

28. Revelations about the *Sai Avatar*

*At the tip of the tongue dwells the
Goddess of Prosperity;
There dwell friends and kinsmen;
Bondage is wrought by the tip of the tongue;
Death waits verily at the tip of the tongue.*

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! All the wealth that man acquires is got through speech. Man's friendships and relations are established through speech. Man forges fetters through speech. In the last reckoning, even death overtakes man through speech.

In human life, speech is extremely vital. When his speech is pure, man gets sanctified. In all circumstances, one should be on guard in the use of words. Purity in speech is ensured only by the company of the good.

"Can the mind concentrate in the contemplation of God without good qualities and good thoughts? Can a house be built without brick and mortar?" (Swami recited a Telugu poem).

Not men alone, but all living beings are enveloped by the six enemies (desire, anger, infatuation, greed, pride and envy). Of the six, the primary ones are *Kama* (desire) and *Krodha* (anger). Although *Kama* and *Krodha* figure in two different forms, *Krodha* (anger) is derived from *Kama* (desire). Even greed, infatuation, pride and envy are the outcome of desire. The six enemies are derivations of the first one, namely, *Kama* (desire).

Desire arouses *Apeksha* (expectations). These expectations relate to the senses. When the expectations are not realised, disappointment turns into anger. The anger gives rise to *Sammoha* (mental aberrations). These aberrations lead to the loss of memory (of what is right and wrong). With the loss of memory, the intellect gets destroyed. When the intellect is destroyed, everything is lost. Thus, *Kama* (sensual desire) is the root cause of all ruin, infamy and sorrow. Hence it is essential to control desires and lead a life of self-restraint.

Advent of Pathri, birth place of Sai Baba

Today I do not intend to speak on Navarathri or Sivarathri I propose today to reveal what has not been known to anyone hitherto.

In the former Nizam's dominions, there was a remote village called Pathri. In that village there were a couple named Gangabhavadya and Devagiramma. They were grieving over the lack of children. In answer to their prayers, a son was born on September 28, 1835. Today

is the anniversary of that day. That child was Sai Baba. As Gangabhavadya had developed a feeling of total detachment and renunciation, he decided to retire to a forest regardless of the child. Devagiramma, who looked upon her husband as God, decided to follow the husband leaving the child.

Early years of the child

There was in the same village a Sufifakir. As he was also childless, he took charge of this child and brought him up in his home. The boy stayed in the Fakir's home for four years (1835 to

1839). The Fakir passed away in the tide of time. The Fakir's wife, who had lavished great affection on the child, was grief-stricken. To add to her worries, the boy was behaving in a troublesome manner. In those days, Hindu-Muslim differences in that area were growing alarmingly. There was considerable bitterness between members of the two communities.

What the boy used to do was to visit a Hindu temple and sing songs in praise of Allah. "Mein Allah hoo!" ("I am God"). "Allah Malik hai!" ("Allah is the Supreme Lord"). He used to declaim in this manner in the temple. The Hindus used to chastise the boy in various ways for his misbehaviour. Nor was that all. He would enter a mosque and declare: "Rama is God", "Siva is Allah." His behaviour in singing about Allah in a Hindu temple and about Rama and Siva in a mosque was a puzzle to the public. Members belonging to both the communities went to the Fakir's wife and complained about the boy's behaviour. Unable to deal with this situation the Fakir's wife handed over the boy to a high-souled, pious scholar named Venkusa, who was living near her house. The boy stayed in Venkusa's *ashram* for 12 years from 1839 to 1851. Venkusa was extremely fond of the boy. In every matter, he used to give priority to the young Baba's views. Seeing this, in course of time, members of the *ashram* developed envy towards the boy.

Arrival of Baba at Shirdi

One night in 1851, the boy left the *ashram*. He reached Shirdi, a very small village at the time. He stayed there for barely two months and then went about wandering from place to place. After strolling for many years, he reached a place called Dhoop-kheda. When he was residing there, the marriage of Chandu Patel's brother's son was celebrated there.

Baba joined the marriage party and reached Shirdi again. That was in the year 1858. From that day, till 1918, he did not move out of Shirdi. He remained there for 60 years.

While at Shirdi, Baba used to converse with those coming to him, give advice to them regarding their problems and offer courage and solace to them with regard to their troubles. In this manner, Baba's activities came to be known all over the country.

At that time there was in the Maharashtra area, a Deputy Collector and Settlement Officer by name H.V. Sathe (Hari Vinayak Sathe). He was grief-stricken over the passing of his wife. Prof. G.G. Narke, a friend of Sathe, came to his house and advised Sathe that there was no purpose in grieving over his loss and that it was advisable for him to have a change of place to get over his sorrow. He suggested that it was good to have the *darshan* of some saint and persuaded him to come to Shirdi.

