

Glory of 'Shri Sai Sat Charita'

It is interesting to know how Baba chooses His devotees to get His tasks accomplished. A case in point is Shri Sai Sat Charita - this magnum opus is penned by Govind Raghunath Dabholkar (Hemadpant) in verses (*ovis*), and it is incredible to note that he had no literary leanings! In spite of it, Dabholkar wrote 9,308 verses (*ovis*) on the life, *leelas* and teachings of Baba.

In 1911, one fine morning, when Dabholkar went to Dwarkamai, he saw Baba grinding wheat at the hand-mill. The villagers too flocked to see this *leela* of Baba.

Four bold women pushing their way through the crowd took hold of the peg forcibly from Baba's hands and started grinding and singing Baba's *leelas*. When all the wheat was ground, the women thought, 'Baba does not have any dependents; moreover, He subsists on alms, why does He need the flour? Baba is Compassion Incarnate; He will give away all this flour to us.' So, they started sharing it. Baba, Who was quiet till now, got enraged and asked, "Whose father's property you are looting?" He asked them to throw the flour on the village outskirts. The women fretted and were ashamed at their greediness; they threw the flour as directed by Baba.

At first no one understood Baba's intention; but, realised that it was raging cholera that was barred from entering the village.

When Dabholkar saw this *leela* of Baba, he was filled with a divine joy and felt that he should sing Baba's *leelas* to his heart's content, which became the inspiration for penning the 'Shri Sai Sat Charita'.

Dabholkar considered himself to be 'Jack of all trades, and master of none'. He felt, he did not have the requisite qualities to accomplish the task of writing on Sai Nath.

Hemadpant was 60 years old and was skeptical, whether he would be able to write on Baba's life; so he wanted to seek Baba's blessings to accomplish the task. On his behalf Shama told Baba, "This Annasaheb wishes to write Your biography; don't say You are a poor *fakir* and there is no need to write it. But, if You agree and help him, Your Feet (Grace) will accomplish the task."

Baba was moved and placed His Boon Bestowing Hand on Dabholkar's head and gave him *Udi* as *Prasad*. The Omniscient Baba wanted to calm his agitated mind; so He said, "Make a collection of my stories, experiences, conversations, etc. He should subdue his ego and offer it at my feet. He who does so, will get not only my help in writing the book but I will be there to assist him forever, in every way."

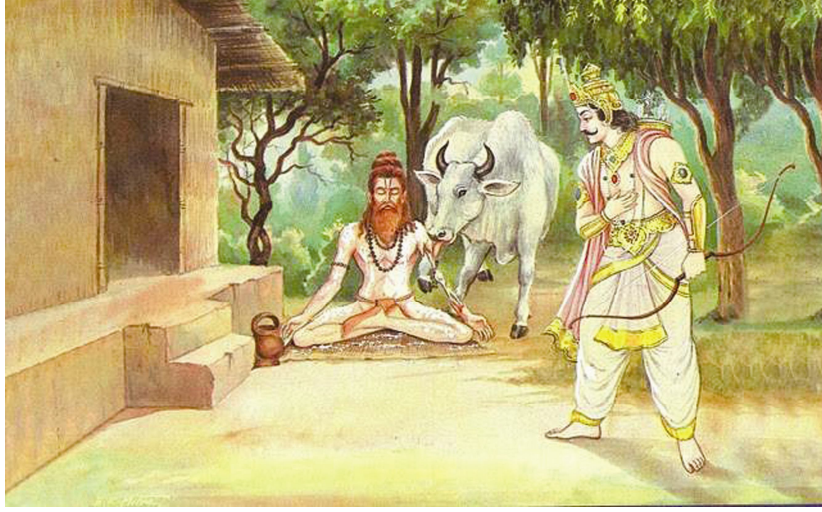
"I shall myself write my own stories, and he will become my instrument. Listen to my stories with reverence, narrate them to others in *kirtan*, and meditate upon them! This will give rise to love and devotion, which will instantly destroy ignorance. Where there is faith and devotion, I remain enslaved forever; but otherwise, I am unattainable."

"When these stories are heard with devotion, the devotees will experience constant bliss and Self Realisation. Where disputes and arguments prevail, *maya* (illusion) and ignorance abound, thus eluding Self Knowledge, hence he remains unhappy on earth and even in heaven."

Dabholkar started writing in 1922-23 and wrote till 1929, his writings were published in Shri Sai Leela magazine. This was later published as a book by the Sansthan and released on November 26, 1930.

Another of Sai's *leela* is to get the original Marathi Shri Sai Sat Charita translated *ovi* to *ovi* in English by ardent Sai devotee Zarine Taraporevla.

