

## Splendid Humour

*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. In the last chapter, I promised that I shall narrate how Sree Sainath, the Cloud of Mercy, taught people in a jocular way, also.
2. The words “I shall narrate” denote egotism. One should surrender most humbly at the feet of the Guru. Only then the stream of the story will flow, for you to respectfully avail of it.
3. The *sadbhus*, the virtuous, the great ones are always pure and without sins. They are clean and clear like an unclouded sky. They are pure and without blemish.
4. By worshipping Maharaj Sai, we attain both objects, worldly and spiritual, and are fixed in our true nature, getting peace and happiness within.
5. Those who want to attain their welfare should listen to the stories respectfully, enjoy the bliss of the Self and obtain the objects of their lives.
6. By listening (to the stories) one’s own peace will be attained, the deluding fears of the world will be removed, and supreme bliss will be a certainty. Listeners will attain *Sadgati* truly.
7. Sai *Samartha* knows the innermost desires of people. He is fully aware of the purport of the devotees. He will complete the work which he has taken upon himself and will be freed from his vow.
8. Sai *Samartha* inspires my intelligence. He alone makes me speak the meaning of his words. I shall narrate them to the best of my ability, which will help in achieving worldly and spiritual welfare.
9. People are not blind nor do they suffer from night-blindness. Despite having normal sight they fail to perceive that their own good is not achieved by the strength of their body and mind alone.

10. Even the body is such that one cannot be certain of life for a moment. Therefore, I earnestly request you to taste this flavour for a moment.
11. Humour is appreciated universally, but Baba's way was uncommon. Through humour, he would impress on us the most profound teachings which were beneficial to all.
12. People do not intently pursue jesting; but Baba's humour was taken fondly. They waited eagerly even to be the butt of those jokes.
13. Generally, no one likes jesting at their cost. But Baba's jests were much appreciated, especially when his words were accompanied by gestures. They easily achieved the desired purpose.
14. Acting effortlessly and with ease, with a smiling face and playful eyes, these added to the entertainment of the jests. Their sweetness is indescribable.
15. Now, I shall narrate an experience. The story is novel and has a moral, and shows how spiritual teaching arose from a jest. Listen to those words with respect.
16. Every week, on Sundays, a big *bazaar* is held in Shirdi. Tent-like shelters (stalls) are pitched in the open and a lot of trade is carried on.
17. There, on the roadside, heaps of vegetables were piled. Groups of grocers and betel-nut leaf sellers also sat in the open.
18. On one such Sunday afternoon while I was pressing Baba's feet, something marvellous happened.
19. The afternoon *darbar* was usually very crowded. In addition, it was a market day and a Sunday. Innumerable persons had come.
20. Sitting on the right, in front of Baba, with my head bent down, I was pressing his feet together with the chanting of the Lord's name.
21. Madhavrao was on the left and Vamanrao on the right. Shrimant Butti was at his usual place ready to serve him.
22. Kaka was also seated there. At that moment Madhavrao laughed and remarked: "What Annasaheb! What are these grains here which seem to be stuck?"
23. Saying so, Madhavrao touched the sleeve of the coat with his fingers, when from the folds of the coat, grains were found.
24. Trying to find out what it was, I straightened my left elbow and grains came rolling down and the people began picking them up.
25. They gathered them as they picked them. A few, about twenty five, were collected. That gave cause for jesting. How had it come about?

