

# ***ARATI SAI BABA***

## **The Tradition of Arati**

**(Translation & Commentary by —Sri Sainathani Sarath Babuji in Shri Sai Leela Magazine from July-August 1996 to May-June 1997))**

### **CHAPTER - I**

#### **What is Arati?**

Arati is a mode of congregational worship, in which the devotees stand facing the image of a deity or a deified saint or, the personage ('living idol') of an exalted saint singing devotional songs in unison. Normally, the singing is accompanied by musical instruments such as bells, gongs and cymbals. The object of worship is devoutly decorated with posy garlands and, aromatic incense and musk are kept smoldering. While the devotees sing psalms, either an officiant or a devotee revolves clockwise, (usually) a fivefold oil lamp - consisting of five oil-traylets - round the object of adoration. Such a performance of *arati* with a fivefold oil-lamp is called panchwрати.

#### **Receptacle of Grace**

At times *arati* is performed with a single, three or elevenfold (and so on) lamps. A lamp with wicks burning clarified butter (ghee) is the most preferred. Sometimes, instead of an oil-lamp, ignited camphor placed on a tray is waved. All such details as the number of wicks, the kind of fuel, etc., carry their own esoteric symbolism. After the devotional singing, the flame of the *arati-lamp* is offered to the devotees, who pass their hands by turns over the sacred-flame and quickly draw them to their faces and heads as a gesture of drawing unto themselves the auspicious energy emanating from the receptacle of grace', i.e. the flame. Though, the tradition of offering *arati* is almost ubiquitous in the Hindu liturgy, the details of the modus operandi differ from region to region and are distinguished by many sectarian embellishments. This custom of *arati*, as a form of congregational worship, is more in vogue in northern India, especially in Maharashtra. In the South, usually it is done as a concluding part of the ritualistic worship, (both public and personal) which is called mangala *arati* or neerajana. In mangala *arati* normally camphor is kindled

instead of an oil lamp. Congregational worship with prolonged singing of devotional songs in unison is seldom found in South India,

**The Grammar of *arati***, in situ, in an integral part of *puja*. *puja*, in its generic sense in a systematised - rather ritualised - expression of devotion to a personalised form of divinity. First the deity is invoked reverentially onto an idol or image which is an initial step toward concentration of the abstract concept of divinity. Then the devotee proceeds to attend upon the deity in the best manner possible. As the deity is usually conceived as the 'cosmocrat' the devotee tries to render all honours befitting a royal guest. After thus entertaining His Divine Majesty, the devotee bids farewell. If out of his loving attachment to the deity, the devotee intends not to say farewell, the deity is installed either in a temple or in his own house. The temple becomes the grand royal place of the deity; at the devotee's dwelling too, the deity is no longer an august royal guest, but the master of the household whose members are his humble servants. Both at the temple and at home the deity is venerably treated with all royal honours. Normally, sixteen kinds of customary services (shodasopachara) are enjoined in the liturgical canons. The daily services to the deity begin with waking up the deity from his bed by soft melodies; then the curtains, behind which he sleeps, are opened and the deity is given a bath with perfumed consecrated water; He is clothed with finespun garments and adorned with fresh and fragrant flowers; incense is kept smouldering and lamps are lit and placed near him; first, the deity is fed sumptuously and the leftovers are consumed by the devotees as his *prasad* then devotional songs are sung in praise of the deity; burned camphor is waved (in clockwise motion) before the deity with hymns wishing auspiciousness (to the deity); the concept behind the mangal *arati* is that, it not only removes the effect of evil-eye on the deity but also charges the flame with an auspicious energy which the devotees avidly receive by passing their hands over the sacred flame and quickly drawing them to their faces and hands; finally, the deity is put to sleep by singing sweet lullabies and pulling down the curtains around the shrine or the idol. This, in brief, is the basic grammar of the language of *puja* which is spoken in various sectarian and regional dialects and, *arati* is one of the patois.

Most of the Indian spiritual traditions and rituals have a .composite - nay, rather complex - heritage. To trace their evolution one has to untangle the manifold cultural and cross-cultural strands of legacies and beliefs enfolding them. And, the task is not always very successful, as their very beginnings are shrouded in the hoary past!

### **Goddess Arati**

The essential constituent, the *sine qua non*, of the ritual of *arati* is - fire. In other words, *arati* is a kind of simple fire ritual. That is why it is frequently translated as a ritual of 'waving of lighted lamps'. It closely resembles the popular ritual of exorcising the bad effects of an 'evil-eye' (*dristi dosha*). The origins of the rite can be traced back to the Vedic time. About a dozen times in the Rig Veda and a number of times in the later Vedic texts, a group of female demons of an inferior class, named *aratis* are the Atharvana Veda, these *aratis* are represented as a single deity, Aarati, Arati is a personification of ill-will, jealousy, spite and ill-liberality. She is depicted as a golden-complexion, beautiful woman who is said to appear in men's dreams as a naked seductress. The purported symbolism is obvious. The golden-complexion is suggestive of avarice of wealth (gold) and the unclad beauty is that of erotic desire. Some mantras (magical formulas) and fire rituals in the Atharvana Veda are intended to exorcise the wicks are the *samithas*; the *arati* flame is the *homagni*; the fuel used to burn the lamp is the *havis*; the *arati-pslams* are the Vedic incantations; the intoxicating ecstasy of mystic devotion is the psychotropic *soma-rasa*; the sense of separateness the isolation (*aham*) is the sacrificial animal (*yagna pasu*). And withal, the whole ritual of *arati* can be envisioned as a simplified representation of the Vedic *yagna*. And what is more, onto the paradigm of the Vedic *yagna* are grafted many expedient methods drawn from the tenets of the again as *tantras* and the *yoga*.

### **A Sail from the I-land**

To the majority worship in a congregational setting is helpful in more than one way. In a communal prayer devotees can pray in a space charged with the homogeneous devotional fervour of a group. While singing devotional songs in unison, beating time to a rhythm, a devotee can cut across the cussed insulations of the ego and merge easily into the group rhythm. It induces a sense of expanded consciousness in which

one tends to lose the individual 'voice'. The sense of being 'apart from the world' is subtly replaced by an awareness of being a part of a 'Whole'. And what is more, wrapped up by the warm emotional fervour of the group, one's enisled ice-berg of the sense of separate identity melts into the mainstream of collective consciousness. Besides, the involvement of intense visual (such as an aesthetically decorated idol), acoustic (such as group singing in accompaniment of gongs, cymbals and bells) and, olfactory (such as aromatic incense, fragrance from flowers, etc.) stimuli in the performance of *arati*, redounds in inducing a kind of airy and rhapsodic ecstasy in the hearts of the participants.

### **A waste of Breath?**

Prolonged singing of psalms in *arati* is not a mere breath consuming vocal performance. If grasped properly, it is indeed a breathtaking technique of pranayama. While offering pancharart, for instance, the devotee sings, "With the fire of devotion glowing in our hearts, we offer Kakad *arati* Burning our five vital forces and the sense of ego as wicks in the *arati* lamp, we offer *arati*, etc. No doubt the concept is inspiringly profound. But, how to make the five pranas (vital forces) and the ego as offering? The use of such symbolic jargon, like pranas pancha tattwas, etc. presupposes a minimum knowledge of the esoteric terminology for a meaningful performance of *arati*. If that is so, how can the rituals such as *arati* be reckoned as simple spiritual methods meant for the practice of the common masses? How could the great masters of the School of Mystic Devotion the laity ? The above quoted arati-song, for instance, was composed by no less a master than Sant Tukaram who minded much for the many. A clue to this question can be found in the tenets of the Vedic Tradition itself. The practice of Vedic recitation (swadhyaya) was conceived as a kind of oblation of speech to the internal vital fire (pranagnihotra). Respiration itself is conceived as an unceasing oblation. Kausatiki Brahmana Upanishad (II-5) Says for instance, "The Inner Agnihotra. . . so it is called. As long, verily, as a person is speaking, he is not able to breathe. Then he is sacrificing breath in speech. As long, verily, as a person is breathing, he is not able to speak. Then he is sacrificing speech in breath. These two are unending immortal oblations; whether waking or sleeping, one is sacrificing continuously, uninterruptedly."

### **Natural Pranayama**

If it is such a natural physiological process, then why any need to perform a *yagna* or an *agnihotra*? It is because, this natural libationary process goes unawares and, the basic design of the Vedic *yagna* is to make one cognize these processes and, discover their structural and functional harmony in the macrocosm. Bereft of such a recognition speech becomes a waste of breath! The very tradition which designates respiration as an unceasing libation cautions that, "If one offers the *Agnihotra* sacrifice without knowing this, it would be, as if, just pouring the offering on ashes!" So, it is the awareness which makes even profane speech or action a sacred ritual ! It is one of the reasons why the Vedic chanting is done by rote. The automation in recitation involves no deliberate effort of recalling the evil spell induced by the goddess *arati*. Literally, *arati* means absence of pleasure and amusement, uneasiness or agitation (*arati*). It is believed that the state of *arati* is produced in a person either by a magical spell (witchcraft) or, by the zealous or spiteful looks of others ('evileye'). *Agni* is hailed in the Vedas as the chief expeller of evil forces (demons), and sonic fire-rituals are prescribed to nullify the noxious effects (*arati*) produced either by a magical spell or by an 'evil-eye'. The ritual consists of a priest waving fire (either in the form of a kindled lamp or an inflamed fuel of specific kinds), in circular motion before the afflicted person, chanting some *mantras* invoking auspiciousness and revoking the inauspicious spell. So *arati* might originally be meaning 'that which takes away (*arati*) the uneasiness (*ariti*).

### **Ethnology**

*arati* used to be a part of the routine daily services rendered to a king by the royal priests to exorcise the harmful effects produced by the looks of 'the green eyed' and as a protective charm against any sorcery by the enemies of the king. Later, as already explained, it was adapted into the *puja* to a deity along with other procedures of royal honours. According to the Vedic tradition, *Agni* (Fire) is the divine priest and the conveyer of offerings to the gods. The fire of the *arati-lamp* is conceived as a receptacle conveying the arduous prayers of the devotees to the deity to the devotees. The act of passing hands over the sacred-flame and quickly drawing them unto their faces and heads at the end of the *arati* is a gesture of

drawing unto themselves the auspicious energy bestowed by the deity through the courier, i.e the arati-flame.

It was the masters of the school of Bhakti who transformed the simple fire-ritual into an exalted spiritual method. In their hands “*arati*” has acquired a new meaning and a purpose. The simple ritual of exorcising the godling *arati* is metamorphosed into a ceremonial act of devotion which is done with a fervent ardour *arati*, an act of delightful (spiritual) intercourse culminating in a state of rapturous ecstasy of union, a < abounding in, rati communion (with the Divine).

### **Aham-medha Yag{n}a!**

As a popular form of worship, *arati* is an ingenious custom conceived and cultivated by many a master of the School of Mystic Devotion. The saints of the Bhakti Tradition not only strove to cut off all philosophical dead wood from the spiritual syllabi but also contrived a few ritual praxes which would serve as user friendly spiritual tools for the common masses. For, in a congregational worship like *arati*, there are no prescriptions of caste and creed; no complicated prescriptions of intricate liturgical canons; no priestly middlemen; nor any ecclesiastical meddlesome men; no abstruse and awesome incantations; no elaborate and extravagant ritual paraphernalia; no prerequisites of high browed learning; no adulterated taboos of ritual pollutions; nor any beguiling metaphysical illusions. Notwithstanding all these 'no'-s, the masters of the Bhakti School saw to it that the continuity of the stream of (Vedic) tradition passed unbroken! With a unique syncretistic genius, they brought about a metamorphosis in spiritual methodology. The ritual of *arati* is a unique example of (lie methodological syncretism. The Cosmic Purusha of the Vedas has become the incarnated ista (the chosen deity); the abstract and impersonal Vedic divinities have been given a concrete shape and a personalised idiom; the Vedic fire-altar has been simplified into the pliant *arati* tray-let, esp., of the *pancharati*; the incantations to the memory, thus facilitating the reciter to be in 'the awareness' uninterruptedly. A similar phenomena happens while singing 'arati-psalms where the singing becomes an oblation into the fire of devotion in the heart of the devotee. Just as an oblation of clarified butter flares up the fire kindled in the sacred fire-altar the

singing of psalms with an understanding of their meaning augment the fire of devotion in the devotee's heart.

### **Meangingful Prayer**

Mere reeling off a hymn or a litany is not prayer. A hymn or a psalm is an expression of ardent devotion which in turn is capable of evoking kindred emotions in the hearts of those who recite it. The words the sounds are only the body of a hymn and, it is the ardour which is the life-force that animates it. Again, it is the knowledge of the meaning of the hymn that can fan the dormant fire of fervent feelings in the heart of the reciter. Recitation of a hymn bereft of the knowledge of its meaning is not more than facile parrotry. To save the spiritual tradition from such bathos the saint-poets of mediaeval India taught and composed in vernaculars and exhorted people to use their vernaculars in the hymnal prayers. They saw no meaning in superstitiously clinging to any language to commune with the Divine esp., when one cannot understand it.

### **The First Glimmerings of Sai *arati***

The first glimmerings of the dawn of the *arati* tradition in Shirdi are a bit foggy. In the whole gamut of the literature on Sri Sai Baba, the details regarding how and whence the custom of performing regular *aratis* to Baba commenced, are not clearly recorded. Even the small stray details scattered here and there are fuzzy and incongruous. Let us first glean all the available data from various sources and construct them into a coherent hypothetical sequence, before proceeding to discuss the posing discrepancies therein.

### **The Seed-bed of Sai Worship**

It would be a historical fallacy to ascribe to a person or to a point in time the beginnings of an eventful tradition like *arati*. Though they seem to have been founded by some one at a particular point in time, the real beginnings of all such traditions are always rooted far back and their first sproutings are usually looked upon as the starting points. The introduction of *arati* as a regular congregational worship at Shirdi is to be seen as marking a new phase in the evolution of the worship of Sri Sai Baba. Even from the day of his advent at Shirdi, people - though a handful in the beginning - looked upon him as a holy man, a fakir (a Muslim ascetic).

To pious Hindus, an ascetic, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, is a holy man worthy of reverence. As Sai Baba's fame soon started spreading, people - mostly Hindus -were drawn to him in galore from far and wide. It is the pious custom of the Hindus to bow down or prostrate in reverence before a saint by touching his feet, as a mark of humility and self-abnegation. As most of the people who were drawn to Sri Sai Baba, from the outset, were Hindus, we can imagine the customary fashion in which he could have been honoured in general. Obviously Baba did not object to the pious usage. Strictly speaking, that was the seed-bed upon which the glorious tree of Sai Worship has begun to grow!

As the devotee's emotional attachment to his Guru grows, the inflated emotional fervour seeks some form of expression.

### **What is a ritual?**

First, he revels in glorifying the object of his adoration, which naturally redounds in its devout deification. Besides, the culture in which he is situated readily offers various outlets in the form of rituals, ceremonies and methods of worship. He spontaneously takes to one of the modes that becomingly ventilates his devotional fervour. At this juncture arises the perpetual pious dilemma on the part of a genuine saint -whether to accept, or not to accept the worship! To accept worship naturally goes against the grain of saint and, not to accept amounts to rejection of the pious and loving sentiments of the devotees. Besides, such devotional expressions are not only conducive in deflating the pent up emotional fervour of the devotees but also in nurturing a healthy unfoldment of fine spiritual propensities - if directed meaningfully. A ritual is an act of expression to a mystic experience and, it may become instrumental, if becomingly re-enacted, in opening up to an analogous experience.

### **A Unique Feature, of Sai Devotion**

The process hitherto explained may go well in a general context. But, Sai Baba is a unique phenomenon. Deification is usually a projection of one's subjective image of (he divine onto an object of adoration. But with Sai Baba, the process is almost the reverse. In the face of baffling manifestations of his almost "cosmocratic' powers, the apotheosis becomes almost spontaneous and effortless. The benign numinous awe, produced by the objective awareness of his incredible preternatural powers, opens

the innermost doors of one's consciousness through which the godlike image (of Sri Sai Baba) penetrates itself spontaneously. Such unaffected awareness or recognition of (he divine and the sublime is the pith of all spiritual paths and the bedrock of all mystic experiences. With Sri Sai Baba such recognition is effected almost irresistibly and, herein lies the unique glory and efficacy of the Sai Tradition as a spiritual path,

### **The Priest Primal of Sai Worship**

Chand Bhai Patil was the first who experienced and recognised the power and grace of Sri Sai Baba. He venerated him in the Muslim way. It was Mhalsapati, the priest of the Khandoba shrine at Shirdi, who first worshipped Sai Baba in the Hindu fashion. It is interesting to note that the same orthodox priest of Khandoba, who is said to have refused even the entree of 'Sai Fakir' into the Khandoba shrine, later turned out to be his first worshipper. The process of the transformation and the actual mode in which Mhalsapali used to worship Sai Baba are shrouded in the hazy past. For, according to the recorded details even Mhalsapali was allowed to apply sandal paste only to Baba's throat.

Mere application of sandal paste to the throat can hardly be designated as *puja* in the generic sense of the term. In the temples of Maharashtra it is customary that the priest smears sandal paste on the foreheads of the devotees as a mark of divine *prasad*. In the light of (he pious custom, it can be conjectured, that the priest of Khandoba might have been offering *prasad* {along with the customary smearing of sandal paste} to Baba which the latter accepted as a gesture of respect to the deity and to the pious sentiments of the priest. Subsequently, as Mhalsapati's faith in Baba grew, he would have extended the *samc puja*, which he was doing in the Khandoba shrine, to Baba also, of course, to the extent Baba permitted. But, as already has been admitted, this is only conjecture!

