

## The Story of Cholkar's Sugar

*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. Those whose meritorious deeds of their past lives have borne fruit get Sai's *darshan*. They are not harmed by the three- fold difficulties and it provides the means to achieve spiritual progress.
2. Now, meditating on your Guru for a moment, oh you listeners! please I beg of you, to give me your attention and be in a frame of mind to listen.
3. "We know that you are there to tell the story. Why are you taking this trouble unnecessarily?" Please do not say this. Pardon me. You are comparable to the ocean.
4. For the ocean, though brimming with water, does not send back the rivers; even though the clouds pour thousand - fold, it gives refuge to the waters.
5. You, listeners, are as virtuous as the ocean and I wish to immerse myself in it. Do not, I beg of you, repulse me. It is not right to reject the weak.
6. The pure waters of the Ganga as well as the stream from the village are both accommodated by the ocean. When they merge with the ocean, there is no commotion.
7. Therefore, the urge to listen to the story of the Saint which you are fostering will by itself be fruitful, if you look at me benevolently.
8. If you partake of this nectar in the form of the life story, with patience and faith, loving devotion will spring within you and the listeners will be gratified.
9. The devotees will easily achieve the supreme state of existence. The listeners will be full of devotion and freedom from attachment. For

those full of faith, they will receive happiness and peace; and for all, in general, contentment.

10. Listening to these stories from the mouth of the Guru will eradicate the troubles and anxieties pertaining to the world. Bliss will be born in the minds of the listeners and knowledge of the soul will dawn upon them.
11. In this chapter, there will be the description of how the loving devotees prayed to Sai and how he gave them *darshan*, and was pleased with them. Now, listen to it all.
12. If a cat has just fed her new born and goes out, then when she returns her kittens longingly return to her, and again and again rush to her with love to suckle.
13. Then she gets fed up and growls which quietens the babies for a while. No sooner than the mother cat is quietly resting, they circle around her and again suckle.
14. When they lovingly nudge and suck, milk flows out of the mother cat. Then she forgets her earlier growling and spreads herself on the ground with love.
15. As her love overpowers her reluctance, she hugs her own babies with her four legs tightly; again and again licks them and fondles them. Oh, what a wonderful sight it is!
16. As her abdomen is scratched by their sharp nails, her love increases and the milk flows more abundantly.
17. Just as those babies' love and affection makes the mother give more milk, your devotion at the feet of Sai will melt his heart.
18. Once, the people of Thane requested that peerless *kirtankar*, Ganu Das, to perform *kirtan* at Koupineshwar (temple).
19. Ganu Das obliged the gentlemen at their request, but he did not demand or ask for even a pie.
20. Not a single pie was paid for the *kirtan*. He did not wear garments on his upper body and was bare-headed, wearing only a *pancha*<sup>1</sup>. Still, listeners flocked to the *kirtan*.
21. There is a story behind this mode of dress. You will enjoy it when you hear it. Listen to it with your full attention. Wonder at Baba.
22. Once, Ganu Das was going to do a *Katha* at Shirdi. So he set off properly dressed with a long coat, *uparna*<sup>2</sup>, and *pheta*<sup>3</sup> on head.
23. According to custom, he happily went to Baba to bow at his feet. On seeing him, Baba said: "Oh, now you have adorned yourself like a bridegroom!

