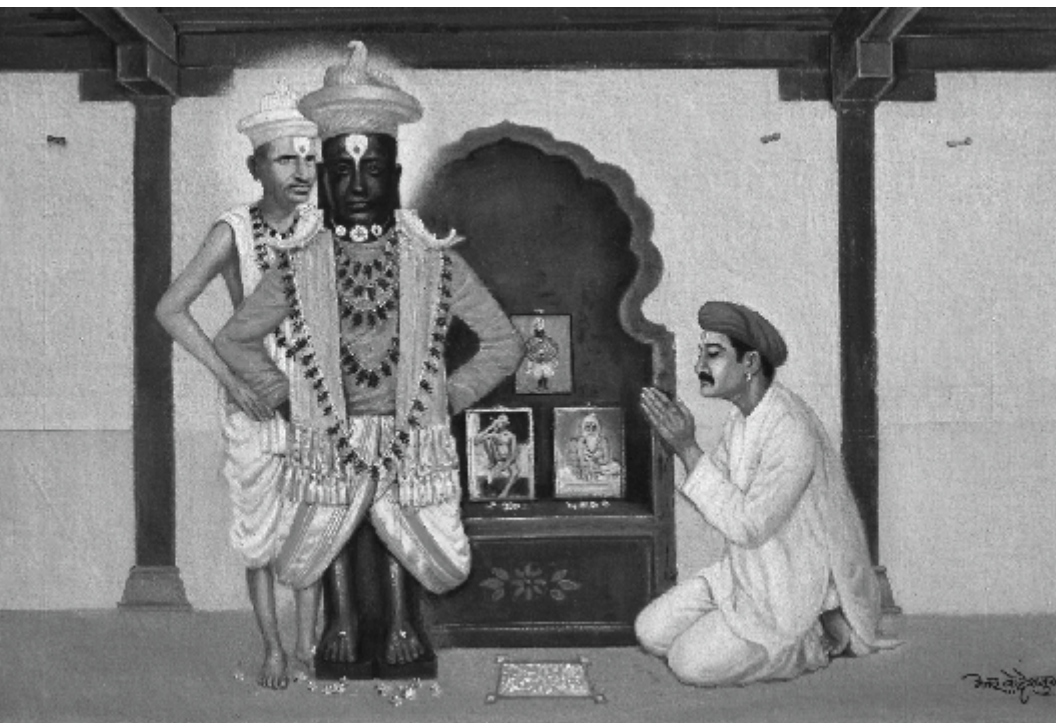


Chapter Eighteen



Saints recognize the plight of the unfortunate.
Lucky are those who get a chance to be near.
Maharaj said, 'Bapuna, don't worry.
I will just now show you
Rukmini Raman Pandurang Hari.'
Saying so Maharaj stood up
And positioned his feet like Vitthal
With hands on the waist like the idol

Chapter 18

Shree Ganeshay namah

Jai to the divinity which showers joyous tidings.
Govind, Shriniwas, embodiment of all blessings.
Hope of the down trodden, save me O Keshav'
Keshimardan, Madhav, Madhusudan
O killer of Putna. Pandurang, consort of Rukhmini,
I need not say what I want from thee.
Scripts say you fulfill desires of devotees.
I beseech you to grant my wishes and be kind to me ...1

A devotee from Mundgaon near Akot, named Baijabai
Was the daughter of Bhulabai and Shivram Mali.
She was married in her childhood early.
Everything happens as per one's destiny.
When Baijabai came of age
Her father took her to his son in law's place.
But it had no significance
As Baijabai's husband was not potent ... 2

Parents of Baijabai were deeply affected.
Bhulabai, her mother even suggested
That Baijabai be married to another person.
Shivaram, the father did not concur.
He said masculinity sometimes comes late.
So they decided to wait
And let Baija be at her husband's place
Expecting that medicines may help ... 3

Both of them returned to their village.
Baija who was sixteen year of age,
With her honey toned complexion
She presented a youthful image.
Endowed with her beautiful eyes, a Sharp nose and a tall
figure
She enjoyed the power to attract the attention
Of any person ... 4

Her elder brother in law was enchanted by her splendor
And earnestly desired to make love to her.
He tried many ways of persuasion
Even a promise to treat her as his wife.
His attempts to seduce her were wasted.
Burdened by this torture, she prayed,
'O God why am I subject to such conflict?
When I have worshipped you from my childhood ... 5

My devotion got me no fruit.
The person I married has no manhood.
I know my fate in a way it is great.
Now I can entirely concentrate
And devote myself to your feet
Now my only request is
That no other man touches me.' ... 6

