

Favour that was Bestowed on Me

I bow down to Sree Ganesh

I bow down to Sree Saraswati

*I bow down to the **Guru***

I bow down to the Family Deity

I bow down to Sree Sita-Ramachandra

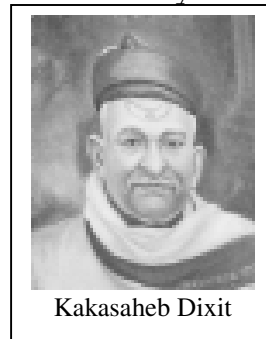
I bow down to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

1. Hail to the *Sadguru* who is supreme and eternal! Hail to the *Sadguru*, who is the Truth of Brahman! who makes you experience that the world is illusory. Hail, hail to him, who is the Controller of *Maya*!
2. Hail, hail to you without beginning or end! Hail, hail to you, beyond duality! Hail, hail to you, who is immutable! O, you are the only one, who teaches the true nature of the Self!
3. Can a salt doll return from a bath in the ocean? This can never happen! It is the same with you!
4. The *Vedas* and the *Shrutis* discuss, day and night, that which cannot be defined. You can point it out easily to the devotees.
5. If, by luck, you lay seige to someone then that one will never entertain the selfish thoughts of the difference between yours and mine.
6. In the last chapter, the pure story unfolding the meaning of Brahman and how the avariciousness of the *Brahmarthi* was an obstacle was described.
7. Now the story about how I received Baba's blessings. Oh listeners, listen respectfully for it will reveal Baba's way of giving guidance.
8. This story is also interesting. I will relate it as it happened. Listeners should listen, with a calm mind, for their own good.
9. If the listener is keen and has due respect, the speaker also gets the right enthusiasm and his heart overflows with love. It is enjoyable for both of them.
10. Without any change of mind or feeling, even in the slightest measure, and according to each one's capabilities Baba showed the true path and preached in accordance with that.

11. Many people are of the opinion that whatever a Guru has told them should not be divulged to anybody, otherwise the Guru's words become ineffective.
12. But this is entirely imaginary - an unnecessary fuss made! Not only things taught personally, but dream visions too, have been told to all, word for word.
13. If you assume this to be untrue, I can support it with the example of Budha Kaushik Rishi, who was taught the *Ram Raksha Stotra*¹ in his dream, which he taught to all.
14. The Guru is like a moisture laden cloud of the rainy season, who fondly showers water in the form of contentment. Why should it be hoarded? On the contrary, one should drink to one's heart's content and should also serve others.
15. A mother holds the chin of the child and lovingly feeds medicine for the sake of its health. Baba's skill was similar.
16. His ways were not secretive. Listen carefully how unexpectedly he would fulfil the wishes of his devotees.
17. Blessed, blessed is the company of the *Sadguru*! Who can describe his powers? When the memories of his words are recalled, one by one, I am inspired greatly!
18. If you pray to God with love, and serve the Guru and perform his *puja*, you will receive that knowledge which only the Guru has. All other means are useless.
19. This path of the world is full of confusion and dim. The words of the Guru shine like rays from a lamp to make it smooth and perceivable.
20. Guru is actually God himself. He is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar. Guru in reality is God Almighty. Guru is the Supreme Brahman.
21. Guru is the mother and Guru is the father. Guru is the protector when God's wrath is incurred. But when Guru is angry nobody can protect you. Remember this always.
22. Guru is the guide for worldly behaviour, the rituals and pilgrimages to holy places. He is the guide to what is right and wrong, and to practise non-attachment. He is the exponent of the Vedas and the Upanishads.
23. The Saints open up the inner eyes of the intellect and reveal the grandeur of the Inner Self. They fulfil all the wishes of the devotees. They are extremely tender at heart and compassionate.