24. Where are you going so dressed up?" Baba asked him. Das Ganu replied: "I am going to perform *kirtan*."
25. Baba said to him, further: "Why have you taken so much trouble over dressing up? Why do you have long coat, *uparna* and *pheta*? We do not need all these things.
26. "Take them off in front of me. Why burden your body with them?" As per his orders, he took them off and laid them at his feet.
27. Since then, till this day, Ganu Das wears no upper garment and makes no show. He carries *chiplis* <sup>4</sup> in his hands and a *mala* <sup>5</sup> round his neck at the time of *kirtan*.
28. Though this is not generally accepted, it is of a pure origin. This was the tradition of Narada, the most enlightened of enlightened sages.
29. This is the original school of '*Naradiyan kirtan*' from which the Haridasas originated. They did not bother about the outward glamour but stressed purification of soul.
30. Only the lower half of the body is covered. *Chiplis* are used and the *veena*<sup>6</sup> is played. Hari's name is loudly chanted. Such is the well-known and pure image of Narada.
31. With the grace of Sai Samartha, Das Ganu composed stories describing the saints and performed *kirtans* free. Thus, he became famous.
32. He was truly instrumental in spreading the zest of Sai devotion. He brought to high tide, the ocean of Sai love and self – contentment.
33. We are very grateful to the foremost of the devotees Chandorkar, who has definitely been the root cause for increasing the devotion to Sai's feet.
34. Even Das Ganu came here because of Chandorkar. He performed *kirtans* everywhere, going from one place to another, and people started singing Sai's praises.
35. Maharaj's fame had already spread to Pune, Nagar and Sholapur. But because of these two, people from the Konkan developed faith.
36. To them, also, goes the credit for the growth of Sai devotion in and around Bombay. Sai Maharaj, the compassionate one, manifested there through them!
37. At Sree Koupineshwar Temple, in the midst of the reverbrations of the *kirtan* of Sai's kindness and the tumultous jubilation with the Lord's name, Cholkar felt goose pimples over his body.
38. Numerous people came to listen to the *kirtans*, but they liked it for

different reasons. Some appreciated Buva's intimate knowledge of the subject and some liked his expressions and gestures.

39. Some only appreciated the singing and would say how wonderfully Buva sings and gets carried away with the devotional singing of Vitthal's name and how he dances with exuberance for the love of Vitthal.
40. Some enjoy the first part which expounds the philosophical thought; some love to listen to the story part of it; some like the dramatisation in which the Haridas indulges mimicing local characters; some love the words and poetry.
41. Whether a buva is ordinary or a scholar or so clever as to give different meanings, references, derivations or expert in telling stories in the latter half of the *kirtan* – in this manner, the listening of a *kirtan* depends on different things.
42. Such listeners are many. But by listening they develop faith and devotion. But a state of mind whereby a listener has absolute love of God and devotion at the feet of Sai, is rare.
43. One may listen for a long time but if it just accumulates one layer over another of false knowledge, can it be called the right outcome of listening? Such listening would be futile.
44. How can we call a thing soap if it does not cleanse? How can it be called listening if it does not remove false knowledge?
45. Cholkar<sup>7</sup> was already a devout man. He felt pangs of love for Sai and said to himself: 'Baba, merciful one, protect this humble one'.
46. He was an ordinary probationer incapable of looking after his family financially. He wanted a higher post in the government and put this burden on Baba.
47. Covetous persons take a vow, saying that if their wish is fulfilled, they would feed the Brahmins, as per the menu set by them, to their hearts' desire and also give gifts to them.
48. The rich, by way of a vow, promise to feed a thousand or donate a hundred cows, if their desires are fulfilled.
49. But Cholkar was, as it is, a poor man. He also wanted to make a vow. Therefore, remembering Sree Sai's feet, he spoke humbly thus:
50. "Baba, I am poor and have to look after a family. My life depends on my job. I have to pass an examination to become permanent.
51. "I have prepared with a lot of effort. I solely depend on passing the examination. Otherwise. I will lose this job which I hold on probation and I will be deprived of the little that I earn.

