

Sai Satcharitra

Sai Satcharitra - Chapter XXXII

In Quest of Guru and God - Fasting Disapproved.

In this Chapter Hemadpant describes two things:- (1) How Baba met His Guru in the woods, and through him God; and (2) How Baba made one Mrs. Ghokhale, who had made up her mind to fast for three days, eat Puran-Polis.

Preliminary

In the beginning, Hemadpant describes the samsara (visible world) by the allegory of Ashvattha (Banyan) tree which has, in the phraseology of the Geeta, roots above and branches below. Its branches are spread downwards and upwards and are nourished by the gunas (qualities), and its sprouts are the objects of the senses. Its roots, leading to actions, are extended downwards to this world of men. Its form cannot be known in this world, nor its end, its beginning nor its support. Cutting this Ashvattha tree of strong roots with the sharp weapon of non-attachment, one should seek the path beyond, treading which there is no return.

For traversing this path, the help of a good guide (Guru) is absolutely necessary. However learned a man may be, or however deep his study of Vedas and Vedangas (sacred literature) may be, he cannot go to his destination safely. If the guide be there to help him and show him the right way, he would avoid the pitfalls and the wild beasts on the journey, and everything will be smooth-sailing.

Baba's experience in this matter, the story which He gave out Himself, is really wonderful, which, when attended to, will give you faith, devotion and salvation.

The Quest

Once four of us were studying religious scriptures and other books and, being thus enlightened, we began to discuss the nature of the Brahman. One of us said that we should raise the self by the Self and not depend on others.

To this the second replied that he who controls his mind is blessed; we should be free from thoughts and ideas and there is nothing in the world without us. The third said that the world (phenomenon) is always changing, the formless is eternal; so we should discriminate between the Unreal and the Real. And the fourth (Baba Himself) urged that bookish knowledge is worthless and added, "Let us do our prescribed duty and surrender our body, mind and five pranas (life) to the Guru's feet. Guru is God, all pervading. To get this conviction, strong unbounded faith is necessary."

Discussing in this wise, we four learned men began to ramble through the woods in the quest of God. The three wanted to make the quest with their free and unaided intellect. On the way a Vanjari (a man who trades in certain things, such as grain etc. by carrying them on bullock) met us and asked us, "It is hot now, where and how far are you going?". "To search the woods", we replied. He enquired, "On what quest are you bound?" We gave him an ambiguous and evasive reply. Seeing us rambling aimlessly, he was moved and said, "Without knowing the woods fully, you should not wander at random. If you want to walk through forests and jungles, you should take a guide with you. Why do you exert yourselves unnecessarily at this sultry noon-time? You may not give out to me your secret quest; still you can sit down, eat bread, drink water, take rest and then go. Be always patient at heart." Though he spoke so tenderly, we discarded his request and marched on. We thought that we were self-contained men and needed nobody's help. The woods were vast and trackless, the trees therein grew so close and tall, that the sun's rays could not penetrate through them; so we lost our way and wandered here and there for a long time. Ultimately through sheer good luck, we came back to the place from where we started. The Vanjari met us again and said, "Relying on your own cleverness you missed your way; a guide is always necessary to show us the right way in small or great matters; and no quest can be successfully carried out on an empty stomach. Unless God wills it, no one meets us on the way. Do not discard offers of food; served dish should not be thrust away. Offers of bread and food should be regarded as auspicious signs of success." Saying this he again offered us food and asked us to be calm and patient. Again we did not like this good hospitality and discarded his offer and went away. Without doing any quest and without taking any food, the three began to move out. So obstinate were they. I was hungry and thirsty and I was moved with the Vanjari's extraordinary love; we thought ourselves very learned but were quite strangers to pity and kindness.

The Vanjari was a quite illiterate and unqualified fellow and belonged to a low caste. Still he had love in his heart and asked us to eat the bread. In this way he who loves others disinterestedly is really enlightened and I thought acceptance of his hospitality was the best beginning of getting knowledge. So very respectfully I accepted the loaf of bread offered, ate it and drank water.

Then to! The Guru at once came and stood before us, "What was the dispute about?" He asked and I told him everything that had happened. Then he said, "Would you like to come with me? I will show you what you want; but he alone, who believes in what I say, will be successful." The others did not agree to what he said and left him; but I bowed to him reverently and accepted his dictum. Then he took me to a well, tied my feet with a rope and hung me - head downwards and feet up - from a tree near the well. I was suspended three feet above the water, which I could not reach with My hands, nor which could go into my mouth. Suspending me in this manner he went away, no one knew where. After 10 or 12 ghatakas (4 or 5 hours) he returned and taking me out quickly asked me how I fared. "In Bliss supreme, I was. How can a fool like me describe the joy I experienced?" I replied. On hearing my answer the Guru was much pleased with me, drew me near him and stroking my body with his hand kept me with him. He took care of me as tenderly as a mother-bird does of her young ones. He put me into his school; how beautiful it was! There I forgot my parents, all my attachment was snapped and I was liberated easily. I thought that I should embrace his neck and remain staring at him always. If his image were not fixed in my pupils, I would like better to be blind. Such was the school! No one, who entered it once, could return empty-handed. My Guru became my all-in-all, my home and property, mother and father, everything. All my senses left their places and concentrated themselves in my eyes, and my sight was centred on him. Thus was my Guru, the sole object of my meditation and I was conscious of none else. While meditating on him my mind and intellect were stunned and I had thus to keep quiet and bow to him in silence.

