

Bestowing Grace

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. At the end of the last chapter, we mentioned about how Thakur and others had *darshan* of a great person. Listen to the story attentively now.
2. Wasted are the words of a speaker if by listening to them, a listener is not affected and does not show the sign that he is overwhelmed with emotions and gets goose pimples.
3. A narration is worthless if the listeners are not in an ecstasy, not choked with emotions and if their eyes are not filled with tears of happiness.
4. Baba's speech was captivating. His style of teaching exceptionally good. His arguments were unique. I lay my head at his feet who reveals something new at every step.
5. One can never be able to meet a holy man till fortune smiles on him. Even if such a person is very close, a sinful person is unable to discover him.
6. There is no need to go far to find proof of this axiom because I am going to tell you about my own experience.
7. There was a famous saint called Pir Maulana who was residing at Bandra. Hindus, Parsis and learned men from other religions used to come to take the *darshan* of that pure soul.
8. I was a magistrate of that place. His *Mujawar* by name Inus, tried indefatigably to persuade me to come for *darshan*.
9. 'Thousands of people come there. Why should I go there on account of the pressure, and spoil my name?'
10. Some such thoughts came to me, and I never went for the *darshan*.

I was, as it were, afraid of my own shadow and somehow ill-luck came in the way.

11. Many years passed. Thereafter, I was transferred from there. Later, when the opportune time came I became attached to Shirdi, for all times.
12. In short, the unfortunate can never reach the vicinity of the saints. This most difficult of meetings can be accomplished only by God's Grace.
13. Now listen to a pleasing story about this. There are from times unknown such secret arrangements of saints, and they go on carrying their mission, while the world is unaware of it.
14. As time flows, the saints choose the place of their liking and appear in human form, to fulfil some mission. But, in reality, they are not different from one another.
15. The place – time – person, though different, a saint realises the essence of the personality of other saints. They are all united inwardly, as they are only one,
16. like the outposts of an emperor situated at different places, with officers in charge to look after the population and its prosperity.
17. Similarly, the emperor of boundless happiness manifests at different places and controls the invisible reins of his own empire.
18. Once, a certain gentleman, who had the privilege of an education in English, holding a Bachelor of Arts degree, climbed step by step and became a big officer.
19. Later on, he became a Mamlatdar and then rose to be an Assistant Collector. Because of good fortune, he came in contact with Sai Baba.
20. Outwardly these posts look very attractive, like mountains from a distance, but if you go nearer to them, they are found surrounded by trees which give an itch. But at the same time these posts command prestige.
21. Those pleasant days are long past when people used to crave for such posts. The general public, too, honoured the officers and mutually they were happy.
22. Let us now talk about present conditions. Gone are those days when it was nice to be in Government Service. Now the responsibilities have increased and the emoluments are insufficient.
23. In the olden times, the Mamlatdar was respected and the Collector was honoured. But that grandeur is no more though one works hard.

24. Be it so. After all, by spending a lot of money on education and after studying very hard, one was able to acquire these high posts.
25. First of all, one had to pass the Bachelor of Arts degree; then become a clerk in the government office; earn a monthly salary of Rs. 30/-. In this manner, one had to go on for some time.
26. During the course of time, he had to go to the *ghats*, learn the surveyors work and live amongst them, measure lands and pass departmental examinations.
27. Later on, if a higher official in the service died leaving his position vacant, then he would be able to get that post.
28. Enough of this lengthy and uninteresting narration. Why should I go on prattling about it unnecessarily? Listen to that story about how such a person met Sai.
29. Near Belgaum, there is a town called Vadgaon. A team of surveyors had camped there.
30. In this town, there was a saint staying there. They went to take his *darshan*, bowed their heads at his feet and received his blessings.
31. That holy person was holding a book called ‘*Vichar Sagar*’ by Nischal Das¹, which he was reading to them.
32. After a while, when these people started to take his leave, the saint spoke to that particular gentleman with great delight. Listen to that.
33. “You may leave now. But be sure to read this book, by which your wishes will come true. Bear this in mind.
34. “Later on, in the course of your work, when you go towards the north, because of your good fortune you will have the *darshan* of a great man on the way.
35. “He will show you the path, further on, and will grant you peace of mind. He will give you advice and impress upon you the knowledge of the Self.”
36. The work there was completed; and he was transferred to Junnar. On the way to Junnar, he had to cross the Nane Ghat, which was a big obstacle.
37. The road was very formidable and could be traversed only on the back of a he-buffalo, which was the only means of transport. So a buffalo was brought for him to ride on.
38. Later on, the man may become a senior official and may get horses and carriages. But, presently, he had to satisfy himself with a buffalo. There was no choice.