### **Dengle's Devotion**

Taking the precedence of Mhalsapati, another devotee by name Nanasaheb alias Sitaram Dengle of Jali Nimgaon a local landlord, wanted to worship Baba. But Baba brusquely brushed his request aside and suggested that Dengle might rather offer his worship to the pillar in the Musjid. Dengle did as directed by Baba but he was not

contented. Again he approached Baba with the same appeal and Baba too reiterated his stance. But this time Dengele was adamant on his purpose and with the support of another devotee by name Dhaggu Bhai, proceeded worshipping Baba. Baba did rant and rave at it. And, Dengele reckoned them all as Baba's blessing! Long after that, Bapurao Chandorkar, son of Nanasaheb Chandorkar, seems to have enjoyed the privilege of worshipping Baba by applying sandal paste to his forehead {almost} in the manner of Mhalsapati.

### **A Cultural Breakthrough**

But for a few stray instances as mentioned above, it can be surmised that the custom of offering ritual worship to the person of Sri Sai Baba was not in common vogue until - probably - 1909, i.e. about nine years before he attained Mahasamadhi! It is, in one way, very surprising, especially in the Maharastrean cultural context, where saints are venerated as concrete manifestations of the Divine . Besides, as seen already, Sri Sai Baba is a wondrous saint, with irresistible magnetism. His mystic disposition, unearthly port, spiritually upholding presence, readily evoked love and devotion in the hearts of those who came in contact with him. Even though many devotees had been adoring him as their guru-god and even worshipping him as their chosen-deity (*upasana daiva* or *istti*), it was more personal and had not taken a collective or cultic dimension for a conspicuously long period. The belated onset of traditional expressions of devotion to him on a social scale seems intriguing at the first sight. But once the expressions got unleashed, they steadily inundated the Indian cultural scene. In an incredibly short time, the tradition of Sai worship cut across the boundaries of hagiolatry and Sai Baba has become integrally incorporated into the Hindu pantheon! The natural ease and speed with which the whole transformation has come about seem quite unprecedented in the history of spiritual traditions of the world!

### **The \*Urs' Enigma**

It seems easy to account for the apparent paucity in the growth of Sai Worship in its initial stages. One is Baba's attitude itself, For a long lime Baba had taken a hard line over favouring any conventional expressions of devotion to his person. His

Muslim men seems to the another reason that produced an almost congenital resistance among his Hindu devotees to embark upon a congregational mode of worship to Sri Sai Baba according to Hindu customs. The very first proposal for a public celebration in Shirdi, of course, proposed by his Hindu devotees themselves, was '*urs*' - a Muslim religious celebration! It was proposed by one Gopalrao Gund and seconded by other local devotees of Shirdi. When the devotees asked Baba to suggest a date, Baba ingeniously advised them to make it coincide with Sriram Navami, one of the most important Hindu festivals. Thus the first public function, "Urs-cum-Sriram Navami was celebrated in 1897. It might be surprising to note that the devotees who proposed and organised the '*urs*' on Sriram Navami were all Hindus. But the wonder wanes as we take note of the fact that most of the direct devotees of Sri Sai Baba, though they cherished the intellection that Baba's creed was a veritable mystery which cut across all religious denominations, yet in all practical dealings with regard to him, they look him to be a Muslim. But this peripheral recognition did not affect their innermost awareness of Baba's real nature as the Universal Spirit, which transcended all corporeal confines. All the zealous efforts to strip the Muslim trappings off the public image of Sri Sai Baba, and put a Hindu grab on it, were patently a later development.

### **Sandal Procession**

The original sources are not clear as to how many years the annual '*urs*' continued to be celebrated. Probably, it would have soon fallen into desuetude and by the year 1912 the '*urs*' was totally converted into the celebration of a Fair on Ram Navami. In 1902 another annual celebration of Sandal Procession. By far, the Annual Fair on 'Sriram Navami' is the grandest local celebration at Shirdi. Curiously enough Baba's Mahasamadhi (in 1918) too coincided with another important Hindu festival - Vijaya Dasami. From 1918 Vijaya Dasami has been celebrated at Shirdi as the Mahasamadhi Day or the Punya Tithi Day of Sri Sai Baba. Apart from these occasional customary celebrations, *arati* is the most popular and important from the ritual adoration offered to Sri Sai Baba at Shirdi.

## **CHAPTER - II**

Who could have been the initiator of the custom of Shirdi aratis - if at all there were one? Even from a cursory look into the biography of Shri Sai Baba it becomes clear that any instance of pomp and ceremony goes against his grain. Arati is an exalted ritual expression of devotion, and it would be indubitably out of the question that Baba would have given a pleasing nod to it, or that he himself instituted the custom. Clearly, it should have been the brainchild of some of his enthusiastic devotees, among whom one or two might have incidentally come out to play the father.

### **Who Performed the First Arati?**

It is a familiar notion among many Sai devotees that the arati tradition at Shirdi was started by Shri K.J. Bhishma, which is in a way off the mark. Swami Sai Sharan Anand, who had direct association with Baba for about eight years, i.e. from 1911 to 1918, informs, "In the beginning only Mhalsapati and Mahadev, son of Nanasaheb Chandorkar, used to worship Baba. Afterwards the tradition of arati was started. Morning (Kakad) and Night (Shej) Aratis were conducted in the Chavadi. Only Noon arati was performed in the Dwarakamai. The arati tradition was first started by Noolkar, a Retd. Mamedar of Pandharpur." Shri Kakasaheb alias H.S. Dixit also says, "Before, Baba never allowed anybody to perform arati to him. But, after some time, (Lakshman Krishnaji) Tatyasaheb Noolkar had the honour of giving arati to Shri Sai Baba for the first time."

So it was to Shri Tatyasaheb alias (Laxman Krishnaji) Noolkar that the laurels of setting up the arati tradition in Shirdi go. Shri Noolkar was a sub-judge at Pandharpur. Shri Nanasaheb Chandorkar, was also working there in 1908 as Mamedar. The first Shri Noolkar heard of Shri Sai Baba was from Shri Nanasaheb, with whom he visited Shirdi for the first time in 1909. He was overwhelmingly impressed with Shri Sai Baba even at the first sight.

### **Noolkar The Father of Shirdi Aratis**

As he was already on the verge of his superannuation, he resolved to settle at Shirdi for good. Shortly after, he obtained voluntary retirement from service and lost no time repairing to the holy feet of Baba. He remained there adoring his beloved Sadguru till he pass away in March 1911. It was a long cherished dream of many a

devotee at Shirdi to perform regular congregational worship (arati) to Shri Sai Baba. But Baba did not countenance such a fanfare of ritualistic exuberance to his person and used to be adamant in turning down all the buoyant appeals of the devotees. At last, devotees succeeded in obtaining Baba's sufferance to perform aratis. Unfortunately the actual circumstance that surrounded the event went off the record. By the look of it, it seemed as though Baba had to give in to the devout sentiments of Shri Noolkar out of his deep affection towards the latter. Once the permission was given, the devotees lost no chance to set it up as an ongoing tradition. Tatyasaheb turned out to be the lucky officiating priest of the daily arati services. Shri Noolkar took to the seva (devout service) with enthusiasm and, carried it out as the most precious good fortune in his life.

### **The Pillar of Guru Pooja**

Besides the tradition of aratis there is another tradition the beginnings of which go with the name of Tatyasaheb. It is the custom of Guru Puja Celebrations on Guru Poornima Day. According to both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, Guru Puja Day or Guru Poornima Day is celebrated on the Full Moon day of the Lunar month Ashadha, which corresponds to June-July of the Roman Calendar. To this day Guru Poornima is one of the major celebrations at Shirdi. Shri H.V. Sathe, one of the close devotees of Shri Sai Baba recounts, "Baba's arati and Puja on ordinary days were started, but for some time there was no celebration of Guru Poornima by special worship of Baba on that day. Baba himself sent for my father-in-law (Shri Dada Kelkar) and said do you not know that this is Guru Poornima? Bring your worship material and do your Guru Puja. Then we had Guru Puja on that day and this practice of celebrating Guru Poornima by all the devotees worshipping Baba, then begun, has continued up to date."

### **The rise of Guru Poornima**

The above account of Sathe has given way to the general belief among Sai devotees that as Baba 'himself sent for Dada Kelkar, reminded him of the Guru Poornima and asked him to render puja, the custom of celebrating Guru Poornima at Shirdi was founded by Baba himself. But a letter published in the Shri Sai Leela (Monthly) recently throws some light on the actual antecedents of the event. The

letter was written by Shri Tatyasaheb Noolkar to Shri Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Unfortunately the date of the letter is not mentioned. The letter reads :

"On Saturday just as I got up in bed, remembered it was Guru Puja day and made preparations. After Bhiksha (begging rounds of Sai Baba) we were permitted to perform Guru Puja. Baba allowed us to do all upachar (particulars and points of worship) quietly. He returned all Dakshina that was given at the time of Puja. Then He sent word to Radhakrishna and Dadabhat (Dada Kelkar, father-in-law of Rao Bahadur Sathe) that Puja and arati was being done and they should come soon. So Radhakrishna sent her Puja and Dada came with his Puja articles."

It is evident from the above letter that some devotees who knew that it was Guru Pournima, implored Baba to allow them to do Guru Puja and eventually obtained his suffrage somehow. And that only after meting out the permission to other devotees that Baba sent word to Dada Kelkar. The expressions, "we were permitted," "Baba allowed..... quietly" in the above letter clearly indicate Baba's attitude toward the puja, suggesting that he would have almost unwillingly nodded his assent to it at the outset.

Shri Noolkar suddenly fell ill in March 1911 and, breathed his last in Shirdi with Baba's name on his tongue, Baba bhajan in his ears and Baba's pada teerth in his gullet! On hearing the news of Tatyasaheb's demise, Baba said in a mournful mood, "Oh, my Tatyaba has left ahead of us! Now what am I to do? I too shall leave! What for this Masjid and what for Shirdi? Tatyaba was a good man. He listened to me and I helped him to accomplish his life's goal. He will be born no more!" Such was the movingly deep love Baba bore for his Tatyaba! Baba's epitaphic pronouncement - "He will be born no more!" - makes it seem, as if, each circle of the arati-lamp which Noolkar revolved before Baba dissolved each set of his karmic resolves (potential vasanas or propensities) for future cycle of births! Shri Tatyasaheb Noolkar's name has become immortal in the annals of Shirdi history as the initiator of the institution of aratis. Curiously enough, the last judgement he had signed just before his retirement from the office of the Sub Judge of Pandharpur was a crucial court case regarding the arati rights of the famous temple of Lord Vitthal!

**Megharati**

After the demise of Shri Tatyasaheb Noolkar, one devotee by name Megha Shyam took over the charge of officiating at Baba aratis. Megha was a poor, simple and austere Gujarati Brahmin. Shri Sai Saran Anandaji describes his unique style of performing Baba's arati thus, "After Noolkar's death, Megha got the good fortune (of conducting Baba's arati). With long beard, matted hair, Megha shone with a healthy body fair in complexion. He used to perform arati standing on one leg. Till the arati was over, he never used even to move his head. He performed arati with utmost concentration."

**Baba's Mourning Arati To His Devotee**

Megha passed away on January 19, 1912, i.e. within a year after he had assumed the charge of officiating at Baba aratis. Baba rarely lamented anybody's death. Of the few instances, we have already noted how Baba mourned the death of Shri Noolkar. The way he reacted to the death of Megha is even more touching. Shri Dadasaheb G.S. Khaparde, who witnessed the scene, records in his Diary, "This was a very sad day.... Dixit Kaka told me that Megha had died about 4 a.m. The Kakad Arati was done but Sayin Maharaj did not show his face clear and did not appear to open his eyes. He never threw glances spreading grace. After we returned, arrangements were made for the cremation of Megha's body. Sayin Baba came just as the body was being brought out and loudly lamented his death. His voice was so touching that it brought tears to every eye. He followed the body up to the bend in the main road near the village and then went his usual way. Megha's body was taken under the Bada tree and consigned to flames there. Sayin Baba could be distinctly heard lamenting his death even at that distance, and he was seen waving his hands and swaying as if in arati to say goodbye.... Dixit Kaka, myself, Bapusaheb Jog, Upasani, Dada Kelkar and all were there, and praised the lot of Megha that his body was seen and touched by Sayin Baba on the head, heart, shoulders and feet."

After Megha's demise, one Sakharam Hari alias Bapusaheb Jog stepped forward to fill Megha's shoes as the presbyter of the arati conductions under the orders of Shri Sai Baba. Jog was also a man of ascetic deportment like Megha with a flair for

orthodoxy. He carried out his priestly ministrations with a pious zeal till Baba passed out of the earthly scene. Obviously he enjoyed the longest period - i.e. about six years - of rendering priestly services in Baba's durbar.

### **The Aayee**

Even though Shri Tatyasaheb Noolkar has been acknowledged as the initiator of the institution of arati in Shirdi, there was another devout soul 'behind the scenes', who set the stage ready. It was Radhakrishna Ayi. In fact the custom of performing arati to Shri Sai Baba was her brainchild. Ayi's real name was Smt. Sundaribai Kshirasagar. She lost her husband in her early years and to make up for the misfortune, she repaired to Pandharpur to spend her life in the service of her chosen deity, Lord Krishna. At heart she was of an occult disposition. She spent a few pious years at Pandharpur, when she came to hear of Shri Sai Baba. She set foot in Shirdi, for the first time, in 1905 along with Shri Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Even on her first visit she felt in her bones that Shirdi was her real home and Shri Sai Baba was her Lord Krishna. Without any second thought she made Shirdi her home. In her early days at Shirdi, she was found constantly chanting the holy name 'Radhakrishna', carrying a small idol of the deity. Hence, people began to call her 'Radhakrishna Ayi' which stuck to her to the end. Ayi means mother. She was a real live wire and in no time she ushered in a new phase in the mode of devotional expression in Shirdi. It was her cherished dream that her Sai Vittal should be duly adored with all the pomp and paraphernalia with which 'He' was being worshipped at Pandharpur. It almost became the ruling passion of her life. She became up to her ears in working out her rainbow. She always found it hard to bring Baba round to her projects. For some reason, Baba used to be very hard on her and never even allowed her to come anywhere near him. So, Ayi never dared to face Baba directly but, in her own way made her presence felt among other devotees. Her invisible workmanship was there behind most of the institutionalised ceremonies in Shirdi, like Chavadi procession, Ram Navami celebrations, Gopalakalotsav, regular arati performance, etc. The tribute Shri Kakasaheb Dixit paid to her in his Introduction to Shri Sai Satcharitra, clearly shows her role in changing the semblance of Shirdi. "...Soon Shirdi was transformed into a Sansthan. Performance of arati with all royal

honours began to be offered to Sai Maharaj with all pomp and eclat. All the royal paraphernalia like music, horse and palanquin, uniformed escorts-cum-harbingers with maces, bhajan parties, started accompanying him in a procession as he proceeded to the Chavadi. The Chavadi was decorated with ornamentations like mirrors. Stone slabs were fixed on the floors of the Masjid and the Chavadi. The one who was responsible for all these things was Sundaribai Kshirasagar (alias Radhakrishna Ayi). She was an acharya of loving devotion. Even though she had no wealth, she offered her body, mind and all to the service of Sai Baba. She could procure various articles from the devotees with which she made the Shirdi Sansthan grand and gorgeous. But, unfortunately, she passed away at the young age of thirty five. She was in Shirdi for about eight or nine years. Yet, what she could accomplish in such a short span, is impossible for anyone else to do even in twenty five years. It is because of her efforts that the custom of offering Kakad Arati in the morning and Shej Arati at night to Shri Sai Baba in the Chavadi has begun.... Radhakrishna Ayi not only diligently rendered her own services, but with love and devotion made others also serve. A number of women volunteered to do jobs like carrying stones and earth, sweeping, digging earth and filling pits (on the roads), planting trees, hewing firewood (for dhuni) cleaning the Masjid, cleansing utensils, making confetti, tailoring flags, etc. Even ladies from wealthy aristocratic families used to come and gladly join in doing those jobs and felt elated at their good fortune." Ayi suddenly passed away in 1916. She is, no doubt, as Kakasaheb Dixit described, 'an acharya of loving devotion'<sup>1</sup> - nay, rather of 'living devotion!'

### **Exploring the Date**

The exact date/month/ in which the regular custom of performing aratis commenced is not clear. Shri Sai Satcharitra (Ch. 4, P. 21) states that the Night (Shej) Arati commenced on 10/12/1910. In the same book in Ch. 37 (p. 204) it is stated that from 10/12/1909 devotees began to offer regular worship to Baba in the Chavadi! In the said context in Ch. 4 it is also recorded that two more incidents took place on that day, i.e. on 10/12/1910. One is Shri G.S. Khaparde permission from Baba to leave Shirdi and the other was the laying of the foundation stone of Dixit Wada. But according the Diary of Shri G.S. Khaparde, the actual permission to leave Shirdi was

granted to him on 12/12/1910. On his first visit to Shirdi, Shri Khaparde stayed for about eight days, i.e. from 5/12/1910 to 12/12/1910. There is no mention of any arati - in any of the entries made on those days in his Diary - whether Morning, Midday, or Night - or anything about the foundation laying ceremony of the Dixit Wada! Shri Khaparde who did not elide to note down even seemingly insignificant happenings, would not have passed over recording such an important event as the commencement of Sej Arati -if it took place on 10/12/1910. On the authority of Shri Sai Satcharitra, (but with a slight modification of the date by a margin of two days) if the commencement of Shej Arati was to coincide with the leave-taking or departure of Shri G.S. Khaparde, then it should be on 12/12/1910.

### **A Moot Point**

One more obstacle crops up on the way for a smooth arrival at the conclusion. In the context of narrating the famous Jamner Miracle in Shri Sai Satcharitra (Ch. 33), it is said, "About 1904-05 A.D., Baba called one Ramgirbua.... and told him.... to stop at Jamner on his way home and give the Udi, and arati, to Nanasaheb.... Then Baba asked Shama to write a well-known arati composed by Madhav Adkar, and give a copy of it with Udi to Ramgirbua, to be delivered to Nanasaheb." If the custom of performing arati to Shri Sai Baba started only in December 1910, how could it happen that Baba sent the famous arati song 'Arati Sai Baba....' by Madhav Adkar in 1904-05?

