

CHAPTER XLII

BABA'S PASSING AWAY

Previous Indication - Averting Death of Ramachandra Dada Patil and Taty Kote Patil - Charity to Laxmibai Shinde - Last Moment.

This chapter describes the Passing away of Baba.

Preliminary

The stories given in the previous chapter have shown that the light of Guru's grace removes out fear of the mundane existence, opens the path of salvation and turns our misery into happiness. If we always remember the feet of the Sad-guru, our troubles come to an end, death loses its sting and the misery of this mundane existence is obliterated. Therefore those who care for their welfare should carefully listen to these stories of Sai Samarth, which will purify their minds.

In the beginning, Hemadpant dwells on Dr.Pandit's worship and his marking Baba's forehead with Tripundra, i.e., three horizontal lines; but as this has been already described in chapter XI, this has been omitted here.

Previous Indication

The readers up till now heard the stories of Baba's life. Let them now hear attentively Baba's Passing away. Baba got a slight attack of fever on 28th September, 1918. The fever lasted for 2 or 3 days, but afterwards Baba gave up his food and thereby He grew weaker and weaker. On the 17th day, i.e., Tuesday, the 15th October 1918, Baba left His mortal coil at about 2-30 p.m. (Vide Professor G.G. Narke's letter, dated 5th November 1918, to Dadasaheb Khaparde, published in Leelamagazine, Page 78, first year). Two years before this, i.e., in 1916, Baba gave an indication of His Passing away, but nobody understood it then. It was as follows:- On the Vijayadashmi (Dasara) day Baba at once got into wild rage in the evening when people were returning from 'Seemollanghan' (crossing the border or limits of the village). Taking off His head-dress, kafni and langota etc., He tore them and threw them in the Dhuni before

Him. Fed by this offering, the fire in the Dhuni began to burn brighter and Baba shone still brighter. He stood there stark naked and with His burning red eyes shouted - fellows, now have a look and decide finally whether I am a Moslem or a Hindu. Everybody was trembling with fear and none dared to approach Baba. After some time Bhagoji Shinde, the leper devotee of Baba, went boldly near Him and succeeded in tying a langota (waist-band) round His waist and said - what is all this? To-day is the Seemollanghan, i.e., Dasara Holiday. Baba striking the ground with His satka said - is my Seemollanghan (crossing the border). Baba did not cool down till 11-00 p.m. and the people doubted whether the chavadi procession would ever take place that night. After an hour Baba resumed His normal condition and dressing Himself as usual attended the chavadi procession as described before. By this incident Baba gave a suggestion that Dasara was the proper time for Him to cross the border of life, but none understood its meaning. Baba gave also another indication as follows:

Averting Death of Ramachandra and Tatya Patil

Some time after this, Ramachandra Patil became seriously ill. He suffered a lot. He tried all remedies, but finding no relief, despaired of his life and was waiting for the last moment. The one midnight Baba suddenly stood near his pillow. Patil held His Feet and said - have lost all hopes of life, please tell me definitely when I shall die. Merciful Baba said - t be anxious, your hundi (death-warrant) has been withdrawn and you will soon recover, but I am afraid of Tatya Patil. He will pass away on Vijayadashami of Shaka 1840 (1918 A.D.). Do not divulge this to anybody, nor to him, for he will be terribly frightened. Ramachandra Dada got well, but he felt nervous about Tatya's life, for he knew that Baba's word was unalterable, and that Tatya would breathe his last within two years. He kept this hint secret, told it to none but one Bala Shimpi (a tailor). Only these two persons - Ramachandra Dada and Bala Shimpi were in fear and suspense regarding Tatya's life.

Ramachandra Dada soon left his bed and was on his legs. Time passed quickly. The month of Bhadrapad of Shaka 1840 (1918 A.D.) was ending and Ashwin was in sight. True to Baba's word, Tatya fell sick and was bed-ridden; and so he could not come for Baba's darshana. Baba was also down with fever. Tatya had full faith in Baba and Baba in Lord Hari, who was His Protector. Tatya's illness began

to grow from bad to worse and he could not move at all but always remembered Baba. The predicament of Baba began to grow equally worse. The day predicted, i.e., Vijayadashami was impending and both Ramachandra Dada and Bala Shimpi were terribly frightened about Tatya and with their bodies trembling and perspiring with fear, thought that as predicted by Baba, Tatya's end was nigh. Vijayadashami dawned and Tatya's pulse began to beat very slow and he was expected to pass away shortly. But a curious thing happened. Tatya remained, his death was averted and Baba passed away in his stead. It seemed as if there was an exchange. People said that Baba gave up His life for Tatya; why He did so? He alone knows as His ways are inscrutable. It seems, however, that in this incident, Baba gave a hint of His passing away, substituting Tatya's name for His own.

