

Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita

The Life & Teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba

the original in Marathi by

Govind Raghunath Dabholkar - Hemadpant

translated in English by

Zarine

Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita

The Life & Teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba

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Foreword to the Second Revised Edition

The daily 'Parayan' (recitation) of "Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita" for Sai devotees is as pious as that of Srimad Bhagvatgita, Ramayana or any other epic. Since the original Satcharita by Govind Raghunath Dabholkar (Hemadpant) is in Marathi, Smt. Zarine of Mumbai, who was an ardent devotee of Baba undertook on herself the task of translating the Marathi version of the Holy Book, word to word into English, to meet the needs of an ever growing number of Sai devotees all over the country and abroad.

The first edition of this book was published by M/s Sai Press India Pvt. Ltd. and had a limited distribution. Since it was considered essential by the original publisher that the book be available to devotees all over, they offered its copyright to Shri Sai Baba Sansthan Trust, Shirdi and this has been gratefully accepted.

I have great pleasure in presenting the second revised edition of this monumental work before the devotees of Shri Sai Samarth on behalf of the Board of management of Shri Sai Baba Sansthan Trust. I hope that the devotees who read this book and adopt the right code of conduct will be immensely benefited.

Smt. Zarine is no longer with us to share this happiness having merged in the lotus feet of Baba on 28th December 2006.

Bow to Sri Sai. Peace be to all.

14th April 2008
Shri Ram Navami

Jayant Murlidhar Sasane
Chairman, Shri Sai Baba Sansthan Trust

Since the time when Sai has graced me and favoured me, I think of him only day and night. He has destroyed my fear of worldly existence and the fear of the cycle of birth and death. (Ch. 1, ovi 78)

Not for me the repetition of any other prayers; not for me any other penance. I behold only one form – the Pure Form of Sai. (Ch. 1, ovi 79)

As soon as one gazes upon Sai's face, thirst and hunger are forgotten. What is the value of other pleasures? One forgets the worldly sorrows. (Ch. 1, ovi 80)

As one looks at Baba's eyes, one forgets one's self. Waves of love swell from within and the whole world is drowned in the raptures of devotion. (Ch. 1, ovi 81)

Action, religion, scriptures, *puranas*, *yoga*, sacrifices, performance of prescribed religious ceremonies, pilgrimage to holy places and acts of penance – all these are at Sai's feet for me. (Ch. 1, ovi 82)

Continuous observance of the teachings of the Guru, and firm adherence to them brings unshakable faith and unwavering stability. (Ch. 1, ovi 83)

Preface

Rare are instances when an individual makes such a profound impact on the minds of people, irrespective of their caste and creed, as does my 'Shahi Baba' more than a century after His Incarnation.

Antonio Rigopoulos, in the prologue to his book, 'The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi', says that "millions of people revere and worship Him as a God, an *avatar*, and as a teacher of tolerance and mutual harmony between Hinduism and Islam". And, the whole purpose of an *avatar* is to make you realise that you are part of God.

Rigopoulos has surmised that "his ever-expanding fame is due, in the first place, to his alleged powers as a miracle worker and a healer.

"Besides this fundamental characteristic of the saint of Shirdi, his personality remains, overall, enigmatic and obscure. His birthplace and religious affiliation are a mystery to all, and to-day people still debate whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim.

"What is certain is that a young ascetic identified by the villagers as a Muslim, reached the hamlet of Shirdi one day in the last century (i.e. in the 19th century); that he was attributed the name of Sai Baba; and that he lived in the village (in Ahmednagar district of the State of Maharashtra) till the end of his days, dwelling in a dilapidated mosque.

"He was of unpredictable moods - loving, harsh, humorous, abusive! But he had spiritual charisma whether he was speaking in parables or observing prolonged silences. "Sai Baba's whole persona, his movements, words and glances conveyed a tangible and immediate experience of the sacred.

"The holy preceptor by the word lighted a lamp; thereby was shattered darkness of the temple of the self; and the unique chamber of jewels was thrown up".

The people of Shirdi worshipped Sai as their God. He dwelt in Shirdi as the embodiment of pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss - the Sadguru, who was King of Kings! King of *Yogis*! Absolute *Brahman*! While eating, drinking, working in their backyards and fields, doing various household chores, they always remembered Sai and sang of His Glory. Initially, however, Baba did not allow anyone to worship Him, that is, to do *archanam*. Whenever any one approached Him with the *puja thali* or platter, Baba would get angry and even upset the platter. But when He saw the pure devotion of the people, He relented. Individual worship of Baba, in the

mosque, existed even around 1894! There was an opposition to it by some Muslims, led by the *Kazi* of Sangamner. Mhalsapati was ahead of most in his worship of Baba, followed by Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Megha also did his *puja* in style. But it was Dr. Pandit a friend of Tatyasaheb Noolkar who earned the distinction of applying sandalpaste for the first time on Baba's forehead by drawing a *Tripundra* i.e. three horizontal lines, as he did to his own Guru. Till then, only Mhalsapati used to apply the sandalpaste to Baba; and, that too, only to His throat.

