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Arati Sai Baba

The psalm Book
of
Sri Sai Baba Samadhi Mandir
at
Shirdi

*English Transliteration of the Original Marathi Arati Songs
With English Translation, Introduction and Commentary*

By
Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji

1997
Saiyana Books

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Second Edition, 1997

"Arati Sai Baba"

(Book of Shirdi Aratis)

*English Transliteration of the Original Marathi arati songs
with an English Translation, Introduction and commentary*

<By>

Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji

Shirdi

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Publisher's Note

The present publication has been intended to supply a want, long felt by Sai devotees, – esp., non-Marathi speaking Sai devotees, — not only for a standard English rendering of Shirdi Aratis, but also for a comprehensive and systematic study of the concept of aratis in general and the historical background and evolution of the institution of Shirdi Aratis in particular. The present work is one of the products of ardent and arduous study and research which our Pujya Guruji, Dr.Sainathuni Sarath Babuji, has completed years ago. Because of his inscrutable reluctance to publish his works, the manuscript of his Aratis translation and commentary {along with many other masterpieces} has not seen the light of the day all these years.

For Saipatham Publications
— S.V.L. Narayana Rao

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

S.S.S. Sri Sai Satcharitra (Marathi):

By: Sri Annasaheb Dabholkar alias Hemadpant; 1980,
Pub. by Sri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi;
English Translations by the Author.

S.S.G. Sri Sai Satcharitra:

The Wonderful Life and Teachings of Shri Sai Baba
English adaptation of the original Marathi S.S.S. of Sri Hemadpant
By: Sri Nagesh Vasudev Gunaji, 1991,
Pub. by Sri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi

S.S.B. Sri Sai Baba

By: Sai Sharan Anand, {Marathi}, Tr. from Gujarati original
By: Kher.V.B., Bombay, 1982

D.E.S. Devotees Experiences of Sri Sai Baba

Ed.By: Sri B.V.Narasimha Swami, Pub. By: All India Sai Samaj, Madras, 1989.

S.D. Shirdi Diary of the Hon'ble Mr.G.S.Khaparde

Pub. by Sri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi, 1994.

L.S.B. The Life of Sri Sai Baba

By: Sri B.V. Narasimha Swami, Pub.By: All India Sai Samaj, Madras.

M.M. Mysticism in Maharashtra, By: Ranade, R.D.

Introduction

The Tradition of 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 smouldering. 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 *pancharati*.

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 suspicious 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 Puja

Arati, in situ, is an integral part of *puja*. *Puja*, in its generic sense is 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 concretization 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 palace 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 effects 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 heads; 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 mentioned. In the later Vedic texts, esp., in the *Atharvana Veda*, these Aratis are represented as a single deity, Arati. Arati is a personification of ill-will, jealousy, spite and ill-liberality. She is depicted as a golden-complexioned, 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*¹ are intended to exorcise the evil spell induced by goddess Arati! Literally, *arati* means absence of pleasure and amusement, uneasiness or agitation (*a-rati*). 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 (‘evil eye’). Agni is hailed in the Vedas as the chief expeller of evil forces (demons)², and some 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 (>*harati*³) the uneasiness (*arati*)’.

1. *Arati* being a simplified fire ritual and basically a magical rite, there is no wonder it owes a clear Atharvan Vedic legacy. According to the Vedic tradition Atharvan was the first *rishi* who ‘discovered’ fire (RV.VI.16.13; RV.VI.15.17; RV.X.21.5; YV.XI.32;), instituted the worship of fire and initiated the custom of offering *soma* in the sacrifice (*yagna*). So he is acclaimed as the ‘father of Agni’. It is after the Atharvan that the *Atharvana Veda* is named and he is the purported author of that Veda.

2. R.V.I. 12,13; I.36, 20;etc.,

3. *Harati*, *haritha*<cause to be taken or seized; *harith*=taking, conveying, carrying, captivating, and also, pleasing, delighting.

Etimology

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 and in return it carries the auspicious blessings of 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.⁴ 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 > *arti*, an act of delightful (spiritual) intercourse culminating in a state of rapturous ecstasy of union, *a* <abounding in, *rati*<communion (with the Divine).

4. Perhaps, it was Sri Jnaneswar Maharaj who first composed an *arati* song as an expression of devotion, which some scholars translated as ‘distress calls’.

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 proscriptions of caste and creed; no complicated prescriptions of intricate liturgical canons; no priestly middlemen; nor any ecclesiastical meddle men; no abstruse and awesome incantations; no elaborate and extravagant ritual paraphernalia; no prerequisites of highbrowed 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 the 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*²; the wicks are the *sambhithas*; the *arati* flame is the *homagni*; the fuel used to burn the lamp is the *havis*; the *arati*-psalms are the Vedic incantations; the intoxicating ecstasy of mystic devotion is the psychotropic *soma-rasa*; the sense of separateness and 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 *agamas*, *tantras* and the *yoga*.

5. It is worth noting here that the Vedic fire-altar is built in five layers. The *agnichayana* portion of the *Satapatha Brahmana* which describes in detail the procedure of building a Vedic fire-altar (*yagna vedi*), also explains the micro-macrocosmic correspondences between the five-layered fire altar and the fivefold nature of man, cosmos, *yagna*, and the fire. The vedic tradition abounds in pentadic symbolism. The Vedas conceive the whole cosmogonical process as fivefold; the *yagna* itself is fivefold; man's nature is fivefold. Besides, there is frequent references to *pancha-vargas* (groups of fire) such as, *pancha janah*, *pancha-tapas*, *panchayatana*, *pancha gavyas*, *panchamritas*, *panchakrityas*, *panchendriyas*, *pancha tanmatras*, *pancha pranas*, *pancha tathvas* and so on.

A Sail from the Hand

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 *pancharati* 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 offerings? The use of such symbolic jargon, like *pranas*, *pancha tattvas*, 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 prescribe them as a common curriculum in the spiritual syllabi

for 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.⁶ 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!”⁷. 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.⁸ The automation in recitation involves no deliberate effort of recalling 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 augments the fire of devotion in the devotee’s heart.

6. It is not within the scope of this introductory essay to digress upon a detailed exposition of this profound concept.

7. *Chandogya Upanishad*, V, 19-24

8. This ‘use’ of the ‘effortless speech’ was, in course of time, misunderstood and, led to the dogma that Vedic recitation requires no comprehension of the text, thus making the Vedic chanting a mere parrotry.

Meaningful 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 and 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.⁹ To save the spiritual radiation 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.¹⁰ They saw no meaning in superstitiously clinging to any language to commune with the Divine, esp., when one cannot understand it.¹¹

9. The scriptures enjoin that one should perform sacred rites (rituals including recitation of *mantras*, hymns, etc.) only with a knowledge of their meaning. “*Jnatva karmani kurveeta*” Some suppose that this applies only to hymns and not to *mantras* which are fancied to confer results even by a mechanical recitation. But this view is not supported by authentic tradition which says, “*Mantra hi bhavena yuto phalapradah; Maurvaasu sajjeekrita baanavadhravam. Bhavena heenasthu vinishphalo bhavet; keerasya vaageerita rama shabdhavat*”, which means, ‘Even the recitation of a *mantra* becomes fruitful reaches the target just like a well aimed arrow. Repeating a *mantra* without knowing its meaning is futile; just as the chatter of the “‘*Rama*’ sound by a parrot!’”

10. For instance, of the thirty *arati*-psalms in the *Book of Shirdi Aratis*, except for two and a half the rest are in vernaculars (mostly Marathi).

11. Sant Ekanath Maharaj, for instance, says at one place, “If Sanskrit was made by God, was prakrit born of thieves and knaves? Let these errings of vanity alone. Whether it is Sanskrit or Prakrit, wherever the story of God is told, it is essentially holy and must be respected....God is no partisan of tongues.” {M.M.p.258}

Part Two

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. At 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 seedbed upon which the glorious tree of Sai Worship has begun to grow!

What is a ritual?

As the devotee's emotional attachment to his Guru grows, the inflated emotional fervour seeks some form of expression. 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 a 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 reenacted, in opening up to an analogous experience.

A Unique Feature of Sai Devotion

The process hitherto explained may go well in general context. But, Sai Baba is a unique phenomenon. Deification is usually a projection of one's subjective image of the 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 the 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 Mhalsapati used to worship Sai Baba are shrouded in the hazy past. For, according to the recorded details even Mhalsapati was allowed to apply sandal paste only to Baba's throat.¹²

12. Even in later year Baba did not allow anyone (except in some rare instances like Dr.Pundit's and Bapurao Chandorkar's) to apply sandal paste to his forehead, which clearly amounts to wearing a (Hindu) religious mark on his person. Allowing sandal paste to be applied only to the throat is clearly a tolerant gesture of respect to the Hindu custom. *Sri Sai Satcharitra* {ch.11} says, "Baba never allowed anyone to apply sandal paste to his forehead. Mhalsapati also used to apply sandal paste only to Baba's throat. Others were (allowed) to smear sandal only on Baba's feet." But Bapurao N.Chandorkar, son of Nanasaheb Chandorkar gives a slightly different account. He says, "Mhalsapati worshipped Baba applying *gandha* [i.e] sandal to feet, head etc. None applied sandal paste to Baba's forehead. I was the first, who, as a child of four, innocently applied it to his forehead just as we apply it to all the gods we worship. After the time, others were allowed to do so. This was in 1900." {D.E. p.228}. Baba's indulgent reaction to Bapurao's applying sandal paste to his forehead is readily understandable. He would have been simply amused by the playful piety of a child of four, which would probably have raised laughter rather than raised eyebrows.

