
6

The Narration of the Story of Ram-janam Celebrations

I bow down to Sree Ganesh

I bow down to Sree Saraswati

I bow down to the Guru

I bow down to the Family Deity

I bow down to Sree Sita-Ramachandra

I bow down to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

1. Whether in the worldly or spiritual life, whenever the *Sadguru* is the captain of the ship, he will steer the ship along with the passengers to the opposite bank.
2. The very word *Sadguru* immediately brings to mind Sai, as he stands in front of me and blesses with his hand on the head.
3. As soon as the boon-giving hand, which has the *udi* from the *dhuni* ¹, touches my head, my heart goes into a rapture with inner happiness and my eyes brim over with love.
4. How marvellous is the touch of the hand of the Guru which has the power to destroy the subtle body, which is burnt to ashes at the touch of the hand – the subtle body which otherwise cannot be burnt even by the inferno at the dissolution of the world.
5. It can even steady the minds of those, who are annoyed even by an accidental mention of God or by His tales, and speak intemperately.
6. As soon as he puts his lotus-like hand on the head, the accumulated sins of many previous births are washed off and the loving devotees of Sai are purified.
7. Having seen the comely features, you are choked with extreme bliss; tears of happiness roll down and the heart is overwhelmed with ‘*ashta satvik bhava*’ ².
8. He awakens the thought of oneness, the inner happiness reveals itself, it dissipates the two-fold nature because of the oneness with God and evenly spreads unity.
9. When one starts reading the sacred books and the *puranas*, the *Sadguru* comes to one’s mind at every step. Sai is Rama and Krishna and makes us listen to his own life-story.

10. When listening to the *Bhagvat (puran)*, Krishna himself becomes the embodiment of Sai, singing the praises of Uddhava³ for the good of his devotees.
11. Even in casual conversation, incidents and stories of Sai's life unexpectedly are recalled to illustrate a point.
12. Intent on writing, when you take up paper and pen in hand, words elude you; but when he makes us write at his command, it becomes difficult to cope with the flow of the words.
13. The moment ego raises its head, he immediately suppresses it. And by creating the awareness of higher consciousness, he brings to the disciple a sense of fulfilment.
14. When you surrender to the powerful Sai - body and soul, virtue, wealth, love and deliverance are attained without striving and unasked.
15. The four-fold path of *Karma* (Action), *Jñyana* (Knowledge), *Yoga* (Yogic Powers) and *Bhakti* (Devotion), though each is distinct from the other, all lead to the same goal.
16. The path of *Bhakti* is the thorny path, like the path through the prickly *Babul* forest. It is full of pits and potholes. One or two steps, in the right direction, takes you really close to God.
17. You should avoid the thorns and step forward. You will reach the destination without fear. This is the only remedy, says the *Guru-mayi* very clearly.
18. When the orchard of the mind is watered by devotion, detachment will grow, knowledge will blossom, union with the Supreme Spirit comes to fruition and joy will burst forth, avoiding the cycle of birth and death, as a certainty.
19. The primeval Supreme Soul is self-existent. It is the three-fold concept, *Sat-chit-anand* (Truth, Consciousness and Bliss). It appears by transformation, in the visual image; and, actually, manifests for the sake of the devotees.
20. As *Brahman* became manifest through its three-fold attributes, *Maya* became active and stirring *Satva* (Righteousness) *Rajas* (Activity) *Tamas* (Inertia) exhibited her qualities.
21. When a particular shape is given to clay, it is called a pot rightfully; but when the pot breaks, it loses its name, form and identity.
22. The whole world is born of *Maya* and both are cause and effect to each other. Thus *Maya* itself manifests, as it were, with different limbs in the form of the world.