39. It was impossible to climb the ghat on foot. There was no other convenient transport. Such was the speciality of the Nane Ghat. Thus the conveyance was really unusual.
40. So he took the decision, and a buffalo was made ready. It was saddled and with great difficulty he mounted on it.
41. Though he did mount it, there was a steep climb. The vehicle being, of all things, a buffalo, he was reduced to swinging and swaying and he developed a pain in the back.
42. So be it. The journey ended. The Junnar mission was completed. He got a transfer order and he moved from there.
43. He was transferred to Kalyan, where he made the acquaintance of Chandorkar and heard of Sainath's fame. A desire arose to have his *darshan*.
44. That chance came the very next day because Chandorkar was planning a trip to Shirdi. He said to him "Accompany me on this pilgrimage to Shirdi.
45. "Let us take Baba's *darshan*. Both of us could bow down to him, stay there for a day or two and return to Kalyan".
46. But on that very day, in the civil court in Thane, a case was scheduled for hearing. Therefore he had to give up the trip in his company.
47. Nanasahab coaxed him. "Come along. Baba is great. He will fulfil your desire for *darshan* : The case is a trivial matter".
48. But, how could he be convinced? He was afraid of missing the date for the hearing. How could he avoid these futile visits, which heaven had destined for him!
49. Nanasahab Chandorkar told him of previous experiences of other people about how their desire for *darshan* was always fulfilled and the difficulties warded off.
50. But he could not bring himself to believe. He could not help his own nature. He said: "First, let the worry get off my mind. Let the suit get over fast".
51. So be it. He then proceeded to Thane while Chandorkar left for Shirdi. When he returned after the *darshan*, something wonderful had happened here.
52. Though he was present at the appointed time, the case was postponed. He had also missed going along with Chandorkar and thus he was full of regrets.
53. He wished that he had believed in him. Chandorkar would have



Nanasahab
Chandorkar

taken him along with himself and he would have had *darshan* peacefully at Shirdi.

54. The case remained where it was and he had lost the chance to see a saint! Therefore, on the spur of the moment, he decided to go to Shirdi.
55. He thought that perhaps when he reached Shirdi, if he was lucky, he would be able to meet Nana and he would take him to Sainath personally. Then, he would be very happy.
56. 'I do not know anybody in Shirdi. I will be a complete stranger there. If I meet Nana it will be beneficial to me, though it is a remote possibility.'
57. Thinking thus, he boarded the train and reached Shirdi the next day. Of course, Nana was not there.
58. The day he left for his trip was the day when Nana had left Shirdi. By this he was disheartened and felt great disappointment.
59. So be it. He met another friend, a nice man, who took him for Sai's *darshan* and fulfilled his wish.
60. The moment he set his eyes on him, he was overwhelmed with faith and he prostrated himself. The hairs on his whole body stood on end and tears of love flowed from his eyes.
61. While he was thus standing, hear carefully what Baba said to him with a smile of understanding, as he was omniscient.
62. "The path of this place is not so easy as the teachings of the Kanarese Appa or even as the buffalo ride in the *ghats*. There is no alternative but to put in your best exertions".
63. When he heard these significant words, he was overwhelmed with emotions and realised that the words of the holy man whom he had met previously had proved correct.
64. Then he folded his hands together and put his head at the feet of Sai. He said: "Have mercy on me, Sainatha. Accept me an orphan, at your feet.
65. "You alone are my great saint and guardian. Today I have fully understood the teachings in the book of Nischal with all its significance and divine meaning".
66. Where's Vadgaon and where's Shirdi! What a union of spirits of the great saints! How brief, yet enlightening, is their speech! What a magnificent method of instruction!
67. One advised reading a book and predicted a meeting with a great saint, who would give *upadesh* and advise further growth.