“For the worship of other deities, the articles required and the ritual are specific. But, for your worship, there is nothing in the world which is worthy of you!”, says Das Ganu. The devotees worshipped the manifested Sadguru Shri Sainath *Maharaj* at Shirdi as they pleased. Baba used a sack-cloth for His seat, which the bhaktas covered with a small beautiful mattress, and put a bolster at His back. Baba respected the feelings of His devotees and gave them full freedom to worship Him, as they liked. Some waved *chamaras* or whisks before Him, some played musical instruments, some laved His hands and feet, others applied incense and attars, some gave Him betel leaf and nuts, some offered *arghya* for worship of His feet, and some offered *naivedya*.

Congregational worship of Sai Baba commenced with the noon *arati* around 1909; followed by the bed-time *arati* after the *Chavadi* procession from 10th of December 1909, on alternate days. The morning *arati* also took place at the *Chavadi* before Baba went to the *Dwarakamayi*. The practice of evening *arati* started much later.

It occurred to Govindrao Raghunath Dabholkar to present Baba's legendary life, while he was intermittently living in Shirdi from 1910 to 1916, after he witnessed Baba grinding wheat and then having the flour thrown on the village border limits to cast out cholera. This incident was the inspiration for “Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita” for Dabholkar, as he contemplated Baba's grinding, almost every day, not of the wheat, but sins and the mental and physical afflictions and miseries of his devotees. He sought Baba's permission to write about His life and it was granted. He was directed to make notes and maintain records which he did. The actual writing was undertaken after Baba's *Mahasamadhi*.

Dabholkar's poetic work runs into fifty-three chapters, modelled on the ‘Eknathi Bhagvat’, containing more than nine thousand ovis or verses. Every chapter is a mixture of philosophy, anecdotes and teachings. His book is akin to the Vedas for Sai's devotees.

More than two decades ago, a casual conversation with my Revered Sivanesan Swamiji, at Shirdi, launched me into reading the Sri Sai Samartha Satcharita in Marathi - or, rather, have it read to me, as I did not know the language at all.

Since then it has been a long journey. While struggling to absorb what my teacher, Mrs. Mohini Varde, taught, I began writing it out in English. After I had completed more than half the fifty-three chapters, the study was disrupted by a chain of events, which included the death of my teacher's father and that of my own darling mother, Dhunmai. Revered Sivanesan Swamiji is the fount of my inspiration for all my works including this one.

My published works, prompted the Shirdi Sansthan of Sri Sai Baba to wonder if I had worked on the Satcharita. At the instance of the Sansthan, the manuscript was submitted to the Shri Sai Leela Magazine, which published it chapter by chapter, over many years. The need to publish it in book form was felt but not pursued.

It is thanks to Shri Motilal Gupta, Founder Chairman of the Shirdi Sai Baba Temple Society, Sai Dham, Tigaon Road, Faridabad (Haryana) that Shri Vijay R. Raghavan of Sai Press India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, came to Shirdi about one year ago; and he enthusiastically undertook the task without a thought of any gains, monetary or otherwise, for himself. Heartfelt thanks are due to both of them.

Both of them have dedicated themselves to embellishing the publication with sketches and photographs, without sparing any time or effort, in addition to looking after every other aspect of printing of the book.

Ms. Vinny Chitluri's book "Ambrosia in Shirdi – Part I" was published in July 2002. The photographs she had painstakingly collected were offered for the Satcharita, with complete devotion for Sainath, on our request. She also was instrumental in getting some sketches made and liaised closely with Shri Raghavan to enhance the value of the book. Indeed, words are inadequate to thank my dear friend for her precious inputs.

My dear and revered friend late Lt. Col. M. B. Nimbalkar's prose version of the Satcharita in Marathi has been of immense help and I am deeply grateful to him for his permission to reproduce the chronological index of events painstakingly prepared by him, which appears slightly modified towards the end. How I wish I could have placed this book in his hands!

Mr. Suresh Chandra Gupta of New Delhi has spared no pains in helping with the final proof reading and has given many valuable suggestions. We are truly privileged to have his help. This has been done to render his devotion to Sainath.

Needless to say that the translation would not have been possible without Mrs. Usha Tembe's patience, perseverance, erudition and dedication. She was a stranger when we embarked on this task, but grew into a friend. It was Mrs. Tembe who sought and obtained the help of the erudite Dr. Moreshwar Paradkar, Professor of Sanskrit, who worked on many a difficult passage of this devotional work to enable us to translate several chapters. Both Mrs. Tembe and I acknowledge our indebtedness to Dr. Paradkar.