Saint Nishchal Das



Nishchal Das (1791-1863) was born in the village named Kidohli in Kharhanda tehsil of Sonapat district (Haryana). He belonged to a prominent family of Dahiya *gotra*. Dahiya is a *gotra* of *jats* found in the Indian states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Delhi. Dahiya is said to be belonging to *Dadhichak family* i.e. the descendants of *Rishi Dadhichi*, who gave his bones to the Gods (to make weapons with to fight the demons) in the *Dev-asur sangram*. [Manglana Stone Inscription of V. 1272 (1215 A.D.)]

Nishchal Das was a promising boy; and as he grew up, his interest in learning Sanskrit, developed. Sanskrit is the most ancient among the languages of the world. Its storehouse of knowledge is unrivaled and one of the most invaluable treasures of the world. Sanskrit language is a symbol of Indian tradition and thought, which has exhibited full freedom in the search of truth. The most interesting aspect of Sanskrit language is that it has shown complete tolerance towards other languages. Since ancient times, luminous and vibrant Kashi (Varanasi/Benares) is a great center of learning of Sanskrit language. Over a period of time, Varanasi has produced many great scholars of Sanskrit. Many great works of Sanskrit have also been penned at Varanasi.

Nishchal Das was interested to learn all manner of ancient Sanskrit knowledge. So he proceeded to Kashi in order to fulfil his ambition. After reaching Kashi, he learnt that non-*brahmins* were not allowed admission in the Sanskrit Vidyalay. But, the young boy did not give up his determination. He disguised himself as a *brahmin*'s son and got admission for learning Sanskrit there.

Nishchal Das soon established himself as the best student in his class, and thus became the most dearest and the favourite *shishya* (pupil) of his *Guru*. On completion of his studies, Nishchal Das went to his *Guru* and asked him for permission to leave the Vidyalay with his blessings. At the time of his farewell the *Guru* asked him to marry his daughter. Nishchal Das showed his reluctance on the plea that he considered the *Guru*'s daughter equivalent to his sister. The *Guru* was not convinced and rejected Nishchal Das' argument. Nishchal Das now had no choice, but to reveal the truth to the *Guru*. He disclosed that he was a *jat* by caste and not a *brahmin*. The *Guru* remarked in anger, "The sin of educating a *jat* lies on my head." He further cursed Nishchal Das : "May thou suffer incurable fever for ever."

Nishchal Das, the Dadu *panthi sadhu*, became a remarkable saint and wrote a new philosophy book '**Vichar Sagar**' which is considered as a comprehensive book on *vedic* literature. On this account saint Nishchal Das is counted amongst fore-ranking philosophers. The *granthas* written by him are : '**Vritti Prabhakar**', '**Vichar Sagar**', '**Yukti Prakash**' and '**Tattva Siddhant**'. The English translation of '**Vichar Sagar**' by Lala Shreeram is titled "Metaphysics of the Upanishads". '**Vichar Sagar**' has been so popular in the northern parts of the country that it has been used for daily *parayan* (reading) for more than centuries by common man who did not have access to Sanskrit scriptures of Vedant.

There is a reference to Nishchal Das in chapter XXI of **Shri Sai Sat Charita**.

Vinayak Harishchandra Thakur, a bachelor's degree holder, was a clerk in the revenue department. He once came to a town named Vadgaum near Belgaum along with a survey party. There he saw a Kanareese saint (Appa) and bowed before him. This Kanareese saint was explaining portion from the book '**Vichar Sagar**' of Nishchal Das to the audience. '**Vichar Sagar**' is a standard work on Vedant. When V. H. Thakur was taking his leave to leave, saint Appa said to him, "You should study this book, and if you do so, your desires will be fulfilled; and when you go to the North in the discharge of your duties in future, you will come across a great Saint, Who will show you the future path, and give rest to your mind and make you happy."

A few days later V. H. Thakur was transferred to Junnar, where he had to go by crossing Nane Ghat.

