

Sai Satcharitra

Sai Satcharitra - Chapter XLI

Story of the Picture - Stealing the Rags and Reading of Jnaneshwari.

As stated in the last chapter, we continue here the story of the picture.

Nine years after the occurrence of the incident depicted in the last chapter, Ali Mahomed saw Hemadpant and related to him the following story.

One day while wandering in the streets of Bombay he bought the picture from a street-hawker; then he framed and set it on a wall in his house at Bandra (suburb of Bombay). As he loved Baba, he daily took darshana of it. Three months before he gave the picture to Hemadpant, he was suffering from an abscess or swelling on his leg for which an operation was performed and he was convalescing in the house of his brother-in-law, Mr. Noor-Mahomed Peerbhoy in Bombay. For three months his house in Bandra was closed; and nobody was living there. Only the pictures of the famous Baba Abdul Rahiman, Moulanasaheb Mahomed Hussain, Baba Sai, Baba Tajudin and other saints (living) were there. The wheel of time did not even spare these. He was lying sick and suffering in Bombay. Why should the pictures suffer there (in Bandra)? It seems that they have also their ins and outs (births and deaths). All the pictures met their fate, but how Sai Baba's picture escaped it, nobody had been able to explain to me up till now. It shows the all-pervasiveness, omnipresence of Sai and His inscrutable power.

He got a small picture of Saint Baba Abdul Rahiman from Mahomed Hussain Thariyatopan many years ago. He gave it to his brother-in-law, Noor-Mahomed Peerbhoy and it was lying on his table for eight years. Once the latter saw it, took it to a photographer and got it enlarged to life-size and distributed copies of the same amongst his relations and friends, including Ali Mahomed who fixed it up in his Bandra house. Noor-Mahomed was a disciple of Saint Abdul Rahiman and when he went to present the picture to his Guru in an open darbar held by him, the Guru got wild and ran to beat him,

and drove him out. He felt very sorry and dejected. He thought that he lost so much of his money, and incurred his Guru's displeasure and anger. As his Guru did not like image-worship, he took the enlarged picture with him to the Appollo Bunder and, after hiring a boat, went in it and drowned it in the sea. He requested the friends and relations to return their copies and after getting them (6 in all) back, had them thrown by a fisherman in the Bandra sea. At this time Ali Mahomed was in his brother-in-law's house. He was told by him that his suffering would come to an end if he would soon drown the pictures of the saints in the sea. Hearing this, Ali Mahomed sent his Mehta (Manager) to his Bandra house and got all the pictures of the saints in his house thrown into the sea.

When Ali Mahomed returned home after two months, he was surprised to find Baba's picture on the wall as before. He did not understand how his Mehta took away all the pictures except this. He immediately took it out and kept it in his cupboard, fearing that if his brother-in-law saw it, he would do away with it. While he was thanking how it should be disposed of, and who would keep it and guard it well, Sai Baba Himself as it were, suggested to him that he should see and consult Moulana Ismu Mujavar and abide by his opinion. He saw the Moulana and told him everything. After mature consideration they both decided that the picture should be presented to Annasaheb (Hemadpant) and that he would protect it well. Then they both went to Hemadpant and presented the picture in the nick of time.

This story shows how Baba knew all the past, present and future, and how skillfully He pulled the wires and fulfilled desired of His devotees. The following story shows that Baba liked very much those persons who took real interest in matters spiritual and that He removed all their difficulties and made them happy.

Stealing the Rags and Reading of Jnaneshwari

Mr.B.V.Deo who was Mamlatdar of Dahanu (Thana District) wished for a long time to read Jnaneshwari - (the well-known Marathi commentary on the Bhagawad-Gita by Jnaneshwar), along with other scriptures. He could read daily one chapter of the Bhagawad-Gita, and some portion of other books; but when he took Jnaneshwari in hand, some difficulties cropped up and he was precluded from reading it. He took three months' leave, went to Shirdi and thence to his home at Pound for rest. He could read there other books but when he opened Jnaneshwari, some evil or stray thoughts came crowding in his mind and stopped him in the effort.