The udi was sent by Baba to save Nanasaheb's daughter, Mainatai, who was then undergoing a risky delivery, Shri B.V. Narasimha Swamiji writes, "About 1904 or so, Baba commissioned him (Ramgirbua) to go to Jamner, in order to deliver to Nana Chandorkar a packet of udi and a set of papers containing Bhishma's aratis for the puja of Baba, modelled on the Pandhapur aratis.... So, he (Ramgirbua) went there (Jamner).... (and) handed over to Nana the udi,... The arati paper also was handed over to Nana for his approval, so that it might be used for Baba's puja at Shirdi."

As Hemadpant says, the paper containing the arati-song was sent by Baba to Nanasaheb to be recited by the latter in prayer. Shri B.V. Narasimha Swamiji states that the same was sent for Nanasaheb's approval! It is hard to believe that Baba himself would send an arati song written in his praise to a devotee to sing in prayer!

By all means such an act seems to go against Baba's grain. On the other hand, it is even a humiliating proposition to imagine the probability of Baba himself sending a song devoutly composed by a devotee in his (Baba's) praise for the approval of some other devotee (however important or influential he might be). Curiously, neither Mainatai nor Bapurao Chandorkar (son of Nanasaheb) mentions anything about the arati-song in their reminiscences.

In view of all the above incongruities, it can be surmised, without much impugn, that Baba would have sent only udi - as is customary with his ways - through Ramgirbua. As he already been noted, long before 1910 devotees had been planning to commence the performance of regular arati to Shri Sai Baba and had been collecting devotional songs for that purpose; but for the approval of Baba the actual commencement of arati had been stalled till 1910. On knowing Ramgirbua was going to Jamner, the local devotees (like Shama) would have sent the arati-psalm to Nanasaheb for his opinion. According to the pious custom, Shama would have requested Baba to give the copy of the arati from his hands to Ramgirbua as a gesture of blessing.

It can be deduced from the available data that the custom of offering regular arati to Shri Sai Baba commenced with Shej Arati when Baba slept at the Chavadi, and later the Kakad when he woke up there. The performance of the Midday and the Evening Aratis at the Masjid might have been introduced subsequently.

### **Why 'no' Kakad & Shej Aratis at the Masjid**

Here pops up another pertinent question! Why Baba did not allow Kakad and Shej Aratis to be performed at the Masjid? In the absence of any record either of Baba explaining himself or of a direct devotee explicating the reasons, the only course left is to take recourse to conjecturing again. Though, in a general sense, all aratis are essentially the same, in the strict liturgical sense, the Noon and Eve Aratis are only a hymnal, whereas Kakad and Shej Aratis come under sevas (services), which form a part of the daily services in a temple. The latter might have been considered more idolatrous in character and so more offending to the orthodox Muslim sentiments. Not identifying himself in totality with any religious community by steering along an unbiased middle path of transcendence seems to be the constant leitmotif of Baba's

life style. Lest there should be any scope for a communal hubbub by the performance of Kakad and Shej Aratis in the Masjid, which are very akin to the services in a Hindu temple, Baba might have disapproved their performance (in the Masjid). The inherent limitations of this pure conjecture are legion and it cannot be helped!

### **Wada Arati**

The pious custom enjoins that the daily liturgical services such as Kakad and Shej Aratis, if once undertaken, should be attended to without a break. As Baba did not permit the Shej and the Kakad Aratis to be performed at the Masjid, the devotees had to conduct them only at the Chavadi when Baba slept there on every alternate night. This gave rise to the problem of continuity of the daily seva. As a solution, the devotees started performing aratis to Baba's picture at Sathe Wada when Baba slept at the Masjid. Later, after the Dixit Wada was constructed, another arati was set up there. Shri Bapusaheb Jog was in charge of conducting the aratis at the Sathe Wada. After Baba's padukas were installed at the Gurusthan in 1912, another, a third, arati used to be performed at the Gurusthan. A young man, by name Dixit, was appointed to officiate at the aratis at the Gurusthan. The result; two aratis performed simultaneously, one at Sathe Wada and one at Gurusthan. The situation seemed odd because Sathe Wada and Gurusthan are located practically in the same compound! One day Baba cut a joke at Shri Jog. Pointing to Shri Dixit, he said, "Look! This boy will surely outdo you. You can't stand in competition with him!" It so turned out that after some time devotees were attracted more to the aratis performed at the Gurusthan and the attendance at Sathe Wada gradually waned. But Jog perseveringly kept the Sathe Wada aratis just jogging along by performing them all alone, or with only one or two participants!

### **A Glimpse of Sai Arati**

In Shri Sai Satcharitra we find a passing glimpse of how the aratis were conducted during Baba's time. "Before the midday-meal, the bell in the Masjid rings announcing the performance of the noon-worship and arati to Shri Sai Baba. All devotees assemble at the Masjid. First Baba is worshipped ceremoniously with gandhakshatas (sandal and rice mixed with vermilion and turmeric). Then

Bapusaheb Jog performs arati with love and devotion. Both men and women join in performing Noon Arati. As women stand up in the Masjid, men assemble in the open courtyard below. All the devotees loudly sing arati psalms in unison to the accompaniment of gongs, bells and cymbals. Baba sits in his seat as usual smoking his chilim. Jog stands right in his front waving pancharati while ringing the bell with his left hand.... At the end of the arati all devotees say ghosanna loudly chanting 'Shri Satchidananda Sadguru Sainath Maharaj ki Jai!' After the devout singing is over, Jog waves ignited camphor (neerajana), reverentially prostrates before Baba and then offers sugar candy as naivedya to Shri Sai Baba. As Baba stretches his hand to receive, Jog places in Baba's hands the candy, in a quantity as much as it fits in Baba's hand. The rest is distributed among the devotees as prasad."

### **The Living Idol**

To the devotees, offering ritual worship and arati to Shri Sai Baba was not a 'mere' gesture of reverence to the saint. To them Sai Baba was their chosen deity, divinity personified, and the 'living idol' of their abstract 'idea of God on earth'. It would be interesting to note the role 'played' by the 'living idol' during the arati sessions. During the arati Baba was usually found sitting quietly smoking his chilim or conversing with some devotee, as if, unmindful of the ritual exuberance shown to his person. Baba's moods were quite unpredictable and he used to suddenly flare up with rage. Devotees were constantly apprehensive that Baba might disrupt the arati at any moment! Sometimes, Baba "exhibited great grace accompanied by hard words", "At times, when he was in a pleased mood, (he) danced as he left the Chavadi and went towards the Masjid". Even though Baba let the arati "pass off easy", after the arati was over it was his usual custom to use "hard words against the internal enemies by naming them as Appa Kote, Telin, Waman Tatya, etc.", as if to fulfil the devotees' prayer in the arati, "kam krodh mad matsar attunee kakada kela" ('Oh Lord Sainath, we offer Kakad Arati to thee!.... I make my lust, anger, pride, envy and hatred as wicks', etc.)

### **Sparks from the Mystic Fire of Arati**

Though Baba seemed unmindful of the ritual expression of the devotees' loving veneration, he did reciprocate their love in his own unique style. It was during the

time of arati that many a devotee was blessed with rare and wonderful glimpses of Shri Sai Baba. Shri Khaparde describes the aratis as "edifying" and noticed that Baba was particularly gracious at the time of arati and "sent out wonderful moments of joy and instruction!" Shri K.J. Bishma articulates this fact when he sings in one of the arati psalms, "Lo! Now seen with help of the light (emanating from the flames of the pancharati), Sadguru Sainath is shining forth with brilliance. That illumination destroys the darkness (of all sense) of duality and lo, both the seer and the seen shine as One (without any shade of difference). Many remarks made by Shri G.S. Khaparde in his Diary bear testimony to this truth. Let's glean a few of the glimpses: (17/1/1912) "...we went to the Chavadi for Kakad Arati. Megha was too ill to attend. So Bapusaheb Jog did the Arati. Saying Baba showed his face and smiled most benignly. It is worth while spending years here to see it even once. I was overjoyed and stood gazing like mad." (7/1/1912) - "In the morning I attend the Kakad Arati. Sayin Maharaj looked exceedingly pleased and gave Yogic glances. I passed the whole day in a sort of ecstasy," (6/1/1912) - "We attended the Shej Arati at the Chavadi. Sayin Maharaj was in an exceptionally pleased mood, made mystic signs to Megha, and did what are known as 'Drishti Pata' in Yoga." (22/1/1912) - "During the course of the worship he put two flowers in his two nostrils and put two others between his ears and the head. My attention was drawn to this by Madhavrao Deshpande. I thought this was an instruction. Sayin Baba repeated the same thing a second time and when I interpreted it a second time in our mind he offered the chilim to me and this confirmed it. He said something which I noted instantly and particularly wished to remember, but it went clear out of my mind and no efforts made all through the day could bring it back. I am most surprised as this is the first experience of the kind," (8/3/1912) - "At the midday Arati, Sayin Baba approached me and touched my left arm and held his hand waist high just as we do to indicate a young man, with the other hand he made a sign as we do to indicate a man passing away. He made a sign with his eyes. I did not understand the whole and puzzled over it all day."

Thus, it is clear that Baba, in his own inimitable way, made the otherwise routine ritual into a lively course of spiritual instruction and a veritable vehicle of grace!

It seems the performance of arati, though ceremoniously regular, was not always very punctual! Sometimes, it was 'a little late' or 'finished soon' depending on the convenience of the officiating priest or the condition of Baba's moods. At times Baba himself put off the commencement of the arati to drive a piece of instruction home into the devotees' heads. There were occasions when Baba asked the devotees to hold off the commencement of arati in waiting for some devotee who was about to arrive at Shirdi shortly.

In the beginning, when the custom of offering regular arati was started, there were not many psalms which were especially composed on Sai Baba. Except a few, like Dasganu's and Madhav Adkar's, most of them were adaptations of the traditional arati-psalms composed by the mediaeval saint-poets of Maharashtra on the deity Lord Vitthal of Pandhapur. It was only about a year after the commencement of aratis at Shirdi, that the actual 'Psalm-Book' began to take shape. The kudos of giving a form and format to the Shirdi Aratis go to Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma.

Shri Bhishma hails from Bori, a village near Nagpur. He was a friend of Shri Khaparde with whom he visited Shirdi for the first time on the 6th of December 1911. He was an old-liner before he met Shri Sai Baba. A few years before he visited Shirdi, he had a vivid dream in which he saw a swarthy brahmin in traditional vestment of a Vaishnava gosai. The holy man, without uttering a single word, showed Bhishma a newspaper on which the words 'Sat-Chit-Ananda' (Being-Consciousness-Bliss) were printed in bold type. When Bhishma inquired of him what it was, the gosai again simply pointed to the newspaper wherein appeared another set of words 'mantra va shikava' (lit. 'mantra and learn'). Bhishma could not make out anything and before he posed another question the Vaishnava vanished with his mystic scroll! Bhishma was roused from his dream but could not figure out the meaning of the dream revelation. Later when he asked a sadhu about it, the latter construed the dream message as a mantropadesh (initiation into a mantra) and that Satchidanand was the name of the Guru who appeared to him in the dream. A few years passed before he went to take Baba's darshan on the invitation of Khaparde. As he approached Baba for the first time, the latter greeted him with folded hands, "Jai Satchidanand!" Bhishma was instantly mystified. The thought that Baba might

be the holy man who appeared to him in the dream flashed across his mind. But, he blinked it away with an orthodox proclivity to identify the brahmin gosai with the 'Moslem Sai'. While at Shirdi though he saw many brahmins devoutly receiving Baba's pada teerth without any orthodox scruple, he gently avoided the predicament. Baba used to smoke tobacco from a chilim (a clay-pipe) and as he smoked he used to offer a puff to the devotees present. Bhishma was apprehensive at heart at the possibility of smoking a chilim polluted by the lips of a Moslem. Surprisingly, for the first few days, Baba never proffered a puff to Bhishma even though he was sitting almost at his elbow. One day Baba was running over a parable to a group of devotees including Bhishma. Suddenly he stopped the narration and passed the chilim to Bhishma and bade him to smoke. Bhishma did Baba's bidding without any demur. Then Baba said, "Look here, I move about everywhere - hills and mountains, Bombay, Pune, Satara, Nagpur....; it is Rama who dwells in all these places" After a pause, he suddenly asked Bhishma complainingly, "Well, Why do you eat the laddus all yourself without offering a single piece to me? At least now give me five laddus!" As Baba spoke those words something happened which changed the basic outlook of Bhishma. His fogyish reactions suddenly evaporated, as if blown away in the singly puff he smoked from Baba's chilim. Then he himself asked for Baba's padateerth and wholeheartedly placed his head on Baba's feet. Baba blessed him by placing his hands on his head for a few moments which induced a strange ecstasy in him. He went to the lodgings but still his mind was running with Baba's cryptic remarks about the five laddus. He could not take Baba's words too literally nor could be clearly construe what actually Baba meant by 'laddus'. Next morning he got up seized by an overwhelming impulse to write a poem, which he penned immediately. The following morning it happened again, and thus five poems were committed to paper, as if under a divine afflatus. When he offered those songs to Shri Sai Baba in lieu of the five laddus he had asked for, Baba blessed him approvingly.

Besides the five devotional songs, Bhishma composed a few more later. The devotees have appreciatively added them all to their collection of arati-psalms. Thereupon, Bhishma prepared a booklet entitled Shri Sainath Sagunopasana which contained, besides the arati-psalms sung in Arati to Shri Sai Baba, some traditional

hymns from the Hindu liturgy like, Purusha Suktam, Sree Suktam, Mantra Pushpam, Sri Lakshmi Ashtotharam, intended for use in the daily worship of the devotees. Shri G.S. Khaparde had borne all the expenses of its publication till 1922, After Baba's Mahasamadhi, the book has been adapted as the official 'Book of Daily Worship' at the Samadhi Mandir. Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi, on making some additions to it, has taken up the publication of the revised edition since 1923.

In all, there are thirty psalms in the Book of Shirdi Aratis. Of the thirty, only sixteen are especially composed on Shri Sai Baba. The rest (fourteen, i.e. about half), are traditional arati-psalms composed by the mediaeval poet-saints of Maharashtra (excepting a Vedic chant). Of the fourteen traditional psalms five are composed by Sant Tukaram Maharaj, two each by Sant Namadev and Sant Janabai, one each by Shri Ramjanardhan Swami and Shri Rameshwar Bhat; of the remaining three, one is a Vedic hymn and the other two are traditional prayers. Of the sixteen, psalms especially written on Shri Sai Baba, the major bulk, i.e. nine, are composed by Shri K.J. Bhishma, three by Shri Dasganu Maharaj, one each by Shri Upasani Maharaj, Shri Madhav Adkar, Shri Mohini Raj and Shri B.V. Dev. Linguistically, of the thirty arati psalms twenty five are in Marathi, two in Hindi, two in Sanskrit and one a bilingual anthology of short Marathi and Sanskrit prayers.

**CHAPTER III**  
**MORNING ARATI**

**I. BHUPALI ,**

(Composed by : **Sant Tukaram Maharaj**)

Joduniyaa kara charanee ttevilaa maatha

Parisaawee vinanthee maajzee

sadgurunaathaa

Aso naso bhaava aalo tujziyaa ttaayaa

Kripaa drishtee paahe majzkade

sadgururaayaa

Akhndeeta Asaave aise vaatate paayee

Saandoonee sankoch ttaava todaasaa deyee

Tukaahamane devaa maajzee vedeevaakudee

naame bhavapaasaa haathee aapu/yaa thondi

Translation

With folded hands I bow down to thee, Oh Sadgurunath, please pay heed to my prayer!

I have resorted to thee with or without having ardent devotion! Yet, Oh Sadgururaya, I beg thee to cast thy glances of grace at me (discounting the degree of my devotion);

I aspire to adore thy holy-feet incessantly forever and anon; I pray thee to put aside all hesitation and condescend to allow a little room for me at thy holy feet;

(I,) Tukaram implores thee, to free me from any unmindfulness in my contemplation of thy Holy Name and, free me from all mundane attachments!

**Commentary**

This abhang is composed by Sant Tukaram Maharaj on his chosen deity Shri Panduranga. By substituting the epithets 'Sadgurunatha' and 'Sadgururaaya' for 'Pandharinatha' and 'Pandhariraya' of the original respectively the psalm has been adapted to the Book of Shirdi Aratis.

An abhang is a metrical composition in Marathi, which is very akin to the religious Lyric in English. Literally, abhang means unbroken (a < unbhanga < broken). It is, in

essence, an unbroken poetic effusion of the innermost mystic musings of a pious soul. Usually it is composed in four lines (padas) following an ABBC rhyme-pattern. The wide use of this form of devotional poetry began with Nivrittinath and Jnanadev and reached its acme with Sant Tukaram.

This abhang breathes the spirit of loving abandonment to the all-embracing grace of God, which cannot be earned by one's merits such as puissance, skill, knowledge and the like, but flows to the devotee quite unconditionally, Time and again Sant Tukaram stresses in his abhangs that without the grace of God/Guru any sadhana is of no avail. "What is the use of all sadhanas?" asks Tukaram, "God's form will appear before us only if he takes compassion upon us."

Sant Tukaram Maharaj (1598-1659) is perhaps, the most popular of all the post-saints of Maharashtra. No other poet-saint is so oft-quoted by the people of Maharashtra as Sant Tukaram. His signature (mudra) 'Tuka Mhane' (Tukaram says) with which all his abhangs invariably conclude, has become in common parlance, a synonym for unerring truth. Tukaram's abhangs were one of the favourites of Shri Sai Baba. Of the fourteen traditional psalms adapted into the Book of Shirdi Aratis, the largest number authored by a single poet, (i.e. five) are the abhangs of Sant Tukaram.

This and the following three bhupalis are sung in rag bhupali. Rag Bhupali is a melodic pattern or scale (raga) in the classical Indian musical tradition. Bupai is an improvisation based on rag bhupali.