Nane Ghat is a mountain pass in the Western Ghats range near Junnar in Pune district of Maharashtra. During the reign of the Satavahan (200 B.C.E.–190 C.E.), the pass was extensively used as a trade route between Kalyan and Junnar. Literally, the name **Nane** means 'coin' and **Ghat** means 'pass'. The name is given because this path was used as a toll booth to collect toll from traders crossing the hills. This **Ghat** was very steep and impassible; and no conveyance, other than a buffalo, was of use in crossing it. The non-motorable pass still serves as a shortcut between the Konkan region and the Deccan by inhabitants of the area. A number of ancient man-made caves have been crafted in the vicinity of the pass. The nearest inhabited area on the Konkan side is Vaishakhare 14 kms., and the village of Ghatghar 6 kms. on the plateau side. The inscriptions in the caves indicate that they are the work of Satavahan rulers who came into prominence after the fall of the Mauryan empire. Satakarni (Satakarni I) was the third of the Satavahan kings. He ruled around 180 B.C.E. in Central India. It is thought that Satakarni was the son of Kunal. He achieved the conquest of the Western Malwa region from the Sungas. Satakarni is mentioned in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kalinga, as a rival to king Kharavela.

Satakarni's queen was Naganika, a Marathi princess. She wrote the Nane Ghat inscription, in which she describes Satakarni as 'Lord of Dakshinapath, wielder of the unchecked wheel of sovereignty'. It is believed that this powerful woman commissioned the cave, the statues and the inscriptions. Inscriptions in the cave mention her and her family members. We know enough about this ruler from an inscription of his queen which records his performance of certain sacrifices, the fees paid to the priests, which meant thousands of cows, horses, elephants, whole villages and large sums of money (called *karshapanas*). He seems to have performed even the horse sacrifice, the symbol of his sovereignty over the neighbourhood. Perhaps it was a victory over the Sungas that was celebrated by the horse sacrifice. Though the statues adorning the sides of the rectangular cave are now gone, the inscriptions still record some of the achievements of the dynasty.

Satakarni (180–170 B.C.E.) may have been killed in battle. He was succeeded by his two young sons Vedishri and Satishri, under the regency of their mother Naganika. In 90 A.D. Vedishri made Junnar, thirty miles north of Pune, the capital of his kingdom.

The Nane Ghat records have proved very important in establishing the history of the region. *Vedic* Gods like *Yam*, *Indra*, *Chandra* and *Surya* are mentioned here. The mention of Shamkarsan and Vasudev indicate the prevalence of Bhagvat form of Hinduism in the Satavahan dynasty.

Reverting back to the description in chapter XXI of **Shri Sai Sat Charita**...

(Contd. on page 12)

(Contd. from page 7)

So, V. H. Thakur had to take a buffalo-ride through the Ghat, which caused him great pain and inconvenience. Thence, he was transferred on promotion to Kalyan, where he became acquainted with Nanasaheb Chandorkar. He heard much about Sai Baba from him and wished to see Him. Next day, Nanasaheb had to go to Shirdi, and he asked Thakur to accompany him. Thakur could not do so as he had to attend the Thana Civil Court for a civil case. So, Nanasaheb went alone. Thakur went to Thana; but there the case was adjourned. He repented for not accompanying Nanasaheb.

Now Thakur left for Shirdi all by himself; and when he reached there, he was told that Nanasaheb had left Shirdi the previous day. Some of his other friends, whom he met there, introduced him to Baba. As a result of having had the good fortune of Baba's *Darshan* and His Blessings, he was overjoyed. He trembled with ecstatic emotions, tears filled his eyes, and he spontaneously chanted the holy name of Baba with devotion. Now he realized that Baba was the full-fledged manifestation of the Lord's energy. Then, after a while the omniscient Baba said to him, "The path of this place is not as easy as the teaching of the Kanareese saint Appa, or even as the buffalo-ride, in the Nane Ghat. When treading the spiritual path, one has to put in ones best exertion, as it is very difficult." When Thakur heard these significant signs and words, which none else than he knew, he was overwhelmed with joy. He came to know, that the words of the Kanareese saint had turned true. Then folding both hands and placing his head on Baba's Feet, he prayed that he should be accepted and blessed. Baba said, "What Appa told you were all right; but these things have to be practiced and lived. Mere reading won't do. You have to think and carry out what you read; otherwise, it is of no use. Mere book-learning, without the grace of the *Guru* and self-realization, is of no avail."

The theoretical portion was read from the work 'Vichar Sagar' by Thakur; but the practical way was shown to him by Sai Baba at Shirdi.

- Dr. Subodh Agarwal

'Shirdi Sai Dham',

29, Tilak Road, Dehra Dun - 248 001,

Uttarakhand.

Mobile : (0)9897202810

Tel. & Fax : 0135-2622810

E-mail : subodhagarwal27@gmail.com

m m m

Zarine in her foreword wrote that she was inspired by Shivaneshan Swamiji and she was helped by Mohini Varde, who read out the original Shri Sai Sat Charita in Marathi. Presumably, the challenge was to comprehend the *ovis* and then to carry the essence to English language!