24. They cause the passions to disappear. Even in sleep true knowledge pulsates. Because of their blessings, the twin fruits of self-denial and self-control are obtained.
25. If one is able to get close to a Saint, serve him and love him, like the wish-fulfilling tree, he fulfils all the wishes of the devotees and wards off all miseries.
26. Always practise truth; listen to the stories about the saints; bow down at the feet of the Saints. Sins will be washed away.
27. When Lord Reay was the Governor of the State, he overthrew the Crawford regime. At that time, a well-known gentleman became Baba's devotee.
28. This world is full of three-fold miseries and is false. This gentleman suffered heavy losses in business and was disheartened. He gave up everything and left home.
29. He was greatly perturbed. He decided to take a journey to a far off place where he would be happy in seclusion.
30. When a person is in tremendous difficulty, then he remembers God; and that too, with great difficulty. Then the devotee continuously calls out God's name and becomes a follower.
31. But till the sins are not diminished, just reciting God's name does not help. Afterwards, seeing the devotion, God leads him to a Saint.
32. Similarly it happened for that devotee. Seeing him utterly fed up of the world, his friends gave him good advice. Listen to that.
33. "Why don't you go to Shirdi to take the *darshan* of *Samartha Sainath*? Pray to him, the Saint who is the Cloud of Mercy.
34. If one is able to get the company of a Saint, even for a moment, the wayward mind becomes steady and immediately settles at the feet of God from where it is difficult to turn back.
35. People go from far and near, humble themselves in the dust of Sai's feet, act according to *Maharaj's* commands and get their wishes fulfilled by serving him.
36. Such is his wide-spread fame. The young and the old all know about it. If he takes pity on you, you will be free of miseries.
37. Shirdi, at present, is a holy place. Streams of people flow in and out, day and night. You too can have this experience. The *darshan* of the Saint will be beneficial".
38. Just as a person worried because of drought and thus reduced to penury, if he is suddenly showered with ample wealth; or

- if a person agonised by terrible hunger is served with delicacies;
39. he felt like that when his friends told him of Shirdi. That devotee accepted this advice and decided to have the experience. He set off for Shirdi.
 40. He came to the town, had *darshan* and prostrated at his feet. Immediately, he felt relaxed and contented.
 41. He who was Absolute Brahman, Ancient, Self-illuminated, Unblemished - such was the vision he saw and he was joyous.
 42. He felt that, thanks to his last birth's good fortune, he had come near Sai's feet and his mind was at peace, free from anxiety because of the *darshan*.
 43. This person's surname was Sathe. He was of a steadfast nature. He began the recitation of the '*Guru Charitra*'² and practised the ritual religiously.
 44. After seven days of reading the book was over. Baba gave him a dream vision that night in which he was holding the book in his hand and was explaining its meaning to Sathe.
 45. Baba sat on his own seat, made Sathe sit in front of him, took the *Guru Charitra* book and expertly explained it to him.
 46. Baba recited from the book and taught like a *puranika*³. Sathe listened peacefully and full of respect.
 47. 'What is this about-turn in my life?!' Thought Sathe. He felt greatly surprised and was choked with love.
 48. 'O, Benevolent One, you awaken those who are resting their heads on the pillows of the darkness of ignorance and who are snoring away in the embrace of passions!
 49. Just see, even at such a time, shaking us to wakefulness, you are giving the nectar of the *Guru Charitra* to drink, O Merciful One'.
 50. So be it. After he had such a dream Sathe became fully awake immediately. He related the whole episode which had taken place to Kakasaheb Dixit.
 51. And said: "I do not understand the meaning. Only Baba is capable of knowing it. I do not know what is in his mind. Kaka, please ask him in detail.
 52. Shall I start the recitation again? Or, shall I consider that whatever has been done is enough? Whatever be Baba's intentions, please ask him. Only that will put my mind to rest".