Next morning (16th October) Baba appeared to Das Ganu at Pandharpur in his dream and said to him - Masjid collapsed, all the oilmen and grocers of Shirdi teased me a lot, so I leave the place. I therefore came to inform you here, please go there quickly and cover me with 'Bhakkal' flowers. Das Ganu got the information also from Shirdi letters. So he came to Shirdi with his disciples and started bhajan and kirtan and sang the Lord's name, all through the day before Baba's samadhi. Himself weaving a beautiful garland of flowers studded with Lord Hari's name he placed it on Baba's samadhi and gave a mass-feeding in Baba's name.

Charity to Laxmibai

Dasara or Vijayadashami is regarded by all the Hindus as the most auspicious time and it is befitting that Baba should choose this time for His crossing the border-line. He was ailing some days before this, but He was ever conscious internally. Just before the last movement He sat up erect without anybody's aid, and looked better. People thought that the danger had passed off and He was getting well. He knew that He was to pass away soon and therefore, He wanted to give some money as charity to Laxmibai Shinde.

Baba Pervading All Creatures

This Laxmibai Shinde was a good and well-to-do woman. She was working in the Masjid day and night. Except Bhagat Mhalasapati, Tatya and Laxmibai, none was allowed to step in the Masjid at night. Once while Baba was sitting in the Masjid with Tatya in the evening, Laxmibai came and saluted Baba. The latter said to her - "Oh

Laxmi, I am very hungry. Off she went saying - wait a bit, I return immediately with bread. She did return with bread and vegetables and placed the same before Baba. He took it up and gave it to a dog. Laxmibai then asked - is this, Baba, I ran in haste, prepared bread with my own hands for You and You threw it to a dog without eating a morsel of it; You gave me trouble unnecessarily. Baba replied - do you grieve for nothing? The appeasement of the dog's hunger is the same as Mine. The dog has got a soul; the creatures may be different, but the hunger of all is the same, though some speak and others are dumb. Know for certain, that he who feeds the hungry, really serves Me with food. Regard this as an axiomatic Truth. This is a ordinary incident but Baba thereby propounded a great spiritual truth and showed its practical application in daily life without hurting anybody's feelings. From this time onward Laxmibai began to offer Him daily bread and milk with love and devotion. Baba accepted and ate it appreciatingly. He took a part of this and sent the remainder with Laxmibai to Radha-Krishna-Mai who always relished and ate Baba's remnant prasada. This bread-story should not be considered as a digression; it shows, how Sai Baba pervaded all the creatures and transcended them. He is Omnipresent, Birthless, Deathless and Immortal.

Baba remembered Laxmibai's service. How could He forget her? Just before leaving the body, He put His hand in His pocket and gave her once Rs.5/- and again Rs.4/-, in all Rs.9/-. This figure (9) is indicative of the nine types of devotion described in chapter 21 or it may be the Dakshina offered at the time of Seemollanghan. Laxmibai was a well-to-do woman and so she was not in want of any money. So Baba might have suggested to her and brought prominently to her notice the nine characteristics of a good disciple mentioned in the 6th verse of chapter ten, skandha eleven of the Bhagwat, wherein first five and then four characteristics are mentioned in the first and second couplets.* Baba followed the order, first paid Rs.5/- and then Rs.4/- in all Rs.9/-. Not only nine, but many times nine rupees passed through Laxmibai's hand, but Baba's this gift of *Nine*, she will ever remember.

Being so watchful and conscious, Baba also took other precautions in His last moment. In order that He should not be

* అపఃస్వమత్సరో దక్షో నింత్రీ+దృఢః+హృదః ।

అపత్సరో ధృఢః+హృదః+హృదః+హృదః ॥

embroiled or entangled with love and affection for His devotees, He ordered them all to clear off. Kakasaheb Dixit, Bapusaheb Booty and others were in the Masjid anxiously waiting upon Baba, but He asked them to go to the Wada and return after meals. They could not leave Baba's presence, nor could they disobey Him. So with heavy hearts and heavy feet they went to the Wada. They knew that Baba's case was very serious and that they could not forget Him. They sat for meals, but their mind was elsewhere, it was with Baba. Before they finished, news came to them of Baba's leaving the mortal coil. Leaving their dishes, they ran to the Masjid and found that Baba rested finally on Bayaji's lap. He did not fall down on the ground nor did He lie on His bed, but sitting quietly on His seat and doing charity with His own hand threw off the mortal coil. Saints embody themselves and come into this world with a definite mission and after that is fulfilled they pass away as quietly and easily as they came.

Bow to Shri Sai - Peace be to all