Sathe was quite an extraordinary person. On reaching Shirdi, he and Narke had *darshan* of Baba. On several occasions, looking at Sathe, Baba used to laugh, sing and make strange gestures. Doubts arose in Sathe's mind whether Baba was real sage or an eccentric person. No one mentioned anything about Sathe to Baba. Sathe and Narke merely went to see Baba and sat in his presence. Baba told Sathe: "Don't worry about anything. Bodies are like water bubbles. Don't develop any attachment to the body. Develop your attachment to the *Dehi* (In-dwelling Spirit). Worries are passing clouds. Have courage. Protect your child." The last remark had reference to the fact that Sathe's wife had died after giving birth to a child. Even Narke had not heard about the survival of this child. On hearing Baba's words Sathe realised that Baba was not a crazy person but one who was a *Trikala jnani* (who knew the past, the present and the future). Sathe, who had intended to stay for a short while just to have *darshan* of Baba, prolonged his stay by two more days.

Making frequent visits to Shirdi, Sathe was the first to realise that there were no proper amenities at Shirdi for those coming to Baba. The place where he provided residential accommodation for visitors is "Sathe Wada." Sathe was the first to set up apartments at Shirdi.

Building at Shirdi

While serving in this manner, Sathe went again to Shirdi after he began to feel whether there was any purpose in his continuing to earn income and accumulate wealth. On seeing, Sathe, Baba smilingly said: "You appear to be losing interest in your job. You are wondering how to dispose of the wealth you have acquired. Why give it to anyone? Use it for a good cause. Build a 'Koti' in Shirdi." Sathe told Baba: "Swami! I am not a millionaire. How can I build a mansion here?" Baba replied: "Go on doing as much as you can. Why *fear* when I am here?" Baba encouraged Sathe in this manner.

In due course, Sathe's maternal uncle, Kelkar, settled down in Shirdi. Sathe used to send funds from Poona and his uncle used to carry on the constructions in Shirdi.

In this way, Baba used Sathe as his instrument. He regarded Sathe as his right hand in regard to all matters. Because Baba was keeping Sathe close to him and relying on him for everything, the residents of Shirdi grew jealous towards him. "Many are content to do nothing themselves, but they cannot bear seeing others do things and will carry tales against them." (A Telugu poem). Several persons used to come to Baba and tell stories against Sathe. What is the appropriate name for such tale-bearers? They should be called "enemies of beggars" (namely, barking dogs).

A judge for a judge

At Shirdi, Baba used to do two notable things. One was to receive money from whoever came to him. He used to ask for *Dakshina* (cash offering). He did not ask for large sums. It was two rupees or five rupees. He would receive the money and give it away immediately in their presence. He kept nothing with himself.

One day a man by name Pradhan came to Baba. He had intended to offer twenty rupees to Baba. In those days, there were no currency notes. Everything was in silver coins; not like the alloy coins of today. In those days every rupee contained one full tola of silver. Pradhan thought that instead of offering so many silver coins, it would be better to offer one gold sovereign to Baba. Baba turned the sovereign this way and that and remarked: "How is it I have not seen such a coin before?" A person near Baba said: "It is a gold coin." Baba then observed: "I don't want this. Give me the money in rupees." He asked how much the sovereign was worth. At that time it was worth fifteen rupees. Getting back the sovereign, Pradhan gave fifteen rupees to Baba. Immediately Baba remarked: "Pradhan! You have to give me five more rupees!" Pradhan was a judge at the time. Pradhan as well as persons around him wondered why Baba was demanding five more rupees when a sovereign was worth-only fifteen rupees.

Noticing Pradhan's hesitation, Baba told him: "First hand over the five rupees and then think about it." Pradhan gave the five rupees. Then Baba observed: "When you set out from your home, how much did you want to offer to Baba? You intended to give twenty rupees. You gave only fifteen. So I was entitled to ask for five more." When Pradhan heard these words, he was stupefied. He admitted that Sai Baba was a good judge.

In this manner, Baba was in the habit of collecting money from those who came to him and to give it away to the needy.