Kakasaheb Dixit

53. Then, Kaka having found an opportune moment told Baba about the dream. "Oh, Lord, through this dream what have you to convey to Sathe?"
54. Should the week-long recitation be repeated? Or should it be terminated now? Please explain the meaning of the dream yourself and show the way to Sathe.
55. This is the only request I am making at your feet. Sathe is an ardent devotee. Please have mercy on him and grant his wish".
56. Then Baba ordered: "Let there be more recitation. By reading this Guru *Charitra*, devotees are purified.
57. If this book is recited repeatedly, it will be beneficial for them. They will receive God's blessings and the worldly chains will be broken off".
58. While Baba was thus talking, I was massaging Baba's feet. I was surprised inwardly and was provoked to think.
59. 'How could Baba do this?! It seems that Sathe has gained the fruit with little effort. And I have spent years! While he gets the benefit in seven days!
60. Sathe has only once completed the recitation of the Guru *Charitra* in seven days and here I am who has done it for forty years! Do I deserve no thought?
61. One gets the benefits within seven days and another has spent seven fruitless years⁴! I am like the chatak eagerly awaiting and thinking, when will this merciful cloud shower on me?
62. When will that day ever come when this jewel amongst the Saints blesses me, fulfils my heart's desire and will grant me the knowledge?'
63. Sree Guru Sai loved his devotees. See his marvel! No sooner than these thoughts came to my mind that he immediately was aware of them!
64. Such thoughts, good or bad, though born of illusion, may they be millions of them, which arise and subside continuously, all come to his knowledge.
65. 'The mind can imagine that which even an enemy cannot think of', is a well-known saying. Though nobody else would know the thoughts, Maharaj immediately realised them.
66. But that very compassionate Mother forgives everything that is evil; and, at the opportune moment, she provokes the good and cultivates right behaviour.
67. Then having understood my thoughts, Baba said to me: "Get up. Go to Shamyra and bring Rs. 15/- from him.

68. Sit with him for a while; chat with him; come back quickly after taking *dakshina* from him".
69. Sainath took pity on me and under the pretext of *dakshina*, said: "Go and immediately ask for money from Shama for my sake".
70. When such an order was given, who could dare to sit? If one should sit in spite of that, it would be disobedience. I got up and took leave.
71. Then I left immediately. Shamrao came out to greet. He had just had his bath and was standing there, wearing a *dhoti*.
72. He had just finished his bath, had put on freshly - laundered garments and was draping the folds of the *dhoti*, while reciting God's names, under his breath.
73. He said: "How have you come unexpectedly? Are you coming from the *Masjid*? Why do you look restless? And, why are you alone to-day?"
74. Come and sit. I have just had a bath and am pleating my *dhoti*. I'll just pour the water over the images of the deities and will return in no time.
75. By the time you eat *pan*, I will finish my *puja* and rituals. Afterwards we will sit comfortably and talk at leisure".
76. Madhavrao went inside. Then I casually picked up the book of *Nath Bhagvat*⁵, which was lying on the window-sill.
77. I opened the book at random and strangely it was that page which I had started to read in the morning and had left incomplete.
78. I was greatly surprised because the portion I was reading in the morning and which I had omitted due to sheer laziness, Baba made me complete and made me stick to my daily ritual.
79. 'Ritual' means to read a certain portion regularly. If not fully understood or done half-way, one should not get up and leave it unfinished. Otherwise, the *upasana* is incomplete.
80. Now, this small story, which has come up in the course of narration, I do not like to leave. So, now, listeners should listen to that story, with respect regarding the *Nath Bhagvat*.
81. That is the *Nath Bhagvat*, full of devotions to the Guru, which Sai has acknowledged, and which Dixit read regularly.
82. This book, written for the salvation of the world was told to Brahma (the Creator) by Narayana (Vishnu) and was the seed sowed by him in the field, which Narada reaped.
83. That farm was cultivated in ten fold ways by Badrayan⁶ and Shuka⁷ selected a few best ears of the corn for the sake of Parikshit⁸ in his threshing ground in the scuttle.
84. Sridhar Swamy⁹ cleaned it. Janardan Swamy measured it and Nath prepared plenty of delicious dishes from it.