68. By Grace of God, he has been met, and he had indicated that he is the concerned person by significant words. The book has been read but now it must be put into practice.
69. Then Sainath said to him: “Whatever Appa has told you is correct. But when you put it into practice, then only your wishes will be fulfilled”.
70. ‘Nischal Das’ ‘Vichar Sagar’ was mentioned in Vadgaon. Some time, after repeated readings, and after a certain lapse of time, how to put it in practice was taught in Shirdi.
71. First you must read the book carefully, then ponder upon it. With repeated readings, it will lead to total absorption in the subject.
72. Just reading is not enough. It should be put into practice. Otherwise, it is like water on a duck’s back².
73. Mere reading is a waste of time till the meaning is not experienced, for which the blessings of a Guru, who has the knowledge of the *Brahman*, is required. Mere bookish knowledge is futile.
74. A simple story depicting the meaning will bring out the importance of faith, which is most essential for attaining the goals of life. Listeners should listen to it for their benefit.
75. Once a resident of Pune, whose name was Anantrao Patankar, who had developed urge for Sai’s *darshan*, came to Shirdi soon.
76. He had heard all the *Vedas* and read the original *Upanishads*, along with the commentaries; but his mind remained always restless and peace of mind eluded him.
77. When he had taken Sai Samartha’s *darshan*, Patankar’s eyes were rewarded. After bowing down at his feet he worshipped him with ritualistic accuracy.
78. Afterwards, with folded hands, he sat in front of Baba, very close to him. Anantrao, who looked very lovingly, asked him with extreme humility:
79. “I have read many books, including the *Vedas*, the *Vedangas* and the *Upanishads*. I have listened to the holy *Shastras* and *Puranas*. Yet, why is my mind so despondent?
80. “I now feel that whatever I have read has been wasted. I think that even the illiterate devout devotee is better off than me.
81. “All my study of books, learning of *Shastras* is a waste. All this bookish knowledge is futile as long as my mind remains unsteady.
82. “Oh how empty is the effort I have made over the study of etymology ! To what purpose is the *japa* and *mantra* which does not give peace of mind! How will I then ever acquire the knowledge of *Brahman*?

83. “By word of mouth I have heard that by Sai’s darshan all worries are removed and that you show the right direction even in your humorous talk, very easily.
84. “Therefore, Maharaj, Treasure Trove of Austerities, I have reached your feet. Give me your blessings, by which I may have peace of mind.”
85. Upon which, Maharaj told him a humorous parable by which Anantrao was satisfied and enjoyed the fulfilment of his learning.
86. Those few words are the entire essence of knowledge. I will tell you that story. Be ready to hear it. It is humorous but meaningful. Who can disregard such words?
87. Baba said, in reply: “Once a merchant came along and at that time a horse passed nine balls of stool in front of him.
88. “The merchant was very efficient. He immediately took off his wrap, and spread it out, collected all the balls and tied a knot and was able to achieve concentration of mind.”
89. ‘What has Sai Samartha said? What could be its meaning? Why the collection of the stool by the merchant?’ He did not understand anything.
90. Thinking thus, Anantrao came back and related the conversation, from the beginning to the end, to Kelkar³.
91. And said: “Who was the merchant? What was the purpose of those balls of stool? Why was number nine mentioned? Please reveal the meaning to me.
92. “Dada, what kind of riddle is this? I find myself incompetent to solve it. Tell me something which will open Baba’s heart clearly to me, in plain words.”
93. Dada said: “I too, do not understand. Baba’s talk is always of this kind. But I will tell you whatever I am able to understand, as he inspires me.
94. The horse is God’s Grace. This is how the puzzle of the nine-fold devotion could be explained. Without devotion one cannot have a union with God and knowledge will not be acquired.
95. 1) Listening 2) Singing the Lord’s praises aloud 3) Remembering Lord Vishnu 4) Serving at His Feet 5) Offering prayers 6) Bowing down before Him 7) Being humble 8) Developing affection and 9) Surrendering the *atma* – these are the nine ways of devotion.
96. With full faith, even if one of these ways of devotion is practised, Sree Hari who longs for devotion will appear in the home of the devotee.

97. Chanting of the Lord’s Name, practise of austerities, keeping of vows, practising yoga, learning of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, abundance of metaphysical knowledge and its various explanations – all this is a sham without faith.
98. There is no need to be well-versed in the *Vedas* nor any need to be famous as a scholar. It is neither necessary to sing the praises of God without feeling. Only the loving sentiment of devotion is essential.
99. Consider yourself to be the merchant and grasp the significance of that transaction. When the flag of devotion, in the form of the nine-fold *Bhakti*, flies high, then the Incarnation of Knowledge will be pleased.
100. When the horse passed the nine balls of stool, the merchant eagerly went forward to collect them. Similarly the nine-fold devotion, when adopted, gives complete peace of mind.
101. Only that will give stability to the mind, develop affection for every being, for which seriousness of mind is necessary. Otherwise waywardness is inevitable. This is what Gururaya said, with love”.
102. Next day, when Anantrao went to bow down at Sai’s feet, he was asked: “Did you gather up the balls of stool?”
103. Anantrao then prayed: “Have mercy on this humble devotee. Then they would be collected effortlessly. Otherwise can one gather such great objects easily?”
104. Then Baba blessed him and assured him with the words “May there be well-being”. Anantrao was pleased and enjoyed bliss.
105. Now another short story. Listen to it respectfully. You will come to know about Baba’s omniscience and his endeavour to guide towards the divine path.
106. Once a lawyer came and went to the *Masjid*. The moment he arrived. He took Sainath’s *darshan* and bowed down at his feet.
107. He then gave *dakshina*, without being asked, and went and sat near by. He felt like listening to Sai’s conversation, with respect.
108. Baba, then, turned his face and uttered words which were meant for the lawyer. The words pierced his heart and the lawyer was repentant.
109. “What frauds people are! They touch my feet, offer *dakshina* also, and abuse me in the heart of hearts. How queer are their ways!”
110. Having heard this, the lawyer kept quiet. But he fully understood the significance. He realised that the words were meant for him only. The essence of the words penetrated deep into his mind.

