



GURU PURNIMA MESSAGE 2012

“The Gifts of Shri Sai”

Prior to Baba’s Mahasamadhi on Vijayadashmi day in October 1918, thousands of devotees, from near and far used to visit Him frequently. Some of them like G.S. Kharparde, Kakasaheb Dixit, Upasani Maharaj, Nanasaheb Chandorkar, etc. used to camp at Shirdi for long periods of time living in close association with Baba.

Baba used to receive various kinds of offerings and gifts from his devotees almost daily. Such gifts used to be made by the devotees sheerly out of their love and reverence towards the Guru. Such gifts are too many to be covered here. However, a number of such examples can be found in Shri Sai Satcharita. From His side Baba used to give away such gifts to other devotees. Some close devotees of Baba who are residents of Shirdi like Shama, Taty Kote Patil besides others were the lucky recipients of such gifts.

Different devotees used to get different types of presents for Baba like cloth, Kafni, Phatka, foot wear, Satka, flowers, food items like fruits, sweets, flowers, etc., tobacco for chillim, coins, books, etc. As explained in Sai Satcharita, He was also gifted with a horse, Palanquin, embroidered umbrella, a wooden bed and many such items which suit the regalia of a ruler. Although all these used to be arranged by one ardent devotee named Radhakrishna Mai to project Baba in the style of a Maharaja, it hardly had any significance for Sai Baba of Shirdi who was truly a fakir.

On some occasions, Baba used to return some gifts to the donor himself and ask him to keep it in his shrine for worship. Sometimes He used to retain a very small portion of the gifts like food, fruits, etc. Baba distributed the rest as charity in varying proportions to different persons as he was fully aware of their needs.

There are numerous examples of Baba giving gifts to devotees like coins of different denominations (e.g. Laxmi Bai Shinde received nine coins on the day of Baba's Mahasamadhi, Baba sent a coin and udhi to Captain Hate in Gwalior with blessings), Udhi or sacred ash (Baba sent Udhi to Nanasahab Chandorkar in Jamner at the time of his daughter Naina Tai's child birth), food (Baba used to personally buy ingredients, then cook and distribute the same to all those gathered), cloth (Baba bought and gave gold embroidered Pheta or headgear to Tatyia Kote Patil), statues and pictures of deities (Kakasaheb Dixit received silver padukas, Shama was given the coin that had the figures of Ram, Laxman and Sita engraved on one side and Maruthi engraved on the other side), foot wear (Abdul's family is still known to have pair of Baba's shoes). Some people received the Kafni that Baba used to wear (families of Hemadpant and Abdul are known to have Baba's Kafni), etc. Some devotees are also reported to have Baba's tooth, hair, etc.

Most of these gifts given by Baba used to be maintained by the recipient devotee as their most valuable prize. They used to worship them with reverence at their places of worship in their homes or in temples of Baba built later on. From generation to generation it became a custom in families of most of such devotees to worship these items.

Each action of the Sadguru, including the donation of such gifts to the devotees, contained a futuristic spiritual angle attached to it. In the process of my research spread over last two decades, I have been able to collect and collate information about more than a hundred families residing in different corners of India who possess such valuable gifts received from Sai Baba of Shirdi. Most of them are found to maintain these with the love and respect they deserve. Of course, Shree Sai Baba Sansthan at Shirdi maintains the largest number of such precious items. However, the number of such items possessed by other devotees if put together would be much more in number than what the Sansthan possesses.

Some of the devotees are found to be carrying such items with them to different places in India and abroad for their own satisfaction or for showing them to other devotees with a purely non commercial angle. However, some other possessors of such items, handed over to them from earlier generations who had directly received them from Baba, are reported to be using them with commercial attitude. To my mind, this can perhaps be avoided as any item given by a Master to the devotee is basically not given from a materialistic point of view, but is much beyond the materialistic value. Therefore display of such items to others should always be done purely with a devotional attitude towards Baba. No doubt Baba's devotees feel extremely happy to see or touch any such items given by Baba at Shirdi.

Jai Shri Sai.

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