One night her brother in law came to her
To let her know of his evil intentions.
Baija turned down his overtures
By calling him a shameless creature.
She reminded him that a husband's elder brother
Has a relationship as good as a father.
His behavior thus should be as worthy as a father ... 7

But ignoring her remarks
He tried to grab her in his arms.
Suddenly he heard a thudding sound
Of his elder son falling to the ground.
He fell from the first floor to the base

Causing a great wound on his forehead.
Baija picked up the child in her lap
And dressed his wound with a medicinal wrap ... 8

Baija told her brother in law to learn a lesson
And not covet other women with passion.
Looking at the condition of his son
He regretted his shabby action
And did not bother Baija thereafter.
Shivram took her back to Mundgaon.
Her mother suggested that they go to Shegaon
And ask Gajanan the future of her daughter ... 9

So they all went to Shegaon.
Prostrating before Maharaj.
The parents requested the saint
To bless Baija to have an infant.
Maharaj smiled and replied
'She is not destined to have a child.
All men in the world are like father to her.
Better forget she is married any more.' ... 10

Shivram was sorry to hear this from Maharaj.
Soon they all returned to Mundgaon.
Baija was happy to know of what was in store for her.
With this visit she became the Saint's resolute follower.
Baija started visiting Shegaon
With Pundalik, a disciple from Mundgaon.
Her parents did not object to these trips.
They hoped this may bring back her marital bliss ... 11

They cherished a faint hope in their minds
That Baija's man would become potent by the blessings.
But her visits to Shegaon with Pundalik
Germinated doubts in the minds of the public.
People even started spreading rumors
That under the garb of religious excursions
Baija and Pundalik were enjoying physical satisfaction.
They openly pointed out the caste diversity ... 12

Pundalik was Maratha and Baija was of Mali community.
A great hue and cry was raised to break their attachment.
But both of them were pure at heart.
Bhulabai scolded Baija for this association
Saying that young men and women come together
For nothing else but physical satisfaction..
She even advised Shivram
To get her a husband from their clan ... 13

Bhulabai took Baija to Gajanan Maharaj
To find out the reason for the association.
She believed that saints knew every thing
And when asked they would tell.
Maharaj was like sandalwood
Which will never emit a bad smell.
Pundalik, Baija, Bhulabai and Shivram
They all went together to Shegaon ... 14

Maharaj looked at Pundalik and said with a smile,
Pundalik, Baija was your sister in your previous life.
Don't deny her affection
Even if it attracts public condemnation.
You both together worship God.
Bhulabai, you should not obstruct that.
She is the sister of Pundalik not his wife
She is not destined to have a husband this life ... 15

She will ever remain a maid like Janabai of Pandharpur.
Who got Namdev as her guru.
Like that Baija is one among the few.
She has surrendered to me.
From now on she is my Janabai.'
Hearing these words Shivram was overwhelmed
He could not speak a word after all that was said ... 16

Next day they returned to Mundgaon with Baija
No one thereafter objected to her visits to Shegaon.
Everytime Pundalik was her escort.
No one ever bothered about that.

The Saint's kindness abundant
Stopped the criticism around ... 17

Here is a tale how Maharaj always
Protects his devotees from dreadful spells.
Doctor Bhau Rajaram Kavar
Was in charge of Khamgaon Hospital.
He got a nasty boil on his body
Eminent doctors were brought from Amravati,
Akola and Buldana cities
To treat this discomforting malady ... 18

All efforts with medicines, even surgery
Failed to bring relief to the state.
Bhau was restless lying in the bed
Due to unbearable pain.
His elder brother was concerned
Over Bhau's discomfort.
There was no alternative left at all
Except remembering Shree Gajanan Maharaj ... 19

Thinking so they folded their hands
And prayed to Shree Gajanan Maharaj
To come to his rescue and cure him of the pain.
It was midnight and pitch darkness covered the sky
With foxes howling nearby
When a hooded cart drawn by two bullocks
Came to the doctor's door by luck ... 20

A Brahmin from the cart came and knocked at the door.
The elder brother opened it asking the purpose of the
stopover.
The Brahmin said he was 'Gaja' and he came from Shegaon
He said he has brought 'Tirtha' and 'Angara' for Bhau Kavar.
He advised to apply angara to the boil and let Bhau sip
the tirtha awhile.
He left the things with the brother and went away
Saying that he had no time to stay.
Hearing this Bhau sent a man to call back the person ... 21