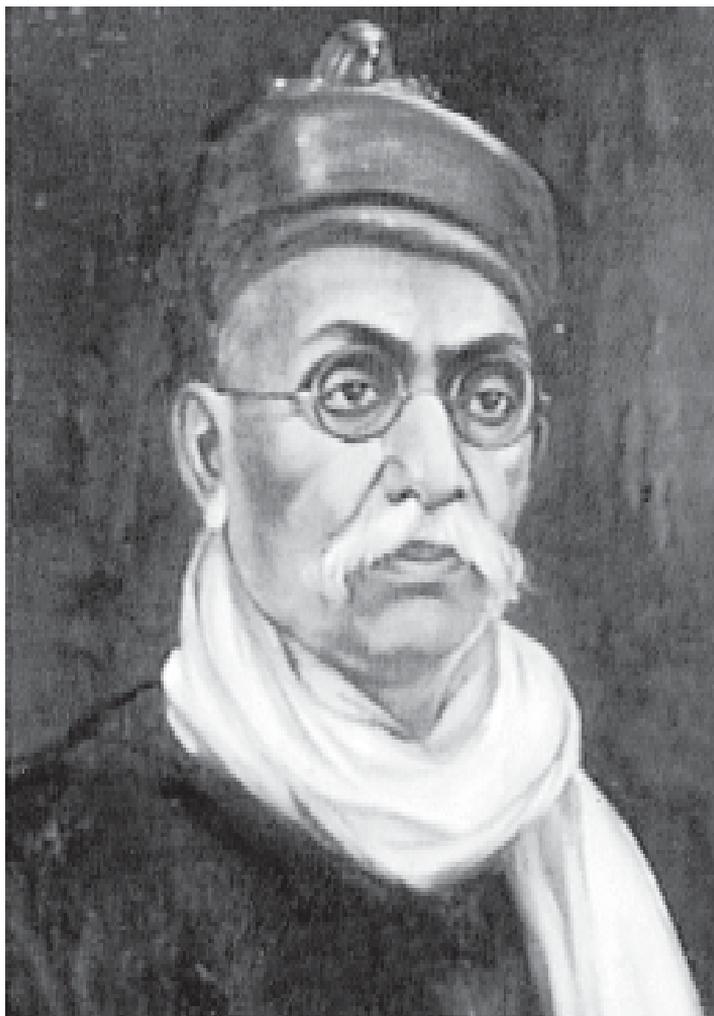
With an upsurge of devotion to Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi currently sweeping the world, I trust that Sri Sainath's devotees will welcome the effort and will make use of this book for their daily prayers and inspire their families to do likewise.

The imperfections are mine; and I seek the readers' generosity in overlooking them.

'Nata- Shahi'
69, Worli Sea Face,
Mumbai- 400 025

Zarine

30th October 2003



Govind R. Dabholkar – Annasaheb alias Hemadpant
(1856 – 1929)

He, by Baba's grace, had the privilege to compose, in Marathi, Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita, a Gita for Sai devotees.

HEMADPANT

(Govind R. Dabholkar – Annasaheb)

(The Author of the original Sree Sai Satcharita in Marathi)

We have seen that Sai Satcharita was composed by Annasaheb Dabholkar, but the work itself says at the end of each chapter that it was composed by Hemadpant at the inspiration of Sai Baba. Now the readers will ask, who is this Hemadpant? For their information we say that Hemadpant is a name or significant title bestowed on Mr. Dabholkar by Sai Baba Himself at the first meeting. How and when it was bestowed and how significant and prophetic it turned out to be, the author himself has told us in the 2nd Chapter of the Satcharita. For the present we give below a short sketch of his life.

The author Mr. Dabholkar was born in 1859 in a poor Adya Gowd Brahmin family in a small town by name Kelave-Mahim in Thana district. His father and grand-father were religious and devout persons. As the family was poor, his primary education was done in his native-place and then his English education up to the 5th standard was finished at Poona. On account of his adverse circumstances he could not continue his education any further. He could only manage to pass the Public Service Examination of the time. Then he had to accept the post of a school-master in his native place. His good nature, intelligence and work were noted by Mr. Sabaji Chintaman Chitnis who was then *Mamlatdar* in the Colaba district. He appointed him first as a *Talati* (village-officer), thence as an English clerk and afterwards *Aval* (head) clerk in the *Mamlatdar's* Court. Sometime afterwards he was appointed as a Forest Settlement Officer and again as a Special Officer on Famine Relief Works at Broach (Gujrat). The duties of the post were most satisfactorily discharged by him. In 1901 he was appointed as a *Mamlatdar* of Shahapur (Thana district) and in 1903 as a Resident Magistrate 1st class, at Bandra where he served till 1907. Thence he was transferred to Murbad, Anand, Borsad (Kheda district) and was again posted in 1910 at Bandra as a Resident Magistrate. It was in this year that he had the good fortune to go to Shirdi and get the *darshan* of Sai Baba. He retired from service in 1916. After this, he again got a temporary Govt. job but that was of very short duration. After his retirement he served Sai Baba heart and soul till Baba's *samadhi* and afterwards managed very skillfully and efficiently Sai Baba's Shirdi Sansthan till his death, which occurred in 1929. He left behind him his wife, one son and 5 daughters, most of whom were married to suitable and worthy husbands.

(Source: First edition of N.V. Gunaji's book in English adapted from the original in Marathi)

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