Literally, Bhupali means, of or pertaining to a bhupal <"the ruler of the Land". Many features in the ceremonial services offered to a deity in a Hindu temple are modelled on the procedures which were normally followed in a royal palace. These kinds of liturgical services offered to a deity are called rajopacharas (< services befitting to be offered to a monarch) in the past, the court-musicians in a royal palace were to sing/play melodies daily, in the morning, to reverentially rouse the king from his bed. As a part of the court repertoire, the soft awaking melodies were mostly tuned in raag bhupali.

## II. BHUPALI

(Composed by ; **Sant Janabai**)

Uttaa paandurangaa aataa  
prabhaatasamayo paatalaa  
Vaishnawaancha melaa  
garudapaaree daatalaa  
Garuda paaraapaasunee  
mahaadwaaraa paryanta  
Survaraanchee maandee  
ubhee jodooniyaa haat  
Suka sanakaadika naarada  
tumbara bhaktyanchyaa kotee  
Trisool damaroo ghewooni  
wubhaa girijechaa patee  
Kaleeyugeechaa bhakta  
Namaa ubhaa keertanee  
Paatteemaage wubhee  
dolaa laavuniyaa Janee.

### **Translation**

Oh Lords Panduranga, the day is about to break. The coterie of the devotees of Vishnu throng by the garuda dhwaja (the temple flagstaff);

Thence up to the main door of the sanctum sanatorium all gods wait in an echelon with folded hands for thy darshan;

Not only great sages such as Suka and Sanaka and celestial minstrels such as Narada and Tumburu, but also Lord Siva, the consort of goddess Girija, holding his trishul (trident) and damaru (a two-sided hand-drum), call on thee;

Namadev, thy devotee par excellence in this Kali Age sings thy glories. Janabai, his maid servant, stands by gazing agog to have a glimpse of thee.

### **Commentary**

This psalm, composed by Jana Bai is one of the popular traditional arati-psalms in Maharashtra. Jana Bai (samadhi c. 1350 A.D.) is one of the famous Maharastrean

saint-poets, who was a disciple of Sant Namadev and Sant Jnaneswar Maharaj. She was dedicated by her parents to the service to Sant Namadev even when she was a child. Serving Sri Namadev as a maid in his household she grew up into a mature saint-poetess,

### III. BHUPALI

(Composed by : -, **Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhisma**)

Utta utta sri sainaathaguru  
charana kamala daavaa  
Aadhivyaadhi bhavataapa  
vaarunee taaraa jadajeevaa  
Gelee tumha soduniyaa bhava  
tama rajanee vilayaa Pareehi agnaanaasee tumachee  
bhulavi yogamaayaa Sakthi na aahmaa yatkinchitahee  
tijalaa saaraaya

Tumheecha teete saaruni  
daavaa mukha jana taaraayaa  
Bhoo sainaatha maharaaja  
bhava timiranaasaka ravee  
Aagnaanee aamhee kitee  
tava varnaava thoravee  
Thee varnita bhaagale  
bahuvadani sesvidhi kavee  
Sakripa howuni mahimaa  
tumchaa tumheecha vadavaava

Utta....

Bhakta manee sadbhaava  
dharooni je tumha anusarale  
Dhyaayaasthawa te darsana  
tumache dhwaari ubhe ttele  
Dhyaanasthaa tumha asa  
paahunee mana amuche ghaale

Pares thwadvachanaamrith  
praasaayaate aatura jzhaaie  
Wughadoonee netrakamalaa  
deenabandhu ramaakaanta  
Paahi baa kripadrishtee  
baalakaa jashee maaataa  
Ranjavee madhuravaanee  
haree taapa sainaatha  
Aamheecha aapule karyaasthava tuja kashtavito deva  
Sahana karisi! te aikuni  
dyaavee bhett Krishna daavava  
Utta.,..

**Translation**

Kindly awake, Sadguru Sainath, to grant us the sight of thy lotus-feet! Oh Sadguru, to cure the maladies of our mundane life and to uplift us who are languishing in a state of insensate existence. The dark night of ignorance has already fled from thee. But, thy yoga maya (divine power of illusion) has ensnared us, the ignorant folk (in the vortex of worldly desires and attachments). We are absolutely powerless to resist the pull of the world. Grant us the sight of thy radiant face, which alone can save us from the entanglements of maya.

Oh Sainath Maharaj, thou art verily the sun who drives out the darkness of worldly attachments. (Remove from our hearts the darkness of ignorance, and illumine the path of enlightenment!) Though having numerous faces, even Adishesha and demiurg Brahma and, other godly bards totally gave up on exhaustion describing thy glories. As such, how can I, an ignorant being, describe thy marvellous magnificence! So, mercifully reveal thy glories thyself to us.

Thy devotees stand at thy door to take thy darshan, to meditate on thee and to serve thee. Beholding thee in thy mystic trance, we feel out of our minds. We are eager to be all ears for the nectarine flow of thy speech. Oh the friend of the helpless, Oh Ramakantha, open thy lotus-like eyes and cast thy affectionate glances on us just as a mother beholds her child. With the sweet nectar of thy words, quench our thirst

(hearts' yearnings) and make us happy. We may be troubling thee with our importunities! Yet, pray, grant us (I me, Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma) thy audience and give thy ear to our petitions with patience,

#### **IV. BHUPALI**

(Composed by : **Sant Namdev**)

Utta panduranga aataa  
darshan dhya sakala Jzhala arunodaya saali nidrechi vela  
Sant sadhu muni avaghe jhaleti ghola  
Soda sheje sukhe aata  
bandu ghya mukha kamala  
Rang mandapi mahadwari  
jzzaafise datee  
Man utaavee! roop pahawaya drishti  
Rahee rakhumabai tumha yewo dya daya.  
Sheje haalawunee jage kara dev raya  
Garud hanumant ubhe paahatee wat  
Swarginche surwar ghewuni aale bobhat  
Zhale muktha dwar laabha zhala rokada  
Vishnudas naama ubha ghewooni kakada

#### **Translation**

Oh Panduranga, the hour of sleep has passed and now it is already dawn. Awake and grant us all thy darshan (in all thy divine glories);

Saints, sages, mystics and the pious are all awaiting thee. Give up the pleasure of sleep and give us the darshan of thy hallowed face;

We all throng at thy threshold bubbling with enthusiasm to catch a sight of thee;

Mother Rukmini, thou must take pity on us and wake up the God of gods from his bed; Garuda and Hanumantha stand bidding thy darshan. All the gods have arrived here from the heavens chanting thy holy Name all along the way;

Vishnudas (alias) Namadev stands by to perform the Morning Arati to thee. Pray, open the (Mandir) doors (of Liberation) and grant us the bliss of thy darshan.

**Commentary**

This is also a popular traditional abhang (psalm) on Lord Panduranga composed by Sant Namdev. Sant Namdev, in the later years of his life has composed a number of abhangs and biographies of saints under the nom de plume 'Vishnudas'. The shrine of Lord Vittal at Pandharpur was the hub of inspiration to a galaxy of great mediaeval saint-poets who flourished in Maharashtra and northern Karnatak. In Marathi, vitt means brick. As the deity, Panduranga, is believed to have been standing on a brick, he is also called Vittal or Vittoba in common parlance.

**V. ABHANG**

(Composed by : **Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishima**)

Ghewuniya panchaarati karoo babansi aarati

Karoo sai see aarati

Utta utta ho bandhawa,

awaaloo ha ramadhava

sayee ramadhava awaaloo ramadhava

Karuniya sthira man,

paahu gambhira he dhyan

Krishnanatha datt sai jado chitta tujze paayee

Sayee tuzhe paayee jado chitta tuzhe paayee

**Translation**

Sai Baba, offer thee pancharati by devoutly waving before thee, a lamp with five lighted wicks;

Friends, awake, arise and rush up to offer arati (worship) to Lord Ramadhava, i.e. to our Sai Ramadhava;

Fixating our minds with steadfast devotion, let us meditate on Sai!

Oh Sai, thou art Lord Krishna and Lord Datta incarnate. We offer our insensate minds at thy feet. Make them ware with enlightened devotion by the thaumaturgic touch of thy holy feet!

## VI. KAKAD AARTI

(Composed by : **Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhisma**)

Kakad aarati kareeto sainatha deva

Chinmaya roop daakhavee

ghewuni balak laghu seva

Kaam krodh mad matsar

aattunee kaakada kela

Vairagyache toop ghaaluni mee to bhijaveela

Sainath Guru bakti jwalane to mee petawila

Tad vryitti jaluni guroo ne prakash paadila

Dwaita tama naasooni

milavi tatswaroopi jeewa

Chinmaya roop>>>>

Bhoochar khechar vyaapooni

awaghe hritkamali raahasee

Tochi dattadev tu shirdi raahuni paawasee

Rahooni yethe anayatrahitoo

baktaastava dhavasee

Nirasooniyaa sankata

daasaa anubhawa daavisee

Na kale twalleelahee kanyaa

devaa waa maanavaa

Chinmaya room>>

Twat yasha dundubheene

saare ambar he knodale

Sagun murti paahanyaa

aatur jan shirdee aale

Prashuni twadvachanaamrita

aamuce dehabhaan haarpale

Sodooniyaa durabhimaan

maanas twaccharanee waahile

Kripa karooniya Sai maawle  
daas padari ghyaawaa  
Chinmaya roop»>

**Translation**

Oh Lord Sainath, we offer Kakad Arati to thee! Kindly accept this tiny service offered by thine ignorant child;

I make my lust, anger, pride, envy and hatred as wicks and dip them in the ghee of vairagya (dispassion). The five wicks are kindled with the fire of Guru Bhakti. Lo! Now seen with help of the light (emanating from the flames of the pancharati), Sadguru Sainath is shining forth with brilliance. That illumination destroys the darkness (of all sense) of duality and lo, both the seer and the seen shine as One (without any shade of difference.)

Thou pervade earth and heaven and thou art the indweller of the hearts of all yogis. All rejoice that thou, being the incarnation of Lord Datta, has taken thy abode at Shirdi, so that those who live away from thee (in the sense of separateness/duality), may be able to take thy darshan. Thou art not only warding off the troubles of those who take refuge in thee but also granting them illuminating experiences. Neither any human being nor any god can discern the glories of the divine sport.

The heavens are resonating with trumpets of thy glory. People eagerly rush to Shirdi to see thee, Oh Sai, who art the embodiment of formless divinity incarnated with all divine attributes. Listening to thy words as sweet as nectar, they forget themselves; and leaving all their prejudices and proclivities (of caste, creed, religion, status etc.) they take refuge at the holy feet. Oh Sainath, kindly accept us who are thy servants and, deign to grant us refuge as thy holy feet.

**VII. KAKAD AARTI**

(Composed by : **Sant Tukaram Maharaj**)

Bhaktaachiya potee bodh kaakada jyoti  
Pancha prana jeevhave owaaloo aarati  
Owaaloo aaratee maajyza  
pandhareenaatha majyza sainathaa

Donhi kara jodonee charanee ttevilaa mathaa  
Kaay mahima varnoo aataa sangane kitee  
Kotee brahma hatyaa mukha pahataa jaatee  
Rahee rakhmaabaayee  
ubhya doghee do baahee  
Mayur pincha chaamara  
dhaaliti thaayee che thaayee  
Tuka mhane deep ghewuni unmaneet sHobhaa  
Vittevaree ubha dise laawanya gaabhaa  
Owaaloo aaratee>>

### **Translation**

With fire of devotion glowing in our hearts, we offer Kakad Arati to thee! Igniting our five vital forces (pranas) and the sense of ego as wicks in the Arati lamp, we offer Arati to thee.

Oh! My Lord of Pandari, Sri Sainath, hai to thy glory! With folded hands, I humbly lay my head on thy holy feet. How can I describe thy ineffable glories? Even billions of deadly sins such as brahmahatya (killing a brahmin etc.) shall be purged just by the mere sight of thy hallowed face. Rayee and Rukhumabai, standing on either side, gently fan about thee with chowries (royal fans) aloft lauding thy divine splendour, absorbed in blissful rapture. It is verily a sight for the gods and a feast for the eyes to behold Lord Vittal standing gracefully on a brick (of bhakti).

### **VIII. PADH**

(Composed by : **Sant Namadev**)

Utta utta saadhu sant aapulale hit  
Jaaeel jaaeel ha nardeh  
mag kaincha bhagawant  
Uttoniya pahaante baba ubha ase vitte  
Charan tayaache gomate  
amrit drishti awalokaa  
Utta utta ho gegesee  
chala jaawoonya raawuiaasee

Jalatil patakaanchya raashi  
kaakad aarati dekhliyaa  
Jaage karaa rukhminivar,  
dev aahe nijasuraant  
Vege limbalon karaa drisht hoeel tayasee  
Daaree waajantree vaajatee  
dhoi damaame garjatee  
Hote kaakad aarati maazhyaa  
sadguru rayaanchee  
Simhanaad shankabheree aanand  
hoto mahaa dwaaree  
Keshawaraaj vittewaree naamaa  
charan vandito

**Translation**

Awake .and arise oh! Pious and devout, and wend your way for your lasting weal!  
Once this mortal coil passes away how can you perceive the divine glories of God?

Awake early in the morning and take darshan of Lord Vittal who stands gracefully on  
a brick. Lo! His merciful looks shower nectar. Take refuge at his feet!

A glimpse of the glowing lamp of Kakad Arati destroys a mass of a million sins! Get  
up from your beds and make haste to the Mandir!

Invoke the consort of Rukmini to rise from his bed. He is verily the Lord of all gods.  
Proffer pure butter (of devotion) to the Lord without any delay lest it should be  
polluted by greedy looks (i.e. lest the devotion should be polluted by looking greedily  
at the world.)

At the Mandir-entrance, musical instruments such as drums are being played as the  
Morning Arati is being offered to our Sadguru.

Deep resonant sounds from trumpets and conch-shells roar forth with crescendo  
from the Main Door in festive gusto. Namadev prostrates to the holy feet of Vittal  
who is Lord Kesava manifest.

**Commentary**

The morning awakening services rendered to a deity are called Kakad Arati. Kakad means a wick made of a thin strip of cloth. Customarily such a cloth-wick is used in the aarti-lamp waved before the deity in the morning services. So its name Kakad Arati. The Varkari saints attached great importance and sentiment to kakad jyoti and encouraged people to begin their day by attending or performing Kakad Arati to their chosen deity. Sant Namdev, for instance, calls out in the present aarti-psalm, "A glimpse of the glowing lamp of Kakad Arati destroys a mass of a million sins; get up from your beds and make haste to the Mandir!" The daily performance of the devout morning service like the Kakad Arati not only induces a sense of auspiciousness in the heart of people but also conduces a lingering devotional effect on them, even amidst their quotidian chores.

Padh is a popular form of Lyrical poetry in the northern India. It is a short lyrical composition set to a raga (musical mode), and especially meant for singing. In singing a padh, the refrain (dhruti) is repeated - in a chorus - between each verse.

**BHAJAN**

Sainath guru maajhe aae  
Majlaa thaav dhyaavaa paayeen  
Datta raaja guru majhe aae  
Majlaa thaav dhyaavaa paayeen

**Translation**

Oh Sainath, my Guru, thou art verily my mother! Grant refuge at thy holy feet;  
Oh Lord Datta, my Guru, thou art verily my mother! Grant refuge at thy holy feet.  
Shri Satchitaanand Sadguru Sainath Maharaaj ki Jai

**IX. SAINATH PRABHATASTAK**

(Composed by : **Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhisma**)

Prabhat samayeen nabhaa  
shubh ravi prabha phaankalee  
Smare guru sadaa ashaa  
samayin tya chhale naa kalee  
Manhoni kar jadoonee karoon

ataa guru praarthanaa  
Samartha guru sainath  
puravee manovaasanaa  
Tamaa nirasi bhaanu  
ha guruhi naasi agnyaanataa  
Parantu guruchee karaa na  
ravihee kadhee saamyathaa  
Punhaa thimir janm ghe  
gurukrupeni agnaan naa  
Samartha guru sainath  
puravee manovaasanaa  
Ravi pragat howuni twarita  
ghaalawee aalasa  
Tasa guruhi sodawee sakal dushkriti laalasa  
Haroni abhimaanahee  
jadwi tatpadee bhavanaa  
Samath guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa  
Guroosi upama dise vidhi  
hareeharaanchi unee  
Kuttoni mag yeie tee  
kavaniyaa ugee paahunee  
Tuzheech upama tulaa  
bharavi shobhate sajjanaa  
Samarth guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa  
Samaadhi uthroniyaa guru  
chalaashidee kade  
twadeeya vachnukti tee  
madhur vaaritee saankhade  
Ajaataripu sadguro akhil pathkaa bhanjanaa  
Samarth guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa  
Ahaa susamayaasi yaa guru uttoniyaa baisale

Vihkuni padaashrithaa tadiya aapade naasile

Asaa suhithkaaree yaa

jagati konihee anya naa

Samarth guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Asa bahut shaahanaa pari

na jyaa guroochi kripaa

Na tatswahit tyaa kaiae

karitase rikamya gapaa

Jari gurupada dhari sudhrid

bhaktineh tho manaa

Samarth guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Guru vinati mee karee

hridayamandiree yaa basaa

Samasth jag he guruswaroopee

ttaso maanasaa

Ghado satat sathkruptee

matihi deh jagatipaavanaa

Samarth guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

### **Sragdhara**

Preme yaa asthakaashi paduni guruvaraa

Praarthitee je prabhaatee

Tyaanche chittasee deto akhilharooniyaan

braanti mee nitya shaantee

Aise he sainathe kathuneesuchvileh

jevee yaa baalakaasee

Tevee tyaa krishnaapaayee namuni

savinayeh arpito ashtakaasee

### **Translation**

It's morning! The sun shines in the (eastern) horizon with his rays of beneficence.

The power of illusion cannot ensnare those who contemplate on the Guru at this

auspicious hour. Hence let us pray ardently to our Sadguru with folded hands. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires!

Just as the sun drives out darkness, the Sadguru dispels the nescience from our hearts. Yet, it is not apt to compare the Guru with the sun. Because the darkness driven away by the sun returns (by night); but the nescience removed by the grace of the Guru never recrudesces. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires!