He could not be traced nor the bullock cart.
They could not be found as they disappeared fast.
Bhau applied angara to the boil
Which immediately burst throwing out the infection.
The fluid oozed out within an hour
Bringing sound sleep to Bhau Rajaram Kavar.
Subsequently he was completely cured
And went to Shegaon to see the seer ... 22

Smiling at Bhau, Maharaj said, 'Look up,
That night you did not even give grass to my bullocks.'
Bhau understood that the visitor that night was Maharaj.
As a token of his gratitude he fed the people of Shegaon.
Once Maharaj left for Pandharpur
To visit God Vitthal on the banks of Chadrabhaga river.
Many devotees accompanied him.
Special trains for Pandharpur were scheduled ... 23

This was for a comfortable travel of the crowd.
The occasion was Ashadhi Ekadasi.
First stop on the journey was at Nagzari.
Jagu Aba, Patil, Bapuna Kale and many more
Were with Maharaj on this tour.
There is an underground cave at Nagzari.
Where springs of natural water flow freely
Yielding a name to the place as Nagzari ... 24

The great Saint Gomaji Maharaj
Had attained communion with God
At this venerable spot.
He was the first guru of Mahadaji Patil
Who got blessings of this Divinity
For welfare and prosperity of the Patil dynasty.
That is why the Patils of Shegaon
Visit Nagzari before they move on ... 25

They pay respects to Gomaji
Before they proceed by train as Varkari
To the holy city of Pandharpur.

With Maharaj on this tour were Bapuna and fifty others.
It was the ninth day of Ashadh in the waxing moon
And thousands of devotees started reaching Pandharpur
Under a cloudy sky drizzling but with no down pour ... 26

Pandharpur appeared like heaven on earth
With a sea of humanity in its girth.
Every inch of space meant for going round the temple
Was jammed with Varkaris
Chanting, 'Jai Jai Ramkrishna Hari.'
The entire atmosphere was charged with devotion
When palanquins of various saints came in procession.
They were of Nath, Nivruti, Dnyaneshwar and Janardan
... 27

Also were there Savata, Gora Kumbhar,
Sopan, Muktabai and Shree Tukaram Dehukar.
Devotees threw up 'bukka' in the air
To offer respects to them at the festival.
The sky was filled with bukka powder
Spreading its fragrance all over.
They threw Tulsi leaves and flowers
On the palanquins in that festive atmosphere ... 28

When Maharaj reached Pandharpur
He stayed at Kukaji Patil's house
Which stands on the pradakshina route.
A huge crowd gathered around the temple.
With Police force protecting law and order.
On the day of the festival
With Hari Patil all Shegaon people,
Except Bapuna, went to the temple ... 29

Bapuna was taking bath and thus was held back.
When his bath was over
He learnt that everyone had gone to the temple.
He hurried to join them there with the crowd around
He could not reach anywhere near.
Helplessly he offered God a prayer, ... 30

'O Vitthal, Rishikesh, why are you displeased with me?
Why don't you allow me to enjoy your blessing
You went to 'Aran' to give darshan to Savata Mali
Panduranga, come from the temple to meet me.
Aran was sixteen miles away. I am just at your gate.
People call you helper of the helpless
Then why are you ignoring me?' ... 31

Thus he prayed and at last disappointed
Returned to Kukaji's establishment.
He had no food and the despondent mood
Made him look pale and sunken.
So intense was his desire to see Vitthal
That his mind hovered over the temple.
People jeered at him calling him the unfortunate example
... 32

They teased him saying,
'You came here to visit the stalls and not see the idol.
Some said he was a hypocrite
Not an unfortunate at all.
Others taunted that he knew Vedant well
And needed not to visit the temple.'
For Vedantees, God is in their hearts not idols ... 33

They believe that only fools go to the temple.
People ridiculed him saying,
'His God for him stands on the street.
'Then why did he come here at all?
He should have called Vitthal to Shegaon.
These Vedantees advice others
Without a fragment of experience.
They preach without practice ... 34

They do not understand that self realization
Is possible only by worshipping the visible.
How can one attain adulthood
Without experiencing childhood?
Bapuna received such criticism.

