

CHAPTER 1

By the side of the pious Godavari river, there was a small village called Shiridi Shiridi falls in the Copergaon taluka of Maharashtra. The inhabitants of Shiridi were poor and simple people and lived in mud houses. Unable to afford the usual diet of rice etc., they survived on 'kanji' (starch water taken from the rice). They were happy and content in their own world.

At the outskirts of the village, there was a Kandoba (Krishna) temple. In the summer of 1854, the priest of the temple whose name was Mahalapati, noticed a boy of about sixteen dressed up like a 'fakir' (saint) and sitting under a neem tree. The boy seemed deeply engrossed in meditation. This boy did not speak to anyone, was not afraid of darkness and just spent his time meditating under the neem tree. All the other boys would mock at him, disturb him by throwing stones and making spiteful remarks. But this boy never got angry.

One morning, a leprosy patient passed by, the young saint asked him to come near him. He consoled him and touched his whole body with his hand. At once, the leprosy patient turned into a healthy man. He was astonished and fell at the saint's feet. This young saint also cured a blind man and restored his eyesight. He would change a cruel man into a good man and help in all kinds of difficulties. There was no end to the miracles of the saintly boy. People from neighbouring villages also started coming in large groups to have the 'darshan' of the saint who sat under the neem tree. He would accept only fruits which he would later distribute after eating a few. Everybody used to wonder and enquire about his parents, birth place etc. but the fakir would just remain silent. One day the fakir could not be found in his usual place. When everyone were wondering about it, they came to know that he was in the kandoba temple. They all went there. The temple priest pointed to a place under the neem tree in the temple premises and asked them to dig there. As they dug they found brick foundations. He asked them to dig further and as they did, they found

a stone. When the stone was removed they found a temple with all the lamps lit. He then told them that the young fakir had performed tapas there for 12 years while people used to trouble him. The young fakir then asked them to replace the stone and guard the place which was holy and sacred as he was going to visit his guru. Saying this he disappeared. No one knew about his whereabouts or received any information about him.

In 1856, on a hot summer day, a man by the name Chand Bhai Patel lost his horse. He went about frantically in search of the lost horse with the saddle over his shoulders. He met a young fakir sitting under a tree along his path. He wore a cloth on his head and a long shirt on his body and he was carrying a 'Satka' and some tobacco. He called Patel and enquired why he was carrying the saddle on his back. He lighted the chilim, producing fire and water by hitting the satka on the ground. He told Patel that his horse was a few yards away and directed Patel to the horse by lighting the path where the horse was found as predicted. Patel was greatly surprised at this fakir's divine power and requested to accompany him to his village. The young fakir went with him.

In 1858 Chand Bhai Patel's nephew's marriage took place in Shiridi. The bride's place was Shiridi. Chand Patel requested the fakir to accompany them and bless the couple. In the Kandoba temple the carts in which they were travelling stopped. Everyone got down including the fakir. Mahalaspatis saw the fakir and called 'Come, Come Sai' which became a divine name. The marriage was over and the marriage party returned but the young Sai stayed back in Shiridi.

OM SRI SAI RAM

CHAPTER 2

The Hindus were under the wrong impression that Sai Baba was a Muslim and hence they would not allow him to enter the Hindu temple. In that village there was dilapidated masjid in which Baba used to stay. Baba used to keep a fire burning continuously day and night. He also planted a Tulsi (Basil) plant. Even though, he dressed like a muslim fakir and resided in the masjid, he kept fire and a tulsi plant like a Hindu. Both Hindus and Muslims accepted him as one of them and used to visit him.

One day, Mahalsapati was hit with a stick by the Muslims when he was entering the masjid with pooja materials in his hand. Instantly Baba started yelling with pain and to their surprise they saw that Baba was having injuries on his back and was bleeding profusely. On the other hand, Mahalsapati who had been hit was not injured in any way. Then Baba told them that they all are his children and that they must accept the truth i. e. there is only one God. He told them that there were no separate Gods for Muslims and for Hindus. After saying this Baba came and occupied his 'asan' (seat).

Baba used to often ask Nanasaheb, who was serving as a Deputy Collector that time, to come and visit him. But Nanasheb taking him for a mere fakir never cared for his words. However, one day when he came to see him. Baba explained to him that they were related in the previous seven lives and that they have been resurrected again in this life. Nanasaheb, unable to understand the significance of Baba words, looked puzzled. Then suddenly he saw Baba with a halo around him. Baba gave him a vision of Ram, Shiva, Krishna and Maruti. Seeing all this, Nanasaheb was convinced that Baba was not an ordinary fakir but an incarnation of God.

One day, while on his official duty, Nanasaheb went up a hill. Since it was summer, he was unable to get a drop of water to drink. He was exhausted and felt as if he was dying. He sat on a stone and started shouting 'thirst, thirst'. Then suddenly a man appeared before him and told that there was

water below the stone he was sitting on. When Nanasaheb removed the stone, he found plenty of water. The water tasted very sweet. Nanasaheb felt that Baba himself came in disguise and saved his life.

He went to Shiridi and informed Baba about his adventure on the hill. Baba confirmed and said that he had indeed come into this world to save his devotees. Hearing the stories, the devotees had the faith that Baba was there to protect them in times of difficulties.

OM SRI SAI RAM

CHAPTER 3

Sai always responds to the call of his devotees, takes away their burdens and protects them. The following story illustrates this—Dadasaheb Kaparde was an advocate in Amravati. He along with his whole family came to Shiridi to offer his prayers to Baba. They were all spending their time happily in Shiridi, when one of the boys was down with high fever. He suffered for two days and on the third day, the doctor found white blisters on his body and diagnosed him to be suffering from Bubonic plague.

