

Shri Sai Satcharitra

Chapter XLVIII (48)

Warding off Devotee's Calamities

Stories of (1) Shevade and (2) Sapatneker

At the commencement of this chapter, some one asked Hemadpant whether Sai Baba was a Guru or Sad-guru. In order to answer the question Hemadpant describes the signs or marks of a Sad-guru as follows:-

Signs of Sad-guru

He who teaches us Veda and Vedanta or the six Shastras (systems), he who controls the breath, or brands his body with Mudras (metallic marks of Vishnu's weapons) or gives pleasing discourses regarding Brahma, he who gives mantras (sacred syllables) to the disciples and orders them to chant the same a certain number of times, but does not assure them any result in a definite time, he who by his spacious wordy knowledge explains beautifully the Ultimate Principle, but has himself got no experience or self-realization is not a Sad-guru. But he, who by his discourse creates in us, a distaste for the enjoyments of this world and the next, and gives us a taste of self-realization, who is well-versed in both the theoretical and practical knowledge (self-realization) deserves to be called a Sad-guru. How can he, who is himself devoid of self-realization, give it to the disciples? A Sad-guru does not, even in his dream, expect any service or profit from his disciples. On the contrary he wishes to serve them. He does not think that he is great and the disciple small. Not only he loves him as his son but regards him as equal to himself or as Brahma. The main characteristic of a Sad-guru is that he is the abode of peace. He is never restless nor ruffled. He has no pride of his learning. The poor and the rich, the small and the great, are the same to him.

Hemadpant thinks that on account of the store or accumulation of merits in his past births, he had the good fortune of meeting and being blessed by such a Sad-guru as Sai Baba. Even in full youth He hoarded nothing (except perhaps chillim). He had no family, no friend, no home, nor any support. Since He was eighteen, His control of mind was perfect and extra-ordinary. He lived then fearless in a secluded place and always abided in His Self. Seeing the pure

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attachment of His devotees He always acted in their interests and hence He was in a way dependent on them. What experiences He gave to His devotees while he was living in flesh, are even to-day, after His Mahasamadhi, obtained now by those who attach themselves to Him. What the devotees have to do is this - They have to trim their heart-lamp of faith and devotion, and burn in it wicks of love, and when this is done, the flame of knowledge (self-realization) will be lit up and shine brighter. Mere knowledge without love is dry; nobody wants such knowledge. Without love there is no contentment; so we should have unbroken and unbounded love. How can we praise love? Everything is insignificant before it. Without love our reading, hearing and the study are of no avail. In the wake of love follow devotion, dispassion, peace and liberation with all their treasures. We do not get love for anything unless we feel earnestly about it. So where there is real yearning and feeling, God manifests Himself. It includes love and is the means of liberation.

Now let us revert to the main story of this chapter. Let a man go to a true saint with a pure mind, otherwise (fraudulently) and hold his feet; ultimately he is sure to be saved. This is illustrated by the following stories.

Mr. Shevade

Mr. Sapatnekar of Akkalkot (Sholapur District) was studying for law. A co-student Mr. Shevade met him. Other fellow students also gathered together and compared notes of their study. It was found by the questions and answers amongst themselves, that Mr. Shevade was the least prepared of all for the examination, and therefore all the students derided him. But he said that though he was not prepared, he was sure to pass the examination, as his Sai Baba was there to get him through it successfully. Mr. Sapatnekar was surprised at this remark. He took Mr. Shevade aside and asked him who this Sai Baba was whom he extolled so high. He replied - "There lives in a Masjid in Shirdi (Ahmednagar District) a fakir. He is a great Sat-purusha. There may be other saints, but this is unique. Unless there is a great store of merits on one's account, one can't see Him. I fully believe in Him, and what He says will be never untrue. He has assured me that I will pass definitely next year and I am confident that I will get

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through the final examination also with His grace." Mr.Sapatnekar laughed at his friend's confidence and jeered at him and Baba.

Sapatnekars

Mr.Sapatnekar passed his examination, settled at Akkalkot and practised as a pleader there. Ten years after this, i.e., in 1913 he lost his only son on account of a throat disease. This broke his heart. He sought relief by making a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, Ganagapur and other holy places. He got no peace of mind. Then he read Vedanta, which also did not help him. In the meanwhile he remembered Mr.Shevade's remarks and his faith in Baba, and he thought that he too should go to Shirdi and see Baba. He went to Shirdi with his younger brother Panditrao and was much pleased to see Baba from a distance. When he went near and prostrated himself and placed a coconut before Baba with pure feeling (devotion), the latter at once cried out "Get away." Sapatnekar hung down his head, moved back and sat aside. He wanted to consult somebody who would advise him how to proceed. Somebody mentioned Bala Shimpi's name. Sapatnekar saw him and sought his help. They bought Baba's photos and came with them to the Masjid. Baba Shimpi took a photo in his hand, gave it to Baba and asked him whose photo it was. Baba said that this photo was the 'Yara' (Lover) of him, pointing to Sapatnekar. Saying this Baba laughed and all others joined. Bala asked Baba the significance of the laugh and beckoned Sapatnekar to come forward and take darshan. When Sapatnekar began to prostrate himself, Baba again cried "Get out." Sapatnekar did not know what to do. Then they both joined their hands and sat before Baba, praying. Baba finally ordered sapatnekar to clear out immediately. Both were sad and dejected. As Baba's order had to be obeyed, Sapatnekar left Shirdi with a heavy heart praying that he should be allowed to take darshan next time.