The translation by Zarine was serially published by Shri Sai Leela magazine from 1994 to 2002 and was bound and released in book form by Sai Press India Pvt. Ltd. (Delhi) in 2004. Now this book is published by the Sansthan since 2008.

In chapter 53, the glory of Shri Sai Sat Charita is as follows -

* The book is a five wick lamp, studded with gems to wave round the king, among saints. The chapters narrate the stories which are wicks of oil, the light of which brings detachment and peace.

- The Sai Sat Charita is the universal sovereign amongst books. The chapters are pleasing, clever minstrels, narrating faith, knowledge, the *vedantic* beauty and its vast glory.

- It is not just a book, but a wish fulfilling tree, which the people engrossed in mundane existence find barren, but for the seekers of liberation it gives only the actual experience of liberation.

Chapter 53 also mentions how the *parayan* (reading) of the Sai Sat Charita has to be done -

Do the recitation with a pure heart and devotion, completing it in one day or two days or three days. Sai Narayan will be gratified.

Or you can do it in a week. Begin the recitation on a Thursday, in the early morning after a bath. Sit on your *asan* (seat for prayer), after quickly completing your usual routine.

Make a pleasing. Large canopy with banana plants, *kardali* (banana like plant), and beautiful cloth covering over it and let it be well decorated.

In it, let there be a raised platform (for the book) and decorate all the four sides of it with colourful rangoli, which are pleasing for the eyes.

Making an image of Sai *Sadguru* or taking a beautiful picture of Him, place it carefully on the high platform. Make obeisance to Him with love.

Tying the book in a silken cloth, place it near the *Sadguru*. After worshipping both with *panch upachar*, commence the reading.

Observe the holy vows for eight days, having only milk or fruits or roasted grain of any one kind, eating only once or having only one meal.

Facing the east and keeping the image of the *Sadguru* in the heart, do the recitation of the book with a calm mind and with joy.

During the seven days, read the first eight chapters on the first day, then the next eight, on the second day, followed by next seven on the third day. Followed by eight, six, eight and seven chapters on the next four days, and epitome (chapter 53) on the eighth day.

On the eighth day, at the end of the observance of vows and of the offering of *naivedya* to Sai Narayan, feed friends, relatives and *brahmins* with delicacies and give *dakshina* to them to the best of one's ability.

Inspiring the *vedic brahmins*, have them chant the *vedas* at night offer them sugar flavoured milk and give them a respectful send off, after they are well satisfied in body and mind.

Finally, after doing obeisance at the *Sadguru's* Feet, offer Him appropriate *dakshina* and send that to the treasury (of Shirdi Sansthan) to augment the funds of the Sansthan.

Lord Sai will be gratified thereby, and He will bless the devotee. The snake in the form of the worldly existence will be destroyed and the treasure of liberation will be revealed to reader.

- Shamshaad Ali Baig

E-mail : shamshaad.baig@gmail.com

In Sai's Proximity

MEGHA

Raobhadur Sathe was the Area Officer (*Prant Adhikari*) of Kheda district. At that time, he got introduced to a Gujarati *brahmin* by the name Megha.

Megha was a devout man. By nature he was straight forward and honest. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Shankar. Sathe got attracted to Megha because of his this emotional and pure attitude. His own nature was also pious. Hence, he acceded to Megha's wishes and gave him *santha* of Gayatri *Mantra* (taught him the *mantra*). Till then Megha was carrying out the various religious rites as per his meager knowledge. He did not know much about rites such as *Sandhyapath*, *Vaishvadev*, *Brahmayag*, *Rudra* etc.

On the other hand, Sathe had studied these matters in great detail and was very strict in following them while performing his religious rituals. He not only taught Megha about these but also got him employed as a priest in a nearby Shivalay temple. Now, Megha began considering Sathe as his mentor and *Guru*. He believed that Sathe showed him the proper direction and path to his devotion. Megha began carrying out all odd jobs for Sathe. Sathe also began appreciating the Megha's sincerity and dedication in devotions.

Due to these mutual feelings about each other, Megha began spending his spare time in Sathe's company. While the two were chatting, Sathe was overcome with emotions about the greatness and miraculous deeds of his *Sadguru*. He had realized Megha had intense desire to achieve *Atmakalyan* (spiritual upliftment). He was convinced that Megha will achieve this goal if he is sent to Baba. Besides this, Sathe had an unfulfilled aspiration. He wanted to bathe his *Sadguru* with water drawn from the holy river of Godavari. He wished that the wish should be carried out at the hands of Megha.

