-band) and for warding off cold he always sat in front of a Dhuni (sacred fire) facing south with His left hand resting on the wooden railing. In that Dhuni, He offered as oblation; egoism, desires and all thoughts and always uttered Allah Malik (God is the sole owner). The Masjid in which He sat was only of two room dimensions, where all devotees came and saw Him. After 1912 A.D., there was a change. The old Masjid was repaired and a pavement was constructed. Before Baba came to live in this Masjid, He lived for a long time in a place Takia, where with GHUNGUR (small bells) on His legs, Baba danced beautifully sang with tender love.

Turning Water into Oil

Sai Baba was very fond of lights. He used to borrow oil from shop-keepers, and keep lamps burning the whole night in the Masjid and temple. This went on for some time. The Banias¹, who supplied oil gratis, once met together and decided not to give Him oil. When, as usual, Baba went to ask for oil, they all gave Him a distinct No. Unperturbed, Baba returned to the Masjid and kept the dry wicks in the lamps. The banias were watching Him with curiosity. Baba took the Tumrel (tin pot) which contained very little (a few drops) of oil, put water into it and drank it and forced it fall in the container.

1. Shopkeepers

After consecrating the tin-pot in this way, He again took water in the tin-pot and filled all the lamps with it and lighted them. To the surprise and dismay of the watching Banias, the lamps began to burn and kept burning the whole night. The Banias repented and apologized. Baba forgave them and asked them to be more truthful in future.

The Pseudo-Guru Javhar Ali

Five years after the wrestling bout mentioned above, one Fakir from Ahmednager by name Javhar Ali, came to Rahata with his disciples and stayed in Bakhhal (spacious room) near Virabhadra temple. The Fakir was learned, could repeat the whole Koran and had a sweet tongue. Many religious and devout people of the village came to him and began to respect him. With the help of the people, he started to build an Idgah (a wall before which Mahomedans pray on Idgah day), near the Virabhadra temple. There was some quarrel about this affair, on account of which, Javhar Ali had to leave Rahata. Then he came to Shirdi and lived in the Masjid with Baba. People were captured by his sweet talk, and he began to call Baba his disciple. Baba did not object and consented to be his Chela. Then both Guru and Chela decided to return to Rahata and live there. The Guru (Teacher) never knew his disciple's worth, but the disciple knew the defects of the Guru, still he never disrespected him, observing carefully his duties. He even served the Master in various ways. They used to come to Shirdi off and on, but their main stay was in Rahata. The loving devotees of Baba in Shirdi did not like, that Baba should stay away from them in Rahata. So they went in a deputation to bring Baba back to Shirdi. When they met Baba near the Idgah and told the purpose for which they came, Baba said to them that the Fakir was an ill-tempered fellow, he would not leave him and that they should better return to Shirdi without him, before the Fakir returned. While they were thus talking, the Fakir turned up and was very angry with them for trying to take away his disciple. There was some discussion and altercation and it was finally decided that both the Guru and Chela should return to Shirdi. And so they returned and lived in shirdi. But after a few days the Guru was tested by Devidas and he was found wanting. Twelve years before Baba arrived in Shirdi with the marriage-party, this Devidas aged about 10 or 11 came to Shirdi and lived in the Maruti temple. Devidas had fine features and brilliant eyes, and he was dispassion incarnate and a Jnani. Many persons, namely Taty Kote, Kashinath and others regarded, him as their Guru. They brought Javhar Ali in his presence, and in the discussion that followed, Javhar was

worsted and fled from Shirdi. He went and stayed in Bijapur and returned after many years to Shirdi, and prostrated himself before Sai Baba. The delusion that he was Guru and Sai Baba his Chela, was cleared away, and as he repented, Sai Baba treated him with respect. In this case Sai Baba showed by actual conduct how one should get rid of egoism and do the duties of a disciple to attain the highest end, viz., self-realization. This story is told here according to the version given by Mhalsapati (a great devotee of Baba).

In the next Chapter will be described Rama-Navami Festival¹, the Masjid, its former condition and later improvement etc.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all

1. This festival is celebrated in the honour of Lord Rama.