23. If you look at the nature of *Maya*, before the existence of the world, nothing is apparent. She was dormant in the Supreme Consciousness, though residing in it she was not perceivable.
24. Even if perceivable, it is actually the Supreme Self. When it is not perceivable, then also it is the Supreme Self. Thus *Maya* is the Supreme Self. It cannot be distinguishable from the Supreme Self.
25. In the beginning *Maya* created lifeless, immovable static objects from the inertia quality and completed the first part of her action.
26. Afterwards, when the Supreme Self was conjoint with the ‘*rajoguna*’ of *Maya*, it revealed the mine of percipience of essential activities, endowed with the aspects of both.
27. Later on, out of the *satvaguna* of *Maya*, was created the intellect, which when combined with the divine bliss of the Supreme Self completed the whole process of creation.
28. Thus, *Maya*, susceptible to great modifications, till she is motivated towards activity, does not create the things which are above mentioned and the three *gunas* remain unmanifest.
29. *Maya* cannot be apparent unless she performs actions according to the three *gunas*. She can exist without appearance and practise non-action (passivity).
30. *Maya* is the creation of the Supreme Being, while the universe is the creation of *Maya*. ‘All this is Brahman’ means that the world, *Maya* and the Supreme Being are all united and one.
31. Those who keenly desire and are intent on realising this unity should refer to the *Vedas* and the *Shrutis*.
32. The *Vedas*, *Shastras*, *Shrutis*, *Smritis*, teachers and scriptures give us the knowledge, the discriminating intellect and ultimate happiness.
33. “In the home of my devotees, food and clothing will never be lacking”. This is an assurance given by Sree Sai and the devotees were aware of this.
34. “Those who whole-heartedly worship me and lovingly always serve me, I look after their well-being. This I know to be my motto.”
35. This is also the affirmation of the *Bhagvat Gita*. Sai says to accept this as universal truth: “There will never be shortage of food and clothing. Therefore do not hanker after them.”
36. “One should seek honour at the door of God; and should beg only from God. Ask only for His Blessings; worldly prestige should be left aside.
37. “Why are you satisfied by the honour given to you by society? And

why are you infatuated by that? Rather seek through intense devotion to move your chosen deity to compassion and to express your joy through copious streams of *satvik bhava*.

38. “May you find joy in such striving. Let all the faculties be seized with such a devotional urge so that the passions of the senses may be transformed completely and sprout devotional worship. What desire will then remain?”
39. “May such devotion be your constant pre-occupation leaving no relish for anything else. May the mind be engaged in constant chanting of my name and let everything else be forgotten.
40. “Then there will be no thought of body, home and wealth. The heart will be fixed on the infinite happiness. The mind will be balanced and serene, and it will find fulfilment in itself.
41. “A contented mind is the surest sign of association with the holy. How can a wandering mind be considered as being surrendered to God?”
42. Therefore, with full concentration, oh listeners, listen to the explanation with faith. By listening to the Sai Satcharita let your mind be inclined towards devotion.
43. Along with the narration, you will feel contented. Your wayward mind will find peace. Agitation will disappear and you will achieve happiness.
44. Now, we will go back to the earlier thread of the story about the renovation of the *Masjid* and the *kirtan* about the birth of Ram. Let us proceed with the narration.
45. There was one devotee by the name of Gopal Gund⁴ who had great devotion for Baba. He spent his time in ceaseless chanting of Baba’s name.
46. He had no children. Later with Sai’s blessings he begot a son. His mind was thus happy.
47. So Gopal Gund thought of holding a *Yatra* or an *Urus*⁵ yearly in the Shirdi village. Everybody would be joyous.
48. Tatyā Kote, Dada Kote, Madhavrao and other leading devotees approved of this idea and began to make preparations.
49. But for such annual festivals, there was a certain regulation. The permission of the District Officer was required.
50. When efforts were made to secure the permission, a perverse *Kulkarni*⁶ from the village went against them and put obstacles in the way.