Sai--the Guru

One day, he summoned Kelkar and told him, "Today is *Guru Poornima*. Perform *Guru Puja* to me." No one there knew the meaning of *Guru Puja*. Kelkar asked Baba what *Guru Puja* meant. Baba asked: "Who do you think is a *guru*? It is not the pontiffs of Maths who are *gurus*. Nor are *sanyasins* (renunciants)*gurus*; God alone is the *Guru* (Preceptor)." "*Brahmanandam Paramasukhadam Kevalam Jnaanmurthim Dwandwa-athitham*" (He is Supreme Bliss, the giver of Divine happiness, the embodiment of the Highest *Advaitic* Knowledge and one who transcends all dualities. He is Supreme Divine Preceptor). "He is Brahma, He is Vishnu, He is Maheswara, He is the Supreme Absolute. Salutations to that Supreme *Guru*. The true *guru* is one who combines the three forms of the Trinity, the gods who preside over creation, protection and dissolution. Thus God alone is the real *Guru*" declared Baba. On hearing this, Kelkar asked: "Should I worship Brahma, Vishnu or Rudra?" Baba declared in a voice of assumed anger: "Eh Saitan! Here I am! Offer worship to Me!" Thereby Baba made known that He was Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. All those present felt that Baba was the Divine incarnate.

Sathe leaves Shirdi

As the days passed, the residents of Shirdi developed hatred towards Sathe because he was collecting all the offerings to Baba in a *hundi* to use the money for building a Mandir. Just at that time, a silver chariot with silver horses which was in Sathe's keeping, was stolen by some thieves. Sathe was the principal trustee. The people of Shirdi suspected Sathe of complicity in the theft. One day one of the residents planned to strike Sathe with an axe on the way. Getting wind of this, his maternal uncle called Sathe and urged him to leave immediately as it was too dangerous, for him to stay there. He told Sathe that he could worship Baba wherever he might be. Reluctantly Sathe left Shirdi.

Baba used to ask for Sathe ceaselessly. But Sathe was not there. Baba appeared to be in great distress. Sathe was near and dear to Baba. The devotees felt that Baba was sorely affected by the absence of Sathe.

About this time, the parents of Shyam came to Shirdi with the two-year old child. Shyam's father had just retired from service and decided to settle down in Shirdi. The boy's name was Mohan Shyam. The parents called him Mohan, while Baba called him Shyam. The boy was put to school at Shirdi and in due course he completed his studies and received training as a teacher. He was appointed as a teacher at Shirdi. The school adjoined Baba's room. During the day, Shyam would be teaching at school. There was a ventilator in the wall separating Baba's room and the classroom. Shyam used to watch Baba at nights through the ventilator. He used to notice Baba talking to himself, getting angry at times, or laughing to himself, or doing other curious things. Baba used to sleep on an eighteen-inch-wide plank suspended from the ceiling. Shyam was apprehensive that Baba might fall off from his lofty but narrow perch during sleep.

aba's concern for Devotees

Once he mustered courage to ask Baba while massaging his feet: "Swami! You don't seem to sleep at all at nights. You are laughing to yourself or talking. What is the secret of all this?" "You simpleton! Do you imagine you are the only person about whom I am concerned in this world?"

There are numerous persons who are praying to me. I am speaking to all of them," replied Baba. "When I turn my finger, I am turning their minds. When I laugh, I am amused at their follies.

These are the things I am doing for my devotees, dear child." Shyam prayed to Baba: "Swami! My classes don't take up much of my time. Let me stay with you during the rest of the time and serve you."

At that time there was a woman called Laxmibai who used to cook the food for Baba. Shyam used to go to her and assist her in the preparation of jowar rotis. Baba had a great liking for brinjals. Shyam went to Laxmibai to learn how to prepare brinjal dishes. Shyam went on serving Baba in this way and he alone knew the joy he derived from such service.

Baba's way of disciplining devotees

Baba often used to fly into a temper. This was only an outward appearance. Sometimes he used to throw a stick at someone ten feet away. Shyam once asked him: "Swami! You are hurling the stick at the man in such a rage. Supposing something happened to him and he died, will you not get a bad name?" Baba replied sharply: "Saithan! You keep quiet. That fellow's life is in my hands. He will die only if I permit him. You better mind your business. Why are you bothered about others? That man will come to his senses only if he sees me in this manner. If I am indulgent they will try to ride the high horse." Thus, in this way, Baba used to discipline people by threats and harsh words. "It is only with this aim in view I am displaying anger and not for any other purpose." This secret was revealed by Baba only to Shyam and none else. Baba's life is really a saga of love and nothing else.

Keeping Shyam near him and allowing him to serve him, Baba spent many years. One day, Baba called Pradhan and asked him to construct a small tank.

Pradhan was thus the first to be involved in the building of a *Samadhi* for Baba.