Sathe told Megha, "Seeing how keen you are in your devotion, I feel that, like me, even you should receive the blessings of my *Sadguru*. Therefore, I feel from the bottom of my heart that you should go to Shirdi. If you bathe my Baba with holy water from Godavari, my long pending desire will get fulfilled. Tell me, what other way can be there to achieve *Atmakalyan*? He is the God in the mortal body of a human being. I have no doubt about this."

This place has been established

by a Muslim





Megha's happiness knew no bounds. He made preparations for going to Shirdi. As he considered Sathe to be his *Guru*, he bowed before him, took his blessings and set on the way. But, after reaching Bhadoch railway station, someone told him that Sai Baba is a Muslim. His staunchly orthodox Hindu mindset rebelled. It could not bear even the mere idea of touching the feet of such a vile person. He gave up the idea of going to Shirdi and returned back to his place.

He pleaded again and again with Sathe not to send him there. But, Sathe would equally adamant and insisted that Megha must go to Shirdi at least once. Sathe firmly believed that '*Sadguru* does not belong to any religion or caste. And, if Megha has to meet his *Sadguru*, his life is to become complete.'

Megha was facing a dilemma now. On the one hand, if he refuses to go to Shirdi, he would be inviting the wrath of his *Guru* – Sathe. On the other hand, if he goes to there and touches a Muslim, then (as per his belief) he will go to hell after his death! But, ultimately his faith in Sathe as his *Guru* won over his conviction in orthodox rules and regulations. Finally, against his own wishes, he decided to go to Shirdi.

Sathe could foresee the possibilities of what could happen when Megha went to Baba. There was every possibility that Baba would instantly know the thoughts going in Megha's mind and may shower choicest abuse on him. Therefore, Sathe wisely thought that it would be better if his father-in-law Dada Kelkar accompanies

Megha when he goes to avail Baba's *Darshan* for the first time. Therefore, Sathe gave a note to that effect to Dada Kelkar and Megha carried it with him.

And, exactly this is what happened! As soon as Baba spotted a dilemma ridden Megha, He got up from His seat, took a stone in His hand and acted as He was going to hit Megha with it. He roared, "*Khabardar* (Be warned) if you even set your foot on this step! You think that this is a place belonging to a Muslim, isn't it? You are a *brahmin* belonging to the high caste and I am the lowest of the low *yavan* (Muslim) isn't it? Then come near. You will get desecrated. Go back! Go back at once!" He even began shouting at the people who had gathered around Him, "Hey, drive way this ruffian!" Not only that, Baba began blaming Sathe for sending such a 'raw' person to Him.

After seeing Baba's this furious *Avatar*, Megha got so scared that his body began shivering. But, even in that state, he ventured to take a few steps forward and seeing this Baba also pretend to come charging towards Megha. Ultimately, he stayed in Shirdi for a few days; but did not develop any faith or confidence about Baba. All the while, he was worried about 'How can I bathe a Muslim?'

Sathe himself writes about this :-

"Ultimately, he got up and went directly to nearby place of pilgrimage – Trambakeshwar (which has a famous temple of Lord Shankar). He stayed there for one-and-half years keeping himself occupied in doing *Pooja* of his beloved Lord Shankar. After that he once again returned to Shirdi. This time, with my father-in-law Dadasaheb Kelkar's help, he availed Baba's *Darshan*. Finally, he decided to make Shirdi as the place of his residence. Baba did not give him any *mantra-upadesh*. But, with His miraculous deeds, Baba transformed Megha completely."

The composer of '*Sagun Upasana*' Krishna Jageshwar Bhishma writes about this incident in greater details. He says :-

"There (at Trambakeshwar) he became ill and bedridden. After recovering from the illness, he went to avail the *Darshan* of Lord Shankar. There in place of *Pindi* of Lord Shankar, he began seeing Sai Maharaj! Therefore, he returned to Shirdi. To purify Megha's body, Baba directed him to perform *Gayatri Purashcharan* (a ritual where one recites the *Gayatri Mantra* for a specific number of times.) Megha did as he was told and Baba performed its *sangata* (the closing ceremony).

Sai-Shankar-Stavan

(A Praise of Lord Sai-Shankar)

After seeing Baba in the place of Shiv *Ling*, Megha began considering Baba as Shiv *Svaroop*. He began performing Baba's *Pooja* three times a day while loudly chanting the name of Lord Shankar and singing the *Bhajan* of his Sai Shankar.

Baba was amused with this. As it is, Megha had no responsibilities and ties of family and worldly things. Now, Baba had resolved to set Megha of all bonds.

And what all Megha did for his Sai Shankar!