85. The eleventh chapter, which is the mine of devotion, love and happiness, from the *Vrindavan*¹¹ with thirty-two corners, is the chapter which Dixit read regularly.
86. During the day he would read and explain that (to the other devotees); and at night he would read *Bhavartha Ramayan*¹². This book was also ordered by the Guru and Dixit followed that authority.
87. It is the essence of happiness and devotion to God - a second edition, as it were, of the *Dñyaneshwari*. This is a great obligation on Maharashtra by Nath.
88. Having an early morning bath, doing daily worship of Sai and other deities, offering *naivedya* and having done the *arati* (lighting the niranjan),
89. then, afterwards along with other listeners, having taken the *naivedya* of milk and some fruits, he read the *pothi* at full length, full of respect, as a daily ritual.
90. That *pothi*, which was enjoyed by the great devotee of God, Tukaram, and was recited by him a thousand times in solitude on the Bandara hill, how can its sweetness be possibly described by anybody?
91. Sai Samartha had asked Dixit who was a devotee full of faith to read the divine book, which is beneficent and capable of leading beings to their salvation.
92. One need not go and stay in the jungles because God himself appears in the *Uddhava Gita* (chapter 11). Those who recite it with full faith can reach God directly.
93. In *Mahabharata*, there is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna; but this one between Krishna and Uddhava is better than that. It is that which is in the *Bhagvat* brought out in words by Eknath, with fond understanding.
94. So be it. This beneficent book, together with the *Bhavartha Dipika*, of Dñyandev, the great and merciful Sainath made people read in Shirdi.
95. Sakharam Hari Jog was commissioned by Baba to read it at Sathé's wada and the devotees were greatly benefitted.
96. Baba would often persuade the devotees to recite the book and would plead with them out of compassion to do so, for their own good.
97. Incomprehensible is Baba's skill of teaching! His ways and means were different for different devotees. They could be near or far away but he would be close to them in their hearts.

98. Though he would sit in the *Masjid* and allot certain work to a person, he would get it done by extending his own powers to the person.
99. He would tell Bapusaheb Jog to read the *pothi* which he would read regularly and religiously in the *wada* and the listeners also came to listen.
100. Every afternoon, after the meals, Jog would go to Baba, bow down at his feet, take '*vibhuti*' and ask for permission to start the reading of the *pothi*.
101. Sometimes he read the *Dñyaneshwari* and sometimes the *Nath Bhagvat*. He would recite with a heart filled with joy and would also explain the meanings.
102. Since this order was given, those devotees who came to visit Baba were directed by Baba to go and listen to the *pothi*, as soon as they came.
103. Sometimes he would tell stories in short which the listeners would listen to attentively and try to retain. No sooner he would tell them to get up and go to listen to the reading of the *pothi* in the *wada*.
104. When the listener, with full devotion, would go to listen to the *pothi*, he would find such a story by which the meaning of the earlier story (as told by Baba) would be confirmed.
105. The *Dñyaneshwari* of Dñyaneshwar or the words of Eknath (in the *Bhagvat*) would be found to be, as it were, adopted from Baba's story. This would greatly surprise the listeners.
106. Sometimes, though there would not be such a schedule as to read a certain portion from the *pothi*, yet Jog would read it out, or refer to, by some coincidence.
107. The *Bhagvat Gita* and the *Bhagvat* are the two main books which contain the essence of the *Bhagvat dharma* and Jog would regularly read them.
108. *Dñyaneshwari* is the commentary on the *Gita*, which is given the title *Bhavartha Dipika*, while Nath advocates the philosophy in a nutshell in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagvat*.
109. So be it. Thus the *Bhagvat dharma* fame spread. Accordingly, as a daily ritual, I used to read it regularly, but that day I had missed it.
110. One story was read half way. Because the people set out for the *Masjid*, I put away the *pothi*, while reading, and hurried off with them,