52. "If I pass by your grace, I will present myself at your feet and distribute sugar candy in your name. This is my firm resolution".
53. In this manner, he took a vow. His wishes were fulfilled and he was happy. But it took time for him to complete the vow. Therefore, he gave up sugar.
54. He would need some money on the way. It was not proper to go empty-handed. Therefore, he would go on postponing. Thus the days passed by.
55. It is possible to cross over Nane Ghat<sup>8</sup> of the high Sahyadri mountain but it is difficult to cross the threshold of the home, for a householder.
56. Till the vow of going to Shirdi was not fulfilled, Cholkar did not eat anything made of sugar. He even took tea without sugar.
57. Some days passed by like this. Then the time came and he went to Shirdi. He fulfilled the vow and was happy.
58. As soon as he had Sai's *darshan*, Cholkar rolled at his feet, and bowing to Baba he was extremely happy.
59. With a pure heart he distributed sugar, offered coconut and said: "To-day all my wishes have borne fruit".
60. He was jubilant with Sai's *darshan* and was happy with the conversation he had with him. As he was Jog's guest, he had to leave along with Jog.
61. As Jog got up to leave, his guest got up also and Baba said to Jog: "Give him lots of cups of tea with plenty of sugar".
62. No sooner did Cholkar hear these significant words, he was surprised. His eyes were filled with tears of joy and he put his head at his feet.
63. Jog was surprised but Cholkar was doubly so because both (Baba and he) knew the reason and understood each other.
64. Baba had nothing to do with tea; so, why did he remember it at this moment? It was to convince Cholkar and stamp him with devotion.
65. Immediately, this was enough of a hint. He said: "I have received your promised sugar. The period of sacrifice for you is over, Cholkar.
66. "I know the state of your mind at the time of taking the vow and about your self-imposed punishment for the postponement. Though you have kept it a secret, I have come to understand it all.
67. "Any one of you, wherever you are, whenever you come to me, with your hand outstretched, with devotion, I am there to respond to your faith, day and night.
68. "Though I am bodily present at this place and you may be beyond

- the seven seas, and doing anything there, I am aware of it immediately.
69. “You may go anywhere on the face of this earth, I am always with you. I reside in your heart and I am within you.
70. “You should always bow down to that Me who thus resides in your heart. I am also the same Me who resides in the hearts of all beings.
71. “Therefore, whomsoever you come across, at home, outside or anywhere in the course of life, I am within them and I am myself present in them.
72. “All living creatures – insects, ants, creatures of the water and the sky, dogs and pigs – I am always present within them. I am in all and everywhere.
73. “Do not keep at a distance from me. There is no difference between you and Me. Whosoever regards Me in this way, he is indeed fortunate.”
74. This story, though seemingly brief, is yet full of merit. How sweet it was for Cholkar and how much it strengthened his devotion!
75. Whatever passed in his mind, Baba gave him proof of it in this way. What a skill, the sages possess!
76. Baba’s words are invaluable. They penetrate deep into the hearts of the devotees, nurture their love and make their devotion one-pointed.
77. To quench the thirst of a Chatak, the clouds shower water kindly, with the result that the whole earth is cooled. So did it happen in this case.
78. Poor Cholkar was a complete stranger. Das Ganu’s *kirtan* was instrumental in his making that vow and Baba was also pleased with him.
79. It was because of him that this amazing episode took place and gave him a glimpse of the Sage’s heart. Baba was always ready to create a situation to teach.
80. Cholkar was just incidental, for the sake of the good of all the devotees. Baba’s skills are beyond comprehension. We can only look and wonder.
81. Describing a similar episode, I will bring this chapter to an end – how somebody put a question and how Baba explained to him.
82. Once, when Baba was sitting on his seat in the *Masjid*, a devotee who was sitting in front of him heard a lizard chirrup.
83. The falling down of a lizard and its utterances! Do they portend anything? He casually asked Baba a question, out of curiosity.
84. “Baba, why is this lizard on the wall behind chirruping? What is the meaning? Is it a bad omen?”