The sun rises and rouses us to activity by restoring energy to the exhausted souls. Similarly, the Guru invigorates our souls by removing all the mental weaknesses, which impel us to indulge in ignoble deeds. Leaving all prejudices and proclivities, let's contemplate on the holy feet of our Sadguru. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires.

Even the Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara cannot be equal to our Sadguru Sainath. None can be found to match him in his ability to uplift human beings from a downfall. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires'.

Oh Guru, arise from thy samadhi (mystic trance) and come and take thy seat at the Masjid. By thy sweet utterances remove (the bitterness of) our sufferings. Sadguru Sainath, thou art the friend of all and cherish no ill will to anyone. Thou art the destroyer of all sins. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires!

Oh! This hour is very auspicious. The Guru has arisen (from his samadhi) and by his gracious glances warding off the troubles of his devotees who have taken refuge in him. There is no benefactor equal to him in this world. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires!

Without the grace of the Guru, no one, however clever he might be, can achieve his lives' objectives. Such a one merely trifles his time in fruitless pursuits. Only by obtaining steadfast devotion to the feet of the Guru, can one's heart's desires be fulfilled. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires!

O Sadguru, I pray thee to dwell in my heart always and bless me to look upon the whole world as thy form. I pray to thee, Oh the purifier of the whole world, to inspire

me to do noble deeds always. May Lord Sainath, the Omnipotent Sadguru, fulfil all our hearts' desires!

### **Sragdhara**

Whoever devoutly chants this astaka (the hymn of eight stanzas) daily in the morning and ardently prays to the Guru, shall be free from all illusions and attain everlasting peace. Thus declares Sadguru Sainath himself, when this child, Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma, (the composer of the hymn) has humbly offered this astaka to him.

### **Commentary**

This is one of the five psalms composed by Shri K. J. Bhishma under the divine afflatus granted by Sri Sai Baba. As such, it is a revealed scripture for the devotees of Sri Sai Baba.

Suprabhat Seva or Kakad Arati, in its denotative scene, is an invocation to awaken the deity from sleep. Offering Kakad Arati to Sri Sai Baba is a reverential prayer to awaken him from sleep. But to a Sai devotee rousing Sri Sai Baba from sleep seems paradoxical and pointless. For, the devotees are aware that Sri Sai Baba never sleeps in the genetic sense of the word, but as Baba himself has declared, he sleeps "with his eyes wide open". When a devotee asked Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, "What is meant by sleeping while awake?", Bhagavan replied, "That is the state of a jnani! In sleep our ego disappears; senses do not work. As the ego of the jnani is already annihilated, he does not have the sense of doership or any deliberate activity with the senses. That is why a jnani is said to be always in a 'perpetual sleep'. But as in the ordinary sleep there is no forgetfulness in jnani's sleep. He is always in the pure awareness of his Self. So there is no sleep for a jnani.... Sleep is necessary for one who thinks 'I have risen from sleep'. For those who are ever in changeless sleep what need is there for any other sleep? He sleeps awake and, while awake he sleeps!"

Therefore, the poet, aptly invokes Sri Sai Baba to 'rise' not from his 'sleep', but 'from his samadhi' ('samadhi uthariniya....'), The waking sleep!

**X. PADH**(Composed by : **Sri Dasganu Maharaj**)

Sai raham nazar karnaa

Bhachonkaa paalan karnaa

Jaanaatumneh jagat pasaaraa

Sabahee jzhoott jamaanaa

Sai raham....

Mem andhaa hoon bandaa aapkaa

Mujhse prabhu dikhlaanaa

Sai raham....

Dass Ganu kahe ab kyaa boloo

Thak gayi meree rasnaa

Sai raham....

**Translation**

Lord Sainath, take care of us, thy children, by always, keeping thy gracious eye on us;

If we know the the truth we find that thou pervade the whole universe. Anything seen apart from thee is but false;

I am blind and a bondsman of thee. Pray, grant me the divine vision of the Lord!

My tongue is totally exhausted and dumbfounded in thy praise. and, what else can this Ganu, thy servant, speak?

**XL PADH**(Composed by : **Shri Dasganu Maharaj**)

Raham nazar karo, ab more sayee

Tumbin naheen mujze maa baap bhaayee

Raham &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;

Mein andhaa hoon banda tumhaaraa

Mein naa jaanoon allaah ilaahee

Raham &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;

Khaiee jamaanaa meineh gamaayaa

Saathae aakhar kaa kiya na koyee

Raham &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;

**Translation**

Lord Sai, kindly cast thy gracious glances on me. I have no mother, father or brother other than thee;

I am blind and a bonded slave of thee. I know not the truth (which thou always drive home,) that Allah alone is All-in-All;

I have scoured the whole country (in vain pursuits) but could find none who can remain as my everlasting companion;

I am nothing but a simple broom in thy Masjid and thou art verily our Master, Oh Baba Sai!

**Commentary**

(On Padh Nos.'X & XI)

This couple of dithyrambs (in Hindi), composed by Sri Dasganu Maharaj are one of the sterling pieces in the whole gamut of Shirdi Arati-psalms. The fervent feelings and the ardent outpourings of a devout heart are very artistically articulated in these psalms. The passionate yearnings of a Sai devotee expressed in these psalms inspire, in turn, kindred feelings in the hearts of those who sing them devoutly. They also earmark, in a subtle manner, the attitude an earnest devotee has to cherish towards Baba, such as the mood of a helpless child towards its loving mother, the attitude of a humble servant towards his benign master, the attitude of a sincere disciple towards his gracious Guru et. al.

The elan vital of Baba's life and teachings is beyond all the barriers of all religions. Yet, he did manifest under the trappings of a Muslim fakir. In spite of their orthodox penchants, many ardent devotees of Baba such as Sri Dasganu Maharaj, Sri K. J. Bhishma and others accepted and adored him as their Guru-God. This fact is amply displayed by the choice of the diction in the present psalms, such as nazr, rahm, masjid, allah-i-llahi etc., which are derived from the Arabic, especially from the Islamic legacy. The fundamental principle on which the Islamic religion rests in the Shahdah. La-illaha-illa-Allah muhammad-ur-rasul-u-allah., which means, There is no God save Allah: Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. A person becomes a Muslim by simply repeating the shahdah with faith. But a Sufi, in his mystic quest to explore the ultimate meaning of it, concludes that the real Existence cannot be attributed

ontologically to anything except God (which is a logical consequence of the first part of the shahdah) and tries to realize it. It matters spiritual Baba spoke mostly in the Sufi jargon. He often used to say, "All that IS is Allah!". Accordingly, Sri Dasganu uses the phrase 'Allah-i-lahi' to mean the All-pervasive nature of Allah (God).

Besides, the Islamic concept of the Masjid as the solemn court of the sovereign Creator, has been transformed by Sri Sai Baba, in his own unique and inimitable way, into a loving lap of a doting mother, - the Masjid Ayi, Referring to the Masjid in which he lived, Baba declared, "Highly merciful in this Masjid Ayi! She is the mother of those who place their entire faith in her. If they are in danger, she will save them. Once a person climbs into her lap, all his troubles are over. He who rests in her shade attains bliss."

Having been imbued with the basic essence of the teachings of Sri Sai Baba through his close association with him. Sri Dasganu Maharaj implores Baba to cast his gracious glances (nazr) on him. But, the glances he seeks are not the vigilant looks of a benevolent sovereign Lord, but the fond looks of a caring and loving mother at her child. From the mood of a helpless baby, the bard soars to the heights of self-surrender by humbly making himself a simple broom in the precincts of Baba's Masjid. This metaphorical outburst is replete with sublime connotations. For, though a broom is one of the most indispensable items of a household it is also the one which is looked down upon as paltriest de classe, and is thrown into a corner as soon as its use is over. Not only in this song but also in his other writings, Dasganu implores Baba to make or use him as a broom, a pliant tool in his mission of sweeping away impurities from the world. Besides, what else except a besom in Baba's Masjid can have the good fortune of constantly touching the holy dust of the feet of Baba and his devotees? Is it not as if Shri Dasganu finds and offers a practical solution for the prayer, "charanaraja tali dyava dasa visava, bhakta visava...." (kindly allow us to settle snugly in the dust of thy holy feet!) of the famous aarti-psalm 'Arati Sai Baba?' As Allah is the malick (Master) of Baba. Baba is the 'Big Boss' of his devotees - malick hamara!

Dasganu's prayer to Baba to grant him the vision of God (prabhupad dikhalna) has an autobiographical undertone. For many years Dasganu was praying, nay rather

pestering Baba to grant him the vision of the Divine (sakshatkar), such one as Sant Namadev and other saints had experienced. Every time, When Dasganu made the request, Baba used to say simply, "Wait". One day Dasganu complained, "Baba, you have long been putting off my request. When will you give me sakshatkar?" This time Baba replied, "Arre! You see me, don't you? That is sakshatkar!" Baba's statement is very significant if we dive deep into its spiritual implications. Perhaps, in the light of the said statement of Baba, Sri Kakasaheb Dixit has suggested an amendment to the plea in the psalm, "'prabhu dikhalana" ('show me the Lord'), by adding 'pad' and, thus making it 'prabhupadh dikhalana' which means 'show me thy feet!" Besides, Shri Dixit offers another apt alternation! To the desperate and pessimistic tone expressed in the statement (in the psalm No. X) "Sathee akhirika kiya na koyee" ('An everlasting companion I have found none'), just by replacing 'kiya' with 'tumabina', the altered statement reads, 'sathee akhirika tumabina koyee' which means 'an everlasting companion; I have found none except Thee!' The amended phraseology voices not only the tone of optimism but also the mood of ananya bhakti (undivided and whole-hearted devotion). The psalms would be replete with richer meanings if the meliorations were carried to the original Psalms Book of Shirdi Aratis.

Above all, it seems, Baba very much liked these twin songs! Laxman Bhat Joshi of Shirdi recalls,

"I was quite a boy when I was with Sai Baba. We would sleep with Baba at the Chavadi.... We were allowed to be with him when none else were allowed.... At night at the Chavadi, he occasionally asked me to sing. 'Sing Ganu's songs or Tukaram's. What does Ganu say?' he would say. I .would joke with him by singing songs in his praise lightheartedly, 'Rahama najara karo abomore Sai' etc., He liked both tune and subject matter of the songs."

## **XII. PADH**

(Composed by : **Sant Jana Bai**)

Tujze kai devoon saawalyaa

mee khaayaa taree

Mee dubaiee batik

naamyaachee jaan shreeharee  
Uchishta tulaa denen hee ghosht naa baree  
Toon jagannaath tujze  
deoon kashire bhaakaree  
Nako ant madeeya pahoon  
sakhya bhagwantaa shrikaantaa  
Maadhyaahnraatra vultoi  
gaelee hee aatan aan chittaa  
Ja hoieel tujha re kaakadaa hee raolaantaree  
Aanateel bhakt naivedya hi naanaaparee

**Translation**

Oh Swarthy One (Sri Krishna), what can I offer thee as breakfast (naivedya)? I am a poor maid-servant of thy devotee Namadev, Oh Srihari, (subsisting on the doles of thy ucchista [leftovers]).

(As such,) How can I offer thee, Oh Lord of the Universe, the same piece of bread that thou hast mercifully doled out to me?

Oh Bhagavan, do not cut off the cherished bond of cozy amity between us. Oh Srikanta, after the Kakad Arati is over, I shall go and avidly return soon to take thy darshan at noon and again in the night.

Many a devotee has come with rich dainties to offer to thee as breakfast (naivedya) soon after the Kakad Arati. Pray, place thy kind attention on me!

**Commentary**

The present psalm elucidates the attitude one ought to have while offering naivedya to God. Baba not only exhorts us to offer (Mentally) whatever we eat or drink, but also declares that he is one who provides all. So a Sai devotee should always keep in his mind that he has received, including his daily bread, in the prasad (blessed food offering) bestowed upon him by Baba. The act of offering naivedya is in fact a means or a pretext to remember the above mentioned truth! Offering naivedya to God, as Bhagavan Sri Ramana maharshi puts it, is just like 'offering sugar to the idol of a deity made of sugar-candy!' The act of naivedya if properly done with an ardent spirit, would consequently lead one to a state, which Sant Janabai expresses in

another abhang, at the heights of her devotional rapture, "I eat God; I sleep in God; I breathe God; I feel God; speak God and I give God and take God."

### **XIII. PADH**

(Composed by : **Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma**)

Shreesadguru baabaa sayee  
Tujh waanchuni aashraya naahi bhutalee  
Mee paapee patit dheemanda  
Taarane malaa gurunathaa jhadkari  
Toon shaantikshamechaa meroo  
Toon bhavaarnaveethe taaru guruvaraa  
Guruvaraa majzasi paamaraa ataan udharaa  
Tvarit lavlaahee tvarit lavlaahee  
Mee budato bhavbhaya dohee udharaa  
>»Shri sadguru»

#### **Translation**

Sri Sadguru Sai Baba, where else shall I take refuge on the face of the earth except in thee! I am a sinner, a wretch and a fathead! Purify and uplift me Oh Gurudev! Thou art as great as Mount Meru in the qualities of peace and forgiveness. Thou art the Sadguru par excellence who saves the ignorant folk like me from the ocean of illusory attachments.

We, lowly folk, are miserably drowned in this ocean of samsara and gasping with fear and frustration! Oh Sadguru, make posthaste to save us promptly.

**End of Kakad Arati**

**CHAPTER IV**  
**NOON ARATI**

**II. ARATI**

(Composed by : **Shir Madhavarao Adkar**)

Arati Saibaabha soukhyadaataara jeevaa  
charana fajaatalee dhyaavaa daasaan visaawaa  
bhaktaa viswaawaa  
Jaaluniuaam aanang swaswaroopee raahe dhanga  
Mumukshu janaan daavee nija dolaan serranga,  
dolan sreeranana  
Jayaa maneejaisaa bhaava tayaa taisaa anubhava  
Daawisee dayaaghanaa aisee tujee hee maava  
thuzeehimaava  
Tumache naama dhyaataan hare sansrithi vyathaa  
Agaadha tava karanee maarga daawisee anaadhaa  
daawisee anaadhaa  
Kaliyugee avataara sagunabrahma saachaara  
AvateernajhaaSaase swami datta digambara  
datta digambara  
Aataan divasaan guruwaaree bhakta karitee waaree  
Prabhupada pahaavayaa bhaavabhaya niwaaree.  
bhaya niwaaree.  
Maajzaa nija dravaya tteesaa tav charan rajasevaa  
Maagane hechiyaataa tumhan  
devaadhideva devaadehideva  
Jchchita deena chaatak nirmai toya nijasookha  
Paajaawe maadhavaa yaa saambha!  
aapuiee bhaaka appulee bhaaka

**Translation**

We offer arati, bailing thy glories, Oh Sai Baba, who art the hestower of happiness of beings. Kindly allows us, who are thy footmen and devotee, to rest in the dust of thy holy feet. Thou bast reduced the god of lust, Eros (Manmatha) to ashes and, always remain absorbed in thin own Self (which is pure Being-Awareness-Bliss). Bestow on ardent seekers of Self-Realization the vision of the real Self (atmasakshatkar);

As is ones intent, such shall be his experience. As such thou bestow thy grace upon each according to his conception ofthee. Such is thy divine sport, Oh Compassionate One! Contemplation of thy Holy name destroys all dolorous distresses borne of inherent tendencies. Thy ways are verily inscrutable. Thou art the friend and guide of the helpless;

Thou art the divine incarnation in the Kali Age and, thou art the formless Absolute embodied (as Sai Baba) with all divine attributes. Thou art the perfect manifestation of Lord Datta the Supreme Master;

Once in a week, on every Thursday, devotees throng to thee. Thou remove the fears and frustration of those who take refuge in thy holy feet;

What all I possess, (wealth, body and mind etc.) is proffered at thy feet. Pray grant me the humble service at the holy feet, which indeed, I deem, is my real treasure, Oh God of gods!

Just the chatak-bird slakes it's thirst only by the heavenly waters (rain-drops), make me (Madhav, the poet) too, feed my mind always upon thy blessed from alone.

**Commentary**

This popular arati-psalm of Sri Sai Baba is composed by Sri Madhav V. Adkar of Beed. He was a playwright and an artist who came into contact with Baba through Sri Dasganu Maharaj. His photograph can be seen in the front hall of Sri Sai Baba Samadhi Mandir at Shirdi. According to Sri Sai Satcharitra (Ch.33), this is the arati-song which was went to Sri Nanasaheb Chandorkar through Ramagir Bua by Shama (on the supposed instruction of Sri Sai Baba) alone with the udi, at the time when Sri Nanasaheb's daughter, Mainatai, was facing a perilous parturition.

### III. ARATI

(Composed by : **Shir Krishna Jogiswar Bishma**)

Jaya devajaya deve dattaa  
avadhuta sayee avadhuta

Jodoonikara tava charanee ttevito maathaa  
Jaya deva...

Avataraseen too yaetaan dhanrtaante glaanee  
Naastheekaanaahee too laavsi njiabhajanee  
Daavissi naanaa leela asankhya roopaanee  
Harisee dheenanchee too sankata dinarajanee

Jaya deva...

Yavana swaropee alikhyaa darshana twaan  
dhidhale

Samsaya nirsunyaan thathdwaitaa ghaalavil  
Gopeechandaa mandaa twaanchee uddharile  
Momina vamsee janmuni bkaan tarriyael  
Jaya deve....

Bhed na tathwee Hindoo yavanaancha kaanhee  
Dawaayaansee twatpadanata vhaave  
Paramaayaamohita janamochana jhanin vhaave  
Twakripayaa sakalaanche sankata nirasaawe  
Deshila tari de twadhyash krishnaane gaave  
Jaya deva...

Kaliyugee avataara sagunabrahma saachaara  
Avateema jhaalaase swami datta digambara  
datta digambara

Aataan divasaan guruwaaree bhakta karitee waaree  
Prabhupada pahaavayaa ,bhaavabhaya niwaaree,  
bhaya niwaaree.