Mrs.Sapatnekar

One year elapsed. Still his mind was not at peace. He went to Gangapur, where he felt more restless. Then he went to Madhegaon for rest and finally decided to go to Kashi.

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Two days before starting, his wife got a vision. In her dream she was going with a pitcher to Lakadsha's well. There a fakir with a piece of cloth round his head, who was sitting at the foot of the Neem tree, came close to her and said - "My dear lassie, why get exhausted for nothing? I get your pitcher filled with pure water." She was afraid of the fakir and hastened back with the empty pitcher. The fakir followed her. At this she was awakened and opened her eyes. She told this vision to her husband. They thought that this was an auspicious sign and they both left for Shirdi. When they reached the Masjid, Baba was absent. He had gone to Lendi. They waited till His return. When He returned, she was surprised to see that the fakir she saw in her vision, resembled exactly Baba. She reverentially prostrated herself before Baba and sat looking at him. Seeing her humility Baba was much pleased and began to tell a story in his peculiar characteristic fashion to a third party. He said - "My arms, abdomen and waist are paining for a long time. I took many medicines, the pains did not abate. I got sick of the medicines as they gave me no relief, but I am surprised to see now that all the pains have disappeared at once." Though no name was mentioned it was the story of Mrs. Sapatnekar herself. Her pains, as described by Baba, left her soon and she was happy.

Then Mr. Sapatnekar went ahead to take darshan. He was again welcomed with the former "Get out." This time he was more penitent and persevering. He said that Baba's displeasure was due to his past deeds and resolved to make amends for the same. He determined to see Baba alone and ask his pardon for his past actions. This he did. He placed his head on Baba's feet and Baba placed His hand on it and Sapatnekar sat stroking Baba's leg. Then a shepherdess came and sat massaging Baba's waist. Baba in his characteristic way began to tell the story of a bania. He related the various vicissitudes of all his life, including the death of his only son. Sapatnekar was surprised to see that the story which Baba related was his own, and he wondered how Baba knew every detail of it. He came to know that He was omniscient and knew the hearts of all. When this thought crossed his mind, Baba still addressing the shepherdess and pointing to Sapatnekar said - "This fellow blames Me and charges Me with killing his son. Do I kill people's children? Why does this fellow come to the Masjid and cry? Now I will do this I will again bring that very child

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back in his wife's womb." With these words He placed His blessing and on his head and comforted him saying - "These feet are old and holy, you are care-free now; place entire faith in Me and you will soon get your object." Sapatnekar was much moved with emotion, he bathed Baba's feet with his tears and then returned to his residence.

Then he made preparations of worship and naivedya and came with his wife to the Masjid. He offered all this to Baba daily and accepted prasada from Him. There was a crowd in the Masjid and Sapatnekar went there and saluted Baba again and again. Seeing heads clashing against heads Baba said to Sapatnekar - "Oh, why do you prostrate yourself now and then? The one Namaskar offered with love and humility is enough." Then Sapatnekar witnessed that night the chavadi procession described before. In that procession Baba looked like a veritable Pandurang (Vithal).

At parting next day, Sapatnekar thought that he should first pay one rupee as dakshina and if Baba asked again, instead of saying no, he should pay one more, reserving with him sufficient amount as expenses for the journey. When he went to the Masjid and offered one rupee, Baba asked for another as per his intention and when it was paid,

Baba blessed him saying -"Take the coconut, put it in your wife's oti (upper fold of her sari), and go away at ease without the least anxiety." He did so, and within a year a son was born to him and with an infant of 8 months the pair came to Shirdi, placed it at Baba's feet and prayed thus - "Oh, Sainath, we do not know how to redeem Your obligations, therefore we prostrate ourselves before You, bless us poor helpless fellows, henceforth let Your holy feet be our sole refuge. Many thoughts and ideas trouble us in waking and dream states, so turn away our minds from them to Your bhajan and bless us."

The son was named Murlidhar. Two others (Bhaskar and Dinkar) were born afterwards. The Sapatnekar pair thus realized that Baba's words were never untrue and unfulfilled, but turned out literally true.

Bow to Shri sai - Peace be to all