Regarding Bapurao's statement [made in 1936] that after 1900 Baba allowed others to apply sandal paste to his forehead, it can be said with impunity that the statement does not conform to hard facts. It stands in contradiction to the clear statement of *Sri Sai Satcharitra* [cited above] and also to the very crux of the detailed account [*ibid.*] of Dr. Pundit's experience which amply supports the statement. Dr. Pundit is introduced in the account as a friend of Sri Tatyasaheb Noolkar. Sri Noolkar's first visit to shirdi was in 1909 and so Dr.Pundit's meeting with Sri Sai Baba should have been occurred subsequently. According the account, Dr.Pundit applied sandal paste on Baba's forehead, contemplating his own guru. To the surprise of all Baba did not object to it. The Sri Dada Bhat Kelkar, a close devotee of Baba, complainingly asked, "Baba, when we so enthusiastically try to apply sandal paste to your forehead, you don't allow us even to touch . . ." This clearly shows that even as late as in 1909 Baba was not allowing even close devotees like Dada Kelkar to apply sandal paste to his forehead.

Mere application of sandal paste to the throat can hardly be designated as *puja*¹³ 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 the 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 same *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 a 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 Blessings! 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.¹⁴

13. Some etymological studies hold that the Sanskrit term puja might have been derived from the Tamil *poosu* or kannada *pooru*, which means, to anoint, to smear, to dye. In the etymological sense, even the act of mere smearing sandal paste on Baba's throat, of course, becomes *puja*.

14. For details, see above, Foot Note No.2.

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 Maharastrian 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 *ista*), 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 time Baba had taken a hard line over favouring any conventional expressions of devotion to his person. His Muslim mien seems to be 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 Srirama Navami, one of the most important Hindu festivals. Thus the first public function, '*urs*-cum-Sriram Navami was celebrated in 1897.¹⁵ It might be surprising to note that the devotees who proposed and organised the '*urs* on Sriram Navami were all Hindus.¹⁶ 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 denomination, yet in all practical dealings with regard to him, they took 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 garb on it, were patently a later development.

15. A detailed description of it can be found in *Sri sai Satcharitra*, Ch.VI. No wonder that such a proposal of Hindus celebrating '*urs*, was not to the liking of some local Hindus. A passing reference in Sri Sai Satcharitra to the trouble created by the village Kulkarni bears out the situation. It says, "For celebration of such a public fair, prior permission from the District Collector was required. When devotees were trying to get the necessary permission, the village Kelkar reported against holding the fair with a cussed mind. As a result the permission was refused by the Authorities. But, with the blessings and consent of Sri Sai Baba, when the villagers again tried, the District Collector annulled his previous orders and issued sanction." {S.S.S.Ch.VI.}

16. For instance, in the English adaptation of *Sri Sai Satcharitra*, the editor (?) expresses his surprise in a footnote [which has been appearing from the 14th (1990) Edition], ‘*Urs* celebrations are made at the tombs of Muslim Holy men. It is surprising how Mr.Gund, a Hindu, got this idea.” {S.S.G. p.32.f.n.1)

In fact, what is really intriguing is the very basis for the celebration for the ‘*urs*. ‘*Urs* are death anniversary celebrations held in honour of a departed saint (*pir* or *wali*), at his tomb (*durga*). ‘*Urs* was originally the term used for marriage festivities, as opposed to *nikha*, the marriage ceremony. However, it has come to be used to designate the ceremonies observed at the anniversary of the death of any celebrated saint. Used in this way the word ‘*urs* has a subtle reference to the unitive stage attained by him (the saint) in his lifetime and consummated at the time of his death. {see Subhan, *Sufism: Its Saints and Shrines*, p.114; also Hughs, *Dictionary of Islam*, p.655, q.i.P.M.Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu in al-din Chishti*, p.117 f.n.} “The fixed day for the ‘*urs* in South Asia is usually the anniversary of the death of the saint; it is called ‘*urs*, literally marriage festivities, for in Sufi theosophy death is the mystical union of the soul, considered as a woman, to Allah who is her beloved.” {of Christian W.Troll, Ed., *Muslim Shrines in India*, p.210}

It is almost analogous to the Hindu celebration of annual *punya tithi* of a saint who has attained *samadhi*. It is not customary to celebrate ‘*urs* in honour of a living saint. As Sri Sai Baba was still in his body, now the question arises, in whose honour the celebration of ‘*urs* at Shirdi might have been proposed. To say that it was proposed and celebrated in honour of Sri Sai Baba, even as a rarity in custom, also doesn’t hold much water. For, if it was actually proposed in his honour, it is doubtful that Baba would have given not only his ready acceptance but also suggested a date for the celebration. If it was done in honour of another departed saint whom even Baba revered, —then, who could have been the saint and where was / is his tomb in Shirdi?

>>[This subject is treated elsewhere separately.]<<

Sandal Procession

The original sources are not clear as to how many years the annual ‘*urs* continues 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 was started by Baba’s Muslim devotees. That was the celebration of Sandal procession.¹⁷ 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 form of ritual adoration offered to Sri Sai Baba at Shirdi.

17. There is not even a mention of this Sandal Procession in the original {Marathi} version of *Sri Sai Satcharitra* by Dabholkar. After briefly recounting how the annual fair of ‘*urs* was started in 1897, he narrates how the flag procession (which is a part of Ram Navami celebrations) used to be held. Then he proceeds to describe how the ‘*urs* was transformed into Ram Navami Festival in 1912. The account of the Sandal Procession, is added to the original narration in the English adaptation of the book by Sri N.V.Gunaji. The Sandal Procession was proposed and organised by one Amir Shakkar Dalal, a Muslim devotee of Baba. It is not clear why another Muslim celebration was felt a necessity on the day of the ‘*urs*. It seems soon after its commencement in 1897 the ‘*urs* would have sunk into oblivion. The Hindu majority among the devotees of Sri Sai Baba and the very coincidence of it with Ram Navami can easily account for such a development. Gunaji is also vague on the point of continued occurrence of ‘*urs* at least till 1912. Even before proceeding to relate the details about the transformation of ‘*urs* into Rama navami Festival in 1912, he simply says, “...the two processions, the Flags by the Hindus and that of Sandal by the Muslims, went on side by side, and still going on without any hitch.” SSG.p.34.

Part Three

The Tradition of Shirdi Aratis

Who could have been the initiator of the custom Shirdi *aratis*, -- if at all there were one? Even from a cursory look into the biography of Sri 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 devotee, among whom one or two might have incidentally come out to play the father.

It is a familiar notion among many Sai devotees that the *arati* tradition at Shirdi was started by Sri 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 (Sej) *Aratis* were conducted in the Chavadi. Only Noon arati was performed in the Dwarakamai. The *arati* tradition was first started by Noolkar, a Retd. Mamaltadar of Padharpur,"¹⁸ Sri 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 Sri Sai Baba for the first time."¹⁹

18. S.S.B, p.75

19. S.S.S., Introduction, by:H.S.Dixit.

Noolkar The Father of Shirdi Aaratis

So it was to Sri Tatyasaheb *alias* {Laxman Krishnaji} Noolkar that the laurels of setting up the *arati* tradition in Shirdi go. Sri Noolkar was a sub-judge at Pandharpur. Sri Nanasaheb Chandorkar, was also working there in 1908 as Mamaltadar. The first Sri Noolkar heard of Sri Sai Baba was from Sri Nanasaheb, with whom he visited Shirdi for the first time in 1909. He was overwhelmingly impressed with Sri Sai Baba even at the first sight. 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 Sri 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 Sri 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.²⁰ Tatyasaheb turned out to be the lucky officiating priest of the daily arati services. Sri Noolkar took to the *seva* (devout service) with enthusiasm and, carried it out as the most precious good fortune in his life.