It was the year 1918. Pradhan's wife, who was living in her native village, had a dream in which Baba appeared to have passed away. Pradhan was in Shirdi. On waking up, Pradhan's wife started crying over the passing of Baba in her dream. At that moment she heard a voice in the house declaring: "Don't say that Baba has died. Say that Baba is in a state of *Samadhi*." *Samadhi* means equal-mindedness. "Life and death are alike. Joy and sorrow, profit and loss are the same. Hence, there is no such thing as death for Baba"--this was what the voice declared. When she was trying to find out wherefrom this voice came, she received a message from her husband conveying the news of the passing of Baba. That occurred on *Vijayadasami* day (in 1918). September 28 (1835) was his date of birth. On *Vijayadasami* day, he gave up his body. Although this year *Vijayadasami* falls on September 29, in the year of Baba's *Samadhi*, the date was different.

Sai's advent:the mystery

On account of the passage of time and circumstances, no one knew the exact dates of Baba's birth and passing. In this context, the mystery relating to Baba's birth should be noted. One devotee wrote a poem (Sanskrit) in which he offered his "salutations to the One born in Pathri, who lived in Dwarakamayi and who was the protector of devotees."

When Gangabhavadya and Devagiramma were living in Pathri village, they were worshipers of Iswara and Parvathi. They had no offspring for a long time. They intensified their prayers. Gangabhavadya used to ply boats near the village for a living. One night, when it was raining

heavily, Gangabhavadya left his house to take care of the boats, telling his wife that he would not be returning in the night. After the husband had left, having an early meal, Devagiramma took her food and went to bed. At 9 p.m. there was a knock at the door. Devagiramma opened the door, expecting the likely return of her husband. A very old man entered the house. He pleaded: "It is very cold outside. Please permit me, mother, to stay inside." As a pious woman, she allowed him to stay in the inside verandah and went in after bolting the inner door.

A little while later, there was a knock on the inner door. She opened the door. The old man said: "I am feeling hungry; give me some food." Finding that there was no food, the woman mixed some flour with curds and gave it to him. There was again another knock after some time. When she opened the door, the old man said: "My legs are aching. Mother, will you massage them?" Devagiramma went inside, sat in the prayer room and prayed: "Oh Mother! Why are you testing me like this? What should I do? Should I serve him or refuse?"

Going out of the house by the back door she went in search of someone who could be engaged to render this service. No one was available. Again there was a knock by the old man. At the same time a woman knocked at the back door. She said: "It appears you came to my house and sought some feminine help. I was away at the time. Please let me know what service I should render." Feeling happy that Goddess Parvathi herself had sent the woman in response to her prayers, Devagiramma sent the newcomer to the verandah for serving the old man and closed the door.

The old man and the new woman were none other than Parameswara and Parvathi the divine couple. Parameswara told Parvathi: "Fulfil the cherished desires of this lady." Parvathi told Easwara: "You are the Supreme. Please shower your grace on her Yourself." Easwara said: "I came to test her. You came in answer to her prayers. Hence you must bless her." There was a knock on the door again. This time Devagiramma promptly opened the door, because of the presence of another woman there. Parvathi and Parameswara appeared before her in their divine form. Unable to contain her joy, Devagiramma fell at their feet. Parvathi then blessed her: "I grant you a son to maintain the lineage and a daughter for Kanyakadana (a girl to be offered in marriage)." Then she fell at the feet of Easwara. Easwara said: "I am immensely pleased with your devotion. I shall take birth as your third child." When Devagiramma got up, the Divine couple were not there. Feeling ecstatic over this experience, Devagiramma was eagerly expecting the return of her husband in the morning to relate to him the whole story.

The husband returned in the morning. Eagerly awaiting his arrival she related to him all that had happened the previous night. The husband said: "Devagiri! What is all this fanciful tale! It is all a dream. Parvathi and Parameswara appearing before you and giving *darshan!* It is pure fantasy!" Gangabhavadya dismissed the whole episode as incredible and fanciful.

But, as the years passed, Devagiramma became enceinte and a son was born. A year later a daughter was born. Gangabhavadya was convinced that the birth of the two children was the result of the blessing conferred by Parvathi and Parameswara. He told his wife: "You had the good fortune (to be blessed by the Divine couple). I did not have that luck." When Devagiramma conceived again, Gangabhavadya began to feel an urge to give up hearth and home and go in search of the Divine couple. He announced to his wife that he was leaving for the forest to do penance. The devoted wife that she was, Devagiramma decided to follow him, though she was in the ninth month of her pregnancy. After proceeding some distance, she developed labour pains. She delivered a boy. Wrapping the babe in a piece of cloth, she left the child by the roadside and followed her husband.

Because of these circumstances, no one knew who the parents of the child were. The Fakir who found the child brought him home and took care of him. Baba's life-story is known only from the time of his arrival in Shirdi.