26. Surmises followed one after the other. Every one was immersed in thoughts. How did the grains come to be stuck to the coat? Everybody was wondering.
27. How many folds of the coat could there be near the armpit? How could these grams get into them? Where had they come from? And in what manner? It was a mystery which no one could understand.
28. While I was pressing the feet, and concentrating on the chanting of the Lord's name, how had the story of the grams cropped up in the midst of it all?
29. I had been rendering service for sometime. Really, why did they not fall down earlier? Everyone was surprised that they remained there for so long!
30. From where had the grams come there? How did they firmly lodge in the folds? Everyone was wondering. Then, listen to what Baba said.
31. Many people have novel methods of teaching. But Baba gave instructions according to the understanding of the person.
32. Maharaj's method was singular. His way was to make it amusing so that it was well remembered. I have no experience of having heard or seen the like of it elsewhere.
33. He said: "He has a bad habit – that of liking to eat alone. Taking advantage of the market day, he came rubbing the grams in his palms (to take off the skin).
34. It is not good to eat alone. But I know his habit. These grams give the proof. What is there to be surprised about?"
35. Then I said: "It does not occur to me to eat without sharing. Then, whence arises the question of this bad habit? This stigma cannot be applicable to me.
36. Baba, till this day, I have not seen the Shirdi *bazaar*. If I went there, I could buy the grams. And the question of eating them would arise only later.
37. I never eat anything without sharing it with someone. Whosoever has this liking may do so, but this is not my habit".
38. Now observe Baba's skill. How he made devotion firmer to himself! Hear with attention, to what he said after listening to my clear denial.
39. "You share the food with whosoever is near you. But what do you do, when you are alone? What can I also do? Do you remember me?
40. Am I not beside you? Do you offer me a morsel?" Thus he made

the grams a mere pretext and deeply impressed upon me this principle.

41. Eating food without offering to Indra and other deities, the five *pranas*, the fire and defrauding them of it or without offering to all deities made by presenting oblations to the fire before meals, or without offering it to the unexpected guest makes the food highly impure.
42. In principle, this appears insignificant. But its application in daily life is very important. Enjoying the flavour of the food is not the only implication – all the five senses and other enjoyments are included.
43. One who panders to his senses can never hope to achieve spiritual progress. He who has a tight control over the senses alone can succeed.
44. The *Shrutis* proclaim: “*Yada Panchavatishtante*” i.e. when all the five senses and the intellect become steady it is considered the highest state of Yoga. That was emphasized by Baba, through this joke.
45. Words, touch, form, are related to this principle. How full of advice is this teaching of Baba, in relation to this incident!
46. “Before the mind, the intellect and other senses enjoy their objects, remember me first so that they become an offering to me, slowly.
47. “The senses can never remain without their objects; but if these objects are first offered to the Guru, the attachment for them will naturally vanish.
48. “If you desire anything, desire me only. If you are angry vent your anger on me only. Offer me your pride and obstinacy. Be devoted only to me.
49. “Whenever desire, anger, pride arise strongly make me the object towards which to direct them.
50. “In this way, one by one, the Lord will help you in eradicating all the *Vrittis*. The Lord (Govinda) will certainly calm the strong waves of these three venomous qualities.
51. “In fact, this disturbed mental state would be absorbed in my form or would become one with me. A state of peace will be yours at my feet”.
52. If you practise this, desires will become weak, on their own, and with the passage of time will be destroyed from their very roots. The mind will be free from all such tendencies.
53. Knowing and believing that the Guru is close by, such a person would never be disturbed by such tendencies.

54. Once such a good habit takes firm root, the bondage of the world will loosen. The Guru's form will be seen in every desirable object. Thus desire itself becomes the form of the Guru.
55. If there is the slightest desire for the enjoyment of the objects, and you think that Baba is close by, the question whether the object is fit to be enjoyed or not will at once arise.
56. The object that is not fit to be enjoyed will be easily shunned. In this way, the devotee's vicious addictions will disappear and an aversion towards the undesirable will develop.
57. He will be ready to obey the rules for the control of the senses, as mainly stated in the *Vedas*. Then, the enjoyment of the objects will be as per the rules and there will be no indiscriminate indulgence.
58. When such a habit is developed, the thoughts about enjoyment of the sense objects are weakened. The desire for the worship of the Guru arises and pure knowledge will sprout.
59. When pure knowledge grows, the bondage of body-consciousness will break and the intellect will be merged in spirit consciousness, leading to infinite bliss.
60. Even though the body is perishable, it is a means towards gaining enlightenment, which is really more desirable than salvation, because through it, we can experience *bhakti*.
61. This fifth rung of gaining enlightenment is superior to the other four *kama*, *artha*, *dharma* and *moksha*. They cannot be compared to *bhakti*. Invaluable are the gains of *bhakti*.
62. One who achieves fulfilment by serving the Guru can fully understand the implication of this statement. He alone will achieve enlightenment by understanding the inherent meaning of *bhakti*, knowledge and detachment.
63. One who thinks of the Guru as different from God is like a man reading the whole *Bhagvat* without realising who God is.
64. Though one has read the *Ramayana* completely, he has not been able to understand who was Sita to Rama. Leaving off seeing the duality know firmly that Guru and God are one.
65. Desire for the objects of senses will be destroyed from the root when you serve the Guru, with a pure heart. The mind will become pure and sinless and your Self will manifest with effulgence.
66. So be it. Given the strong desire, it was an easy matter for Baba to produce roasted grams! He needed no special time for the enactment of the most miraculous deeds.