20. It would not be irrelevant in the present context to refer to a curiously peculiar praxis of Baba. It was his characteristic wont to stick to a routine exactly the same way it had once been done. Baba almost always used to resist a change in his routine. It was extremely difficult for the devotees to get his initial permission for any enthusiastic plan or project that would usher in a change in his routine. But, for some inscrutable reason, if he once gave in to a change, he insisted upon adhering to it from the following day. Many instances can be found which reflect this curious feature in his life. His routine of sleeping at the Chavadi on every alternate night started just because he had to sleep one stormy night there! Once there was a heavy downpour in Shirdi. The devotees saw the dilapidated Musjid too insecure a dwelling for Baba under such a cloudburst. They prevailed upon him to snug the night out at the Chavadi which was just less than a stone throw from the Musjid. Baba brushed aside their apprehensions and declined to leave the

Musjid. One devotee by name Narayan Teli, took the liberty of practically carrying him to the Chavadi notwithstanding Baba's protestations. As he had to thus spend one night at the Chavadi, he made it an enduring routine to spend every alternate night there, for the rest of his life! Another instance! One day in 1910, Baba suddenly thrust his hand into the fire embers of his *dhuni*. His hands were badly burnt. But he obstinately refused all the sophisticated medicaments offered by many a devotee. However, he acceded to the ingenuous services of one Bhagoji Shinde, a leper devotee, who dressed Baba's singed hand daily with an indigenous medicinal leaf, salving it with ghee. In a few days the burns healed up. But Baba continued with the daily routine of getting his hand bandaged till the last day of his bodily existence! Many holy festivities like Sriram Navami became special customary observances at Shirdi in a similar way. And, so it was with *aratis*!

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. Sri H.V. Sathe, one of the close devotees of Sri 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 {Sri Dada Kelkar} and said do you not know that this is Guru Poornima? Bring your worship material and do your Guru Puja.²¹ 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."²²

21. According to another source, Baba sent for Dada Kelkar on a Guru poornima Day and said, "Don't you remember that today is Guru Poornima?" and, pointing to the pillar in the Masjid, he added, "Go and bring Puja material and worship that post!"

22. D.E.P.106.

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 Sri Tatyasaheb Noolkar to Sri Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Unfortunately the date of the letter is not mentioned.²³ 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 Radhakrishnamai and Dadabhat [Dada Kelkar, father-in-law of Rao Bahdur Sathe] that Puja and *arati* was being done and they should come soon. So Radakrishnamai sent her Puja and Dada came with his Puja articles."²⁴

23. Usually Guru Puja Day or Guru Poornima is celebrated on the Full Moon day of the Lunar month Ashadha, which corresponds to June - July of the Roman Calendar. Sri Noolkar passed away in March 1911, i.e., before the Guru Puja Day of that year. As Sri Noolkar had not yet settled at Shirdi by 1909 and, he passed away before Guru Poornima of 1911, the Guru Puja Day referred to by Tatyasaheb in his letter must be the Guru Poornima of 1910.

24. *Sai Leela* (Monthly) May - August 1991, Lt.Col.Nimbalkar, M.B., 'Late Tatyasaheb Noolkar - A Great and blessed Sai Devotee'

It is evident from the above letter that some devotees who knew that it was Guru Poornima, implored Baba to allow them to do Guru Puja and eventually obtained his suffrage somehow. And that only after meeting 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.

Sri 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 theerth* 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 Musjid 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! Sri 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 Vittal!

'Megharati'

After the demise of Sri Tatyasaheb Noolkar, one devotee by name Megha Shyam took over the charge of officiating at Baba *aratis*.²⁵ Megha was a poor, simple, and austere Gujarati 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."²⁶

25. According to *Sri Sai Satcharitra* Megha was performing regular *arati* to Sri Sai Baba {only} "every noon and evening" SSG,p.151.

26. SSB p.76.

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 instance, we have already noted how Baba mourned the death of Sri Noolkar. The way he reacted to the death of Megha is even more touching. Sri Dadasaheb G.S.Kharpade, 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,"²⁷

27. S.D.pp.57-58; Sri H.V.Sathe adds in his reminiscences that, while placing his hands on Megha's corpse Baba said, "This was a true devotee of mine." D.E.p.109.; also SSG,p.151.

After Megha's demise, one Sakharam Hari *alias* Bapusaheb Jog stepped forward to fill Megha's shoes as the presbyter of the *arati* conductions²⁸ under the orders of Sri 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 *darbar*.

28. Obviously it was Baba's choice! Sri G.S.Kharpade records in his *Diary*, "Bapusaheb Jog has been ordered by Sayin Baba to do all the *Aratis* at all the times. I predicted this result two days before Megha passed away." p.59.

The Aayee

Even though Sri Tatyasaheb Noolkar has been acknowledged as the initiator of the institution of *aratis* 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 Sri 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 Sri Sai Baba. She set foot in Shirdi, for the first time, in 1905 along with Sri Nanasahab Chandorkar. Even on her first visit she felt in her bones that Shirdi was her real home and Sri 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’²⁹ 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 Sri Kakasaheb Dixit paid to her in his Introduction to *Sri 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 Musjid 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 Sej Arati at night to Sri 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 Musjid, 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’ — nay, rather of ‘*living devotion*’!

29. For some reason, Sri B.V. Narasimha Swamiji has recorded her name as “*Ramakrishna Ayi*” in his L.S.B.

Exploring the Date

The exact date/month/ in which the regular custom of performing aratis commenced is not clear. *Sri Sai Satcharitra* (Ch.4,p.21) states that the Night (Sej) 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.Kharpade permission from Baba to leave Shirdi and the other was the laying of the foundation stone of Dixit Wada. But according to the *Diary* of Shri G.S. Kharpade, the actual permission to leave Shirdi was granted to him on 12/12/1910.³⁰ On his first visit to Shirdi, Sri Kharpade 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! Sri Kharpade 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 10/12/1910.³¹ On the authority of Sri Sai Satcharitra,

(but with a slight modification of the date by a margin of two days) if the commencement of Sej Arati was to coincide with the leave-taking or departure of Sri G.S.Kharpade, then it should be on 12/12/1910.³²

30. S.D. p.11

31. Sri Kharpade who keenly referred to the Chavadi procession held on 6th and 8th, did not even mention anything about it on 10th, as if nothing worthy of mention occurred on that day!

32. As Sri Kharpade left Shirdi on that day by evening, he could not have recorded the event.

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 *Sri Sai Satcharitra* [Ch.33], it is said, "About 1904-05 A.D.,³³ 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."³⁴ If the custom of performing arati to Sri 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. Sri 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's³⁵ *aratis* for the puja of Baba, modelled on the Pandharpur *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."³⁶

33. In the Marathi original no date has been given. The date appears in the English Adaptation by Sri Gunaji.

34. SSG. p.177.

35. The statement that Baba gave Ramgir Bua a set of papers containing Bhishma's Aratis (in 1904) is quite wide off the mark. For, Bhishma visited Shirdi for the first time only in December, 1911. It is, of course, a minor slip and, well, even Homer nods sometimes!

36.L.S.B Vol.2, pp.62-63.

As Hemadpant says, that paper containing the arati-song was sent by Baba to Nanasaheb to be recited by the latter in prayer. Sri 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.³⁷

37. DES p.198 & p.228.

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 has already been noted, long before 1910 devotees had been planning to commence the performance of regular *arati* to Sri 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 Sri Sai Baba commenced with Sej *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 Musjid might have been introduced subsequently.

Why 'no' Kakad & Sej Aratis at the Musjid

Here pops up another pertinent question! Why Baba did not allow Kakad and Sej Aratis to be

performed at the Musjid? 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 Sej *Aratis* come under *sevas* (services),³⁸ 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 Sej *Aratis* in the Musjid, which are very akin to the services in a Hindu temple, Baba might have disapproved their performance (in the Musjid). The inherent limitations of this pure conjecture are legion and it cannot be helped!

38. An explanation on *sevas* {as liturgical services} has already been given above (ref. the *Introduction*, Part One).

Wada Arati

The pious custom enjoins that the daily liturgical services such as Kakad and Sej Aratis, if once undertaken, should be attended to without a break. As Baba did not permit the Sej and the Kakad *Aratis* to be performed at the Musjid, 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 Musjid. Later, after the Dixit Wada was constructed, another *arati* was set up there. Sri 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!

Baba's Prophetic Joke on Jog

One day Baba cut a joke at Sri Jog. Pointing to Sri 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 aratis just jogging along by performing them all alone, or with only one or two participants!

In *Sri Sai Satcharitra* we find a passing glimpse of how the *aratis* were conducted during Baba's time.³⁹ "Before the midday-meal, the bell in the Masjid rings announcing the performance of the noon-worship and arati to Sri 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 hosanna loudly chanting 'Sri 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 Sri 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*."⁴⁰

39. In 1917, i.e. about a year before Baba's *niryana*

40. SSS, Ch.XIX.

The Living Idol'

To the devotees, offering ritual worship and *arati* to Sri 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.⁴¹ 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!⁴² Sometimes, Baba "exhibited great grace accompanied by hard words."⁴³ "At times, when he was in a pleased mood, {he} danced as he left the Chavadi and went towards the Musjid."⁴⁴ 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 Taty, etc."⁴⁵ 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.}⁴⁶

41. SSS. Ch.XIX

42. To cite one instance, Sri Khaparde records in his *diary*, "At the Chawadi I thought he [Sayin Maharaj] would beat Bapusaheb Jog, for he approached the latter, held his hands and demanded why Arati was done;" (29.2.1912) S.D.p.97.

