

Narration of the Guru's Greatness

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 previous chapter, it was narrated how Vijayanand attained salvation and how Balakram also was happily absorbed at Sai's feet.
2. Similarly, Tatyasaheb Noolkar and the greatest devotee Megha both left their bodies in the presence of Sai.
3. Greater than these was the marvel of the mode of death of a cruel animal like the tiger. That also was heard in detail, by the listeners.
4. Now, in the present chapter, I shall narrate an interesting story told by Baba himself. The listeners will find it immensely beneficial.
5. Once when Baba was in a forest, he had the *darshan* of his Guru, all of a sudden. Listen with full attention to the strange behaviour of the Guru.
6. How can I, an insignificant person, narrate the wonder of that story? It will grant devotion, faith and salvation as Sai himself has said.
7. Also, how a lady desired to have Baba's *darshan*, stay there (at Shirdi) for three days observing a fast, without water.
8. How a situation was created to make her break her resolve and how she was made to cook tasty and well-baked, golden-red *puranpolis*.
9. Not only did he make her prepare the *polis* but feed them to others and herself to the heart's content, teaching her the virtue of using one's body for service to others.
10. He impressed upon her, in a manner she would remember all her life that service rendered to others was higher in merit than the benefits attained from fasting.
11. Also that for the one who wishes to attain the ultimate purpose of

life, how well one should study and how to make great and persistent efforts, regularly, to attain the objective.

12. Stories, emphasising this purport, sweeter than nectar, will arouse devotion amongst the listeners and remove their sorrows.
13. Now, from here onwards the sweet stories which will satisfy the listeners and unite the narrator and the listeners in a bond of common ecstasy.
14. Sai will get these stories, which are amazing and full of love, done through me, who am only a foolish and insignificant person. As I write, I experience their marvel at every step.
15. Just as the sins are removed by the *darshan* of the Ganges or the worldly turmoil by the *darshan* of the moon, Sai's words are effective in destroying all the sins and sorrows.
16. Now, all you listeners, become respectfully attentive to hear the words of Maharaj Sai about the *darshan* of his own Guru.
17. Even if the *Vedas*, *Shrutis*, *Shastras* and like scriptures are studied, there is no acquisition of knowledge without the Guru's grace. It is just a physical and mental exhaustion.
18. This tree of mundane existence, of an immense expanse, which was not visible earlier but which is experienced later, is full of miseries on account of birth and death. It is illusory and perishable.
19. This mundane existence is called a tree because like a tree it can be cut to pieces and hence is perishable. This existence which is not perceptible initially, because at one point of time it remained steady, is, therefore, compared to a tree.
20. This is that tree of mundane existence which is seen but the nature of which is not known. It has its roots above with endless expanse of branches. Very little of this tree comes within the purview of a human being.
21. From moment to moment, it spreads as more branches sprout. Sometimes from a distance they look beautiful, but one finds them prickly all over, if embraced.
22. Like the trunk of a plantain tree, this is devoid of essence (or pith). Like a mirage or like the city of *Gandharvas*, this tree appears very attractive with the surrounding area round the roots clinging on account of the water, in the form of desires.
23. This tree, although non-existent in character, originates from actions and desires rooted in nescience; and has its own character undergoing a change every moment.

24. This tree is of the nature of calamity; has its origin in ignorance. Surrounding this tree is a store of water in the form of desires and lust.
25. This tree is one that has its expanse in the belongings or possessions viz. money, food, son and wife. This tree has as its support the idea of oneness with the body. In fact, this idea is always at the root of this tree.
26. The trunk of this tree, in reality, is the endless beings with gender differences. The many offshoots in the form of branches are formed by actions and sublime impressions. On account of these, this tree continues to grow.
27. This tree is one which is full of leaves in the form of *Shrutis* etc. It throbs with sprouts in the form of primary sensations. It assumes glory in the form of flowers which are actions, including rituals and charity. It is full of the juices of the pairs of opposites.
28. There is no end to the fruits of this tree. On it, indeed depend all beings as well as the worlds like “*Bhur and Bhurva*” for their existence, as they cannot remain separate from the tree.
29. This is like the ancient *Ashwatha* tree which has always a dejected face. At times it is dancing, at times singing and at other times playing instruments. Sometimes it is full of sport, laughter and at times, it weeps.
30. The appearance of this tree is really within *Brahman*. This can be cut by the sword of detachment. This is that tree which has for its support pure roots. Understand this to be of the nature of effulgence.
31. That *Brahman* is Truth and is the support for everything. This world is of an illusory nature like a dream. Surely neither has this tree a beginning nor an end. How can it exist only in the middle?
32. It is for this purpose that those who are detached, toil. The holy are ever attached to it. This is the goal of those who seek liberation and is the coveted end for all aspirants.
33. Try to stay at the place which you like. Do aspire to take refuge at the feet of Saints. Listen with attention to all that they say and take care to do away with doubts from their very roots.
34. Controlling the mind utterly, root out the intellect. Try to become totally detached and continue to gaze at the feet of the Guru.
35. Eradicate completely all fake beliefs, which otherwise will create impediments on the way. Trample under your feet all conceit. Then only will you be able to reach the other shore.