51. When the *Kulkarni* came in the way, look what was the result. The District Officer issued an order that the *yatra* should not be held at Shirdi.
52. But to hold this *yatra* in Shirdi was also Baba's wish and he had commanded them to fulfil this along with his blessings.
53. The villagers persevered and tried their utmost. The authorities changed the earlier order and honoured the wishes of the people.
54. Since then, according to Baba's wish, the *yatra* takes place on *Ramnavami*. Taty Kote looks after the arrangements and a large crowd gathers.
55. On *Ramnavami* day, devotional singing and worship take place to the accompaniment of drums and other wind instruments. People flock there from all four quarters in large numbers.
56. Every year, two new flags are ceremoniously carried in procession and tied to the dome of the *Masjid* and permanently fixed there.
57. Out of the two, one would be Nimonkar's⁷ and the other, Damu Anna's⁸. They are taken with pomp in procession and they fly high on the top of the dome.
58. Now listen to the interesting account of how the celebration of *Ramnavami* originated from the *Urus*, which is unusual – the pleasure and glory of Shirdi!
59. Originating from the *Urus*, *Ramnavami* was celebrated for the first time in Shake 1833⁹; and, since then, it continues uninterruptedly to be held to this day.
60. The famous Krishna Jogeshwar Bhishma¹⁰ was the originator of the idea of celebrating the birth of Ram, which he thought would be greatly beneficial for all.
61. Till then, it was only the *Urus* for which the people participated. Since that year, the beautiful festival of the birth of Ram took place.
62. Once, as Bhishma was peacefully sitting in the *wada*, and Kaka¹¹ was ready to leave for the *Masjid* along with the *puja* paraphernalia,
63. in his heart, he (Kaka) was thinking of *Sai-darshan* and outwardly he was enthusiastic about the *Urus*. Kaka had come a day earlier to Shirdi for the celebrations.
64. Considering it an opportune moment, Bhishma asked Kaka: "Would you give me help for a good cause that has inspired me?"
65. "Here, every year, *Urus* is held on the day which is also the birth of



K. J. Bhishma

- Ram. Therefore, this is a natural opportunity to hold the ceremony of the birth of Ram”.
66. Kaka liked the idea and asked Bhishma to obtain Baba’s consent. It would depend on his wish. Then, there would be no delay in the work.
67. But for the celebration, there would have to be a *Kirtan*. That was a problem – for, where would one get a *Haridas* in a small village? That was the only question.
68. Bhishma said: “I would be the *Kirtankar*¹². You can accompany me on the harmonium. And Radhakrishnabai¹³ would be prepared to make the *Sunthwada*¹⁴ at the proper time.
69. “Come then let us go to Baba. Any delay for a good cause poses problems. A good cause accompanied by promptness will be executed efficiently.
70. “Come along, let us go and ask permission to perform the *Kirtan*”. So saying, they both arrived in the *Masjid*, at that time.
71. No sooner had Kaka begun the worship, Baba on his own asked what was the discussion going on in the *wada* and Kaka could not think of an answer.
72. Immediately Baba asked Bhishma the same question in a different way. “What has Buva to say?” asked Baba of him.
73. Then Kaka remembered and disclosed the intentions. Baba liked the idea and it was decided to hold the celebrations.
74. Next day, early in the morning, seeing that Baba had gone to the Lendi¹⁵, a cradle was put in the courtyard with ceremonial preparations for the *Kirtan*.
75. The audience assembled. Later on, Baba returned on time. Bhishma got up. Kaka sat down at the harmonium. Then Baba sent for Kaka.
76. “Baba is calling you”. Hearing this, Kaka got a shock. He could not understand what had happened. Let there not be a fiasco.
77. On hearing Baba’s call, Kaka became scared; “Why has Baba become so angry? Will the *kirtan* take place without any difficulty?”
78. He walked ahead casting backward glances. He climbed up the steps with fear. His steps were very timid. Kaka was extremely worried.
79. Baba asked him a question as to why the cradle was tied here and having learnt in brief the story, the reason behind it and the whole scheme, he was happy.
80. Then, from the niche¹⁶ he took a beautiful garland and put it round

Kaka's neck and gave another for Bhishma.