43. *ibid.* p.85

44. *ibid.* p.100

45. *ibid.* p.62

46. Kakad arati, No.IV

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 Sri Sai Baba. Sri Khaparde describes the *aratis* as "edifying"⁴⁷ and noticed that Baba was particularly gracious at the time of *arati* and "sent out wonderful moments of joy and instruction!"⁴⁸ Sri K.J. Bhishma 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)."⁴⁹ Many remarks made by Sri G.S.Khakar in his *Diary* bear testimony to this truth. Let's glean a few of the glimpses: (17/1/1912) "... we went to the Chawadi for Kakad Arati. Megha was too ill to attend. So Bapusaheb Jog did the arti. Sayin 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."⁵⁰ (7/1/1912) -- "In the morning I attended the Kakad Arati. Sayin Maharaj looked exceedingly pleased and gave Yogic glances. I passed the whole day in a sort of ecstasy,"⁵¹ (6/1/1912) -- "We attended the Shej Arati at the Chawadi. Sayin Maharaj was in an exceptionally pleased mood, made mystic signs to Megha, and did what are known as '*Drishti pata*' in Yoga."⁵² (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 Madhavarao 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 some thing 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,"⁵³ (8.3.1912) -- "At the midday Arti, 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."⁵⁴

47. S.D. p.16.

48. *ibid.* p.53.

49. *ibid.*

50. *ibid.* p.54.

51. *ibid.* p.47.

52. *ibid.* p.46. Curiously, within two weeks after the said '*Drishti Pata*', Megha passed away!

53. *ibid.* p.62.

54. *ibid*, p.101.

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.⁵⁵ At times Baba himself put off the commencement of the *arati* to drive a piece of instruction home into the devotees’ heads.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷

55. To cite a few instances from *Shirdi Diary*.

(14.1.1912) “The midday Arti was a little late as Megha was not well and it being Til Sankrant, the Paros were late.” p.51.

(15.1.1912) “the Kakad Arti was a little later than usual as Megha, having been unwell, could not get up in time to blow the conch shell. .. The midday Arti was [also] late.” p.52

(16.1.1912) “The midday arti was late as Megha is ill and was not ordered to come soon”

(6.1.1912) “Bapusaheb Jog went today to Kopergaon to get his pension so the Arti was finished soon.” p.76.

(28.1.92) “... the midday Arti passed off easy except that Radhakrishnamai appeared to be put out and vexed and she closed the doors. So the Arti things could not be got at soon.” p.67.

56. To cite an instance, Sri S.B.Nachne says in his reminiscences, “When people were assembling for Arati at the Masjid, and I was among them, Baba asked me to go and take my meal. I said it was Ekadasi. Usually I did not fast on Ekadasi days; but my friends did and I had to conform to their ways and not to be singular and claiming advantages which they did not share. But Baba did not want me to fast. He said (referring to my companions) ‘*These people are mad. You had better go to the Wada and eat.*’ The person who had to serve the food at the Wada was grumbling that I should be clamouring for food on an Ekadasi day and would not give me food till Arati was over. So he came to the Mosque and I also returned to the Mosque. Baba again questioned me if I had messed but I said that it was time for *Arati* and so the meal might be deferred till the completion of the *Arati*. But Baba insisted and said, “*The Arati will wait and will begin after you finish your meal and come.*” The hotel man had to yield and gave me food. Then I went to the Mosque for Arati.” DES, p.45.

57. For instance, one Raojee of Dahanu was on a visit to Shirdi. From Dahanu he came to Kopergaon and thence proceeded to Shirdi on a *tonga* {horse-cart}. The *tonga* was slow and Raojee was obviously anxious to arrive in Shirdi on time to join the *arati*. At Shirdi, when the devotees were about to commence *arati*, Baba said, “Wait for a while; Bhau will also come! That *tongawala* is delaying!” The devotees could not understand to whom Baba was referring. After some time Raojee arrived in time to receive *arati prasad*.

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 Vittal of Pandharpur. 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 Sri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma.

Sri Bhishma hails from Bori, a village near Nagpur. He was a friend of Sri Khaparde with whom he visited Shirdi for the first time on the 6th of December 1911. He was an old-liner before he met Sri 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 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 theerth* 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*⁵⁸ 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 foggyish reactions suddenly evaporated, as if blown away in the single puff he smoked from Baba's *chilim*. Then he himself asked for Baba's *padatheerth* 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 he 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 Sri Sai Baba in lieu of the five *laddus* he had asked for, Baba blessed him approvingly.

58. *Laddu*= A popular Indian confectionery made of flour and sugar and shaped into small balls (roughly sized from 2 to 4 inches in diameter).

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 Sri Sai Baba, some traditional hymns from the Hindu liturgy like, *Purusha Suktam*, *Sree Suktam*, *Matra Pushpam*, *Sri Lakshmi Ashtotharam*, intended for use in the daily worship of the devotees. Sri G.S.Khapparde 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 Sri Sai Baba. The rest (fourteen, i.e. about half), are traditional arati-psalms composed by the mediaeval poet-saints of Maharashtra⁵⁹ {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 Sri Ramjanardhan Swami and Sri Rameswar Bhat; of the remaining three, one is a Vedic hymn and the other two are traditional prayers. Of the sixteen psalms especially written on Sri Sai Baba, the major bulk, i.e. nine, are composed by Sri K.J.Bhishma, three by Sri Dasganu Maharaj, one each by Sri Upasani Maharaj, Sri Madhav Adkar, Sri Mohini raj and Sri 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.

59. It is true that the English of the present translation is dated; the '*thous*' and '*hasts*' and the wordage such as '*psalms*', etc. may sound in a biblical tone to some ears. The genre of the *Shirdi Aratis*, in general, reflect the poetic idiom of the mediaeval poet-saints of Maharashtra and, it is one of the reasons why an archaic style is deliberately chosen in their English rendering.

The End of the Introduction to Shirdi Arati

Part one

Kakad Arati (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

Akhandeeta asaave aise vaatate paayee
Saandoonee sankoch ttaava todaasaa deyee

Tukaahmane devaa maajzee vedeevaakudee
naame bhavapaasaa haathee aapulyaa 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 'Sadgururaya' for 'Pandarinatha' and 'Pandarraya' 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<un, bhanga<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 Nivrattinath 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."¹

Sant Tukaram Maharaj {1598-1649} is perhaps, the most popular of all the poet-saints of Maharashtra. No other poet-saint is so oft-quoted by the people of Maharashtra as Sant Tukaram. His signature (mudra) 'Tukamhane' ('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)² in the classical Indian musical tradition. Bhupali is an improvisation based on rag bhupali.

Literally, Bhupali means, of or pertaining to a bhupali < '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.³

1. MM, p. 346

2. To be precise, according to the classical Indian Musical tradition, bhupali is a ragini. Literally, raga means 'emotion'. Musical formulas are called ragas because of their propensity to evoke in the hearts of the listeners and singers particular corresponding emotions. Based, on the mood that a musical mode creates the musical formulas are divided into ragas {masculine} and raginis {feminine}. According to one version of the Puranas there are six Ragas married to six Raginis, whereas according to another version, twenty-six Ragas are married to thirty-six Raginis.

3. See also the Introduction, part one.

II. BHUPALI

Composed by :: Sant Janabai

Uttaa paandurangaa aataa prabhaatasamayo paatalaa
Vaishnawaancha melaa garudapaaree daatalaa
Garuda paarapaasunee mahaadwaaraa paryanta
Suravaraanchee maandee ubhee jodooniya haat
Suka sanakaadika naarada tumbara bhaktyanchyaa kotee
Trisool damaroo ghewooni wubhaa girijechaa patee
kaleeyugeecha bhakta Namaa ubhaa keertanee
Paatteemaage wubhee dolaa laavuniyaa janee

Translation

Oh Lord Panduranga, the day is about to break. The coterie of the devotees of Vishnu throng by the garuda dhawaja {the temple flagstaff};

Thence up to the main door of the sanctum sanctorum 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;

Namdev, thy devotee par excellence in this Kali Age sings thy glories. Janabai, his maidservant, 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 Jnaneshwar Maharaj. She was dedicated by her parents to the service of 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

Bho Sainaatha maharaaja bhava timiranaasaka ravee
Agnaanee aamhee kitee tava varnaava thoravee
Thee varnita bhaagale bahuvadani sesvidhi kavee
Sakripa howuni mahimaa tumchaa tumheecha vadvaava
Utta...