36. Listen to a sweet story, which elucidates this, and which Baba himself narrated. Savouring the nectar of Guru's words, you will have great pleasure:
37. "Once, the four of us, having read the *Shastras* and the *Puranas*, began to describe the *Brahman*, believing ourselves to be very knowledgeable.
38. One of our group, quoted the *Gita*'s words about 'salvation by self-effort', decried the tendency to depend on anyone else for one's salvation.
39. To this, the second replied that he who controls his mind is blessed; and that we should be free from thoughts and ideas and there is nothing in the world except our own Self.
40. The third said that the world is always changing. The formless is eternal. So we should discriminate between the Real and the Unreal – the Permanent and the Transitory.
41. The fourth one did not approve of bookish knowledge and suggested that the prescribed duty should be carried out and we should surrender our body, mind and the five *pranas* at the Guru's feet.
42. The Guru is God, and all pervading. To get this conviction, strong unbounded faith is necessary.
43. Those who know the scriptures, those who are pedagogues, always ready for arguments and discussions, and those who raise unnecessary doubts and sceptisms, they do not achieve complete knowledge even in their dreams. What is necessary is a person full of faith and devotion.
44. Thus, we four 'wise' men set forth in the quest of *Brahman* which can be experienced independently through one's intellect and a mind free of anxiety.
45. Three of the group had this objective. While wandering in the forest, according to our own fancy, we met a *Vanjari* ¹ on the way, who questioned us.
46. 'The heat is scorching. Why and where are you going?' We replied to him that we were searching the woods.
47. The *Vanjari* then asked us on the nature of our quest and we replied to him ambiguously and evasively.
48. Seeing us rambling aimlessly, he was moved and he said that the forest is dense and impenetrable, and without knowing the woods fully, we should not wander, at random.
49. If we wanted to walk through the forest, we should take a guide

- with us; and not exert ourselves unnecessarily at the sultry noon-time.
50. We need not disclose to him the secret of our mission; but we could rest a little, eat a little bit, drink some water and be patient at heart.
51. Though he made a compassionate entreaty, we contemptuously discarded his request and proceeded further; and felt greatly tired on the way.
52. We had an arrogant attitude that we were all very knowledgeable and could find our own way and needed no guide.
53. But that forest was very vast and full of massive trees. Where the rays of the sun could not penetrate through the dense foliage, how could we find our way?
54. We lost our way and wandered here and there fruitlessly. Through sheer good luck, we reached the same place from where we had started.
55. It was destiny that brought us back to the same path. We met the earlier *Vanjari* who said to us that it seemed that we had missed the way. 'Sometimes mere intelligence is not enough'.
56. 'A guide is always necessary to show the right way in small or great matters. No quest can be successfully carried out on an empty stomach. The flaws of the intellect are strange.
57. Unless God wills it, no one meets us on the way. Do not refuse offers of food or thrust away a platter of food.
58. Believe it to be very auspicious, if someone gives food and urges you to eat. It will help you to succeed in your undertaking.'
59. He again offered us food and asked us to eat, and to be calm and patient. But again this good suggestion was not approved and we left again, without partaking of the refreshment.
60. 'Without accomplishing our quest, we refuse to take any food.' Then see what obstacles were encountered, thanks to our obstinacy.
61. Now, I was hungry and my throat was parched with thirst. The *Vanjari*'s love was extraordinary and I experienced the marvel of it.
62. We were educated and learned but had no acquaintance with kindness and compassion. A rich man, when his right hand is covered with food, does not even drive away the crow, lest the particles of food would fly off and there would be a loss to that extent.
63. Yet this *Vanjari*, illiterate and unqualified, of a low caste, had a heart full of love and offered us a share in his food, saying 'eat some bread and vegetable'.