81. Having heard the question about the cradle, there was anxiety all around. But when the garlands were put round the necks, everyone was at ease.
82. Bhishma was a versatile man, well-versed in narrating *kathas*. The *kirtan* was very enjoyable and all the listeners were very pleased.
83. Baba too was very pleased. According to his consent, the festival had taken place, along with *bhajan*, *kirtan* etc.
84. At the time of the birth of Ram, the red *gulal* powder¹⁷, that was thrown about, went into Baba's eyes and Baba became enraged. He looked terrible like Narahari¹⁸, at the hour when Rama was born in the palace of Kaushalya.
85. The '*gulal*' was just an excuse. The action implied the fervour at the birth of Ram, who would destroy the ego, in the form of Ravan, and wickedness in the form of *Rakshas*.
86. Suddenly he was annoyed. He became, as it were, Narasimha¹⁹. Then started abuses and curses, which were showered upon all.
87. Radhakrishnabai²⁰ was quite concerned, as she thought that the cradle would be broken into pieces. How can it be kept in tact? That was the difficulty she faced.
88. "Please untie, quickly untie", she was insistent. Kaka moved forward to untie the cradle.
89. Then Baba got very angry and rushed forward towards Kaka. The untying of the cradle was forgotten and Baba regained his composure.
90. When, in the afternoon, Baba's permission was sought, his answer surprised everyone. "Why should you untie the cradle in such a hurry? It is still needed".
91. What could this necessity be? Sai's words are never spoken in vain. When given thought, the realisation dawned that the festival was not yet complete.
92. The festival had progressed upto a stage. But till the dawn of next day and until the time of *Gopalkala*²¹ the festival could not be said to be complete.
93. In this way, on the second day, after the *Gopalkala* and the *kirtan*, Baba gave his consent to untie the cradle.
94. Next year, Bhishma was not available. Balabuva Satarkar was to be brought for the *kirtan*. But he had to go to Kavathe²².

95. Therefore, Balabuva Bhajani, known as the 'Modern Tukaram' was brought by Kaka Mahajani and the festival was performed at his hands.
96. Even if he (i.e. Bhajani) had not been available, Kaka would have performed the *kirtan*, because he knew by heart the composition about *Ramnavami* composed by Das Ganu.
97. In the third year, Balabuva Satarkar himself came to Shirdi in time for the occasion. Listen to that incident with respect.
98. Having heard of Sai Baba's fame, a desire arose to have his *darshan*, but he wanted company on the way; and was wondering how he would find someone.
99. Balabuva was himself a Haridas (*keirtankar*) who hailed from Satara but was living in Parel, Bombay, at this time.
100. At Brihad Siddhakavathe, in Satara District, there was a *devasthan*²³, where Buva did *kirtan* on *Ramnavami* day, every year, for which he was paid annually every year.
101. Balabuva was connected with two annual festivals there – Ashadi *Ekadashi* and *Ramnavami*, falling in the month of *Chaitra*.
102. According to a charter of the Mogul Emperor ²⁴, a sum of Rs.2400/- had been allotted for the expenses of the Deity (Bade Baba) and the arrangements were made by the institution.
103. For these two festivals, Buva was paid Rs. 30/-. But that year there was a cholera epidemic at Kavathe and the villagers were in difficulty.
104. Therefore, the *Ramnavami* celebrations were called off there. Buva received letters from there to come the next year as the village was deserted.
105. In short, he lost the opportunity to serve Ram and did not also receive his allowance. But it gave him an opportunity to go to Shirdi and, therefore, he met Dixit²⁵.
106. Dixit was a great devotee of Baba. The desire to go to Shirdi would be fulfilled if he takes it upon himself and, along with personal gain, spiritual benefits will be achieved.
107. So he told Dixit that, as his yearly stipend was temporarily held back, he had thought of having Baba's *darshan* and performing the *kirtan* there.
108. Bhausahab then replied that there was no certainty of payment. To give or not to give was in the hands of Baba, and even for the *kirtan*, permission would be required.

109. While this conversation was going on, Kaka Mahajani came along unexpectedly and distributed *udi* as prasad of Shirdi and this was considered to be a good omen.
110. Mahajani had just returned from Shirdi. He conveyed that all was well there and thereafter returned to his residence.
111. Later on, Dixit very lovingly told Buva that he would ask for Baba's permission and if it was granted, he would definitely let him know.
112. "As soon as you receive the letter, come to Shirdi. Do not worry about the travelling expenses. You will not have to bear them. Have no doubts about it".
113. Later Dixit preceded (Balabuva). Baba gave his permission. Balabuva came to Shirdi and had *darshan* to his heart's content.
114. Sai Baba got the elaborate festival of *Ramnavami* performed in his presence with great love at the hands of Balabuva.
115. Balabuva was happy at heart. The objective had been fulfilled. Sai was also pleased. Thus everyone's wishes were fulfilled.
116. His expectations were more than fulfilled. Rs. 150/- was ordered to be received by him; and Buva was extremely happy.
117. Why shouldn't Balabuva be happy, when Baba gave as much earnings as he would have had in five years in Kavathe for one festival? Thus he was indebted to Baba.
118. Later on when Das Ganu was once in Shirdi, Baba on being so entreated, entrusted Das Ganu with the performance of the *kirtan* at the festival every year.
119. Since then, till this day, the *Janmotsav*²⁶ is celebrated with a lot of pomp and pageantry. Food is distributed to the heart's content and the poor and down-trodden are happy.
120. At the main gate of the *Samadhi Mandir*, accompanied by the music played by the traditional instruments (like *changbada* and *shehmai*), the chant of Baba's name resounds in the skies and the atmosphere is suffused with joy.
121. Just as he had thought of the *Yatra* and the *Urus*, Gopal Gund was inspired in the same manner, to give a new look to the old dilapidated *Masjid*.
122. As the devotee Gopal Gund decided to renovate the *Masjid* by his own hands, he got the stones ready.
123. But the renovation work was not ordained for Gund. The occasion for this auspicious work arose later appropriately.