Bhakta manee sadbhaava dharooni je tumha anusarale
Dhyaayaasthawa te darsana tumache dhawaari ubhe ttele
Dhyaanaasthaa tumha asa paahunee mana amuche ghaale
Paree thwadvachanaamrith praasaayaate aatura jzhaale
Wughadoonee netrakamalaa deenabandhu ramaakaanta
Paahi baa kripadrishtee baalakaa jashee maataa
Ranjavee madhuravaanee haree taapa sainaatha
Aamheecha aapule karyaasthava tuja kashtavito deva
Sahana karisil te aikuni dyaavee bhett krishna daavava
Utta...

Translation

Kindly awake, Sadguru Sainath, to grant us the sight of thy lotus-feet! Awake, 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 in 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 gave thy ear to our petitions with patience.

IV. BHUPALI

Composed by:: Sant Namdev

Utta panduranga aataa darshan dhya sakala
Jzhala arunodaya sarali nidrechi vela
Sant sadhu muni avaghe jhaleti ghola
Soda sheje sukhe aata bandu ghya mukha kamala

Rang mandapi mahaadwaari jzzaalise datee
Man utaaveel roop pahawaya drishti
Rahee rakhumabai tumha yewoo dya daya
Sheje haalawunee jage kara dev raya
Garud hanumant ubhe paahateewat
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 Bhishma

Ghewuniya panchaarati karoo babansi aarati
Karoo sai see aarati
Utta utta ho bandhawa, owaaloo ha ramadhava
Sayee ramadhava owaaloo ramadhava
Karuniya sthira man, paahu gambhira he dyan
Sayeeche he dhyan pahu gambhira he dhyan
Krishnanatha datt sai jado chitta tujze paayee
Sayee tuzhe paayee jado chitta tuzhe paayee

Translation

Sai Baba, I 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 konyaa devaa waa maanavaa
Chinmaya roop>>>
Twat yasha dundubheene saare ambar he kondale
Sagun murti paahanyaa aatur jan shirdee aale
Prashuni twadvachanaamrita aamucho dehabhaan haarpale
Sodoonyaa durabhimaan maanas twaccharanee waahile
Kripa karooniya sai maawle daas padari ghyaaawaa
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 thy 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 thy holy feet. Oh Sainath, kindly accept us who are thy servants and, deign to grant us refuge at thy holy feet.

VII. KAKAD AARTI

Composed by:: Sant Tukaram Maharaj

Bhaktaachiya potee bodh kaakada jyoti
Pancha prana jeevehbave 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
 Vittevarree 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, hail 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) made of peacock feathers. Tukaram holds the lamp (of knowledge) 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).

VII. 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 vegesee chala jaawoonya raawulaasee
 Jalatil patakaanchya raashi kaakad aarati dekhliyaa
 Jaage karaa rukhminivar, dev aahe nijasuraant
 Vege limbalon karaa drisht hoeel tayasee
 Daaree waajantree vaajatee dhol 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 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 Namadev, 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 a devout morning service like the Kakad Arati not only induces a sense of auspiciousness in the hearts 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 the 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 Bhishma

Prabhaat samayeen nabhaa shubh ravi prabha phaankalee
Smare guru sadaa ashaa samayin tya chhale naa kalee
Manhoni kar jodoonee 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 aalasaa
Tasa guruhi sodawee sakal dushkriti laalasaa
Haroni abhimaanahae jadwi tatpade bhavanaa
Samartha guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Guroosi upama dise vidhi hareeharaanchi unee
Kuttoni mag yeie tee kavaniyaa ugee paahunee
Tuzheech upama tulaa baravi shobhate sajjanaa
Samartha guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Samadhi uthroniyaa guru chalaashidee kade
Twadeeya vachnokti tee madhur vaaritee saankhade
Ajaataripu sadguro akhil pathkaa bhanjanaa
Samartha guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Ahaa sunamayaasi yaa guru uttoniyaa baisale
Vilokuni padaashrithaa tadiya aapade naasile
Asaa suhithkaaree yaa jagati konihee anya naa
Samartha guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Asa bahut shaahanaa pari na jyaa guroochi kripaa
Na tatswahit tyaa kale karitase rikamya gapaa
Tari gurupada dhari sudhrid bhaktineh tho manaa
Samartha guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Guro vinati mee karee hridayamandiree yaa basaa
Samasth jag he guruswaroopee ttaso maanasaa
ghado satat sathkrutee matihi deh jagatipaavanaa
Samartha guru sainath puravee manovaasanaa

Sragdhara

Preme yaa asthakaashi paduni guruvaraa
praarthitee je prabhaatee
Tyaanche chittasee deto akhilharroniyaan
braanti mee nitya shaantee
Aise he sainathe kathuneesuchileh jeevee 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' desire!

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.⁴ 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!

4. In Sai Baba's time, Morning and Night Aratis were performed in Baba's presence only at the chavadi, when he slept there on alternate nights. After the Kakad (Morning) Arati, Baba used to return to the Masjid. For details see the Introduction.

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.⁵ As such, it is a revealed scripture for the devotees of Sri Sai Baba.

Suprabhat Seva or Kakad Arati, in its denotative sense, is an invocation to awaken the deity from sleep. Offering Kakad Arati to Sri Sai Baba is 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 generic 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
Bachonkaa paalan karnaa
Jaanaatumneh jagat pasaaraa
Sabahee jzhoott jamaanaa
Sai raham...
Mein andhaa hoon bandaa aapkaa
Mujhse prabhu dikhlaanaa
Sai raham...
Daas 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 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?

XI. PADH

Composed by:: Shri Dasganu Maharaj

Raham nazar karo, ab more sayee
Tumbin naheen mujze maa baap bhaayee
Raham>>>
Mein andhaa hoon banda tumhaaraa
Mein naa jaanoon allaah ilaahee
Raham>>>
Kalee jamaanaa meineh gamaayaa
Saathee aakhar kaa kiyaa na koyee
Raham>>>
Apne maszhid ka zhaadoo ganoo hai
Maalik hamaare tum baabaa sayee
Raham>>>

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, kindered 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 a nazr, rahm
masjid, allah-i-lahi etc., which are derived from the Arabic, especially from the Islamic legacy. The
fundamental principle on which the Islamic religion rests is 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. In 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 is 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 (nazar) 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 paltriest de classe, and it 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 dikhalana) 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 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 alteration! 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, ‘saathee 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 light-heartedly, ‘Rahama najara karo abomore sai’ etc., He liked both tune and subject matter of the songs.”⁶

6. DES, P.262

XII. PADH

Composed by:: Sant Jana Bai

Tujze kai devoon saawalyaa mee khaayaa taree
Mee dubalee batik naamyachee jaan shreeharee
Uchishta tulaa denen hee ghosht naa baree
Toon Jagannaath tujze deoon kashire bhaakaree
Nako antmadeeya pahoon sakhya bhagwantaa shrikaantaa
Maadhyaahnaraatra vultoni gaelee hee aatan aan chittaa
Ta 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 Bhagawan, 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 the one who provides all. So a Sai devotee should always keep in his mind that all he has received, including his daily bread, is 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 saayee
Tujh waanchuni aashraya naahi bhutalee;
Mee paapee patit dheemanda
Taarane malaa gurunathaa jhadkari
Toon shaantikshamechaa meroo
Toon bhavaarnaveeche taaru guruvaraa;
Guruvaraa majzasi paamaraa ataan udharaa
Tvarit lavalaahee tvarit lavalaahee
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 poshtaste to save us promptly!

End of Kakad Arati

Part two

Madhyahn Arati (Noon Arati)

I. ABHANG

(See No.V of the Morning Arati)

II. ARATI

Composed by:: Shri Madhavarao Vamanarao Adkar

Arati Saibaabaa soukhyadaataara jeevaa
Charana rajaatalee dhyaavaa daasaan visaawaa
bhaktaa visaawaa
> Arati...<

Jaaluniyaan aanang swaswaroopee raahe dhanga
Mumukshu janaan daavee nija dolaan sreeranga,
dolan sreeranga
> Arati...<

Jayaa manee jaisaa bhaava tayaa taisaa anubhava
Daawisee dayaaghanaa aisee tujzee hee maava
thujzeehimaava
> Arati...<

Tumache naama dhyaataan hare sansrithi vyathaa
Agaadha tava karanee maarga daawisee anaadhaa
daawisee anaadhaa
> Arathi...<

Kaliyugee avataara sagunabrahm saachaara
Avateerna jhaalaase swami datta digambara
datta digambara
> Arati...<

Aataan divasaan guruwaaree bhakta karitee waaree
Prabhupada pahaavayaa bhavabhaya niwaaree
bhaya niwaaree
> Arati...<

Maajzaa nija dravya tteewaa tav charan rajasevaa
Maagane hechiyaataa tumhan
devaadhideva devaadhideva
> Arati...<

Ichchita deena chaatak nirmala toya nijasookha
paajaawe maadhavaa yaa saambhal
aapulee bhaaka aapulee bhaaka
> Arati...<

Translation

We offer arati, hailing thy glories, Oh Sai Baba, who art the bestower of happiness on all beings. Kindly allow us, who are thy footmen and devotees, to rest in the dust of thy holy feet. Thou hast reduced

the god of lust, Eros (Manmatha) to ashes and, always remain absorbed in thine 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 of thee. 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 frustrations 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 thy holy feet, which indeed, I deem, is my real treasure, Oh God of gods!