Maajzaa nija dravaya tteesaa tav charan rajasevaa  
Maagane hechiyaataa tumhan

devaadhideva devaadehideva  
Tchchita deena chaatak nirmal toya nijasookha  
Paajaawe maadhavaa yaa saambhal  
aapulee bhaaka appulee bhaaka

**Translation**

Hail unto thy glory. Oh Sai Avadhut, who art Lord Datta incarnate. With folded hands, I humbly lay my head at thy feet;

When dharma (righteousness) is in peril, thou incarnate in this world and demonstrate the truth of divinity in innumerable ways, making even come around to sing thy glories. Very vigilant thou art, day and night, to ward off the troubles of thy devotees.

Thou hast manifested in the form of a Muslim Fakir and strived to destroy the sense of difference, between Hindus and Muslims, thus uplifting many stupid and ignorant folk (from heinous religions bigotry). To uplift humanity thou hadst taken birth in a Momins (Muslim weavers) Family (as Kabir).

To reiterate the truth that there is absolutely no meaning in the different between Hindus and Muslims, thus human form (as Sai Baba). Those lovingly look upon both Hindus and Muslims with an equal eye. Thou hast proved that One all pervading consciousness dwells in all beings.

Lord Sainath, humble prostrations at thy Holy Feet! Pray, liberate all ignorant folk from the snares of maya. By thy grace, ward off the trouble (wordly and spiritual) of all. Pray, kindly bestow on me (Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma, the psalmist) the ability to sing thy glories.

**Commentary**

This psalm is significant in many ways. It lucidly brings forth many salient features of Sri Sai Baba's manifestation and his mission. "My business of give blessing", declared Baba, If we are to sum up Baba's life, it is the spontaneous overflow of bounteous grace inundating in the form of spiritual and temporal well-being, those who take refuge in him. It is the wall of separateness, to put it in Baba's own words., bricked with sense of ego (ahankar) and cemented by the proclivities of caste, creed, religion and orthodoxy, that stands out as a barricade on the road to truth,

damming the flood of Baba's grace. What Baba has asked us is to 'pull down the wall' that differentiates us from one another and separates us from Baba.

Is Baba a Hindu or a Muslim ? "He is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, he is above both", states Sri. S. D. Dhumal, one of the close devotees of Baba, perhaps very aptly ! While Sri Dhumal said it, he might be unconsciously voicing the unspoken insight which Baba has bestowed upon most of his devotees. In the present psalm, Sri Bhishma also addresses Baba as Datta Avadhut and Sai Avadhut. Datta is synonymous with the concept of perfect manifestation of the Divine as Sadguru and, Avadhut means one who has eschewed or transcended all religious formalities. In spite of the fact that Baba had donned the trappings of a Muslim their own or any other creed. Then, what must have been Baba's religion ? It is kabir, as has been avowed by Baba himself. Kabir did not identify himself with any religion. In one of his dohas (couplets) Kabir declares unequivocally. "Hindu kahoon tho mein nahin, Musalman bhee naahin !" (I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim; I am none of them.) Baba not only declared that his religion was Kabir, but also 'disclosed' that he was Kabir himself in his previous incarnation ! He said, "I was kabir and used to spin yarn." Sri Bhishma points this out in the present psalm saying that kabir has been reincarnated (Daya ya Si Zhala punarapi naradehi) as Sri Sai Baba. It would not be irrelevant in the context of the present arati-psalm, to take note of a verse of Kabir which is included in the Sikh's Adigranth (Maru-4) In it Kabir says :

**So the man who looketh on all with an equal eye shall become pure and blessed with the infinite. Why should I return to this world ? Transmigration take place by God's order, he who obeyeth it shall blend with him. I devote myself to and perform the duties which, God assigned me.**

Like Kabir, Baba too strived to strike a harmonious rapport between the Hindus and the Muslims and looked upon both with an equal eye. Yet all the time remaining beyond both. The popular notion is that Baba expressed himself as a Hindu and Hindus and to Muslims as a Moslem and so on. But in most cases he acted vice versa ! He insisted that the Hindus and the Moslems should accept him as a Fakir and a Brahmin respectively, crossing the barriers of caste and creed. Many close devotees of Baba such as Dasganu Maharaj, Nanasaheb Chandorkar, H.S. Dixit, G.

S. Khaparde, Upasani Maharaj, Bade Baba, Abdul Baba, Shamsuddin Rangari, Abdulla Jan and others, in spite of their flora for orthodoxy, accepted Baba as he was and adored him as their Guru-God. They did not stoop down to the intellectual hypocrisy of projecting him as one of their own creed. Cherishing any kind of heinous prejudices of creed or religion ill becomes a true Sai devotee.

#### **IV. ABHANG**

(Composed by : **Shir Dasganu Maharaj**)

Shrdee maajze pandharapura Saibaba ramaavara

Shuddha bhakthee chandrabhaagaa bhaava

pundaleeka jaagaa

Yaa hlyaa.ho avaghejana karaa babaansee

vandana

Ganoo mhane Baba sayee dhaava paava maajze aayee

#### **Translation**

Verily Shirdi is my Pandharpur and Sai Baba is Lord Vittal ! Pure and unalloyed devotion (which flows at Shirdi) is the River Chandrabhaga (which courses across Pandharpur); mindful awareness (in the hearts of the devotees at Shirdi) is the holy locus where Bhakt pundalik is ensconced. Attention one and all! Come up, come up quickly and make nascence to Sai Baba. Dasganu call out, Oh Sai, my mother I

Pray come I Nay, rush posthaste to uplift me!

#### **V. NAMAN**

(A Graland of Traditional Prayers)

Ghaakeena btaangana vandeem charan

Dolyanee paaheen roop tujze

preme aalingina aananade poojin

Bhaave oowaalina mhane naamaa

Tvameva maataa cha pitaa tvameva

Tvameva bandhuscha sakhaa tvameva

Tvameva vidyaa dravinam tuameva

Tvameva servam mama devadeva

Kaayena vaachaa manasevdriyaiarwan

Budhayatmanaa vaa prakriti swabhaavaat  
Karomi yadyatskalaam parasmai  
Naryanaayeti samarpayaami  
Achyutam keshavam raamanaaraayanam  
krishnadaamodaram vaasudevam harim  
Shreedharam maadhavam gopikaa vallabham  
jaanakeenaayakam raammachandram bhaje

**Translation**

Making humble prostrations to thy lotus-feet, rejoicing at the sight of thy blessed form, (mentally) embracing that form of bliss with love, we adore thee (Lord Sainath) absorbed in the ecstatic rapture (.says Namadev).

Thou art my mother and my father thou art; thou art my kinsman and bosom friends thou art; thou art my knowledge and my wealth thou art; thou art verily everything unto me. Oh my God of gods !

I offer to Lord Narayane (in worshipful surrender) all my actions done with my body, speech, mind, sense, intellect, volition and instinct.

(Sadguru Sainath,) I worship thee, who art adored with various names viz., Achyutta Kesava, Rama, Narayana, Krishna, Damodara, Vasudeva, Hari, Sridhara, Madhava, Gopikavallabha, Janakinayaka, Ramchandra etc.

**VI. NAMASMARAN**

Hare Raama Hare Raama  
Raama Raama Hare Hare  
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
Krishna krishna Hare Hare

**Translation**

Hail Ram, Hail Ram, Hail all Ram Ram;

Hail Krishna, Hail Krishna, Hail Krishna Krishna!

**VII. NAMASKARASHTAK**

(Composed by : **Shir Mohini Raj**)

Anantaa tulaa ten kase te sthavaave

Anantaa tulaa ten kase te sthavaave

Anantaa mukhaanchaa shine shesh gaataan  
Namaskaar Saashtaang Sri Sainathaa  
Smataave hmanee twatpadaa nitya bhaave  
Wurave taree bhaktisaattee swabhaave  
Taraave jaggaa taarunee maaya taataa  
Namaskaar Saashtaang Sri Sainathaa  
Vase jo sadaa daavayaa santleelaa  
Dise agna bkaanaparee jo janaa!aa  
Paree angaree gnaana kaiwalya daata  
Namaskaar Saashtaang sri Sainathaa  
Baraa laadhalaa janma haa maanvaachaa  
Naraa saarthakaa saadhaneebhuha saachaa  
Dharoon sayeepremaa galaayaa ahantaa  
'Namaskaar Saashtaang Sri Sainathaa  
Dharaave karee saana alpagna baalaa  
Karaave amhmaa dhanya chumboni gaalaa  
Mukhee ghaala preme karaa graas aataan  
Namaskaar Saashtaang Sri Sainathaa  
Suraakeeka jyaanchyaa padaa vandistaantee  
sukaadeeka jyaante samaanatva detee  
Prayaagaadi teerthen padee namra hotaa  
Namaskaar Saashtaang Sri Sainathaa  
Tujhyaa jhya padaa paahtan gopanaalee  
Sadaa rangalee chitswaroopee milaalee  
karee raasakreedaa save Krishna naathaa  
Namaskaar Saashtaang sri Sainathaa  
Tulaa maagato maagane eka dhyaave  
Karaa jodito deena afyanta bhaave  
Bhavee mohaneeraaja haa taari aataan  
Namaskaar Saashtaang sri Sainathaa

**Translation**

Oh, the Infinite One, how can I extol thee ! Oh, the Boundless Being, how to make obeisance to thee ! Having innumerable faces, even Adiesha is exhausted by singing thy ineffable glories. Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

Daily I contemplate on thy holy feet with ardent devotion. That contemplation (in turn) strengthens the nature of my devotion to thee. Only by such steadfast devotion can one escape from the snares of illusory worldly attachments. Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

The object of thy life (as Sai Baba) is to bless the pious with the leelas of thy divine glory. To the ignorant thou too seem to be one such. But, in reality, thou art the bestower of true knowledge and enlightenment. Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

It is a rare fortune to have this human birth. One has to utilize this fortune by earnest endeavours to realise the Self. Hence, kill the ego and kindle love towards thee in my heart. Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

Carry me, this ignorant child, in thine arms,  
make me blessed by caressing me affectionately and feeding me lovingly with thy prasada. Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

To whose holy feet all gods make obeisance; to whom great sages such as Suka pay homage as their compeer; at whose holy feet all the holy places such as Prayag lay humbly, to thee, Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations!

In order to obtain the good fortune to be always at thy holy feet, the milkmaids of Brindavan took part in thy divine sport completely absorbed in the ecstatic joy of pure Awareness, Thou art verily Lord Krishna, O Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

With folded hands I humbly implore thee, with ardent devotion, for nothing else but to save me, Mohini Raj (the psalmist) from the snares of worldly attachments and desires. Oh Lord Sainath, my worshipful prostrations to thee !

**Commentary**

This lucid octave, with a forcefully effectual refrain, is composed by Sri Mohini Raj an ardent devotee of Sri Sai Baba who worked as a Mamaltadar at Nasik.

Experiencing an unconditioned state of blissful ecstasy is the goal of all spiritual endeavours; and effacing the "conditioning" of the ego which get in the way of realizing that state is the essence of all spiritual disciplines. Ego has an instinctive self-perpetuating tendency which doesn't allow it to throw itself off happily. When encountered with an overwhelming situation or a overpowering personage, the ego experiences unpleasant reflexes and grabs all possible self-defensive shifts. In the path of devotion-only in the path a devotion-the subtle 'conditionings' of the ego are loosened by overpowering emotion (devotion) and the ego allows itself to be blissfully lost in its own image of the divine magnitude. Namaskar symbolizes this state of ego's readiness to lose itself. Gestures like uniting ones two palms together prostrating etc., while doing namaskar, suggest the said state of merger or union.

Thus, namaskar is not a mere deferential gesture of greeting. It is a meaningful techniques handed down by the masters of mystic wisdom as a means of effacing the ego. It is not simply treated as an -adjuvant ancillary to various devotional moods and modes. In fact it has been given an independent status as a mode of devotional discipline. Namaskara Bhakti is, thus one of the nine modes of devotional approaches (navavidha bhakti) enumerated in the tenets of devotional literature.

Literally the term namaskar is said to be a compound of three root-words=na (no)+mama(=I)+ aaskaara (=scope) = no scope for the 'I'. Thus it is a state of mind in which the self is effaced by an expressive recognition of the divine magnitude. To bear such a self-effacing feeling in mind is true namaskar. Saashtaanga means sa - with, ashta - eight, anger-limbs; Sashtaanga namaskar is making reverential obeisance by prostrating in such a way that the eight limbs of the body, viz, two hands, two legs, two shoulders, chest and forehead touch the ground. All the devout gestures such as folding of hands (keeping the palms together), kneeling, bowing down in obeisance, prostrating etc., are only ingenious designs conducive to effect a feeling of self-effacing humility in our hearts. Bereft of such a feeling namaskar becomes a mere namesake.

This Hymnal Octave of Obeisance (Namaskaraashtaka), if meaningfully recited, enables us to do a perpetual prostration-sastang namaskar-to the Ashtaka the eight limbs !

## VIII. PRARTHANA

### (Prayer)

Aisaa eyee baa-Sayee digambaraa  
 Akshaya roopa avataara-sarvahiyaapaka too  
 Shrutisaara-anusyaatrikumaaraa-maharajeyebaa!  
 Kassshee snaanajapa-praridivashee  
 Kolhapura bhikshesee-nirmala nadi tungaa  
 Jala praasee-nidra madhur deshee aisaa  
 Jzholee lombatase vaamakaree trishoola  
 Damaroodhaari bhaktaa varada sadaa sukhkaaree  
 Deseel muktee chaaree aisaa...  
 Paayeepaadukaajapmaala kamandaloo  
 Mrigacchalaa dharana kariseebaa naagijataa  
 Mukuta sobhato maathaa aisaa...  
 Tatpara tujyaa yaaje dhyaanee akshaya  
 Thyaanche sadhanee lakshmeevasa kafee  
 Dinarajanee rakshisi sankat vaaruni aisaa...  
 Yaa pari dhyaana tujze gururaayaa  
 Drishya karee nayanaan yaa  
 Poornaananda sukhe hee kaayaa  
 Laavisi hariguna gaayaa aisaa...

### Translation

We invoke, thee, Oh Sai Digambar! thou art the immortal incarnation of the indestructible spirit which animals the infinite forms of this universe. Thou art all pervasive and the essence of all revealed scriptures. I invoke thee, my Lord, the son of Sage Atri and Anasuya !

I invoke thee, Oh Sai Digambar, who perform thy daily ceremonial ablutions at Kasi (Banares), accept alms of Kolhapur and partake everyday of the pure water of the river Tunga Bhadra and retire to bed at Mahurpur every night.

Having a long mendicant bag adorned round thy left arm and trishul (trident) and damarit (a two sided hand-drum) in thy right hand, thou always make thy devotees

happy by granting them boons and leading them on the path of Liberation. Such thou art, Oh'Sai Digambar, I invoke thee !

Wearing wooden sandals on thy even feet, holding a rosary and kamandalu (water-pot) in thy dressed in a deerskin attire, thou shine forth with the crown of matted locks coiled as a serpent on they head. Such thou art, Oh Sai Digambar, I invoke thee.

Thou take all care to see that there will be no dearth in the houses of thy devotees who devotedly contemplate on thee and, make the goddess of wealth never leave their homes. Thou art ever vigilant, by day and night, to ward off the troubles of thy devotees. Oh Sai Digambar, I invoke thee.

Oh ! Master of master, bestow on me boundless bliss of having constantly the vision of thy blessed form and bless me to contemplate on thee uninterruptedly. Make my body always adore thee in singing thy glories. Oh Sai Digambar, I invoke thee.

### **Commentary**

This is also on of the traditional hymns adapted to the Book of Shirdi Aratis by substituting 'Sai for Datta' in the refrain.

## **IX. SRI SAINATHA MAHIMA STHORAM**

(Composed by : **Sir Upasani Baba Maharaj**)

Sadaa satswaroopam chidaananda kandam

Jagat sambhavasthaana samhaara hetum

Swabhaktechhayaa maanusham darsaynatham

Namaameeswaram sadgururm Sainaatham

Bhawadhwaanta vidhwamsa maarthaanda

meeddyam

Manovaagateetam munir dhyaana gamyam

Jagadvyapakam nirmalam nirgunam twqam

Namaamee... '

Sacdaa nimba vrikshasya mooiaadhivaasaat

sudhaasravinam tiktamapya priyantam

Tarum kalpa vrikshaadhikam saadhayantam

Namaamee.....

Sadaa kaipavrikshasya tasyaadhi moole  
Bhawadhaava buddhya saparyaadisevaam  
Nrinaam kurwataam bhukti mukti pradantam  
Namaamee...

Anekaashrutaa tarkya leela vilaasaein  
Samaavishkruteshaana bhaaswat prabhaavam  
Ahambhaava heenam prasannatma bhaawam  
Namaamee...

Ajanmaadhyamekam param brahma saakshaat  
Swayam sambhavam raamamevaavateeranam  
Bhawadhrshanaathsam puneetah prabhoham  
Namaamee...

Sro sayeesa kripaanidhe akhilanrinaam  
Sarwaarth siddhiprada  
Yushmatpaadarajah prabhaavamatulam  
dhaataapi vaktaakshamah  
Sadbhkthyaa saranam krithaanjali  
putah samprapithosmi prabho  
Shrimath sayiparesa paada kamalaa naanya  
Ccharanyam nama

Sayiroopadhara raaghavottaman  
Bhakta kaama vibudha dhrumam prabhum  
Mayayopahata chitta shudhayae  
chintayaamyahamhamisam mudaa  
Sharat sudhaamsu pratime prakaasam  
Kripatpaatram tava sainaatha  
Twadeeya paadeebja smaaashritaanaam  
Swachhaayayaa taapamapaa karothu  
Upaasanaa daivata sainaatha  
Sthavairmayopaasaninaasthu sthatwam  
Ramenmanome tava paadayuame bhrungo

Yathaabje makaramda lubdhah  
Anekajanmaarjita paapasamkshyo  
Bhavet bhawatpaada saroja darshanaat  
Kshamaswa sarvaanaparaadha poonjakaan  
Praseeda sayeesa guro dayaanidhe  
Sri sainaatha charanaamrita putachithaah  
Sthwatpaada seva narataah satatmcha bhaktyaa  
Samsaara janya duritaagha vinirgataaste  
KivaSya dhaama paramam samavaapnuvanti  
Sthotrane tatpatte bhakthyaa yonara  
sthanmanaahsadaa  
Sadguroh sainaadhasya kripa paatram  
bhaveddhwam

**Translation**

The state of Absolute Being is his eternal form and Pure Awareness and Bliss are his attributes. He is the primordial cause of creation, sustainment and destruction of the universe. He has assumed this human frame (as Sai Baba) in response to the fervent prayers (and exigencies) of his devotees. I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation.