124. It appears that Baba wished that the renovation should be done by Nana (Chandorkar) and afterwards the paving of the floor should be done by Kaka (Dixit).
125. Accordingly, it happened later on. In the beginning, they had got tired of asking for the permission. Then they made Mhalsapati²⁷ the mediator and Baba gave his permission.
126. So be it. When the paving of the floor of the *Masjid* was completed in one night, then the next day itself Baba came and sat on the *gadi*²⁸.
127. It was in the year 1911 that the *Sabha-mandap* was constructed. It was a difficult and Herculean task. It involved a lot of hazards and people trembled with fear²⁹.
128. This work was also completed by the devotees working at nights, in the same way and under similar circumstances.
129. In the night, the pillars would be erected with great difficulty and in the morning Baba would start uprooting them. Again seizing the opportunity they would be re-erected. Thus, everybody got exhausted.
130. Everyone girded up their loins, turned night into day, to fulfil their objective, undergoing a lot of exertion.
131. Dixit thought that the site was a proper place to construct the *Sabha-mandap*³⁰ where there was earlier an open ground and a small playground.
132. Putting in as much money as was needed, for iron columns and angle-brackets, the work was finished, as and when Baba was at the *Chavadi*³¹.
133. The devotees would turn night into day and erect the pillars with much effort. But as soon as Baba returned from the *Chavadi*, he would pull them out.
134. Highly incensed on one occasion, Baba caught Tatyā³² by his neck with one hand and with the other shook a pillar and tried to uproot it.
135. He loosened it by shaking it; removed the head gear of Tatyā; kindled it by lighting a matchstick, and threw it into the pit with anger.
136. At that time, his eyes looked like fire-balls. Who would dare to look straight into them? Everyone had lost their courage.
137. Immediately he put his hand in his pocket, took out a rupee and threw it there, as if to mark an auspicious moment.

138. Curses and abuses were showered. Tatya was also very scared at heart. It seemed a very difficult situation. How had it all happened?
139. All the onlookers were surprised and distressed. What is this bad omen to-day? How can this difficulty which has befallen Tatya be warded off?
140. Bhagoji Shinde³³ took courage and cautiously moved forward. He also fell an easy prey and was given a sound beating by Baba.
141. Madhavrao³⁴ was also caught by him and received a shower of brickbats. Whoever dared to intervene was similarly favoured by Baba.
142. Who would venture to go before Baba? And how could Tatya be rescued? As they were talking like this, Baba's anger subsided and he calmed down.
143. Promptly a shopkeeper was called and a zari-bordered headgear was ordered. He, himself, tied it around Tatya's head, like a *Rajah* who bestows a mark of favour.
144. People wondered and did not know the reason for the anger and this attack on Tatya and the reason for Baba making this hullabaloo.
145. What was the reason for getting angry and in the next few moments turning into a pleasant mood? The root cause could not be known by anyone.
146. Sometimes he was calm and talked lovingly. Sometimes, for no apparent reason, in the twinkling of an eye, he would be agitated unexpectedly.
147. So be it. Such are the stories of Baba. As I relate one I recall another. Which should I narrate and which withhold? The tendency to diversify is not proper.
148. I have no preferences and make no choice. Whichever story is appropriate for the occasion will fulfil the desire of the listeners and fill their hearts with joy.
149. In the next chapter listen to the tales gathered from the old people whether Baba was a Hindu or a Muslim. I shall repeat what I have heard as best as I can.
150. How the money collected as *dakshina*³⁵ was utilised for renovation (of old temples); and how he mortified his flesh through *dhoti-poti* and *kband-yoga*.
151. How he toiled³⁶ for the benefit of others and warded off the difficulties of his devotees will be clarified in the next chapter. The listeners will be pleased.