Just as 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 form alone.

Commentary

This popular aarti-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 sent to Sri Nanasaheb Chandorkar through Ramgir Bua by Shama (on the supposed¹ instructions of Sri Sai Baba) along with the udi, at the time when Sri Nanasaheb's daughter, Mainatai, was facing a perilous parturition.

1. For details see the Introduction

III. ARATI

Composed by:: Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma

Jaya deva jaya deva dattaa avadhutaa sayee avadhutaa

Jodoonikara tava charanee ttevito maathaa

> Jaya deva...<

Avataraseen too yaetaan dharmaante glaanee

Naastheekaanaahee too laavisi nijabhajanee

Daavisi naanaa leela asankhya roopaanee

Harisee dheenanche too sankata dinarajanee

> Jaya deva...<

Yavana swaroopee aikhyaa darshana twaan dhidhale

Samsaya nirsuniyaan thathdwaitaa ghaalavile

Gopeechandaa mandaa twaanchee uddharile

Momina vamsee janmuni lokaan taariyale

> Jaya deva...<

Bhed na tathwee hindoo yavanaancha kaanhee

Daawaayaansee jzaalaa punarapi naradehee

Paahasin premaane too hindoo yavanaanhee

Daavisi aatmatwaane vyaapaka haa sayee

> Jaya deva...<

Devaa sayeenaathaa twatpadanata vhaave

Paramaayaamohita janamochana jnanin vhaave

Twakripayaa sakalaanche sankata niraasaawe

Deshila tari de twadhyash krishnaane gaave

> Jaya deva...<

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 atheists 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 religious 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 differences between Hindus and Muslims, thou hast again assumed this human form (as Sai Baba). Thou 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 troubles (worldly 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 Baba's manifestation and his mission. "My business is to give blessings", 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 own words, bricked with the 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 fakir, both the Hindus and the Muslims found Baba not bound by 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 this 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 (Dava Ya si zhala punarapi naradehi) as Sri Sai Baba. It would not be irrelevant in the context of the present aarti-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 takes place by Gods 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 to 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 Maharj, Nanasaheb Chandorkar, H.S.Dixit, G.S.Khparde, Upasani Maharj, Bade Baba, Abdul Baba, Shamsuddin Rangari, Abdulla Jan and others, in spite of their flair 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 caste, creed or religion ill becomes a true Sai devotee.

IV. ABHANG

Composed by:: Shri Dasganu Maharaj

Shirdee maajze pandharapura Saibaba ramaavara
Shuddha bhakthee chandrabhaaga bhaava pundaleeka jaagaa
Yaa ho yaa ho avaghe jana 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 obeisance to Sai Baba. Dasganu calls out, Oh Sai, my mother! Pray come! Nay, rush posthaste to uplift me!

V. NAMAN

{A Garland of Traditional prayers}

Ghaaleena lotaangana vandeem charana
Dolyanee paaheen roop tujze
Preme aalingina aanade poojin
Bhaave oowaalina mhane naamaa

Tvameva maataa cha pitaa tvameva
Tvameva bandhuscha sakhaa tvameva
Tvameva vidyaa dravinam tvameva
Tvameva servam mama devadeva

Kaayena vaachaa manasendriyaiarwan
Budhyatmanaa vaa prakriti swabhaavaat
Karomi yadyatsakalam parasmai
Narayanaayeti samarpayaami

Achyutam keshavam raamanaaraayanam
Krishnadaamodaram vaasudevam harim
Shreedharam maadhavam gopikaa vallabham
Jaanakeenaayakam raamachandram 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 friend 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 Narayana (in worshipful surrender) all my actions done with my body, speech, mind, senses, intellect, volition and instinct.

(Sadguru Sainath,) I worship thee, who art adored with various names viz., Achyuta, Kesava, Rama, Narayana, Krishna, Damodara, Vasudeva, Hari, Sridhar, Madhava, Gopikavallabha, Janakinayaka, Ramachandra 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:: Sri Mohini Raj

Anantaa tulaa ten kase re sthavaave
Anantaa tulaa ten kase re namaave
Anantaa mukhaanchaa shine shesh gaataan
Namaskaar Saashtaanga Sri Sainaathaa!

Smaraave hmanee twatpadaa nitya bhaave
Wurave taree bhaktisaattee swabhaave
Taraave jagaa taarunee maaya taataa
Namaskaar>>>

Vase jo sadaa daavayaa santleelaa
Dise agna lokaanaparee jo janaalaa
Paree antaree gnaana kaiwalya daataa
Namaskaar>>>

Baraa laadhalaa janma haa maanvaachaa
Naraa saarthakaa saadhaneebhuha saachaa
Dharoon sayeepremaa galaayaa ahantaa
Namaskaar>>>

Dharaave karee saana alpagna baalaa
Karaave amhaa dhanya chumboni gaalaa
Mukhee ghaala preme karaa graas aataan
Namaskaar>>>

Suraadeeka ज्यांच्या पादा वंदितांते

Sukaadeeka jyaante samaanatva detee
Prayaagaadi teerthen padee namra hotaa
Namaskaar>>>

Tujhyaa jhya padaa paahtan gopabaalee
Sadaa rangalee chiswaroopee milaalee
Karee raasakreedaa save krishna naathaa
Namaskaar>>>

Tulaa maagato maagane eka dhyaave
Karaa jodito deena atyanta bhaave
Bhavee mohaneeraaja haa taari aataan
Namaskaar Saashtaanga Sri Sainaathaa!

Translation

Oh, the infinite One, how can I extol thee! Oh, the Boundless Being, how to make obeisance to thee! Having innumerable faces, even Adishesha 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 'conditionings' of the ego which get in the way of realizing that 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 of 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 technique 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, anga = 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 name sake.

This Hymnal Octave of Obeisance {Namaskaraashtaka}, if meaningfully recited, enables us to do a perpetual prostration- saastang namaskar - to Sri Sai Baba (in our minds), by making, as if, the eight stanzas of the Ashtaka the eight limbs!

VIII. PRARTHANA

{Prayer}

Aisaa eyeee baa - Sayee digambaraa-
Akshaya roopa avataara - sarvahi vyaapaka too-
Shrutisaara - anuasayaatrikumaaraa - maharajeyeebaa!
Kaashee snaana japa - pratidivashee-

Kolhapura bhikshesee - nirmala nadi tungaa-
Jala praasee- nidra maahur deshee- >aisaa...
Jzholee lombatase vaamakaree - trishoola
Damaroo dhaari - bhaktaa varada sadaa sukhkaaree-
Deseel muktee chaaree- >aisaa...

Paayee paadukaa japamaala - kamandaloo
Mrigacchala- dharana kariseebaa- naagajataa-
Mukuta sobhato maathaa- >aisaa...
Tatpara tujyaa yaa je dhyaanee- akshaya
Thyaanche sadhanee- lakshmeevasa karee
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 animates the infinite forms in 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 at Kolhapur and partake everyday of the pure waters of the river Tung Bhadra and retire to bed at Mahurpur every night.

Having a long mendicant bag adorned round thy left arm and trishul (trident) and damaru (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 a kamandalu (water-pot) in thy hands, dressed in a deer-skin attire, thou shrine forth with crown of matted locks coiled as a serpent on thy 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 devoutly 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 masters, 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 ardently invoke thee!