64. He who loves others disinterestedly, is really enlightened. I thought acceptance of his hospitality was the best beginning for getting Knowledge.
65. Therefore, very respectfully I accepted the little food the *Vanjari* offered, and drank the water. See, what miracle happened then!
66. Gururaj came unexpectedly and said: "What was the reason for the argument?" Then I related to him all that occurred, from the beginning to the end.
67. "Would you like to come with me? I will help you to complete your search speedily; but only he who obeys me implicitly will succeed".
68. The others did not agree to this. But, I accepted it with profound reverence. The others left and then the Gururaya took me along with him.
69. He took me to a well, where he tied both my feet with a rope, then left me dangling upside down over the well water.
70. Gururaya left me suspended over the well in such a way that my hands did not touch the water and neither could the water enter my mouth.²
71. Gururaya tied the other end of the rope to a tree which was on the side of the well and went away confidently. No one knew where.
72. He returned after four or five hours and took me out quickly. He asked me, if I was fine.
73. Then I replied to him: "I was in supreme bliss. The joy I experienced is beyond my poor powers to describe".
74. Hearing these words of mine, Gururaya was delighted. Stroking my body with his hand, he kept me with him.
75. My heart still overflows with joy; as I narrate this. Then the Guru took me to the 'school'. He took care of me as tenderly as a mother bird does her young ones, protecting them under her wings.
76. How wonderful was the Guru's school! I became detached from my parents' love and the chains of greed and love snapped. I attained salvation easily.
77. Nothing appeared impossible. My evil tendencies vanished. My previous *karmas* were wiped out. I thought I should embrace this Guru's neck and remain staring at him always.
78. If his image was not reflected in the eyes, then they were only balls of flesh! Better still, I would have preferred to be blind. Such was the effect of the school on me!

79. Which unfortunate individual would have wanted to leave the precincts of this school having once entered it? My Gururaya was my mother, my father, my property – everything to me.
80. All the senses, together with the mind, concentrated themselves in my eyes to meditate on him.
81. The Guru was the sole object of my meditation. The entire universe assumed his form. I was conscious of none else. This is known as ‘Singular Devotion’.
82. Meditating on the form of the Guru, the mind and intellect were baffled. Therefore, in the end, I could only pay obeisance to him, wordlessly.
83. If one cannot achieve this state, then one may take a Guru to acquire Knowledge but his *upadesh* will be a big zero. One would pay large sums as *dakshina* and repent in the end.
84. Such a Guru emptily chats about his secret knowledge and makes a show of his purity and straight-forwardness. He who has learnt hypocrisy from his childhood, what can he give, in the end to another?
85. There is a great show and pomp of sacredness but not real tender love. No actual experience exists. His school is useless.
86. Where words about knowledge abound, the knowledge of the *Brahman* can never be experienced. Where a Guru is busy singing his own glory, how can the disciple achieve his own welfare?
87. He whose words do not touch the heart and the disciples are not convinced, of what value is his position as Guru? His words are useless prattle.
88. So be it – enough! But in my case, I served my Guru in such a way that he rewarded me with the store of Knowledge. I did not have to search for anything or seek any deeper significance.
89. By the Guru’s grace, realisation flashed upon me by itself, without effort or study. I had not to seek anything but everything became clear to me as broad daylight.
90. Only the *Samartha* Gururaya knows my happiness over the topsy turvy suspension, with head down and feet up, that the Gururaya had done.
91. The ways of Saints are something different, which can be understood only through experience. Here, faith alone is the consideration and the only means to attain the objective is Guru’s Grace.
92. A *Karmath* knows how to observe and abstain from certain rites; a

Gnyani is puffed with pride of knowledge; a *Yogi* is a hypocrite. In reality nothing can be achieved without faith.