He is the sun who banishes the darkness of ignorance and the one who transcends all thought and speech. He is the goal of the meditations and the moorings of the mystics. He pervades the whole universe and is pure and unalloyed without any relative attributes. I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation

By dwelling at the foot of the neem tree (at Shirdi) thou, hast removed its bitterness by showering ambrosia (of the grace) and have made the tree surpass even the kalpavriksha (the celestial wish-fulfilling tree). I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation.

Thou always take delight to rest under the neem tee and to bestow both material and spiritual prosperity upon thy devotees, who lovingly attend upon thee (there) I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation,

Thou reveal thyself in innumerable divine exploits which are unheard of and are unfathomable by discursive reasoning. Thou art the mystic sun who unleashes the light of divine knowledge bereft of all sense of egoism. Thou always abide in the Self-abounding grace. Such thou art, Oh Sainath, I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation.

Thou art the bestower of bliss and bounty on thy devotees. Thou art the sole anchor of repose and rejoicing and the object of their constant adoration. I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation.

Thou art the Primordial Self which transcends the cycle of births. Thou art verily the Absolute Being who hast assumed this human form at thine own will as was Lord Sri Rama incarnated (om days of yore). We shall verily be hallowed just by the sight of thee. Oh Lord, Sainath, I bow down to Sri Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation.

Lord Sainath thou art the ocean of grace and bestower of success and fulfillment of all the four objects of life (viz, dharam, arthka, kama and moksha.) Even demiurg Brahma cannot described the great efficacy of the dust of thy hallowed feet. With folded hands, I take refuge in thee; wiht earnest devotion I surrender to none other than the lotus feet of thy divine form, Oh Sainath !

For the purification of my mind stained with delusions, I lovingly contemplate day and night on Sri Rama, who has assumed the form of Lord Sainath. He is verily the celestial Wish-fulfilling Tree for his devotees.

Oh Lord Sainath, thou art a vaulting umbrella of Grace, glowing with the soothing lustre of moon light and protecting those who take refuge at thy lotus feet from the scorching showers of suffering.

Oh Sainath, thou art the most adorable deity who art ardently adored by this adorer (Upasani). May my mind hold fast to thy lotus feet in rapt delight just as a honeybee covetously clings to a bloom.

The accumulated sins earned in numerous past births shall be annulled just by the sight of thy hallowed lotus-feet. Oh Lord, Sainath, my Sadguru, thou art the ocean of mercy. Kindly forgive me for all my umpteen sins and, bless me graciously.

Those devotees whose minds are completely absorbed in the bliss of tasting the nectar of the lotus-feet of Sri Sainath, and always lovingly adore his feet with unswerving attention, shall be free from all troubles and turmoils borne of this mundane existence and will surely attain the state of Kaivalya.

Who-so-eve recites this stotra (hymn) wiht steadfast devotion, shall certainly obtain the grace of Sadguru Sainath.

### **Commentary**

This Sanskrit hymn was composed by Sri Upasani Baba Maharaj in 1911 at Shirdi, during the period of his spiritual probation prescribed by Sri Sai Baba. When a pair of marble padukas of Sri Sai Baba was installed (on Sravan Pournima, 15 th of August, 1912) at the foot of the neem tree at Baba's Gurusthan, the fourth and fifth slokas (Stanzas) of this hymn were inscribed on a marble slab affixed to the small pedestal supporting the installed padukas.

This hymn, composed by the Saint of Sakori on the Saint of Saints, Sri Sai Baba, should indispensably form apart of the daily prayers of all Sai Devotees. The first eight stanzas form a fine astaka (octave) even if they are read separately. Of all the Hymn it is the makutam (refrain) 'namameeswaram sadgurum Sainatham' of the first eight slokas (Stanza), which is of surpassing value. The makutam expresses both the Iswara and the sadguru aspects of Sri Sai Baba. The Manifestation of the powers of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, with perfect control of lordship over the phenomena] world, is the Iswara aspect, and while always remaining in a state of transcendence and instructing and helping sincere seekers to reach that state is the sadguru aspect. These two aspects are very rarely to be seen in one personage and, Sri Sai Baba is such a rare manifestation. As Mrs. Tarkhad, a contemporary ardent devotees of, Shri Sai Baba, described with deep insight. "One noticeable difference between Sri Sai Baba and other saints struck me. I have seen them in high Samadhi or trance condition entirely forgetting their body. I have seen them later, getting conscious of their surroundings, knowing what is in our hearts and replying to us. But, with Sri Sai Baba there was this peculiar feature. He did not have to go into trace to achieve anything or to reach any higher position or knowledge. He was, every moment, exercising a double consciousness, one actively

utilising the ego called Sri Sai Baba and dealing with other egos in temporal of spiritual affairs, and the other entirely superseding all egos and resting in the position of the Universal Soul. He was exercising and manifesting all powers and features incidental to both states of consciousness. He was always inside and outside of the material world's In other words, what Mrs. Tarkhad has described is the perfect blend of the Iswara and the Sadguru aspects of God, manifested so perfectly in Sri Sai Baba. Thus, the makutam of the stotra, chanted devoutly and meaningfully, becomes a mahamantra which bestows immense benefits, both spiritually and materially.

## **X. PUSHPANJALI**

(Mantra Pushpam) (Vedic Hymn)

Om yagnena yagnamayajanta devaastaani  
dharmaani

Prathamaanyaasan

Teha naakatn mahimaanah sachine yatra

Poorvesaadhyaa santi devaah

Om rajaadhiraajaaya prasahya saahine namovayam

Vaishravanaaya kurmahe

Samekaaman kaama kaamaaya mahyam

kaameswaro

Om swasti saamraajyam bhojyam swaraajyam

Vairajyam

Paarameshtyam raajyam maharajya

maadhipatyamayam

samantparyaa yeesyaat

Saavabhaoumah saarvaayushya

Aantaadaaparaaraadhaat prithivayai

Samudraprayanthaayaa ekaraaliti tadapsyesha

slokobhigeeto marutah

Pariveshtaaro maruttayaavasan gruhe

Aviskhitasya kaamaprer vsivedevaah sabhaasada ithi.

Sri Naraayana Vasudeva Satchidananda Sadganj Sri Sainath Mahraaj Kijai!

**XL PRARTHANA**

Karacharanakritam vaakkaayajam karmajam vaa  
Shravanayanajam vaa maanasam vaaparaadham  
Viditamaviditam vaa sarvame tatshkamasva  
Jayajaya karunaahdhe sriprabho sainatha

**Translation**

Oh, Lord Sainath, Ocean of mercy, kindly forgive me for all my guilty (mis-) deeds done with my hands and feet, by my body and speech, with my organs of sight and hearing, by thought and action, (whether they are) done deliberately or undeliberately. Oh My Lord, I humbly hail thy glory.

**Sri Satchidananda Sadguru Sainath Maharj Ki Jai**

## CHAPTER V

### DHUP ARATI

(EVENING ARATI)

#### I. ABHANG

(Same as Psalm No. II of the Noon Arati)

#### II. ARATI

(Same as Psalm No. IV of the Noon Arati)

#### III. ARATI

(Same as Psalm No. V of the Noon Arati)

IV. NAMAN (Same as Psalm No. VI of the Noon Arati)

#### V. NAMASKARASTAK

(Same as Psalm No. VIII of the Noon Arati)

#### VI. PRARTHANA

(Same as Psalm No. IX of the Noon Arati)

#### VII. SRI SAINATHA MAHIMNA STOTRAM

(Same as Psalm No. X of the Noon Arati)

#### VIII. SRI GURUPRASADA YACHANAASTAKAM

(Composed by : Sri B. V. Dev alias **Babanche Bal**)

Ruso mama priyaambikaa majavaree pitahee ruso

Ruso mama priyanganaa priyasutaatmajaaheruso Ruso

bhagini bandhuhee swasura saasubayee ruso

Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Puso na sunabayee tyaa maja

na bhratrujaayaa puso

Puso na priya soyare priya sage na gnateen puso

Puso suhrida naa sakhaa

swajana naapta'bandhu puso

Paree na guru Saayima

majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Puso na aba/aa mulen tarun vridhahee naa puso

Puso na guru dhakute maja na thor saane puso  
 Puso nacha bhale bure sujan sadhuheen naa puso  
 Paree na guru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso  
 Ruso chatura tatwavit vibudha praanajnaanee ruso  
 Rushohi vidushee striyaa kushal panditaahee ruso  
 Ruso mahipatee yatee bhajak taapaseehee ruso  
 Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso  
 Ruso kavi rishee mune anagha siddha yogee ruso  
 Ruso hi grihadevata ni kula graama devee ruso  
 Ruso khala pishaascahee malm dakineehee ruso  
 Na dattaguru Saayima majavari kadheenhee ruso  
 Ruso mriga khaga krimi akhila jeeva jantu ruso  
 Ruso vitap prastaraa achal aapagaabdhee ruso  
 Ruso kha pavan naagni vaar  
 avani panchatatwe ruso  
 Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso  
 Ruso vimal kinnaraa amala yakshineehee ruso  
 Ruso shashi khagaadihee gagani taarakaahee ruso  
 Ruso amararaajahee ac/aya dharmaraa ruso  
 Na dattaguru Saayima majavari kadheenhee ruso  
 Ruso mana saraswatee chapa!a chitta tehee ruso  
 Ruso vapu dishaakhilaa kattina kaa! tohee ruso  
 Ruso sakal vishwahee mayi tu brahma golaa ruso  
 Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso  
 Vimoodha hmanunee haso  
 majana matsaraahee daso  
 Padaabhi ruchi ulhasohjanan kardamee naa phaso  
 Na durga dhriticha ahaso ashivbhaav maage khaso  
 Prapanchi mana he ruso dridda virakti chittee ttaso  
 Kunaachihi grinaa naso na  
 cha sprihaa kashaachee aso

sadaiva hridyeeen vaso manasi dhyani Sayee vaso  
Padee pranaya varaso nikhila drishya baabaa diso  
Na dattaguru Saayima upari yaachanelaa ruso

**Translation**

Let it be, even if my beloved mother and father, my darling wife and dear children, my sisters, brothers, mother-in-law and father-in-law are all cross with me. I care not! But, Oh my Motherly Sai the Datta Guru, pray never be cross with me!

Let it be, even if my daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, my near and dear relatives, kith and kin, well-wishers, and bosom friends forsake me in neglect, I never mind! But, Oh my Motherly Sai the Datta Guru, pray never be cross with me!

Even if women, boys, girls, aged, youngsters, elders, good, bad, pious and holy all neglect me. I mind not in the least! But, Oh Sai, my Motherly Guru, never be cross with me!

Even the wizards in philosophy, intelligent, clever, wise men, enlightened women, erudite scholars, kings, monks, mystics, all may be indignant with me. I do not bother! But, Oh Sai, Motherly Guru, never be cross with me!

Poets, sages, saints, great godmen, yogis, tutelary gods, clan and village deities, evil spirits, malicious devils and grungy goblins, all may be piqued with me. I care not in the least! But, my Motherly Sai, the Datta Guru, never get displeased with me!

Animals, birds, insects, all the sentient beings, stones, mountains, rivers, oceans, earth and the five elements all may turn unfriendly against me, I care not! But, Oh my Motherly Sai, the Datta Guru, never be ungracious to me!

Even if pious Kinnaras, Yakshas, the moon, the sun, and the stars in the firmament, Indra the king of the gods, Yama Dharma Raja the implacable god of Death, all may turn ungraceful to me. I am least bothered! But Oh my Motherly Sai the Datta guru, never turn me down in displeasure!

My own body and mind, Saraswati the goddess of learning, Lakshmi the capricious goddess of wealth, the gods presiding over all the cardinal directions, the ruthless (god of) Time, the whole universe and the three spheres of creation may turn unfavourable to me. But, Oh Sai, the Datta Guru, do not look upon me with disfavour!

Even if the whole world laughs at me with ridicule or my own kith and kin gibe and jeer in my face taking me as a block headed dolt, make me undaunted with unswerving faith and devotion to thy feet. Let ignoble thoughts never enter my mind, and let me not get entangled in the mire of births and rebirths. Let strong emotions borne of dispassion towards worldly attachments be implanted deep in my heart, Oh Sainath!

Bless me, Oh Sai, that I cherish no ill will to anyone nor any yearning for anything. Pray, constantly dwell in my heart and make my mind constantly dwell upon thee. Inspire in me loving passion to thy even feet and bless me to look upon the whole world only as thy blessed form. Oh my Motherly Sai the Datta Guru, I beg thee to dole out the said boons upon me without getting irritated!

### **Commentary**

This alluring piece of tuneful devotion is composed by Sri Balakrishna Vishwanath Dev, who served as a Mamaltadar at Dahanu. Sri Dev composed the psalm in 1940 and it was added to the Book of Shirdi Aratis about twenty two years after Baba's Maha Samadhi. Sri B. V. Dev rendered memorable services to Shri Sai Baba Sansthan as one of its founding members/trustees and, contributed a number of articles to Shri Sai Leela Masik (Marathi).

'Babanche Bal' is his chosen pen-name, which means, 'Baba's Child'. When Sri Annasaheb Dabholkar, the author of Sri Sai Satcharitra, passed away in 1929 leaving his magnum opus unfinished, the task of penning the finale was entrusted to Sri B. V. Dev, who then composed the concluding chapters (Chs. 52 and 53) of the book.

Even though the express motif of the psalm is an impassioned plea, nay, begging (=yachana) for the favour (=prasad) of the Guru to the exclusion of all other concerns and attachments in life, it hints and hits at the subtle clogs in our consciousness (ego) which hold us back from an all out bid for an undaunted encounter with our essential Self. The lilting rhythm of the song aired with the cadence of euphonic alliterations and onomatopoeic diction leaves in the hearts of

the singers and the listeners a lingering ring of rhapsodic ecstasy - even if one knows not the language!

**Sri Satchidananda Sadguru Sainath Maharj Ki Jai**

## **CHAPTER - VI**

### **(SEJ ARATI) (NIGHT ARATI)**

#### **I. ARATI**

(Composed by : **Sant Tukaram Maharaj**)

Owaaloo aaratee mazhaa sadgurunaathaa  
maazhaa sainaathaa

Paanchaahee tatwaanche deep iaawila aataan  
Nirgunaachee sthitee kaisee akaaraa aalee  
- Baba aakaraa aalee

Satvaa ghatee bharoni vuralee Sayee maawoolee  
> Owaaloo >

Rajatamasathwa tighe maayaa prasawaiee  
Baba maayaa prasawaiee  
Mayecheeye potee kaisee maayaa udbhavalee  
> Owaaloo >

Saptasaagaree kaisaa khel maandeelaa  
Baba khel maandeelaa  
Khelooniyaa khelawagha visthaar kela  
> Owaaloo >

Brahmandeeche rachanaa daakhavHee dolaa  
- Baba daakhavilee dolaa  
Tuka hmane maazhaa Swaamee kripaaioo bhola  
> Owaaloo >

#### **Translation**

Oh my Sadgurunath, I adore thee (with arati) by hailing thy glories. The five essential categories (tattwas) of my being are the five wicks in the quintuple lamp waved before thee in arati;

How hast thou assumed this form (as Sai Baba) out of thy primal formless nature?  
How doth thou, though pervading the whole universe, prevail as a loving mother  
confined to this form as Sai Baba?

How hast maya emerged from the three gunas (ultimate reals or qualities) viz,  
sattwa (intelligence-stuff), rajas (dynamic energy) and Tamas (mass or static  
inertia)? Again how hast another may a (the manifold creation) sprung from the  
womb of that primal Maya?

How hast thou turned the seven seas as thy playground? And, thus revelling in thy  
.sport, how hast thou extended thy recreation in the form of the vast multiplicity of  
this creation?

In what manner wilt thou lay hare for us the process in which this vast expanse of  
creation sprang from thee? Oh my Lord Sainath, lauds Tukaram, thou art the  
embodiment of guileless grace!

### **COMMENTARY**

This is one of the popular abhangs of Sant Tukaram adapted into the Book of Shirdi Aaratis. The psalm is rather cosmogonic in purport inquiring into the origin and evolution of the universe. A blend of Sankhya-Yoga philosophy with the teachings of Chaitanyaites, to whose order he principally belongs, forms the basic background for the cosmological ideas of Sant Tukaram. In common Vedantic parlance maya means illusion superimposed upon the Reality (i.e. Brahman) due to ignorance. Like many other great saints of Maharashtra, esp., of the Sant Tradition, Tukaram too does not subscribe fully to the doctrine of Maya. He says in one of his abhangs that "(to say) the world is Maya is a half-truth." In the present abhang Tukaram employs the term maya as synonymous with prakriti (=primal matter}. Such a usage is, of course, not an anomaly to the tenets of Vedanta. Setaswatara Upanishad, for instance, says, "mayanthu prakritim vidwa... ", i.e., 'know that maya means prakriti and the upholder of this maya is the great Lord.'

According to the Sankhya Philosophy, the Primal Prakriti {First Cause} is characterised by an equilibrium of the three gunas (qualities or ultimate reals); in conjunction with the Purusha (Pure intelligence, the Final Cause). When the original equilibrium of the three gunas is disturbed it becomes the relative or embryonic

prakriti (or mahat) which in turn unfolds itself into this vast expanse of manifold creation. While referring to this, Tukaram adds a teleological motive to the whole cosmogenetic process by envisaging that it is all only a part of the Divine Sport {leela}!