Commentary

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

IX. SRI SAINATHA MAHIMNA STHOTRAM

Composed by:: Sri Upasani Baba Maharaj

Sadaa satswaroopam chidaananda kandam
Jagat sambhavasthaana samhaara hetum
Swabhaktechhayaa maanusham darsayantam
Namaameeswaram Sadgurum Sainaatham

Bhawadhwaanta vidhwamsa maarthaanda meeddyam
Manovaagateetam munir dhyaana gamyam
Jagadvyaapakam nirmalam nirgunam twaam
Namaamee...>

Bhawaambhodhi magnaarthitaanaam janaanaam
Swapaadaasritaanaam swabhakti priyaanaam
Samuddhaaranaartham kalow sambhavantam
Namaamee...>

Sadaa nimba vrikshasya moolaadhivaasaat
Sudhaasravinam tiktamapya priyantam
Tarum kalpa vrikshaadhikam saadhayantam
Namaamee...>

Sadaa kalpavrikshasya tasyaadhi moole
Bhawadbhaava buddhyaa saparyaadisevaam
Nrinaam kurwataam bhukti mukti pradantam
Namaamee...>

Anekaashrutaa tarkya leelaa vilaasaih

Samaavishkruteshaana bhaaswat prabhaavam
Ahambhaava heenam prasannatma bhaawam
Namaamee...>

Sataam vishramaaraama mevaabhiraaman
Sadaa sajjanaiah samsthutam sannamadbhiah
Janaamodadam bhakta bhadrapradantam
Namaamee...>

Ajanmaadhyamekam param brahma saakshaat
Swayam sambhavam raamamevaavateeranam
Bhawadharshanaathsam puneetah prabhoham
Namaamee...>

Sri Sayeesa kripaanidhe akhilanrinaam
Sarwaartha siddhi prada
Yushmatpaadarajah prabhaavamatulam
dhaataapi vaktaakshamah
Sadbhakthyaa saranam kritaanjali
Putah samprapithosmi prabho
Shrimath Sayi paresa paada kamalaa naanya
ccharanyam mama

Sayiroopadhara raaghavottamam
Bhakta kaama vibudha dhrumam prabhum
Mayayopahata chitta shudhayae
Chintayaamyahamaharnisam mudaa

Sharat sudhaamsu pratima prakaasam
Kripatapaatram tava sainaatha
Twadeeya paadaabja samaashritaanaam
Swachhaayayaa taapamapaa karothu

Upaasanaa daivata sainaatha
Sthavairmayopaasaninaasthu statwam
Ramenmanome tava paadayugme bhrungo
Yathaabji makaramda lubdhah

Aneka janmaarjita paapasamkshayo
Bhavet bhawatpaada saroja darshanaat
Kshamaswa sarvaanaparaadha poonjakaan
Praseeda sayeesa guro dayaanidhe

Sri sainaatha charanaamrita putachithaah
Sthwapaada seva narataah satatamcha bhaktyaa
Samsaara janya duritaagha vinirgataaste
Kaivalya dhaama paramam samavaapnuvanti

Sthotrime tatpatte bhakthyaa yonara
sthanmanaahsadaa

Sadguroh sainaadhasya kripa paatram bhaveddhruvam

Iti Sri Sainaatha mahimnastotram sampoornam

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.

In order to uplift those, among the unhappy lot drowned in the ocean of ignorance, who take refuge in thy loving devotion, thou hast incarnated in this Kali Age, Oh Sainath, I Bow down to thee, who are 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 thy grace) and have made the tree surpass even the Kalpavriksha [the celestial wish-fulfilling tree]. I bow to Sainath, who is the Supreme Lord and the Master of Creation.

Thou always take delight to rest under the neem tree and to bestow both material and spiritual prosperity upon thy devotees, who lovingly attend upon thee (there). I bow 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 thee, who art 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 rejoicings and the object of their constant adoration. Oh Sainath, I bow to thee who art 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 (in days of yore). We shall verily be hallowed just by the sight of thee. Oh Lord Sainath, I bow down to thee, who art the Supreme Lord and Master of Creation.

Lord Sainath, thou art the ocean of grace and bestower of success and fulfilment of all the four objects of life (viz., dharma, artha, kama and moksha). Even demiurg Brahma cannot describe the great efficacy of the dust of thy hallowed feet. With folded hands, I take refuge in thee; with 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 honey-bee 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-ever recites this stotra (hymn) with steadfast devotion, shall certainly obtain the grace of Sadguru Sainath.

Commentary

This Sanskrit hymn was composed by Sri Upasini 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 Poornima, 15th 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 a part 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 (stanzas), 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 or lordship over the phenomenal 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 devotee 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 conditions entirely forgetting their body and effacing the narrow notion of the Self confined to the 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 trance 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 or 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."² 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.

2.D.E.S, p.67

IX. PUSHPANJALI [Mantra Pushpam] (Vedic Hymn)

Om yagnena yagnamayajanta devaastaani dharmaani
prathamaanyaasan
Teha naakam mahimaanah sachanta yatra
Poorvesaadhyaa santi devaah;
Om rajaadhiraajaaya prasahya saahine namovayam
Vaishravanaaya kurmahe
Samekaaman kaama kaamaaya mahyam kaameswaro
vaishravano tathatu
Kuberaya vaisravanaya mahaaraajaaya namaha;
Om swasti saamraajyam bhojyam swaaraajyam
vairaajyam
Paarameshtyam raajyam mahaarajya
maadhipatyamayam
samantaparyaa yeesyaat

Saarvabhoomah saarvaayushya
aan taadaapadaardhaat prithivyai
Samudraparyanthaayaa ekaraaliti tadapyesha
Slokobhigeeto marutah
Pariveshtaaro maruttasyaavasan gruhe
Aviskhitasya kaamaprer visvedevaah sabhaasada ithi

Sri Naraayana Vasudeva Satchidananda Sadgurur Sri Sainath Maharaaj Ki Jai!

X. PRARTHANA

Karacharanakritam vaakkaayajam karmajam vaa
Shravananayanajam vaa maanasam vaaparaadham
Viditamaviditam vaa sarvame tatshkamasva
Jaya jaya karunaabdhe sri prabho 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 Maharaj Ki Jai

End of Madhyahn Arati

Part Three

Dhup Arati (Evening Arati)

I. ARATI

{Same as Psalm No.II of the Noon Arati}

II. ABHANG

{Same as Psalm No.IV of the Noon Arati}

III. NAMAN

{Same as Psalm No.V of the Noon Arati}

IV. NAMASKARASTAK

{Same as Psalm No.VII of the Noon Arati}

V. PRARTHANA

{Same as Psalm No.VIII of the Noon Arati}

VI. SRI SAINATHUNI MAHIMNA STHOTRAM

{Same as Psalm No.IX of the Noon Arati}

VIII. SRI GURUPRASADA YACHANAASTAKAM

Composed by:: Sri B.V.Dev alias Babaanche Bal

Ruso mama priyaambikaa majavaree pitahee ruso
Ruso mama priyanganaa priyasutaatmajaaher ruso
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 subrida naa sakhaa swajana naapta bandhu puso
Paree na guru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Puso na abalaa mulen tarun vriddhahee 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 praana jnaanee ruso
Rusohi vidhushee striyaa kushal panditaahee ruso
Ruso mahipatee yatee bhajak taapaseehee ruso
Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Ruso kavi rishee muneer anagha siddha yogee ruso

Ruso hi grihadevata ni kula graama deveso
Ruso khala pishaascahee malin dakineechee ruso
Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Ruso mriga khaga krimi akhila jeeva jantu ruso
Ruso vitap prastaraa achal aapagaabdhee ruso
Ruso kha pavan naagni vaar avani panchatathwe ruso
Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Ruso vimal kinnaraa amala yakshineechee ruso
Ruso shashi khagaadihee gagani taarakaachee ruso
Ruso amararaajahee adaya dharmaraajaa ruso
Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Ruso mana saraswatee chapala chitta tehee ruso
Ruso vapu dishaakhilaa kattina kaal tohee ruso
Ruso sakal vishwahee mayi tu brahma golaa ruso
Na dattaguru Saayima majavaree kadheenhee ruso

Vimoodha hmanunee haso majana matsaraahee daso
Padaabhi ruchi ulhasoh janan kardamee naa phaso
Na durga dhriticha dhaso ashivbhaav maage khaso
Prapanchi mana he ruso dridda virakti chittee ttaso

Kunaachihi grinaa naso na cha sprihaa kashaachee aso
Sadaiva hridayeen vaso manasi dhyani sayee vaso
Padee pranaya voraso 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 Blalakrishna Vishwanath Dev, who served as a Mamaltadar at Dahanu. Sri Dev composed the psalm in 1940¹ and it was added to the Book of Shirdi Aaratis 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 Anna Saheb 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!

IX. PUSHPANJALI

{Same as No.VII of the Noon Arati}

X.PRAARTHANA

{Same as No.XII of the Noon Arati}

End of Dhup Arati

Part Four

Sej Arati (Night Arati)

I.ARATI

Composed By:: Sant Tukaram Maharaj

Owaaloo aaratee mazhaa Sadgurunaathaa
-maazhaa sainaathaa
Paanchaahee tatwaanche deep laawilaa aataan
Nirgunaachee sthitee kaisee aakaaraa aalee
-Baba aakaraa aalee
Sarvaa ghatee bharoni vurallee Sayee maawoolee
> Owaaloo >
Rajatamasathwa tighe maayaa prasawalee
-Baba maayaa prasawalee
Mayecheeye potee kaisee maayaa udhbavalee
> owaaloo >
Saptasaagaree kaisaa khel maandeelaa
-Baba khel maandeelaa
Khelooniyaa khel awagha visthaar kelaa
> owaaloo >
Brahmandeechee rachanaa daakhavilee dolaa
-Baba daakhavilee dolaa
Tukahmane maazhaa swaamee kripaaloo bolaa
> 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 maya (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 bare 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 prakrithim 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 gunas¹ (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 {leela²}!