111. with a view to listen to Baba's stories. But Baba had something else in his mind. Baba did not like my leaving the *Bhagvat* and doing anything else.
112. Only for this reason, somehow or the other, Baba made me read the remaining portion of the *Bhagvat*. Such was Baba's great marvel. My affection overflows as I remember it.
113. So be it. The reading in the *Bhagvat* was completed. And, my subsidiary story also ends here. By then Madhavrao's *puja* had ended and he came out.
114. "Oh, there is a message from Baba, which I have brought to you: 'Bring, Rs. 15/- as *dakshina* from Shama.'
115. While I was sitting and serving him, suddenly he remembered you and said: 'Get up and go to Shama, and come back with the *dakshina*.'
116. He also said: 'Sit for a while at his home. Chat with him for some time. After conversing with him, return thereafter' ".
117. When Madhavrao heard this, he was very much astonished and said: "Instead of rupees, offer him my *namaskars*. Say that it is my *dakshina*".
118. "Alright one thing is done. I am carrying fifteen *namaskars* with me. But now, come and sit and chat with me", so said I.
119. "Tell me any story you choose. Quench the thirst of my desire to listen. Let the Ganges of Baba's stories flow from you, for they will wash away my sins".
120. Then Madhavrao said: "Sit down. Such is the *leela* of this God of which you are aware! Rest for a while. Sit.
121. Take this *pan* and *katha*. The *chuna* and the *supari* are in the box. I'll come back in a moment, after putting my cap on my head.
122. Unfathomable are the *leelas* of Sai Baba. How many can I tell you? Have'nt you seen enough since you came to Shirdi?!
123. I am just a villager, while all of you are from the cities. To what extent can I talk about his incomprehensible *leelas* before you?!"
124. He told me that he was coming back and went inside - offered flowers etc. to the deities, put on his cap quickly, returned and sat down to talk to me.
125. "What an amazing sport of God is this! Who can understand his ways? His deeds know no bounds. He remains aloof after making his moves.
126. Oh! You are all seekers of knowledge - one more learned than the other. Such simpletons as we are, how can we understand Baba's incomprehensible personality?

127. Could he not explain to you, during the conversation what he wanted to say? Why did he send you to me? Only he knows the meaning of his deeds, because he is not a mortal.
128. Just now, while flowing with the current of these thoughts, I am reminded of a story. So let us make good use of this time by talking about it.
129. I will relate to you an incident which took place before my eyes. Whatever was the determination one had, in mind, he saw to it that it was fulfilled.
130. Sometimes, Baba too, puts a person's love and faith to severe test. He spares no means; and, then gives *upadesh*".
131. As soon as I heard the word '*upadesh*', I was reminded of the incident about Sathé's Guru *Charitra*. I actually felt as if lightening had struck my mind.
132. Could it be that this incident about Shama had been contrived by Baba to ease my mind, which had become wayward in the *Masjid*? This indeed was an astounding deed of Baba!
133. So be it. This line of thought was suppressed by me immediately. My eagerness to listen to the story had doubled and let us see how it was satisfied.
134. Thereafter, as he started telling the stories about Baba, slowly unfolding them, I felt happier by and by, realising his love for his devotees.
135. Afterwards he told another story and said that there was a wife of a *Deshmukh*, who thought of spending some time in the company of Saints.
136. Hearing of Sai Baba's fame, the lady came to Shirdi, along with a group of people from Sangamner with a longing for Baba's *darshan*.
137. She was the mother of *Khashaba Deshmukh*. Her name was *Radhabai*. With great faith in Sai, she bowed down at his feet and took *darshan*.
138. She had *darshan* with the right formalities. All her fatigue of a long journey disappeared and then she remembered her mission.
139. She ardently desired to make Sai *Samartha* her Guru, so that he would give her the right *upadesh* by which she would attain her goal of life.
140. The lady was quite aged and had immense faith in Baba. She was firmly resolved on getting some *upadesh* from him.
141. "I will not go anywhere else till Baba graces me personally and gives me a *mantra* whispered in my ear.