No one protected him from this sarcasm.
He sat quiet without taking any food.
Maharaj watching the events and understood his mood ...
35

Saints recognize the plight of the unfortunate.
Lucky are those who get a chance to be near.
Maharaj said, 'Bapuna, don't worry.
I will just now show you
Rukmini Raman Pandurang Hari.'
Saying so Maharaj stood up
And positioned his feet like Vitthal
With hands on the waist like the idol ... 36

Bapuna saw him in this form
With garlands of Tulsi and flowers around his neck.
Bapuna prostrated himself in front of this image.
When he looked up it was Maharaj again.
He was happy at this darshan of the Deity.
When he went to the temple subsequently
He saw the same idol in that position
As was shown by Maharaj in Kukaji's residence ... 37

When people came to know of this incident
They requested Maharaj to bless them with the same
darshan.
Maharaj replied, 'Like Bapuna mould your mind.
The darshan is not an ordinary kind
Like a commodity at the market place
It requires an attitude of pious bend,
Just as seen in Bapuna's case,
To get a darshan of such a consequence ... 38

Maharaj revealed Vithoba to Bapuna
Because he was a real saint.
There is no difference between a saint and God.
It is like sugar and the sweet taste,
One cannot be separated from the other.
After sharing Prasad they returned to Shegaon.

With the blessings of Vithoba, Bapuna got a son
Who grew up to be an intelligent person ... 39

Services to saints never go waste.
Bapuna's son was named as Namdeo
As he came with the blessings of Vithoba Dev.
A devotee from Kavathe Bahadur of Vidharbha
Had also lodged himself at Kukaji's wada.
On the next day of the Ekadashi fare
Cholera gripped Pandharpur with a flare.
Thousands of people were dying there ... 40

The Police authorities asked people to leave the sacred town.
Doctors too said they should move out soon.
The authority even drove them out as a precaution.
The villager of Kavathe Bahadur caught the infection.
He suffered from vomiting and loose motions.
His vigor was lost and he became weak.
No one gave him any medicine
Nor did they inform doctors for fear of police ... 41

Everyone left, abandoning him to the fate of death.
When you flourish people are your friends.
Adversity brings dire desertion.
This always has been the general equation.
God and Saints come to help in such a situation.
Looking to the devotee lying helpless
Maharaj asked people to take him with them.
'He is nearly dead.' They said ... 42

'We too will face difficulty.
In our entourage we are fifty.
Cholera is spreading like wild fire in the city.
Under the circumstances we leave for our own safety.
We cannot stay here even for a day.
Let us leave this place immediately.'
Maharaj said, 'It is foolish of the tour band
To abandon a sick brother from your land.' ... 43

He went out and caught the hand of the devotee,
Helped him to sit up and said with certainty,
'Come with me. To Vidharbha we go.'
The devotee moaned, 'I cannot even move.
I am on death bed with no relations now.'
Maharaj assured, 'Don't get scared,
The danger to your life is now over.'
Saying so he put his hand on the devotee's head ... 44

His symptoms vanished with that touch.
He felt strong and stood up.
How can death take away a person
When he is in the shadow of saint's protection?
He recovered within an hour
And joined his people on the return tour.
Rescued from fear of death and all that pain
He prostrated before Maharaj again and again ... 45

The devotee from Kavathe Bahadur remarked,
'Swamiji, you brought me back.
I was 'in the jaws of death.'
He cheered to the glory of the saint again.
All devotees in Pandharpur entourage
With Shree Gajanan Maharaj
Returned safe to the town of Shegaon.
They had Saint Gajanan as their escort ... 46

An orthodox Brahmin once came to Shegaon
For the darshan of Shree Gajanan Maharaj.
He heard of the greatness of the saint
And arrived there from a far off place.
Being a very orthodox person
He did not tolerate being touched by any one.
After looking at Maharaj he regretted
To have come all the way to see this saint ... 47

He branded Maharaj as a crazy person.
Behaving contrary to established traditions.
He did not appreciate people worshipping such a deviation

He saw a dog lying dead on the way to the well
And did not go further muttering to himself,
'No one removes the dead dog from here.
They are all Ganja smokers.
I am a fool to have travelled here,' ... 48

Maharaj heard this and to the Brahmin he said,
'Don't harbour any doubts. The dog is not dead.
Go, perform your worship as you desire.'
The Brahmin retorted, 'I am not crazy like you Sir!
The dog is dead lying here for an hour.
No one removed it. No one cares!'
Maharaj said, 'We are ignorant and spoiled
We don't possess wisdom so bright ... 49

Follow me to the well with your pitcher.'
With his feet he touched the dog lying there.
It stood up and took to its heels.
The Brahmin was spell-bound indeed
He fell prostrate at Maharaj's feet
And begged pardon for his misdeeds.
He served food to the devotees that day.
After taking Prasad he went away ... 50

We hope this treatise
Will bring happiness to all devotees.