The difference between devotees and disciples

In 1917, Baba once called Abdul Baba, Nana Chandorkar, Mhalsapathi, Das Ganu and others and started asking each of them: "*Do* you know who you are?" Each of them replied: "*I* am your *sishtya* (disciple)." Baba said: "Nonsense! Don't use that term any longer. I have no disciples in this world. I have countless devotees. You do not recognise the distinction between a disciple and a devotee. Anyone can be a devotee. But that is not the case with the disciple. A disciple is one who carries out implicitly the commands of the *guru* (the preceptor). The mark of the *sishtya* is total devotion to the preceptor. Only the man who says, "I have none in the world other than the preceptor is a disciple. How far have you respected my injunctions? How are you entitled to claim that you are my disciples? Only the one who follows me like my shadow can claim to be my disciple. The devotee is one who prays to the Lord wherever he may be. Hence, there is a big difference between a disciple and a devotee. The disciple and the preceptor are like two bodies with one spirit. The disciple should have no sense of separateness from the preceptor. He should feel, 'I and you are one.' There are no such disciples to be found in the world. There are millions of devotees, but no disciples."

Baba and Shyam, the only disciple

On hearing this, Shyam was in deep pain. He felt within himself: "Apart from serving at your feet, I have no other concern." Baba then went into another room and called Shyam inside. "In this entire world, for me you are the only disciple. All others are only devotees." At that moment, Shyam fell at the feet of Baba, and cried out, "You alone, you alone" (are my refuge) and breathed his last.

In all his life of over 82 years, Baba had never shed a tear in the presence of devotees. When Shyam passed away he shed three drops of tears. The devotees present there said: "Swami! Why do you feel so grieved? All are in your hands." Baba replied: "Dear boys! I am not grieving at all. Almost all his sins had been wiped out already. By the three tear drops I shed, the remaining sins (of Shyam) have been washed away."

All that Baba said or did was for the good of the devotees alone. Towards the end, Abdul Baba came to Baba. Baba told him: "I shall appear again and give you *darshan*." "When will that be?" asked Abdul. Baba told him: "It will be after eight years."

"The first advent of Sai was in Maharashtra. The second advent will be in Madras," Baba said. It should be noted that when this form (Sathya Sai) made Its advent, Andhra Pradesh was part of Madras Presidency.

Advent of Sathya Sai after Shirdi Sai

When he was asked, in what form the next advent would take place, Shirdi Baba told Abdul Baba alone: "I will give *darshan* in the name of Sathya for upholding Truth." That is the present advent.

The two bodies are different, but the Divinity is one. The first advent was for revealing Divinity. The second advent is to awaken the Divinity (in human beings). The next advent is for propagating Divinity. The three Sais are' Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai and Prema Sai.

The reason for relating all this is that today happens to be the birthday of Shirdi Baba (September 28, 1835). Baba attained *Samadhi* in 1918. Bodies are transient. These vestures are assumed only for the sake of devotees. Unless the Divine comes with a form, no one can develop faith in the Formless. The Divine in human form is the preparation for comprehending the Formless Absolute.

The truth about God cannot be understood by anyone. He is infinitely vast. He is minuter than the atom. No one can know what is the macrocosm and what is the microcosm. Because of this mystery, one devotee sang:

*Can any one unravell your mystery
Oh Krishna! You are vaster than the vastest;
You are subtler than the atom.
All the countless beings in the world
Cannot grasp your baffling mystery
How can anyone know your Infinite
Cosmic form, Oh Krishna!
Nor is that all.
Among the great thieves, you are the greatest,
How can anyone know you, oh Krishna!*

The ordinary thieves take away wealth and riches. But this extraordinary Divine thief steals the hearts of people. Hence, when God is described as *Chitta Chora* (the stealer of hearts) or *Badaa Chitta Chora* (the greatest stealer of hearts), the appellation is not derogatory but delightful.

If you call anyone, "You thief!" he will get angry. But when you sing "*Chitta chora Yasoda ke Baal*" (Oh thief of hearts, Yasoda's darling!) everyone rejoices. The *chitta chora* confers delight on those whose hearts he steals. But the *Vitha Chora* (the one who robs you of your wealth) causes you misery. The mundane thieves take away your wealth. But the Lord steals your hearts.

It is not easy, therefore, for anyone to understand the ways of the Lord. When one cannot understand the ways of the Divine, it is best to keep silent and atleast refrain from indulging in grievous misinterpretation. Seek, therefore, to understand the ways of God and through devotion and worship strive to experience the Divine.

Discourse at the Prashaanthi Mandir, on 28-9-1990.