142. The *mantra* should come directly from the lips of Sai, because if I take it from anyone else, it will be impure. Lord Sai is the holiest and foremost amongst Saints. Let him choose to bless me."
143. Having thus determined at heart, the lady gave up eating and drinking and became inflexible about it.
144. She was old, as it was. She had not eaten even a morsel nor drunk any water. Yet she had extreme faith in *upadesh*.
145. For three days and nights continuously, the old woman fasted and had decided to continue it till the day Baba gave her the *upadesh*.
146. 'What is the use of visiting Shirdi without receiving a *mantra upadesh*?' She remained unmoving from the place where she was staying and was prepared to die there.
147. She did not have food or water for three days and thus did penance. The lady was exhausted and became very sad.
148. Madhav Rao was worried and thought that the situation was not proper. What should be done about the future, as the old lady was not afraid of death.
149. Then he went to the *Masjid* and sat besides Baba. He asked respectfully, about the day-to-day matters regarding general well-being.
150. "Shama, what are you planning to-day? Is everything alright? That Narayan Teli¹³ has gone far out of bounds and is giving me a lot of trouble".
151. Thinking about the condition of the old lady, Shama was already dejected. What exactly should he do? Gathering courage, he asked Baba.
152. "Lord, what is this confusion and mystery¹⁴? Your moves are not understood by others. You make people come to this village and now you are asking my plans.
153. That old Deshmukh woman is aged and has gone without food or water for three days and is solely depending on you.
154. That old woman is very obstinate and has great faith in you. You are not ready to even look at her. Why are you making her miserable?
155. As it is, she is like a dry stick. She is unrelenting, of a very irascible nature and strong-willed. Obviously, without food, she is going to lose her life.
156. It will be said that the old woman came with the desire to take *darshan* and wished to have *upadesh*. But Sai Baba had no pity on her. He let her die.

157. Baba, let not such a reputation spread. Tell her what is good for her. Why don't you grace her and wipe out the probable blot?
158. She has no strength left in her. Her life is hanging by a thread. The old woman will die and you will receive the blame.
159. The old woman's penance is hard. We are very much worried. Unfortunately, if the old woman dies, it will be a disaster.
160. The old woman is bent on doing injury to herself in a fit of passion. If you do not favour her I don't see any chance of her survival. Tell her something from your own lips".
161. This chapter has reached the limit set for its length. The desire of the listeners will be fulfilled thoroughly in the next chapter, very lovingly.
162. Later on Baba lovingly gave *upadesh* because of that old woman. By listening to it with respect, ignorance will disappear.
163. Hemad surrenders to Sai; prostrates before the listeners. Now be ready to listen to that which will lead you to cross the worldly ocean with the least efforts.

May there be well-being. This is the end of the eighteenth chapter of *Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita*, written by the devotee Hemadpant, impelled by Saints and virtuous people, called: "Favour that was Bestowed on Me".

This is offered to *Sree Sadguru Sainath*.

May there be auspiciousness!

Notes :

1. Hymn of praise to Ram, simple and lucid, and in use by the common man.
2. It is the story of Narasimha Saraswati Swamiji, who is considered as the avatar of Dutta. It is believed that it destroys all evil when it is read and grants salvation.
3. A *brahmin* well versed in the *Puranas*.
4. Seven years since Baba's *darshan*.
5. Commentary by Eknath Maharaj on the eleventh *Skanda* (section) of the *Bhagvat*, which had thirty-two chapters (sections).
6. Vyas, noted scribe to whom sometimes authorship is wrongfully attributed.
7. Son of Vyas.
8. Grandson of the Pandavas.
9. Critic of the *Bhagvat* in Sanskrit and the *Gita* of the fourteenth century.
10. Saint graced by Dutta and Eknath's Guru, of the sixteenth century.
11. *Tulsi* plant holder.
12. Also written by Eknath.
13. Not a real person, but a personification of something that troubled Baba.

14. The Marathi phrase used is "Gowd Bengal", because these two states are famous for magic practices and hypnotism.



Taking the tumrel in one hand and the jholi in the other, he himself moved from doorstep to doorstep of the particular houses every day. (Chp. 8, ovi 93)

Blessed are those at whose doorstep, Baba as a mendicant spread his hand, calling "Oh, lassie, bring me a quarter of a bhakri". (Chp. 8, ovi 92)