67. A popular conjurer or juggler, merely to earn his livelihood, can produce whatever you ask for, by waving his magic wand.
68. But Sainath is a divine conjurer! What can be said about the prowess of his feat? When he willed, he produced innumerable grams, on the spur of the moment.
69. But, what is the moral of this story? Let us concentrate on it. ‘Do not enjoy any object with any of our five senses without first remembering Baba’.
70. When the mind is trained in this way, we will be always reminded of him. The attention will be at Sai’s feet in all transactions.
71. That Incarnation of Pure *Brahman* will ever remain before the eyes and then devotion, liberation and non-attachment would arise. Salvation will be achieved.
72. When this beautiful form is fixed before our mental vision, we forget hunger, thirst and the mundane existence. The consciousness of worldly pleasures will disappear and our mind will attain peace.
73. When one makes an effort to recall a stanza, it does not come to mind. But it springs to the mind as soon as one sits down to grind. Similarly, while narrating the *leela* of the grams, I recall the story of Sudama.
74. Once when Balrama, Krishna and Sudama were serving in the Guru’s<sup>1</sup> *ashram*, Krishna and Balrama were sent to fetch firewood.
75. No sooner than Krishna and Balrama had set out on the way to the forest, at the behest of the Guru’s wife, that Sudama was sent after them.
76. He was given some quantity of grams. The Guru’s wife instructed that all three of them should eat them, in case they felt hungry while roaming in the forest.
77. Later he met Krishna in the forest, who said: “*Dada*, I am thirsty”. Without mentioning the grams listen to what he said.
78. “Do not drink water on an empty stomach”, said Sudama. “Rest a while”. But he did not say that the grams should be eaten. Krishna laid down on Sudama’s lap.
79. When he saw that Krishna was asleep, Sudama began to eat the grams. “*Dada*, what are you eating? What is this sound?” said Krishna, then.
80. “What is there to eat here? Due to the cold my teeth are chattering so much that I cannot even pronounce clearly the *Vishnusahasranama*”<sup>2</sup>.