It is believed that Lord Shankar has a liking for the leaves of a tree named *Bel*. But, Megha realized that in the entire Shirdi, there was not a single tree of *Bel*. Ultimately, he located one such a tree at a distance of about three miles. He then began trading the distance every day to collect the leaves.

Baba had directed Megha to first perform the *Pooja* of temples in Shirdi, and then come to the *Masjid*. Megha strictly followed these directions. After arriving in Dwarkamai, he would reverentially press Baba's Feet and do His *Pooja-Archa*. He would then give *daxina* to Baba and with a lot of love and respect, he would bow down before Baba's seat.

Megha was a staunch follower of orthodox and artificial barriers of religions and castes. Therefore, it was most surprising that after performing Baba's *Pooja*, he would even sip the holy water (in which Baba's Feet had been washed) and seek His blessings.

It is worth observing how Baba brought about this miraculous transformation in Megha's soul. Once, Megha went on his rounds of temples in Shirdi; but found that the door of Khandoba temple was close. Without waiting there, he came to Dwarkamai. Baba said, "*Are*, you prayed at all the temples except one. Now go and first carry out that *Pooja*!" Megha narrated his story... "Baba, what can I do when the temple door was locked? I tried to open it; but failed to do so. Therefore, I gave up and came here directly." Baba replied, "Go and check now. You will find the door open now." Thereafter, as directed, Megha went and performed Khandoba's *Pooja* and only then Baba allowed him to carry out His own *Pooja*.

One more incident of similar nature! On the auspicious day of *Makar Sankrant*, Megha had an urge to bathe Baba with the water of holy river Godavari. He incessantly nagged Baba to grant him the permission. Ultimately, a rather reluctant, Baba gave him His consent to "Do as you wish." Megha was overjoyed. He began telling everyone... "Tomorrow, I am going to bathe my Sai Shankar!"

In the middle of the night, he took an empty pot and went to river Godavari on bare feet. The to and fro distance was about 16 miles. By the time he fetched the water, it was early morning. But, Megha showed no

trace of the physical efforts that he had undertaken. The Noon (*Madhyam*) *Aarati* got over and Megha began to hurriedly make the preparation for the much awaited bath.

He made Baba sit on the bath stone. Baba held his hand and tried to dissuade him by saying... “*Are*, why bathe a simple *fakir* like me? Have you gone mad?” But, Megha would not hear of it. He knew only one thing ‘Lord Shankar is fond of bathing in the holy river Ganga.’ He told, “Baba, today is a very auspicious and important day.” Ultimately, looking at Megha’s ardent devotion, Baba got up. He told Megha, “Head is supreme in the entire body. Therefore, sprinkle a little water on my head and that will amount to bathing me fully.”

Megha agreed and lifted the copper pot full of water. He chanted “*Har har Gange*” and tried to put a few drops on Baba’s head. But, he was so overcome with emotions that he never realized when he emptied the entire pot of water on Baba’s head.

Megha was so entranced in chanting the name of God that he did not comprehend what he had done. But, an amazing thing had happened. Even after emptying the entire pot, it was only Baba’s head which had got wet! His other body had remained dry!

How would a devotee, who is entranced in chanting the name of his God, be aware of what he was doing? But, Baba’s own words were “Sprinkle a little water on my head” and ultimately, they became the truth. As Megha was in the grip of *Paramanand* (heavenly joy), he overlooked this fact that Baba’s words could never fail. Baba did not want Megha to have even *sattvik* (righteous) ego. Therefore, even after emptying the entire copper pot full of water, only Baba’s head got wet and other parts of His body remained dry! Baba had performed a miracle! Through it He convinced Megha about a vital fact related to devotion. He said, “In your deeds also you will see Me.”

Draw a Trishul (Trident)!

Nanasaheb (Chandorkar) had given a big picture of Baba to Megha. Megha used to stay on the ground floor *ota* (open square) of Sathe *Wada*. Every evening he would perform Baba’s *Aarati* there.

Once, while Megha was asleep, he saw Baba in front of him. Baba sprinkled a few *akshata* (grains of sanctified rice) and said, “Megha, draw a *Trishul* (Trident).” As Megha opened his eyes, Baba disappeared.

In the morning, when Megha went to the *Masjid*, he narrated his dream to Baba. Baba said, “*Are*, what dream you are talking about? Did you not hear my words - ‘Megha, draw a *Trishul*?’ ” Megha replied, “Oh, I thought I heard those words in my dream. Because, the door was shut and hence...” Baba further added, “*Are*, I have neither an *aakar* nor a *vistar* (I do not have any form nor do I occupy any space). I am here, there, everywhere. I take care of everyone who has faith in me.”