93. The *Pandits* are blinded by conceit and are pride personified. The *Gnyanis* run away from them, and they do not like each other's company.
94. The *Gnyani* says: 'There is no God but me for I have attained all knowledge and I am that Pure Consciousness'.
95. A *Bhakta* (devotee), because of his faith and devotion, does not show off his knowledge. He is totally surrendered to the Guru and serves his Guru with his body, his mind and all that he possesses.
96. He does not have the conceit to believe that this is his achievement or that this is the greatness of his prowess or that this is the brilliance of his knowledge.
97. Whatever happens is caused by God. He elevates and he degrades. He fights and causes fights. He alone is the doer.
98. Leaving all doership to the Guru, he adopts utter humility. A devotee is always dependent upon God and he is not independent.
99. Enough! What were these four wise men in search of? It has not been mentioned so far. Listen now to the explanation.
100. All these *Karmath*, well-versed in the way of reciting *Vedas*, full of pride on account of their learning, who in the course of a pedantic discussion, began to discuss God.
101. It was their objective to identify God and the place of His existence, and search out paths to Him, through endeavour and knowledge.
102. Sree Sai was one of the four wise men. He was the personification of discrimination and dispassion, being himself *Parabrahma*. Then, why did he get involved in this injudicious talk?
103. The listeners will naturally have this doubt. This was for the good of the public. Would Sai *Samartha*, the uplifter of his devotees, be belittled by this incident?
104. Though an incarnation himself, he respected a *Vanjari* by accepting his food with the firm belief that 'Food is *Brahman*', and spoke highly of it.
105. Also, he showed how those that rejected the offer suffered and how it was impossible to get knowledge without a Guru, by narrating the story of these wise men.
106. Religious Knowledge is not possible without the instruction and

- teachings of the mother, the father and the preceptor. It also depends on the studies which without application is a waste.
107. The *Shruti* exhorts us to honour and worship mother, father and the preceptor and obtain their powerful blessings.
 108. The blessings of the three combined with *Yagnas*, learning of the scriptures and charity are the best means of avoiding the cycle of birth and death.
 109. These are the means of purifying the mind and unless this purification is effected, self-realisation is not possible. Such a life has been lived in vain.
 110. The body, the senses, the mind and the intellect cannot understand the profound Real Self. It is the Guru’s Grace that makes it possible.
 111. Where modes of proof, such as perception and inference do not help in the matter, who else but the Guru can show it as easily as holding an *amalaka* fruit.
 112. The objects of our life such as *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Kama* are attainable with effort; but the fourth object *Pursharath* can be only had with the help of the Guru, without whom they will remain efforts in vain.
 113. In the *darbar* of this saint of Shirdi, the astrologers came and paid their homage, giving the prediction for the young and the old.
 114. The rich and the prosperous, the rulers great and petty, the *jogis* who beg for alms, the ascetics devoid of desire and attachments came with equal eagerness for *darshan*.
 115. The *sanyasis*, who chanted the Lord’s Name, who practised penances, who took vows, the pilgrims from holy places, the musicians, the dancers came to Shirdi for *darshan* with their families.
 116. The *barijans* also arrived in Sree Sai’s *darbar* to pay obeisance, with the belief that he is the only mother and father who would help in ending the cycle of births and deaths.
 117. They came too, who wear the *lingam* round their necks and smear ashes upon their foreheads and accept only uncooked grain and alms to see this festive progression.
 118. The cunning jugglers came. The *Gondhalis* lovingly created confusion, and begged for alms in the name of Goddess Bhavani, with great love, from Baba.
 119. The blind, the lame and the deaf, the *jogis*, the followers of Guru Nanak, the Bhats, the torch-bearers all came running with affection for Sai *Samartha*.