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!

1. Lit. ‘strands’, ‘constituents’. Even though, the generic meaning of the word guna is ‘quality, in Sankhya Philosophy it is employed to mean ‘the basic constituents of matter (prakrit). Prakrit is a mixture of the three constituents, sattva, rajas and tamas, in various proportions, just as manifold strands are ‘warped’ and interwoven into a rope.

2. Lit, ‘blissful sports or pastimes’

II. JNANESWAR ARATI

Composed by:: Shri Rama Janardhani Swami

Aaratee jnaanaraaja - mahaa kaivailya tejaa
Sevitee saadhusanta - hmanu vedhalaa maazha
> Aarati <

Lopale jnaana jagin - hita nenatee konee
Avataara panduranga - nam tteville jnanee
> Aarati <

Kanakaache tat kareen - ubhyaa gopikaa naaree
Naarada tumbaraho - saamgaayan karee
> Aarati <

Pragata guhya bole - vishwa brahmachi kele
Rama janardhanee - paayee mashtak tteville
> Aarati <

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 saints (saints) that followed pay unequivocal homage. As the devotees sang these aratis 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 arati-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 >

Raaghave saagaraat - jaise paashaan taarile
Taise he tuko baache - abhang (udaki) rakshile
> Aarati tukaraamaa <

Tukitaa tulanesee _ brahma tukaasee aale
Hmanonee raamesware - charanee mastak tteville
> Aarati tukaraamaa <

Translation

Oh Tukaram Maharaj, Master of the Abode of sadgurus, I adore thee by offering arati. 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 Rameswara 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 brahmins orthodoxy

flared up in rage. For instance, Bahani Bai, a brahmins 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 will 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.³ 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 (guruparampara) of this Order runs thus Dattatreya Siva Chaitanya Raghava Chaitanya⁴ 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 Chaitanya⁵ and Tukaram Maharaj.

3. Though they call themselves Chaitanyas, there seems to be no direct monastic link between them and the more well-known Chaitanyaites of Bengal, the followers of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu alias Lord Gauranga. However, some scholars on this subject believe that these Maharastrian chaitanyas owe a spiritual legacy to Lord Gauranga, who was in Maharashtra for some time on his pilgrimage and is said to have visited Pandharpur. Historically, one Siva Chaitanya (circa 1500 A.D) is said to be the founder of this Maharastrian Chaitanya Order.

4. Raghava Chaitanya, the foremost figure in the line, taught beyond the barriers of caste and religion. His tomb near Gulbarga, where he is known as Ladle Mashayak alias Raghav Daraz Aland Sharif, is reverentially visited even to this day by both Hindus and Muslims.

5. Some identify Babaji Chaitanya with Kesava Chaitanya.

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 tatguruhbyas cha namovakam adheemahe..’ {=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 ‘bache’) 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 of Ravana to redeem his wife Sita who had been abducted by Ravana. In the same way, the psalmist suggests, Tukaram’s 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), own real Self (which is his self's better-half). In one of this 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 Bhat 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. SEJARATI

Composed by:: Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma

Jai jai sainatha aataa pahudaave mandiree ho
Aalavito sapreme tuzhala aaratee ghevuni karecho

> 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
-suman shej tyavareen ho
Gdhyaavee todee bhakta janaanchee
-pujan archan karen ho

Owaalito panchaprana - jyotee sumatee karen 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 the glories, Oh Sainath, I invoke thee to accept thy bed in the Mandir. I offer Arati (by singing lullabies) to thee with a heart overpowering 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 by devotees!

So, come and repose for a while on the beautiful bed bedecked with flowers of forgiveness. Thy devotees offer thee worship and devout services. Making five pranams (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 Motherely Sai, we shall wake thee up at dawn to make lasting weal for our own selves.

V. SEJ ARATI

Composed By:: Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma

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 navavidhaa bhaktee
Jnaanaachyaa समयaa laawuni ujalalyaa 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 >
Aashaa trishnaa kapanechaa saanduni galabala - baba saanduni galabala
< Aataa swaamee >
Alakshya unmanee ghevunee baba naajuk duhsshaalaa-
baba naajuk duhsshalaa
Niranjana sadguru swaamee nijavile shejelaa
< Aataa swaamee >

Translation

I inovke 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 to attend upon thee.

The beauteous blanket of boundless bliss is spread as a cover. Oh Sadguru Sainath, the Niranjana (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
karooni 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 (prasada) 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
Aatan 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 prasada. 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 annul all evil influences from us. Tukaram says, I partake of Thy sacred leftovers in the contemplation that I and Thou art not different but one!

VIII. ABHANG

Composed by :: Shri Krishna Jogiswar Bhishma

Sainaath maharaaja aatan
Kripaa karaa gururaaja
Trividha taap haa paattee laagalaa
Kaa nhee na shuche kaaja aataa
Mano vrittee hya kiteetaree usalatee
Utaree yaamchaa majza aataa
Harisee jaisaa deen janaache
Vyasana kasunee maaja aataa
Krishnadaas twatcharaneer 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 Ki Jai

End of Sej Arati

BOOK REVIEW

Arati Sai Baba *The Psalm Book of Shirdi Aratis* *English Translation and Commentary*

Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji

Saiyana, Shirdi, 1996

94 pp., Rs 40

This remarkable book, the first of a number of awaiting publications, is the outcome of ardent and arduous study and research of Sri Pujya Guruji, Dr. Sainathuni Sarath Babuji, who has finally given his consent to release several of his completed works (both, in English and Telugu). It is a masterpiece in all respects and reflects the author's deep love for Sadguru Sainath and an uncompromising commitment to truth. The extraordinary care of the detail that has been taken shows itself in the thoroughness of content, as well as in the fine layout and the exquisite coverpage.

The book is written in a beautiful blend of scholarly and poetic literary style and, the artful English rendering of the Arati songs skilfully convey the spirit of the original psalms.

The work contains a comprehensive and systematic introduction of over 30 pages, revealing for the first time ever, in great depth, the authentic meanings of the concept of Aratis in general and the historical background and evolution of the institution of Shirdi Aratis in particular. It provides invaluable and rare information which enhances the reader's understanding of Sri Sai Baba and deepens his devotion to the great Saint.

In the first chapter of the Introduction where the author expounds the meaning and background of the '*Tradition of Arati*' he explains that the origins of 'arati' can be traced back to the vedic times. And, that "*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).*" [pg. IV/V] "*The sense of being 'apart from the world' is subtly replaced by an awareness of being a part of a 'Whole'.*" [pg. VI] In the paragraph on '*Meaningful Prayer*' the author emphasizes the importance of knowing the meaning of our recitations: "*Just as an oblation of clarified butter flares up the fire kindled in the sacred fire-alter, the singing of psalms with an understanding of their meaning augments the fire of devotion in the devotee's heart.*" He persists that "*mere reeling off a hymn or litany is not prayer*", and "*Recitation of a hymn bereft of the knowledge of its meaning is not more than facile parrotry.*" [pg. VIII]

In the second part of the Introduction the author explores the dawn of the Arati tradition in Shirdi, which, as his thorough research shows, can't be ascribed to a person or a point in time and, he gives a beautiful and thrilling exposition of the development of Sai Arati and the cultural breakthrough that it evoked in no time. *"...in the face of baffling manifestations of his (Sai Baba's) almost 'cosmocratic' powers, the apotheosis becomes almost spontaneous and effortless. The benign numinous awe, produced by the objective awareness of his incredible preternatural powers, open the innermost doors of one's consciousness through which the godlike image (of Sri Sai Baba) penetrates itself spontaneously. With Sri Sai Baba such recognition (of the divine) is effected almost irresistibly and, herein lies the unique glory and efficacy of the Sai Tradition as a spiritual path."* [pg.X]

Furthermore the author reveals by whom, where and when the aratis were actually performed in Baba's times, along with delightful anecdotes showing vividly the intimate relationship between Baba and his devotees.

Then follows a full transliteration of the original thirty psalms of the *Shirdi Arati* (Morning, Noon, Evening and Night Arati) with English translation and commentaries, which offer an unravelling of the inner meanings and significance of the arati songs as well as insight into the composers of the songs. The author also elucidates many features of Sri Sai Baba and his life and teaching *"which is beyond all the barriers of all religions"* [pg. 18]. *"My business is to give blessings", 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."* [pg. 27]

A renowned devotee of Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi like Sri Sainathuni Sarath Babuji, popularly known as 'Guruji', is certainly the right person to write on the Shirdi Aratis. He hails from Andhra Pradesh and has settled in Shirdi, the holy abode of his Sadguru. He is the beloved guide and refuge of numerous devotees and seekers who flock to him for their material and spiritual welfare. Living in complete dependence on and oneness with Sri Sai Baba he caters in a direct and personal way to their needs. "Guruji's" life and, in fact his whole persona convey and transmit the very spirit of the beatific 'Path of Sai Baba'.