81. Hearing this reply from Sudama, the omniscient and divine Krishna, said: "I also had a similar dream, truly.
82. Someone was eating another person's share of food. When questioned as to what he was eating, he said 'what can I eat? Dust?', when the word *Tathastuta* (May it be so) was heard.
83. Oh! *Dada!* This is just a dream. Would you ever eat anything without sharing with me? I asked you the question as to what you were eating because I was still not fully awake from the dream."
84. If Sudamaji had known the *leelas* of Krishna of his earlier years, then he would not have made this mistake and would not have suffered the consequences.
85. Nor was it any ordinary suffering because he had to experience the most extreme poverty. Therefore, those who eat alone should bear this in mind.
86. Even a devotee like Sudama, whose friend was Lord Krishna, when he forgot to behave according to the law of good virtuosity, suffered in this world.
87. Later on, when he offered a handful of parched rice earned by his wife with her own labour, Krishna was pleased and granted him all prosperity.
88. So be it. Let me tell you another story which is instructive. To begin with, it began in fun as a joke but in the end was full of great wisdom.
89. Some will enjoy the instruction about the spiritual goal, some will appreciate the skill of the debate, and some will enjoy the wit and humour. All will be happy.
90. This too has humour. A gentleman and a lady got into a fit of obstinacy and started a quarrel in Sai's *darbar*, which was solved without anyone being insulted.
91. This also is a very interesting story. The listeners will enjoy it a lot. When devotees quarrel amongst themselves, laughter will arise.
92. A devotee called Damodar Ghanshyam whose surname was Babre<sup>3</sup>, and was nick-named as Anna Chinchnikar, had great love for Baba.
93. By nature he was outspoken and never cared for anyone. He was blunt in saying whether it was right or wrong, and never bothered about the consequences.
94. He was as pious and God fearing, as he was hard and brittle. His head seemed to have been filled with gun powder, for the slightest spark could ignite it.
95. All his actions were brisk and fearless; his transactions were in hard cash; he deferred to none; his dealings were straightforward.



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96. It is possible to hold a burning coal in the palm, but Anna's fury was worse than that. But he was without any malice by nature, for which Baba loved him.
97. Thus, one afternoon in the *Masjid* when the *durbar* was full of people, Baba was seated with his left arm on the railing.
98. Baba appeared neutral and uninvolved, but unknown to us it was he who caused the quarrels, amongst his devotees and when they were angry or offended, ultimately reconciling both parties.
99. Everyone was serving him in his way – some were pressing the side of his body, some were massaging his feet, some were pressing his back and abdomen.
100. Baba was a *brahmachari* since childhood. His thoughts and behaviour were clean and pure, as he lived a life of perpetual continence. Therefore, he allowed all men and women to serve him.
101. Anna was standing outside the railing, and pressing Baba's left arm gently, by leaning forward. Listen now, with a quiet mind, to what was happening on the right side.
102. There was a lady there, who had singular devotion for Baba. Baba called her 'Mother' while others called her *Mavashibai* (aunt).
103. Everyone called her *Mavashibai*. Her real name was Venubai and her surname was Kaujalagi. Her devotion to Baba was incomparable.
104. Anna had crossed fifty and did not have his full set of teeth. This *Mavashibai* was mature and aged. A quarrel arose between the two.
105. Anna and his wife both served Baba. Mother was a widow. While she was massaging Baba's stomach and sides, she was breathless.
106. *Mavashibai* was pure hearted and vigorous in her service of Sree Sai. She clasped the fingers of both her hands and was kneading Baba's abdomen.
107. Holding Baba with both the hands, from the back to the front of the stomach where one ties the *dhotar*, she pressed and pulled and pushed him about, as if she was churning buttermilk.
108. Engrossed in chanting Sai's name, *Mavashibai* fearlessly massaged. Baba did not utter a word and he seemed tranquil and relaxed.
109. Her method of massaging was extraordinary. She would flatten the stomach till it met the back. But her love aroused compassion within Baba.
110. This pure love of Sai resulted in the best mutual service, as he looked after the welfare of the devotees who continuously remembered him.