120. The *Dugdugas* ³, the *Sarodes* ⁴, the lame and *Kolbatinis* ⁵ also came. Now, in good time this *Vanjari* had also arrived.
121. Blessed was Sai's form, moulded out of detachment. He was desireless, free of attachments, selfless and full of incomparable love for the devotees.
122. Enough. Now let us pick up again the thread of the main story. The listeners should pay attention.
123. Baba never fasted nor permitted others to remain hungry. The mind of a person observing a fast is never at ease, then how can he attain his *Parmartha*?
124. 'God cannot be attained on an empty stomach. First, the Soul has to be appeased (by satisfying the physical hunger).' I will narrate one more story pertinent to this advice, for the benefit of the listeners.
125. When at noon, the bowels are churned with hunger, the importance and truth of the saying that 'food is *Brahman*' is realised.
126. It is a very difficult situation indeed, when some food is not put into the mouth. All the sensory organs become weak and are unable to function properly.
127. If there is no moisture of food in the stomach, with what eyes should we see God, with what tongue should we describe His greatness and with what ears should we listen to it?
128. In short, when all the sense organs are strong and sound, then only it is possible to practise devotion. If one feels weak by starving, then one is unable to make progress towards the highest goal of life.
129. Consumption of too much food is not beneficial. Moderation is really wholesome. Extreme fasting is dangerous. It leads to affliction always.
130. Once, a lady came to Shirdi for Sai's *darsban* with a letter to Shri Kelkar, with great enthusiasm.
131. The lady had resolved to sit at Maharaj's feet and observe a three days' fast. But her resolve came to naught.
132. Baba, in accordance with his precepts, believed that when thinking about the highest goal in life, one should have some food alongside.
133. One who desires to realise God must eat a little, to begin with; for unless the being is content, how would God be realised?

134. It is impossible to realise God when one is starving. Sai did not approve of such austerities which burden one.
135. Maharaj, who knew intuitively, on the previous day, had mentioned it to Dada Kelkar earlier.
136. “Now during these Holi holidays, will my children go without food? How can I allow it? Then why should I be here?”
137. The day following this utterance of Sai, this lady arrived in Shirdi.
138. The lady’s surname was Gokhale. As she had earlier resolved, she left her luggage at Dada’s and gave him the letter.
139. Kashibai Kanitkar, being related, had written a letter to Dada, requesting him to make arrangements for Sai Baba’s *darshan*, for her.
140. As soon as she arrived at Shirdi, she went for Baba’s *darshan*. Afterwards, she sat near him for a while, when she was advised by Baba.
141. Sainath was aware of the innermost thoughts of everyone for nothing on this earth was hidden from him.
142. “Food and the one who eats it are the embodiments of Vishnu. Fasting, austerities, unsullied food, going without any food or water – why indulge in this?”
143. “What is the need for us to practise fasting and austerities?” Baba said this on his own, to her.
144. “Go to that Dada Bhat’s⁶ house, make *puran polis* happily. Feed them to his children and eat also to your heart’s content”.
145. It was a happy coincidence that the lady had arrived at the time of the *Holi* festival. Dada’s wife, at that time, was in her menses and therefore, could not do the cooking herself.
146. The intense desire to observe fast disappeared, as she had to cook herself! Then, she very lovingly obeyed Baba’s orders.
147. Making obeisance at Baba’s feet, she went to Dada’s house, made *puranpolis*, served everyone and ate herself.
148. What a beautiful story and how profound its meaning. If one places faith, in this manner, in the Guru’s words, then there would be no delay in upliftment.
149. Yet another story – one narrated by Sai *Samartha* to his devotees, of which he was reminded. Please listen carefully.
150. One who is desirous of spiritual progress needs to work hard and constantly study. One should be bold and courageous.

151. One should always savour the nectar of the true stories, like the washings of the saint's feet, for one's welfare. Being humble at a saint's feet gives internal purity.
152. "Once, when I was young, and wishing to get a job to sustain me, I stinted on my own needs and set out.
153. "I walked on and on and arrived at Beedgaon, where I rested. The Fakir (God) had other plans for me. I was happy.
154. "There, I found zari (embroidery) work. I also worked tirelessly and my efforts were rewarded. Behold the Fakir's power!
155. "Those who were employed before me were extremely clever and skilled. All four of us worked there and our wages were fixed on the quantum of work done.
156. "One had done work worth Rs. 50/-, the second had done Rs. 100/- worth; the third had done Rs.150/- worth; and mine was twice more than all of them put together.
157. "The owner was very pleased with my work and skill. He praised me to many and loved me a lot.
158. "He gave me a full dress, a turban for the head and a magnificent robe' for the body. But I kept it tied up, unused.
159. "Who can give enough to another person? However much is given, it is always inadequate. But when my *Sarkar* (God) begins, it lasts till the end of time.
160. "The only true giver is my *Sarkar*. Can any else be compared with Him? How can the finite be the ornament of the infinite?
161. "My *Sarkar* says 'take, take'; but everybody comes to me and says 'give, give'. Nobody attends carefully to the meaning of what I say. No one takes cognisance.
162. "My *Sarkar*'s treasury is overflowing. No one comes to fetch cart loads away. When I say 'dig' no one does so. No one wants to make efforts.
163. "I say 'dig up this wealth and plunder cart loads of it. The blessed son of a true mother should fill his store with this wealth'.
164. "What will be the fate of a living being? Dust (body) will turn to dust, and air (breath) will merge with air. This time will not come again.
165. "Enough. The skill of my Fakir, the leela of my *Bhagvan*, the aptitude of my *Sarkar* is quite unique.
166. "I too go somewhere and sit somewhere. But this '*Jeeva*' is