85. Baba replied to him: “The lizard is joyous in anticipation of her sister’s arrival from Aurangabad to meet her”.
86. At the outset, the lizard is an insignificant creature. How could she have a father, mother, sister or brother? What does any relationship mean to it?
87. Therefore, Baba merely said something jocularly in reply, he believed; and therefore, sat quietly for a while.
88. In the meantime, a gentleman arrived from Aurangabad on horseback to take Baba’s *darsban*. At that time, Baba was having his bath.
89. He had to go further but his horse would not move without his fodder. Therefore, he set out for the bazar to purchase some green grams.
90. The man who had raised the query about the lizard was watching with interest this newly arrived traveller, who emptied the feeding bag which he was carrying under his arm and dusted it.
91. As soon as the bag was hit on the ground, one lizard came out of it, and hastily ran, with fright, while everyone was watching.
92. Baba said then to the person who had asked the question: “Now, keep an eye on her. This is the sister of that lizard. Look at the marvellous behaviour”.
93. She started moving immediately in the direction of that noise of the chirruping of her sister, swaying joyously.
94. The meeting of the two sisters after a long time took place. They kissed and hugged each other closely. Their affection was exhibited in an incomparable way.
95. They went around each other; they turned round and round happily; went straight, horizontally, diagonally and danced about freely.
96. Where is the city of Aurangabad? And where is Shirdi? What explanation is there about all this? And how did the horseman arrive there suddenly with the lizard?
97. The lizard, undoubtedly, from Aurangabad had in some way crept into the horse’s feeding bag. But how did her arrival coincide with the question and answer session?
98. Why should the lizard chirrup? What inspired the question? Why should the explanation be given? Why should it be immediately proved?
99. Such was the unique coincidence. Love of humour is universal. Saints deliberately create incidences to increase the welfare of the devotees.

100. Let us reflect – if this intellectually curious person was not present there or no one had asked the question, how would have Sai's greatness been revealed and who would have understood the significance?
101. Many times, many people have heard lizards chirruping, but does anyone ask the meaning of their chirruping or about their language?
102. In short, these are the dramas in the world. The reins are not perceivable and are beyond understanding. If anyone can understand, all are amazed.
103. On the contrary, where a lizard is heard chirruping, it is supposed to be ominous. If the word 'Krishna, Krishna' is uttered, the bad effect is warded off. So people say.
104. Whatever the significance of this sound, it does not matter. To make a devotee believe firmly in him, Baba employed this supreme means.
105. Whoever reads this chapter with respect, or recites it a fixed number of times regularly, will find his difficulties warded off by Gururaya. Bear it well in your mind.
106. Whoever puts his head truly at his feet with single minded devotion, he is the only saviour, the protector for him, the only one who gives assurance, the doer, the warder of all difficulties.
107. Do not have doubts about this. Sainath is really so. I am telling you the essence of my experience for the sake of the good of the devotees.
108. "I am omnipresent. There is nothing else besides Me in this world. I exist not only in this world but in all the three<sup>9</sup>".
109. Wherever there is such unparalleled belief, there is no scope for fear. When the being realises that the Pure Consciousness fills all, that person is devoid of ego and pride.
110. Hemadpant surrenders to Sai. He does not wish to leave his feet, even for a moment because they lead him across the ocean of mundane existence. Listen to the sweet narration.
111. In the next chapter there is a beautiful incident, which Sai, the Great Master, creates about how the knowledge of *Brahman* is asked by people, in a trice.
112. A certain greedy person asks about the knowledge of *Brahman*; and Maharaj will, as it were, take it out of his pocket and present it to him.
113. When the listeners hear that story, they will come to know Baba's powers. Unless desires are completely given up, it is impossible to attain *Brahman*, without any doubt.
114. No one stops to consider the worthiness of the aspirant. Maharaj will explain who can achieve it and how.

115. I am his most humble servant. I beg of you and expect from you to listen with enthusiasm to the exuberance of my love for Sai.

116. It will give you pleasure, and enlighten you. Therefore, listeners pay attention and you will understand the greatness of saints.

May there be well-being. This is the end of the fifteenth chapter, of *Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita*, written by the devotee Hemadpant impelled by Saints and virtuous people called “The Story of Cholkar’s Sugar”.

This is offered to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

May there be auspiciousness!

#### Notes :

1. Poor man’s *dhobi* which was short and also used as a towel.
2. Small cloth worn loosely over the shoulders.
3. Cloth head-dress.
4. Pair of sticks used to clap together, with metal discs at two ends.
5. *Mala* could be a garland of flowers or beads of *tulsi*.
6. Indian lute.
7. He was a poor man, full of faith, working in the Thane Civil Court, as an apprentice.
8. It is in Thane District, in Murbad Taluka.
9. The earth, the sky and the nether world.



‘Ever blessing’ *Padukas* of Baba.



The meeting of the two sisters after a long time took place. They kissed and hugged each other closely. Their affection was exhibited in an incomparable way. (Ch.15, ovi 94)