In spiritual symbolism, ocean or water stand for consciousness. However, the seven seas - in the present context - connote the seven stages in cosmic evolution, which form the extended playground for the Divine Sport. The extension of the Divine Play from the basic playground (Primal Prakriti) runs through seven stages [according to Sankhya Cosmology], viz., mahat {the great substance} - ahankara {ego} - jnanendrias & manas {the five cognitive senses and the mind} - Karmendriyas {the five conative senses} tanmatras {the five subtle genetic elements} - stulabhutas {gross elements}-vriksha-sarira {vegetable & animal organisms} 'How and why has this vast expanse of creation with names and forms (saguna) emanated from the attributeless absolute?' - Tukaram intrigues at the enigma of the creation and, envisions the whole process as the Divine Sport! Besides, he tries to evoke in our hearts a spirit of enquiry coupled with a numinous awe at the profound mysteries of the universe and, concludes that the recondite mysteries can only be unravelled by the compassionate and guileless grace of God!

## II. JNANESWAR ARATI

(Composed by : **Shri Rama Janardhani Swami**)

Aaratee jnaanaraaja - mahaa kaivailya tejaa  
sevitee saadhusanta - hmanu vedhalaa maazha

> Arati >

Lopalejnaane jagin - hita nenatee konee  
Avataara panduranga - nam tteville jnanee

> Arati >

Kanakaache tat kareen - ubhyaa gopikaa naaree  
Naarada tumbaraho - saamgaayan karee

> Arati >

Pragata guhya bole - vishwa bramachi kele  
Rama janardhane - paayee masthak tteville  
> Arati >

**Translation**

Oh King of the realm of Knowledge, Jnanaraja, thou art haloed with surpassing splendour of Kaivalya. Saints and sages adore thee with their minds fully absorbed in thee (i.e. being one with thy exalted state).

This world is wanting in wisdom and no one wants wisdom in this world. Hence, Lord Panduranga has incarnated as Jnaneswar Maharaj to impart wisdom to the world.

The milk-maids of Brindavan are standing by to offer thee Arati with lamps placed in golden trays (i.e., with their golden hearts kindled with the fire of love);

Celestial minstrels such as Narada and Tumburu are singing thy glories in melodious Sama Vedic chants.

Verily, to reveal the secrets of the Universe and the Self, thou hast incarnated in this world, Oh Jnanadeva! I, Rama Janardhani (the composer), humbly lay my head at thy holy feet.

**COMMENTARY**

Sant Jnaneswar Maharaj (1275-1296) is, perhaps, the most revered of all the saints in Maharashtra. He is hailed as the Adiguru of the glorious Varkari movement in Maharashtra and to him all Varkari Sants (saints) that followed pay unequivocal homage. As the devotees sang these aaratis to Sri Jnaneswar Maharaj and Sri Tukaram Maharaj, while offering Sej Arati to Sri Sai Baba, Baba used to sit attentively with folded hands as a gesture of reverence to these great saints.

The composer of this aarati-song, Sri Rama Janardhani, is one of the three chief disciples of Sant Janardhana Swami (1504-1575) of Devgiri (Daulatabad). The other two are Sri Eka Janardhani (the famous Eknath Maharaj) and Sri Jani Janardhani. All the three devoutly suffix their beloved Guru's name to their own, declaring that the real author of their compositions is their Guru and, they are just mere pliant tools in the hands of their Guru.

### III. TUKARAM ARATI

(Composed by : Shri **Rameswar Bhat**)

Aaratee tukaraamaa - swamee sadguru dhaamaa  
Satchidaananda murtee-paaya daakhavee aamhaa

> Aarati tukaraamaa >

Raaaghave saagaraat -jaise paashaan taarile  
Taise he tuko baache - abhang (udaki) rakshile

> Aarati tukaraamaa >

Tukitaa tulanesee - brahma tukaasee aale Hmanonee  
raamesware - charanee mastak ttevUe

> Aarati tukaraamaa >

#### **Translation**

Oh Tukaram Maharaj, Master of the Abode of sadgurus, I adore thee by offering draft Oh embodiment of pure Being-Awareness-Bliss, grant us the sight of thy blessed feet.

Just as Sri Rama made boulders miraculously float on the ocean to build a causeway (across to Lanka), thou hast saved thy abhangs by making them float on the river.

Oh Tukarama, on weighing well thy greatness in the balance (of wisdom), the truth has come out that Tukaram is verily the Brahman. I, Rameswar Bhat, lay my head at thy holy feet in humble obeisance.

#### **COMMENTARY**

This arati-psalm on Sant Tukaram is composed by Sri Rameswar Bhat, a disciple of Tukaram Maharaj. His forefathers migrated from Karnataka to Maharashtra and settled at Vagholi near Pune. Rameswar Bhat was an erudite Vedic scholar and renowned as an austere worshipper (upasaka) of his tutelary deity, Vyaghreswara. In the days of Tukaram caste regulations and restrictions were strong in the Hindu society. Imparting spiritual instruction was considered a prerogative of the brahmins and, to the canon of the orthodoxy it would be a sacrilege if a shudra took up the privilege. Tukaram, though a shudra by birth, composed abhangs (sermonic poetry) and shot up to eminence as a star preacher. On that account he elicited strong

opposition and hostility from the orthodox brahmin circles. Even that could have been put up with. But, when he began accepting brahmins also as his disciples, the brahmin orthodoxy flared up in rage. For instance, Bahuni Bai, a brahmin disciple of Tukaram, writes, "Tukoba's keertan is the meaning of the Vedas. Even brahmins fall at his feet." At one stage, the matter was brought to the Brahmin Tribunal (Sabha) at Pune. As a die-hard old-liner, Rameswar Bhat too shared the orthodox ill towards Tukaram and, said to have taken active part in the persecutive proceedings. The Brahmin Sabha passed a resolution to the effect that Tukaram's writings were inimical to the tenets of the Vedas and, Tukaram himself should fling his abhang - manuscripts into the nearby river or, should suffer grievous ostracism. That was almost a canonical verdict in those days. Tukaram had to submit to the atrocious dictate but with a broken heart. He hung on to the banks of the River Indrayani, where his manuscripts were scrappily drowned, refusing all food and aliment and, remained fervently meditating on God. On the thirteenth day, to the utter amazement of many spectators, the submerged manuscripts miraculously floated up dry on the waters! This and many other experiences opened Rameswar Bhat's eyes to the greatness of Tukaram, converting the hostile rival into an ardent aficionado. It was to that miracle of the floating manuscripts that Rameswar Bhat refers in the present arati-psalm.

Though the psalm seems very simple on the surface, it displays beautiful shades of meanings the deeper we dive into it. Tukaram principally belongs to a spiritual order which flourished in Maharashtra, whose (ascetic) adherents suffix 'Chaitanya' to their names. Most ascetic orders in India try to trace their origin to Dattatreya and these chaitanyas also claim Dattatreya as their Adi Guru. The traditional account of the preceptorial line (guruparainpara) of this order runs thus: Dattatreya - Siva Chaitanya -Raghava Chaitanya - Kesava or Babaji Chaitanya -Sant Tukaram Maharaj. Even though Tukaram's Guru belongs to the order of Chaitanyas, Tukaram's main arena was within the Varkari Tradition. The traditional Varkari account of Tukaram's guruparampara (though somewhat anachronistic) is Jnaneswar Maharaj - Satchidananda Baba-Vishwambhar - Raghava Chaitanya - Kesava Chaitanya - Babaji Chaitanya and Tukaram Maharaj.

A devotee is enjoined by the Tradition to remember with reverence not only his Guru but all the gurus of his preceptorial line (guru parampara) 'Gurubhyas tatgurubhyas cha namovakam aheemahe...' {'To the gurus and to their gurus we bow..'} The poet of the present psalm tries to achieve this end by a dexterous employment of paranomasia, presenting rich riddles of meanings. First, the poet enters the abode of the Sadgurus ('sadguru dhama') to call on his guru, Sant Tukaram, to offer worship. There in the abode of the Sadgurus he beholds not only his own guru, but also many great personages of his preceptorial line. He pays homage to them also, and presents them to us by a suggestive pun on their names and epithets. First he bows down to Lord Dattatreya who is hailed by Indian spiritual traditions at large as the Master of the Abode of the Sadgurus. In essence the name Datta has become synonymous with a Perfect Master. Especially in Maharashtra, all Sadgurus are looked upon, in one way or other, as either complete (poorna) or partial (amsa) incarnations (avatars) of Lord Datta. Sometimes the epithet, 'sadguru dhama' is also applied to Sri Jnaneswar Maharaj by common convention in the Sant (Varkari) hagiographical poetry. Then, the poet sees, Sri Jnaneswar Maharaj's disciple, Sri Satchidananda Baba (in satchidananda murthy') and next the latter's grand-disciple Sri Raghava Chaitanya (in 'raghava sagaraate). Then he pays respect to his Parama Guru, Babaji Chaitanya (in 'baehe') who the Guru of Sant Tukaram (Tuka).

According to the epic story of Ramayana, huge boulders floated miraculously on the sea, forming as a causeway .and, enabling Sri Rama and his army to cross over to the Island to Ravana to redeem his wife Sita who had been abducted by Ravana. In the same way, the psalmist suggests, Tukaramss abhangs too floated, as if forming a causeway (bridge) across the ocean of samsara, enabling Man to get through to the island ('I'-land) of his own self (surrounded by the waters of ignorance), to destroy the forces of delusion and to redeem or liberate his own real Self (which is his self's better-half"). In one of his abhangs, Tukaram himself declares to people in a prophetic vein, "Come here, come here, great and small, women and men. Take no thought and have no anxiety. I shall carry all of you to the other shore. I come as the sole bearer of the stamp of God to carry you over in God's name."

Tukaram's abhangs were condemned to be drowned in the river because he was not a brahmin by caste. The very Rameswar Bhatt who had condemned Tukaram with contempt, now declares, upon thorough examination, balancing wisdom and experience, that Tukaram is not only a true brahmin (in the true sense of the word), but verily one with the Absolute Brahman!

As one literary critic has aptly stated, "Prose that conveys more than one meaning is bad prose; poetry that fails to imply a hundred meanings is bad poetry." Certainly, Sri Rameswar Bhat is not a poet of mean order!

#### IV. SEJ ARATI

(Composed by : **Shri Krishna Jageshwar Bhishma**)

Jai jai Sainatha aataa pahudaave mandiree  
ho Aalavito sapreme tuzhala aaratee  
ghevuni kareeho

> Jai jai >

Ranjavisee too madhura bolunee -  
maaya jashi nija mulaa ho

Bhogisi vyaadhee tunch haruniyaa -  
nijasevak dukhaalaa ho

Dhavuni bhakta vyasana harisi -  
darshan deshee tyaalaa ho

Jzhaale asatil kasta ateesaya tumache yaa  
dehaalaa ho

> Jai jai >

Skhamaa shayana sundara hee shobhaa  
-suwan shej tyavareen ho

Gdhyaavee todee bhakta janaanchee  
-pujan archan kareen ho

Owaalito panchaprana -  
jyotee sumatee kareen ho

Sevaa kinkara bhakta preetee -  
attar parimala vaaree ho

> Jai jai >

Soduni jaayaa dukha waatate - sayee tava

charanaansee ho

Agnesthavah aasi prasaada -

ghevuni nijasadanaasee ho

Jaato aata yevunpunarapi -

twatcharanaache paashee ho

Uttavoon tujala Saimaavule -

nijahitasaadhaa yaasee ho

> Jai jai >

### **Translation**

Hailing thy glories, Oh Sainath, I invoke thee to accept thy bed in the Mandir. I offer Arati (by singing lullabies) to thee with a heart overflowing with love.

Just as a mother dandles and 'recreates' her (importunate) children with fond caresses, thou delight us with thy mellifluous words and, take delight in removing the diseases and the distresses of thy devotees. Thou show up in prompt presto to ward off the worries of thy devotees when they are in trouble. Alas! Thy body might be wearied by the task of constantly guarding thy devotees!

So, come and repose for a while on the beauteous bed bedecked with flowers of forgiveness. Thy devotees offer thee worship and devout services. Making five pranas (vital forces) as the five wicks in the quintuple-lamp lit by the fire of wisdom, we perform arati to thee. The redolent aroma emanating from the sweet love and devotion in the hearts of thy devotees and servants is the perfume proffered to thee.

Distressed we feel to go home leaving thy holy feet. Yet, by thy leave, we go home on taking thy blessings and prasad but, only to return by morn to adore thy holy feet. Oh Motherly Sai, we shall wake thee up at dawn to make lasting weal for our own selves.

### **V. SEJ ARATI**

(Composed By : **Shri Krishna Jageshwar Bishma**)

Aataa swaamee sukhe nidraa karaa

avadhutaa - baba karaa sayinaathaa

Chinmaya he sukhadhaama jaawuni  
pahudaa ekaantaa  
Vairaagyaachaa kunchaa ghewuni chowk  
jhadeelaa - baba  
chowk jhadeela  
Tayaawaree supremaachaa shidakaavaa  
didhalaa  
> Aataa swaamee >  
Paayaghadyaa ghatalyaa sundar  
navavidhaa bhakti - baba  
navavidhaabhaktee  
Jnaanaachyaa समयaa Jaawuni ujalayaa  
jyotee  
> Aataa swaamee >  
Bhaavaarthaanchaa manchaka  
hridayakaashee taangilaa - baba  
kaashee taangilaa  
Manaachee sumane karunee kele Baba  
shejelaa  
> Aataa swaamee >  
Dwaitaache kapaat laavuni ekatra kele -  
baba ekatra kele  
Durbuddheechyaa gattee soduni padade  
sodeele  
> Aataa swaamee >  
Aashaatrishnaa kalpanechnaa saanduni  
galabala - baba  
saanduni galabala  
dayaakshamaa shaantee daasee ubhyaa  
sewelaa  
> Aataa swaamee >

Alakshya unmanee ghevunee baba naajuk  
duhsshaalaa  
baba naajuk duhsshala  
Niranjana sadguru swaamee nijavile shejelaa  
> Aataa swaamee >

**Translation**

I invoke thee, my Lord Sai Avadhut, to retire to bed calm and sequestered in the blissful abode of pure consciousness. I swept thy bed-chamber with the broom of dispassion, and cleansed it with the pure waters of loving devotion.

A foot-rest made of nine kinds of devotion is bedecked at thy cozy couch. A radiant ruby of knowledge is kept as a bed-lamp. Baba, now retire to bed in peace!

In the chamber of our heart, the cot of devotion bedecked with flowers of pure thoughts is neatly arranged. Baba retire to bed in peace!

A bed-spread of pure consciousness is unfurled over the bed, removing from it all the wrinkles of duality. Removing the knots of wickedness, the canopy of faith is set up intact.

The termagant and troublesome maids of craving and covetousness are banished from service and, now the maids of compassion, peace and patience are standing by attend upon thee.

The beautiful blanket of boundless bliss is spread as a cover. Oh Sadguru Sainath, the Niranjan (one who is free from the eye-unguent of ignorance), now retire to bed in grace!

**VI. ABHANG**

(Composed by: **Sant Tukaram Maharaj**)

Paahe prasaadachee vaat  
Ghyaave dhuwoniaan taat  
Sesh ghewunee jaayeen  
Tumche jhaliyaan bhojan  
Jhaalo aata eksavaa

Tumha aadu niyaa devaa  
Tukaa hmane aatan chitt  
Karoo/i/ raahilo nischint

**Translation**

Oh God, keeping ready our dishes (our hearts) which are thoroughly cleansed, we are eagerly looking forward to our share of the sacred leftovers (prasad) of Thy meal. After Thou hast finished partaking of Thy meal, we shall share the hallowed leftovers among ourselves equally. Tukaram says, fixing my mind on Thee, now I rest in peace.

**VII. PADH**

(Composed by : **Sant Tukaram Maharaj**)

Paawalaa prasaad aataa vitto nijaave  
Apulaa to shrama kalo yetase bhaave  
Aataan swaamee sukhe nidraa karaa  
gopalaa

Purale manorath jato aapule sthalaa  
Tumhaasee jaagawoo aamhi aapulyaa  
chadaa

Shubashub karme dosh haraavayaa peedaa

Tuka hmane didhale utchistaache bhojan  
Naahi nivadile aamha apulyaa bhinn

**Translation**

Oh Lord Vittal, we have received Thy prasad. Now we give thought to the hardships Thou hast borne for us. Oh Sai Gopal, the merciful, retire to bed in peace! All our hearts' desires are fulfilled and we go home contented. We shall call on Thee in the morning again to pour out our petitions. Bless us, nullifying the effects of all our pure and impure actions and annual all evil influences from us. Tukaram says, I partake of Thy sacred lefeovers in the contemplation that I and Thou are not different but One!

## VIII. ABHANG

(Composed by: **Shri Krishna Jageshwar Bhishma**)

Sainaath mahaaraaja aatan  
Kripaa karaa gururaaja  
Trividha taap haa paattee iaagalaa  
Kaa nhee na shuche kaaja aataa  
Mano vrittee hya kiteetaree usalatee  
Utaree yaamchaa majza aataa  
Harisee jaisaa deen janaache  
Vyasana kasunee maaja aataa  
Krishnadaas twatcharanee jhaalaa  
Leen tyejuni janlaaj aataa

### **Translation**

Oh Sainath Maharaj, always be gracious to us. Oh Lord of all gurus, we are miserably at bay being engulfed by the three kinds of sufferings, {viz, adibhoutika (physical), adidaivika (providential) and adhyatmika (psychosomatic) and, are gasping for a respite. Pray, uplift us who are swept away by the gales of passions. Thou art verily the saviour of the miserable folk like me who are drowned in distress. I, Krishna Das, lay my head humbly at thy holy feet in rapt absorption, bereft of all bashfulness (i.e. free from being self-conscious of any public scrutiny)!

Shri Rajadhiraja Yogiraja Parabrahma Shree Satchidananda Sadguru Sainath Maharaj KiJai

End of Sej Arati

and

**End of 'Arati Saibaba' Serial**