Thereafter, Megha came back to Dixit *Wada* and he drew a beautiful Trident in red/vermillion (*kesariya*) colour beside Baba's picture. The very next day, a miracle took place. A Ramdasi arrived from Pune and presented a Shiv *Ling* to Baba. Just then, Megha arrived there. Baba handed over the Shiv *Ling* to him and said, "Look at this Shiv *Ling*. Now, take care of this."

Megha was overjoyed! First the Trident and then the Shiv *Ling*!

Megha proceeded towards Dixit *Wada*. Just at that time, Kakasaheb Dixit had finished his bath and was reciting the name of Baba with his eyes closed. Suddenly, a Shiv *Ling* appeared before his eyes! Megha reached there and told Kakasaheb, "Kaka, look! Baba gave me this Shiv *Ling*." Kakasaheb was moved to tears with this miraculous happening.

In this manner, Baba helped Megha in becoming a stauncher devotee of Lord Shankar.

Honour of performing

three *Aaratis* every day

How can one describe the unique fortune of Megha? He enjoyed the exceptional privilege and honour of performing Baba's *Aaratis* three times every day. While he was in Bhadoch/Bharuch, he used to stand on one leg and perform the *Aarati* in the Shivalay (Temple of Lord Shankar). He continued the same practice while performing *Aarati* of Lord Sai-Shankar.

Babasaheb Tarkhad has beautifully described the scene of Megha performing Baba's *Aarati*. He writes :-

"Now, I am unable to stop myself from describing an event which I observed while I was seated at the Feet of Shri Sai *Mauli*.

'Many have observed Megha performing the *Aarati* of Shri. Megha used to perform the *Madhyam* (Noon) *Aarati*. He would stand on one leg and fold the other one and support it with the knee of the first one. The *Aarati* would go on for about 30 to 45 minutes.

'Megha would be required to stand absolutely still during all that time. We all used to praise him for this feat. Before commencing the *Aarati*, as directed by Shri, Megha would first perform *Aaratis* at various temples in the village – Shri Khandoba, Shani Dev and others. After that he would arrive in Dwarkamai. Megha was an ardent Shivopasak (devotee of Lord Shankar). He had several experiences which made him firmly believed that Baba was an Incarnation of Lord Shankar.

'After Megha arrived, Baba would slightly raise His right hand and move His index finger in a circle. With this gesture, He was enquiring whether Megha had performed *Aaratis* of all the Deities in the village. In confirmation, Megha would bow his head. Then Baba would hold His finger still in the air. According to Megha,

Baba was conveying that 'All those Deities are different appearances of my beloved Lord Shankar.' Sometimes, these gestures would be repeated three times. Then, Shri would give a beautiful smile and make all of us happy.

'This meant that amid the loud din of tolling of bells, rolling of drums, singing voices of hundreds of devotees, Baba would wonderfully impart this lesson with simple gestures of His hand and finger. He was conveying to all the ultimate truth of *Aarati*.' "

In the early days, Megha believed only in Lord Shankar. But, Baba proved him that even if the Almighty is known by several names, the underlying *Ishwari Tattva* (Divine Being) is one and only one. Your Lord Shankar exists in all the devotees and all the devotees exist in Lord Shankar.

One more thing can be noticed here. Baba never claimed to be '*Anal Hak*' (I am the Almighty). He merely stressed that He is '*Yade Hakka*' (I awaken the memories of the Almighty).

It appears that Baba made everyone believe in this merely for the welfare of His devotees. But, ultimately He allowed His *Aarati* to be performed.

The practice of performing

three Aaratis every day

The first ever *Pooja* of Baba was performed by Tatyasaheb Nulkar in Dwarkamai. But, there was no practice of performing three *Aaratis* at that time. It is not clear as to when Megha began to perform Baba's three *Aaratis*.

It appears that the practice must have started around the first week of November 1910 or a little earlier than that. In a letter dated 9th November 1910, written by Madhavrao Deshpande to Kakasaheb Dixit, he describes the great fanfare with which *Aarati* was performed. But, he does not mention the name/s of the person/s carrying out the ritual.

In Dadasaheb Khaparde's diary, surprisingly no mention is found about *Aarati* in the events of 5th December 1910 (his first visit to Shirdi). In his notings of 6th December 1911 (his second visit to Shirdi), there is a repeated reference to *Aaratis*.