111. How many devout practices must we have done to attain the company of this saint's association? But Sai was certainly loving towards the meek and the humble and never disregarded the devotees.
112. What a skill there was in these movements! Baba moved up and down due to it. She also moved in the same way. It was an unique way of serving.
113. Anna was bending forward but was steady. The lady was so engrossed in her service that her face moved up and down (with her strokes). Then, see what happened!
114. In the bliss of her service to Sai, while swaying in doing the massage of the stomach, behold that her face came near Anna's.
115. Taking this opportunity, *Mavashibai*, who was of a very witty disposition, said: "What, Anna! You lewd fellow! Are you, initially, asking me for a kiss?"
116. "Have you no consideration for your grey hair? Let me see how you kiss me!" When *Mavashibai* said so, Anna rolled up his sleeves.
117. He said: "Am I that decrepit? Am I such a fool or totally mad? It is you who have brought your face near mine and got ready to pick a quarrel".
118. Realising that a row was in the offing, Baba who had affection for both of them, used a skillful way to pacify them both.
119. Lovingly he said: "Oh, Anna, why are you unnecessarily raising this hue and cry? I do not understand what impropriety is there when the mother is kissed".
120. Listening to this, both felt abashed. The jocular words were subdued at that juncture. Loving laughter sprang everywhere. Everyone liked the humour (of Baba's).
121. Apparently, this is a very small story but discerning listeners will find it interesting. They will observe clearly in the story how to put a stop to trouble.
122. Just as there is love between a mother and a son, if that same loving feeling had existed between both of them, then this situation would not have arisen and there would be no question of angry feeling.
123. When one is whipped, laughter bursts forth; while when one is showered with flowers one feels like crying. Waves of reaction depend upon the imagination and the understanding. Who has not experienced this?
124. There is novelty in Baba's simple ingenuity. He chose words suitable to a situation which soothe as well as teach the listeners immediately.

125. Similarly, once when *Mavashibai* was pressing Baba's stomach vigorously, a staunch devotee felt pity and concern.
126. He said: "*Bai*, be gentle! Is this the way to press the body? Have some compassion. Baba's veins will break".
127. No sooner than Baba heard these words that he got up from his seat, picked up his *satka* with his hand and struck the ground with it.
128. He got enraged and none dared to stand before him. His eyes became red like live charcoal and he glared all around.
129. Just as the cat's eyes shine in the dark, his eyes gleamed during the day. It seemed that a flame from the eyes could immediately burn the universe.
130. He took hold of one end of the *satka* with both hands and pressed it in the hollow of his abdomen. The other end, he fixed to the post in front and tightly embraced the post.
131. The *satka* which was about two or three feet long seemed to have fully gone into the abdomen and all feared that at any moment the abdomen would be ruptured thus ending Baba's life.
132. Baba began to go closer and closer to the post which was fixed and immovable, and pressed his abdomen firmly to it. All the onlookers were terrified.
133. 'Now the abdomen will be ruptured' they thought, biting their fingers with dismay. 'Oh, God! What an unendurable situation! We are dragged into a severe calamity.'
134. Thus, the people were worrying. What could be done in this calamity? All this suffering for this *Mavashibai*! It was an ordeal for the sake of a devotee.
135. Whenever anyone was serving Baba, if anyone expressed a dislike or correction in between, or if anyone expressed an opinion to the person rendering the service, Baba did not like it.
136. A loving devotee had felt like just giving an indication to *Mavashibai* that Sai Baba should be comfortable. Why should this be the outcome?!
137. So be it. The Lord felt compassion. Calmness arose in Sai's heart. He resumed his seat, relieving everyone's terrified state.
138. Although the loving devotee had been fearless, seeing Baba's strict nature, swore never to commit this mistake in the future.
139. From then onwards, he decided not to meddle in anyone's affairs and to let each person follow his or her own way.

140. *Samartha* was himself full of powers. He knows when to use those powers to restrain the evil and confer favours upon the good. He also knows the good and bad qualities of all those who serve him. Then why should we interfere?
141. 'Sai likes the services of one or finds another's harsh' – these are, after all, our understanding. No one knows the truth.
142. Enough of this humour and jokes. Let those who wish to learn lessons from this do so. May the devotee savour the honey, the taste and the fragrance from Sai's stories.
143. Hemad surrenders at Sai's feet. The next chapter is more profound than this. Sai, the Cloud of Mercy, fulfils the desire of his devotee Damodar.
144. That also was a great miracle. Damodar was greatly afflicted in his life. He was summoned before him by Baba and relieved of his problem.

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

This is offered to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

May there be auspiciousness!

#### Notes :

1. Guru Sandipani.
2. The thousand names of Vishnu.
3. Both he and his wife spent a lot of time in Shirdi. His wife predeceased him. He left his whole estate to the Shirdi Sansthan.