- confused and confounded by ‘*Maya*’. It suffers from the snares of *Maya*.
167. “*Maya* is very merciless. It has driven me to desperation. I remain worried about my people day and night.
168. “He will reap, what he sows’. The one who always remembers these words of mine will get invaluable happiness”.
169. Hemad surrenders to Sai. Unparalleled is the narration of this story. When Sai does the work himself, my egotism is demolished.
170. Sai himself narrates this story. He is the reader and the listener. He is the writer and the one who gets it written. It is he who makes it comprehensible.
171. Sai himself is the actor in this story, it is he who is the sweetness in the story, it is he who is the listener and the narrator and it is he who enjoys its bliss.
172. Then, the privilege and pleasure of listening to this story, can it not help in attaining spirituality? Those devotees are fortunate who appreciate and enjoy it.
173. Now in essence the next chapter deals with the incomparable greatness of Sai’s UDI. Virtuous listeners I earnestly supplicate you to listen with respect.
174. Hemad says with great humility that Sai *Samartha* graced me and made me narrate his biography, where the stories are most interesting.

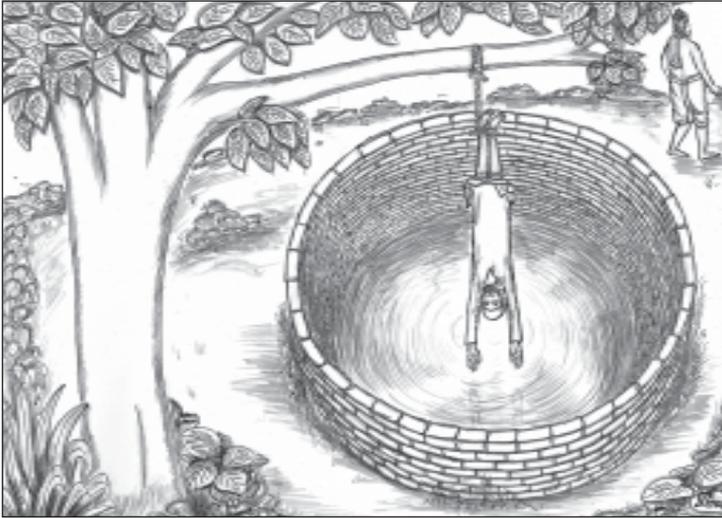
May there be well-being! This is the end of the thirty-second chapter of the Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita, written by the devotee Hemadpant, impelled by the Saints and virtuous people, called the “Narration of the Guru’s Greatness”.

This is offered to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

May there be auspiciousness!

Notes :

1. A trader who carried salt and grains etc. on the back of a bullock and who knows the paths in the forest; and belongs to the Laman caste.
2. This story should not be taken literally. It is allegorical.
3. Those who imitate the sound of a rickety, shaking article.
4. Those who play the seven-stringed instrument and constantly practise the prediction of good fortune to the lower caste.
5. The rope dancers.
6. Dada Kelkar.
7. Such an outfit was presented as an approbation of conduct and was a great honour.



Gururaya left me suspended over the well in such a way that my hands did not touch the water and neither could the water enter my mouth. (Ch.32, ovi 70)

Gururaya tied the other end of the rope to a tree which was on the side of the well and went away confidently. No one knew where. (Ch.32, ovi 71)

He returned after four or five hours and took me out quickly. He asked me if I was fine. (Ch.32, ovi 72)

Then I replied to him: 'I was in supreme bliss. The joy I experienced is beyond my poor powers to describe'. (Ch.32, ovi 73)