Khaparde mentions Megha for the first time on page devoted to 12th December 1911. He writes :-

"This morning, I and Bhishma got up a little early thinking that it is time for *Kakad* (Morning) *Aarati*. However, we realized that we had got up about an hour early. After some time, Megha arrived and performed *Aarati*... Today Megha arrived late (for the *Madhyam Aarati*)... He could not get leaves of Bel tree nearby. Hence, he had to travel far to collect them. Therefore, even if it was past 1.30, the *Aarati* was not over."

“He was my true devotee”

Megha passed away on 19th January 1912. Before that, on 3rd January 1912, he completed a ritual called *Gayatri Purashcharan*. He served a meal to some *brahmins* in *Sathe Wada*.

Khaparde writes :-

- 13th January 1913 : ‘Megha is still not fully well.’
- 14th January 1913 : ‘As Megha is ailing, the Noon *Aarati* got a little delayed.’
- 15th January 1913 : ‘Megha was unable to get up in time to blow the *shankh* (conch shell). He rose and left the Chavadi. But, Sai Maharaj did not say anything to him.’

- 16th January 1913 : ‘*Aarati* got a little delayed because Megha is unwell. It was about 4 p.m.’

- 17th January 1913 : ‘As Megha is seriously ill, the *Aarati* was performed by Bapusaheb Jog in his place.’

- 18th January 1913 : ‘Megha was unable to even stand today. Tonight, Sai Baba foretold his demise.’

19th January 1913. The day Megha left for his heavenly abode. The description of events of the day will sadden the hearts of all Sai devotees. Dadasaheb writes :-

‘Today was full of sorrow. Kakasaheb Dixit informed me that Megha passed away at 4 a.m.

‘*Kakad Aarati* was performed. But, throughout the proceeding, Baba did not show His face clearly to anyone. Nor did He open His eyes. Today, He did not look at anyone with those radiating eyes.

‘After we returned to the *wada*, preparation began to be made for cremation of Megha’s body. While his body was being taken out, Sai Baba came, glanced at the body, blessed it by touching Megha’s head, heart, shoulders and legs and cried loudly and bitterly. His voice touched everyone’s heart and tears welled in every eye present. Baba followed the funeral procession for some distance and then proceeded further on His usual route.

‘Megha’s body was kept under a Baniyan/*Wad* tree and was consigned to the flames at the same place. From such a long distance also one could clearly hear Baba’s lamenting. We could see Baba waving His hand in the same manner in which he gestured at the time of *Aarati*.

‘As there was enough dry wood in the funeral pyre, the flames quickly reached towards the skies. Myself, Dixit, Bapusaheb Jog, Upasani, Dada Kelkar and all other who were in the village, were present.

‘Everyone was praising Megha. I recalled that three days prior to Megha’s demise, Baba had foretold about his death – “This is Megha’s last *Aarati*.” ’

If we carefully read the above notings, we realize :-

Khaparde has not made any reference to Megha's health till 6th January. This may mean that till then, his health was good. He had even completed Gayatri *Purashcharan* and served a meal to some *brahmins*.

On 8th January, Khaparde notes 'The epidemic of plague is again setting foot in Shridi.' Thereafter, on 13th January, he writes 'All is not well with Megha's health.' Does it mean that Megha was a victim of plague? As the exact cause of his death has not been mentioned anywhere, it is difficult to say firmly anything in the matter.

It may be mentioned here that Khaparde's own son had been suffering from plague and even in his case, Khaparde had refrained from mentioning the cause. He had merely said, 'Bhishma and my son Balwant are not well.' It may be his practice to write in that manner and hence, he did not refer to the cause of Megha's death.

After Megha's cremation, the religious rites were performed. On 31st January, a 13th day lunch was served. Baba footed the expenses and Kakasaheb Dixit looked after all the arrangements.

Baba asked Bapusaheb Jog to perform all the *Aaratis* from 20th January.

Honourable Megha

Megha was very fortunate and hence, he got Shri Sai Baba as his *Sadguru*. When he became a devotee of Baba, he merged himself with Baba. He dedicated his *Panchpran* to Baba. He enjoyed *Brahmanand* in Baba's company.

He was a bachelor. The normal definition of a bachelor is a person who does not get entangled in the ties of marriage. However, according to the saints, any person whose innerself has real purity, is a *Brahmacharil* bachelor and Megha was such a person.

Baba caressed Megha's dead body, put flowers on it and accompanied the funeral procession. These facts can give us an idea of how strong and staunch was Megha's devotion/ *Bhaktisadhana*.

(Contd.)

– Mrs. Mugdha Sudhir Divadkar

61, Hindu Colony, 1st Lane,

Dadar (E), Mumbai - 400 014.

E-mail : mugdha54@rediffmail.com

Mobile : (0)9323971117

Translated from original Marathi into English by

Sudhir