On hearing this, the mother of the boy started crying. Baba consoled her by saying that when he was there, there was nothing to fear. He would bear all the burden. This was said in front of many devotees sitting around him. Baba, to prove his statement, lifted his shirt and showed blisters on his body. He had taken over the boy's blisters on to himself. Needless to say, the boy was cured and healed completely at that moment itself.

Another story will illustrate this even further. One day while arranging the firewood in the Dhuni, Baba put his hand into the fire. His devotees who were around him came to his rescue and pulled Baba away. They asked Baba for an explanation for his action. Baba then told them that there was a blacksmith, who was a devotee of his, in village about 100 km away from Shiridi. His wife was working at the bellows of the furnace, when he called her for some work. Leaving the baby unattended, she went into the house. The baby unknowingly crawled into the fire. Seeing this Baba put his hand into the fire to save the baby from being burnt. Baba said that he did not mind that his arm was burnt but he was glad that the life of the baby was saved. This incident was confirmed by the blacksmith and his wife some days later, when they came to thank Baba.

All these incidents show how kind and affectionate Baba was to his devotees. Blessed are the devotees who got to witness his miracles.

OM SRI SAI RAM

CHAPTER 4

This chapter illustrates further how Baba always comes to the rescue of his devotees.

Rustomji Wadia of Nizam state was a very rich man. He had amassed lots of houses, cattle and was very well respected. Everybody thought him to be a good and happy man. But the truth was otherwise. In spite of donating generously, performing all kinds of poojas, he was not blessed with children. All his prayers were of no avail. He thought himself to be very unfortunate. One day, he was fortunate enough to meet one of Baba's most intimate devotee named Dasganu. Dasganu advised him to visit Shiridi and seek the blessings of Baba. He also assured him that Baba would bless him with children. Trusting him, Rustomji along with his wife came to Shiridi. He very respectfully and devotedly offered Baba a basket of sweets and mangoes and prostrated before him reverently. Seeing Baba's divine form, his whole body began to shiver and tears came out of his eyes. Baba lovingly pulled him up and blessed him saying that all his sins were forgiven and that he would be blessed with children. He gave four mangoes to Rustomji's wife saying that she would be blessed with four sons. Rest of the fruits in the basket were distributed among all the devotees sitting nearby. Needless to say, in due course Rustomji was blessed with a son. He came along with his wife and son one year later to take the blessings of Baba. Later, he built a Wada for the use of devotees of Shiridi. Even today, the wada is called Rustomji Wada. This story shows that Sai Baba showered his blessings upon all his devotees.

Another interesting story is about a devotee by the name Shiv. He was a student of law. He went to Shiridi to get the blessings of Baba. Baba blessed him and told him not to worry. He asked him to appear for the exam with his complete faith in him. Just before the exams he suffered from serious illness which made him doubtful about his success in examination. His friends felt that Shiv had not done well but Shiv was confident of his

success as he had the blessings of Baba. When the results were declared, he passed the exams with distinction. Everyone including his friends were surprised, then they remembered his confidence in Baba's words.

This story shows how Baba's blessings would remove all the difficulties. Baba will bless anyone who remember him with love and devotion.

OM SRI SAI RAM

CHAPTER 5

In the year 1918, on Vijaya Dashmi day, Baba left his physical body. His approaching death had made his devotees ponder over the futility of their existence in his absence. They felt as if they were going to be orphaned. But Baba had assured them that though his physical form would be no longer visible he would be always with them, when and wherever they called for him. All he longed for was their love. The following stories illustrate how he kept up with his promise—

BALAJI PATEL SEVASKAR

Balaji Patel Sevaskar was a great devotee of Baba. He used to cultivate a small land and offer all that was produced to Baba first. He and his family lived happily with whatever Baba gave them from this produce. This tradition was followed by Balaji's son even after the death of his father. Once when Balaji's son was performing his father's annual ceremony, more people turned up than expected. His wife feared that the food might not be sufficient for all. Knowing that family reputation was at stake, she asked her mother-in-law for advice. Her mother-in-law told her not to worry as it was not theirs but Baba's food. She asked her daughter-in-law to cover all vessels after putting udi (the sacred ash) in them and then serve. To their surprise and amazement, food was not only sufficient but remained surplus. They all thanked Baba and sang bhajans in his praise with love and devotion and performed Aarti.

BAGLA

In 1943, a first class sub-judge named Bagla, a devotee of Baba, celebrated Baba's Saptah (a week for reading Baba's book). He decided to distribute food among all the devotees and poor people after completion of the saptah. Accordingly, food was prepared for about 1000 people. But almost 6000 people turned up. Fearing that food may not be sufficient for all, Bagla went

near Baba's idol, prostrated in severance and prayed for help. Baba told him not to get frightened but put some udi in all the vessels and then serve from them. The food was not only sufficient but there was surplus. This story reminds us of how Lord Krishna presented the Akshaya Patra (Vessel) to Draupadi to satiate Durvasa's and his disciples' hunger.

The list of Baba's miracles is endless. Only a few of them have been narrated here. Whosoever performs this vratam and listens to the Sai Leelas (miracles) with love and devotion, is sure to be blessed by Baba. After the completion of the vratam, the prasad should be distributed and taken by one and all. Only then, the vratam is said to be duly completed.

OM SAI RAM OM SAI, SHRI SAI, JAI JAI SAI