111. Later on when he went to the wada, he told Dixit that Baba's cutting words had hurt him but they were true.
112. "As soon as I arrived, he fired me. But that was a kind of warning to me that I should never indulge in mocking or backbiting anybody.
113. "As our Munsif was not keeping good health and he was restless, he took leave from the office and stayed on peacefully here to improve his health.
114. "While we were in the chamber of the lawyers, the discussion turned around the Munsif and though we were not directly concerned, conjectures were made.
115. "'Without medication, just by following Sai, can the physical ailments be cured? Does it befit him who has risen to the status of a Munsif (to behave in this superstitious way).'
116. "While he was being thus reviled, Sai was also belittled. I was also party to a small extent to all this and that fault of mine was pointed out (by Baba).
117. "It was not a scolding but a blessing in itself. One should not unnecessarily participate in useless discussion, malign or criticise others and pass bitter remarks behind the backs of people and should refrain from indulging in these bad habits."⁴
118. Besides, this is proof that even if there is a distance of a hundred *koss*, Sai is omniscient and knows the heart of every person.
119. Moreover, one more matter became clear that intervening hills and mountains could not hide anything from Sai. Securely hidden secrets were all open to him.
120. Be it so. From that day onwards, the lawyer decided that in future he would never criticise or utter ill words. That was his vow.
121. 'Wherever and whatever one does, cannot remain unknown to Sai', became a firm conviction. The bad habit was given up.
122. He became conscious of doing good deeds because he knew that Sai, as it were, was watching him from all sides and who can be capable of deceiving Sai? He was thoroughly convinced of this.
123. Though the story concerns the lawyer, it was meaningful in all respects, at all times, and for everybody!
124. The lawyers, the listeners, the speakers and all the devotees of Sai should also take the same vow. I truly pray thus.
125. When the cloud of Sai's Grace showers upon us all, we will be contented. There is no doubt about this. All those who are thirsty will quench their thirst.

126. Inexplicable is Sainath's greatness; unfathomable is the meaning of his stories; boundless are the limits of his biography. He is the incarnation of the Supreme *Brahman*.
127. Now listen to the story in the next chapter, oh you listeners who have faith, with respect. It will fulfil your desires and give peace of mind.
128. Sai Samartha knows the future miseries in the lives of his devotees. He wards them off casually, joking and laughing, in the course of a light conversation.
129. The devotee Hemad surrenders to Sai. Now the present narration is complete. The next story deals with the removal of the difficulties of the devotees.
130. How Sai, the Ocean of Compassion, is aware of the terrible difficulties to befall his devotees in the future and how he removes them by giving a timely warning.

May there be well-being! This is the end of the twenty-first chapter, of *Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita*, written by the devotee Hemadpant, impelled by Saints and virtuous people, called "Bestowing Grace".

This is offered to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

May there be auspiciousness!

Notes :

1. This is the translation in Hindi of the Panchadasi, done in the year 1849. It has been also translated in other languages.
2. In Marathi the proverb says "It is like pouring water on an overturned pot, with its mouth down".
3. Ganesh Damodar Kelkar alias Dada Kelkar.
4. Mathurdas from Anjanvel often came for Maharaj's *darshan*. In Shirdi, he stayed with a caterer named Sagun. Once while Sagun and Mathurdas were chatting, there was criticism about some people. Thereafter, Mathurdas went to Maharaj. After he sat down, Maharaj asked him immediately: "What did Sagun say?" Mathurdas was ashamed and realised that whatever talk took place with Sagun was not approved by Maharaj. Mathurdas learnt the lesson never to criticise anyone nor to listen to such talk.