Try however he might, he was not able to read even a few lines of the book with ease. So he resolved in his mind that when Baba would create love for the book and would order him to read it, he would begin and not till then. Then in the month of February 1914 he went with his family to Shirdi. There Jog asked him whether he daily read Jnaneshwari. Deo said that he was desirous of reading it, but he was not successful and that only when Baba would order him to read it, he would commence. Jog then advised him to take a copy of the book and present it to Baba and to start the reading after it was consecrated and returned by Him. Deo then replied that he did not want to resort to this device, as Baba knows his heart. Would He not know his desire and satisfy it by giving him a clear order to read?

Deo then saw Baba and offered one rupee as Dakshina. Baba asked for Rs. 20/- which he gave. At night, he saw one Balakram and enquired how he secured Baba's devotion and grace. Balakram told him that he would communicate everything next day after arati. When Deo went for darshana next day, Baba asked for Rs.20/- which he gave willingly. As the Masjid was crowded, Deo went aside and sat in a corner. Baba asked him to come close and sit with a calm mind, which Deo did. Then after the noon-arati was over and after the men dispersed, Deo saw again Balakram and asked him his previous history, what Baba told him and how he was taught meditation. Balakram was going to reply when Baba sent one Chandru, a leper devotee to call Deo to Him. When Deo went to Baba, the latter asked him when and with whom and what he was talking. He said that he talked with Balakram and heard from him His fame. Then Baba asked again Rs.25/- as Dakshina which Deo gladly gave. Then Baba took him inside and sitting near the post charged him saying - "You stole away My rags without My knowledge." Deo denied all knowledge of the rags, but Baba asked him to make a search. He searched but found none. Then Baba got angry and said - "There is nobody here, you are the only thief, so grey-haired and old, you came here for stealing." After this Baba lost His temper, got terribly wild, gave all sorts of abuses and scoldings. Deo remained silent and watching, and thought that he might get a beating also. After about an hour or so, Baba asked him to go to the Wada. He returned to the Wada and told Jog and Balakram all that had happened. Then in the after-noon Baba sent for all and Deo also, and said that His words might have pained the old man (Deo) but as he committed the theft, He could not but speak out. Then Baba asked again for Rs. 12/- Deo collected the amount, paid it and prostrated himself before Him.

Then Baba said to him - "What are you doing?" "Nothing" replied Deo. Then Baba - "Go on daily reading the Pothi (Jnaneshwari), go and sit in the Wada, read something regularly every day and while reading, explain the portion read, to all with love and devotion. I am sitting here ready to give you the whole gold-embroidered Shella (valuable cloth), then why go to others to steal rags, and why should you get into the habit of stealing?"

Deo was much pleased to hear the words of Baba, for He asked him to start reading Pothi (Jnaneshwari). He thought that he got what he wanted and that he could read the book with ease thenceforth. He again prostrated himself before Baba and said that he surrendered himself to Him and that he should be treated as a child and be helped in his reading. He realized then what Baba meant by 'stealing the rags'. What he asked Balakram constituted the 'rags' and Baba did not like his behaviour in this respect. As He was ready to answer any question, He did not like him to ask others and make unnecessary enquiries and therefore He harassed and scolded him. Deo thought that He really did not 'harass and scold' him but taught that He was ready to fulfill his desires, and there was no use asking others in vain. Deo took these scoldings as flowers and blessings and went home satisfied and contented.

The matter did not end here. Baba did not stop with only issuing an order to read. Within a year He went to Deo and enquired about his progress. On 2nd April 1914, on Thursday morn, Baba gave him a dream-vision. He sat on the upper floor and asked him whether he understood the Pothi. "No" answered Deo. Baba - "Then when are you going to understand?" Deo burst into tears and said, "Unless You shower Your grace, the reading is mere worry and the understanding is still more difficult. I say this definitely." Baba - "While reading you make haste, read it before Me, in My presence." Deo - "What shall I read?" Baba - "Read Adhyatma (spiritualism)." Deo went to bring the book when he opened his eyes and was awakened. We leave the readers to imagine what ineffable joy and bliss Deo felt after this vision.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all