There are other schools where you see an altogether different spectacle. The disciples go there to seek knowledge and spend their money, time and labour; but ultimately they have to repent. The Guru there boasts of his secret knowledge and his straight-forwardness. He makes a show of his sacredness and holiness, but he is not tender at heart. He speaks a lot and sings his own glory; but his own words do not touch the disciples' hearts and they are not convinced.

So far as Self-realization is concerned, he has none. How can such schools be of any use to the disciples and how can they be benefited? The master (Guru) mentioned above was of different type. By his grace, realization flashed upon me of itself, without effort or study. I had not to seek anything, but everything became clear to me as broad day-light. The Guru alone knows how the topsy-turvy Suspension, 'with head down and feet up' can give happiness!

Among the four, one was a Karmatha (Ritualistic) who only knew how to observe, and abstain from, certain rites; the second was a Jnani, who was puffed up with pride of knowledge and the third was a Bhakta who surrendered himself completely to God, believing that he was the sole Doer. When they were discussing and arguing, the question of God turned up, and they, depending on their unaided knowledge, went in search of Him. Sai, who was Discrimination and Dispassion incarnate, was one of the four. Being Himself Brahman Incarnate, some may ask, "Why did He mix with them and act foolishly?" He did this for attaining the good of the public, and setting them an example to follow. Though an incarnation Himself, He respected a low Vanjari, by accepting his food with the firm belief that "Food is Brahman" and showed how those who rejected Vanjari's hospitable offer suffered and how it was impossible to get Jnana without a Guru. The Shruti (Taittiriya Upanishad) exhorts us to honour and worship mother, father and preceptor, and to study (learn and teach) the sacred scriptures. These are the means of purifying our minds and unless this purification is effected, self-realization is not possible. Neither the senses, nor the mind and intellect reach the Self. Modes of proof, such as Perception and Inference will not help us in the matter. It is the grace of the Guru that counts. The objects of our life such as Dharma, Artha and Kama are attainable with our effort, but the fourth object, Moksha (liberation) can only be had with the help of the Guru.

In the Darbar of Shri Sai, many personalities appear and play their part; astrologers come and give out their predictions; princes, noblemen, ordinary and poor men, Sannyasis, Yogis, songsters and others come for darshan. Even a mahar comes and, making a Johar (his salutation), says this Sai is the Mai-Baap (True parents), Who will do away with our rounds of births and deaths. So many others such as Jugglers, Gondhalis, the blind and the lame, Nath-panthis, dancers and other players come and are given suitable reception. Biding his own time, the Vanjari also appeared, and played the part assigned to him. Let us now revert to the other story.

Fasting and Mrs. Gokhale

Baba never fasted Himself, nor did He allow others to do so. The mind of the faster is never at ease, then how could he attain his Paramartha (goal of life)? God is not attained on an empty stomach; first the soul has to be appeased. If there is no moisture of food in the stomach and nutrition, with what eyes should we see God, with what tongue should we describe His greatness and with what ears should we hear the same? In short, when all our organs get their proper nutrition and are sound, we can practise devotion and other sadhanas to attain God. Therefore, neither fasting nor overeating is good. Moderation in diet is really wholesome both to the body and mind.

One Mrs. Gokhale came to Shirdi with an introductory letter from Mrs. Kashibai Kanitkar (a devotee of Baba) to Dada Kelkar. She came to Baba with a determination to sit at Baba's Feet observing a three days fast. The day previous, Baba said to Dada Kelkar, that He would not allow his children to starve during the Shimga, i.e., Holi holidays, and that if they had to starve, why was He there? Next day when the woman went with Dada Kelkar and sat at Baba's Feet, Baba at once said to her, "Where is the necessity of fasting? Go to Dadabhat's house, prepare the dish of Puran POLis (wheat rotis with gram-flour and jaggery), feed his children and yourself too." Shimga holidays were on. Mrs. Kelkar was then in her menses and there was nobody to cook in Dadabhat's house. So Baba's advice was very timely. Then Mrs. Gokhale had to go to Dadabhat's house and prepare the dish as directed. She cooked that day, fed others and herself. What a good story and how beautiful its import!

Baba's Sircar

Baba gave a story of his boyhood as follows:- "When I was a youngster, I was in search of bread and went to Beedgaum. There I got embroidery work. I worked hard, sparing no pains. The employer was very much pleased with Me. Three other boys worked before Me. The first got Rs. 50/- the second Rs. 100/- and the third Rs. 150/-. And I was given twice the whole of this amount, viz. Rs. 600/-. After seeing my cleverness, the employer loved me, praised me and honoured me with a full dress, a turban for the head and a shell a for the body, etc. I kept this dress intact without using it. I thought that what a man might give does not last long and it is always imperfect. But what My Sircar (God) gives, lasts to the end of time. No other gift from any man can be compared to His. My Sircar says "Take, take," but everybody comes to me and says 'Give, give.' Nobody attends carefully to the meaning of what I say. My Sircar's treasury (spiritual wealth) is full,

it is overflowing. I say, "Dig out and take away this wealth in cartloads, the blessed son of a true mother should fill himself with this wealth. The skill of my Fakir, the Leela of my Bhagwan, the aptitude of my Sircar is quite unique. What about Me? Body (earth) will mix with earth, breath with air. This time won't come again. I go somewhere, sit somewhere; the hard Maya troubles Me much, still I feel always anxiety for My men. He who does anything (spiritual endeavour) will reap its fruit and he who remembers these words of Mine will get invaluable happiness."

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all