

How K. J. Bhishma Composed “Shri Sadguru Sainath Sagunopasana”

Krishnashastri Jageshwar Bhishma was a resident of a village called Bori in the district of Nagpur. He lived on the income from his farms. After his second wife died he became restless. His relations and friends advised him to remarry but he declined. In the month of Shravan in 1908, on the night of Purnima he had a dream. He saw a person of dark complexion with tripundra mark on his forehead, sandal-wood paste mixed with saffron applied to his body and Puja offered at his feet. He gave Bhishma a newspaper. Bhishma enquired of him as to who he was. He did not reply but pointed to the newspaper on which “Sat-Chit-Anand” was printed in bold letters. He directed Bhishma to read. Bhishma looked at the newspaper wherein he saw the words “Mantra va shikava” which means “chant mantra and learn”. Bhishma was intrigued and wanted to question the dark person, but both the person and the newspaper had vanished. Bhishma was mystified, but in the meantime he heard a knock at the door and he emerged out of his dream. He lost no time in recording this dream. Thereafter he thought long about his dream but was unable to unravel the mystery. After a few days a sadhu, a devotee of Ganesh, visited Bori. Bhishma narrated his dream to the sadhu who told him that “Sat-Chit-Anand Swami” was his guru, and gave him the mantra “Va Shikava”.

After sometime Bhishma happened to visit Amraoti where Dadasaheb Khaparde asked him whether he would like to accompany him to Shirdi. He agreed and in the company of Khaparde arrived in Shirdi. There is a mention of Bhishma in Khaparde’s Diary pertaining to his second and long stay at Shirdi beginning from 6th December 1911. As soon as Bhishma went to the Musjid for Sai Baba’s darshan, Sai Baba with folded hands exclaimed “Jaya Sat-Chit-Anand”. Bhishma was perplexed. He wondered whether the sadhu of his dream was Sai Baba. However, the sadhu of his dream was a Vaishnavite while Sai Baba appeared to be a Muslim! Yet, why Sai Baba uttered Sat-Chit-Anand? All Brahmin devotees of Sai Baba took tirtha but Bhishma did not. Sai Baba used to smoke

the chillim and often invited others to have a puff but excluded Bhishma in the beginning. Once while Sai Baba was narrating a story, a devotee got the chillim ready and gave it to Sai Baba. Sai Baba held it out to Bhishma and directed him to smoke after merely touching the chillim to his mouth. Bhishma had a puff and returned it to Sai Baba. Sai Baba accepted it and remarked, "I roam everywhere, my friend – Bombay, Pune, Satara, Nagpur; all those towns are filled with the presence of Rama". Then he suddenly said to Bhishma, "You eat laddus alone by yourself without offering anything to me. At least now give me five laddus". It is well known that Sai Baba asked for dakshina from every devotee and spent the amount collected for charitable purposes.

Sai Baba's remark had a strange effect on Bhishma. The distinction between the Vaishnav sadhu of his dream and Sai Baba disappeared. He knowingly asked the sevak for Sai Baba's tirtha and placed his head on Sai Baba's feet. Sai Baba put his palm on Bhishma's head for two full minutes. Bhishma went into ecstasy. How could he describe the state of his mind except by saying like Devnath in his famous composition "Gurukrupayka uhnjuna paya mera main janu". "The Guru's Grace I have received I know it for myself".

Bhishma returned to his lodging, brooding on how he could prepare five laddus in a place where he himself was a guest. Even otherwise he would have had to take the assistance of another person for the purpose and Sai Baba would have surely known about it. Moreover, why did Sai Baba ask him for only five laddus and not laddus generally? He spent a day thinking about the deeper meaning thereof and fell asleep with this thought uppermost in his mind. Suddenly he woke up and was inspired to compose a stanza. In the morning while he busied himself with the second stanza, Hari Sitaram Dikshit, on his way to the Masjid, saw the stanza. After his bath, Bhishma went to the Masjid. Sai Baba reminded him about the laddus. Bhishma kept quiet but Dikshit replied that laddus were being prepared. On hearing this Sai Baba fell into a silence. Next day, Bhishma completed five stanzas, and however hard he tried, he could not

compose any more. So he placed the composition of five stanzas into Sai Baba's hands. Sai Baba asked him to recite them. While he was reciting, Sai Baba again blessed him by putting his palm on his head and Bhishma felt exalted. Thereafter Bhishma would compose a verse and show it to Sai Baba who would order him to render it. Thus the booklet "Shri Sainath Sagunopasna" wrote itself and was offered at Sai Baba's feet. Dadasaheb Khaparde has the booklet published at his expense till 1922. Later on in 1923, after Shri Sai Baba Sansthan was founded, with Bhishma's consent a revised edition was planned and published by the Sansthan with incorporation of more compositions therein.

V. B. Kher.

(From Shri Sai Leela, September 1985)

Bhishma prepared a booklet entitled Shri Sainath Sagunopasana which contained, besides the Arati, psalms sung in Arati to Shri Sai Baba, some traditional hymns from the Hindu liturgy like, Purusha Suktam, Sree Suktam, Mantra Pushpam, Sri Lakshmi Ashtotharam, intended for use in the daily worship of the devotees. Shri G.S. Khaparde had borne all the expenses of its publication till 1922, After Baba's Mahasamadhi, the book has been adapted as the official 'Book of Daily Worship' at the Samadhi Mandir. Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, Shirdi, on making some additions to it, has taken up the publication of the revised edition since 1923. In all, there are thirty psalms in the Book of Shirdi Aratis. Of the thirty, only sixteen are especially composed on Shri Sai Baba. The rest (fourteen, i.e. about half), are traditional Arati psalms composed by the mediaeval poet-saints of Maharashtra (excepting a Vedic chant). Of the fourteen traditional psalms, five are composed by Sant Tukaram Maharaj, two each by Sant Namadev and Sant Janabai, one each by Shri. Ramjanardhan Swami and Shri. Rameshwar Bhat; of the remaining three, one is a Vedic hymn and the other two are traditional prayers. Of the sixteen, psalms especially written on Shri Sai Baba, the major bulk, i.e. nine, are composed by Shri. K.J. Bhishma, three by Shri. Dasganu Maharaj, one each by Shri.

Upasani Maharaj, Shri. Madhav Adkar, Shri. Mohini Raj and Shri. B.V. Dev. Linguistically, of the thirty Arati psalms, twenty five are in Marathi, two in Hindi, two in Sanskrit and one a bilingual anthology of short Marathi and Sanskrit prayers.

(Contributed by from "Arati Saibaba" by Sri. Sarathbabuji)

<http://www.saibaba.org/newsletter10-06.html>