May there be well-being! This is the end of the sixth chapter “The Narration of the Story of Ram-janam Celebrations” of *Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita*, written by the devotee Hemadpant, impelled by Saints and virtuous people.

This is offered to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

May there be auspiciousness!

Notes:

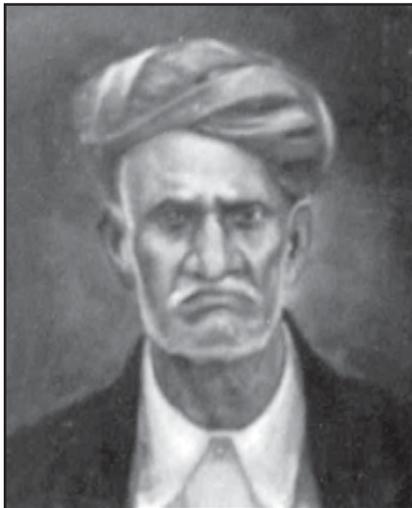
1. The sacred ashes from the fire lit by him which burns eternal even to-day.
2. The eight forms of *Satvik* changes/ecstasies that shake the body and mind are: motionlessness, perspiration, horripilation, indistinctness of speech, tremor, paleness, tears and loss of consciousness.
3. Krishna’s best disciple.
4. He was Circle Inspector, of the Revenue Department, at Kopergaon.
5. Religious festival.
6. Village Officer.
7. Nanasaheb Nimonkar i.e. Shankarao Raghunath Deshpande.
8. Damodar Rasne of Ahmednagar.
9. AD 1911.
10. Author of the book of *Aratis*
11. Laxman Ganesh alias Kaka Mahajani.
12. Performer of *Kirtans*.
13. She was Sundarabai Kshirasagar, a child widow who had come from Pandharpur by her own inclination to Shirdi around 1907.
14. Sweetmeats with ginger.
15. Garden by the small stream.
16. Every *Masjid* has a niche to the west.
17. For auspiciousness.
18. Half lion *avatar* of Vishnu.
19. Half lion *avatar* of Vishnu.
20. She had provided the cradle for the festival.
21. Feasting and merriment, following the breaking of the mud pot, filled with curds, parched rice, coins etc. The pot is hung high and reached by the formation of human *pyramids* by the merry-makers.
22. Brihad Siddhakavathe is a small place in Satara District. Satarkar performed the *Ramnavami Kirtan* there since years.
23. Institution.
24. Akbar. Even *Shivratri* was observed by the institution.
25. Hari Sitaram Dixit.
26. *Ramnavami* which is still celebrated at Shirdi.
27. Besides being the *pujari* of Khandoba Temple, he was a goldsmith.
28. The sack-cloth was given up for a proper seat, with bolsters.
29. Fearing obstacles for completion.
30. Covered courtyard for gatherings.
31. From December 10, 1909, Baba slept at the *Chavadi* on alternate nights, and the night *arati* commenced being sung there.
32. Taty Kote Patil, beloved son of Bayjabai.
33. He was covered with leprosy. Yet he was such a great devotee that Baba allowed him to massage him with ghee from hand to foot, in the mornings, in the

Masjid. It was Bhagoji who carried the umbrella over Baba's head when he went to the Lendi in the mornings, with one hand, carrying the water-can with the other, thus accompanying Baba.

34. Deshpande, who was greatly loved by Baba, and who alone could coax Baba and speak to him with familiarity.
35. Gift offering.
36. Laboured and served.



Originating from the *Urus*, Ramnavami was celebrated for the first time in 'shake' 1833; and, since then, it continues uninterruptedly to be held to this day. (Ch.6, ovi 59)



Taty Ganpat Kote Patil