

Shirdi Sai Baba

The personification of Vedic Truths

Sumeru Swami Sai Venkatesha

||Sri Gurubhyo Namah||

Much like the Divine name Rama, the name Sai Ram, and its glory and power far predate the physical life of Sai. Nevertheless, the physical incarnation gives a basis and a Dhyana form to that wonderful name. As has already been said, the whole of Sai's teachings arises from the expansion of the Nath tradition for the forthcoming Satya Yuga, just like Dattatreya did for the running Kali Yuga.

With this established, this section is dedicated at the feet of Sai Ram, and purports to understanding how Sai Baba, through simple incidents in His life reinforced truths of the Vedic era, and revived the Nath tradition for the upcoming era.

Before that, it is essential to clear some gross misconceptions about Sai, which lead to ridiculous claims about the Guru. These baseless claims stand as a clear mirror, reflecting how baseless and illiterate the very proponents of such claims are. Authoritative References to the life of Sai shall be twofold: the Satcharita by Henadpant, and the Sai Guru Charitra by Das Ganu, both enlightened disciples of Sai who have written these books with the express blessing and guidance by Sai.

First, we start by recalling and strongly reinforcing here, Sai's own words recounted in the two above mentioned books many sources including "Everyone's Sai": "I live in a Mosque but I am not a Muslim; I light the holy fire but I am not a Hindu. I wish to break your concepts about me". This statement is very crucial, coming directly from Sai Himself, and answers a lot of misconceptions.

First, can a person who is not a Muslim Himself, convert others to Islam? So too, a non Hindu person cannot convert people to Hinduism either. Thus, people who look at Sai as either Hindu or Muslim are not only wrong, but in a single stroke, they insult Sai Himself, as well as insulting the Dharmic and Abrahamic faiths. While as a figure of compassion, Sai may not react to such stupidity with force, such people will definitely be punished by guardian deities of both these faiths. Even more ridiculous and blasphemous are those who, instead of Vedic spirituality, call Puranic Hinduism as the eternal Sanatana Dharma, and then use Sai's own quote given above to say that He is not a Guru of the Sanatana Dharma. It is these people that will bear the biggest brunt of punishment for such sacrilege and blasphemy.

Next, one might raise the objection that He wore the attire of a Muslim rather than a saffron attire that befits a Sanyasi. To this, one must understand that, even though Sai did not follow any Dharmic or Abrahamic religion, He was obliged to honour the established faiths. He resided in a mosque and thus it was only appropriate that His attire was a Muslim one. Isn't everybody, Sikh or otherwise, required to wear a turban before entering a Gurudwara? Moreover, the Satcharita clearly mentions that He did not wear this attire since birth, but did so only after willingly embracing defeat in a wrestling bout. How can such a background suggest any connection between the

attire and Islam? He did not, as per the Satcharita, display any bodily signs of Islam such as Sunnat which is mandated for every Muslim male. So too, He did not sport a Urdhvapundra or Tripundra Thilak or even the Upavitha, which was mandatory for a Hindu male. Thus, any claims of religion based on His appearance, is again blasphemous. It must be noted that Sai did not choose to live in a mosque, but was originally found meditating under a neem tree. It was Mahalsapati and others by whom He started to live in a mosque. However, after His passing away, His Samadhi now is in a building originally constructed as a Krishna temple by Booti, to show precisely that He cared only for the sanctity of a place, irrespective of what faith it belonged to.

While repeatedly proving His point of not adhering to any post Vedic religion, by appearance and practices, Sai nevertheless showed strict adherence to the Nath tradition, displaying all the practices of this tradition. He lit the Dhuni or eternal fire. He had His ears pierced, what is known as Khanphata, and also didn't shave His head. He smoked Bhang or cannabis. He performed Hatha Yoga practices including extreme ones such as severing the body parts and affixing them back later on called Khanda Yoga, as well as Dhauti. Finally, a Sanyasi tradition that the Nath is, Sai was strict in living through alms or Bhiksha alone. References to each of these are abundant in the Satcharita. We have already seen how the Nath tradition, crosses all religious boundaries, including a far as Christ within its folds, thus making it undoubtedly a Vedic tradition.

With this established, one needs to understand the rationale behind Sai's repeated teachings and sayings, using terminology of Hindu and Muslim faiths. Being neither Hindu nor Muslim meant He was not qualified to preach either religion, and thus, cannot convey Hindu or Muslim teachings. Rather, He used the terminology of these faiths to convey Vedic teachings that are in reality, timeless. Why these two faiths? Because, in Abrahamic traditions, religions tend to be accumulative or additive. That is, each tradition embraces those previous to it. As a consequence, Islam respects and affirms through sanctity of Christian and Jewish teachings through its concept of 24 prophets. In contrast, Dharmic religions tend to be subtractive. That is, newer religions tend to eschew more and more from the older faiths, making an older faith more inclusive. Thus, Hinduism, in a concept such as the 24 incarnations of Vishnu, conveniently includes Buddha and Adinatha, founders of the Buddhist and Jain traditions, within its folds. This means that by combining the earliest Dharmic and latest Abrahamic faith, one can get the most vastness of philosophy possible in the Puranic era, and this is exactly what Sai did. Moreover Sai is not unique in doing so, since, prior to Him, Kabir, Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus have achieved this already.

This point means that any terms that are used in the teachings of Sai, such as Allah Malik, or Narayan etc cannot be taken in religious context, but rather as vernacular words to explain Vedic concepts. That is, Allah must not be taken as an Islamic God in particular, but simply an Arabic word that means "The God". So too Narayan as a Sanskrit word that means the ultimate destination of mankind. Now we may ask, outside of the Puranic religions, when Sai uses these words to refer to God, which deity is He talking about? We can obtain the answer by considering two important aspects. First, the Dhuni bring the eternal flame, may be seen in Vedic light, as the very Rig Veda starts with Agni Suktha. Thus, the Vedic deity is venerated here. Which Vedic deity? The term Dhuni connotes Yoni or cleft, and thus, the Mother Amma alone is referred to here, which can be seen either as Veda Mata Gayatri, or Lalitha as the Sahasranamam mentions Chidagni Kunda Sambhutha. The mosque that formed Sai's residence was called by Him as Dwarkamai, again Maayi referring here to the Mother aspect. Further, the very name Sai, for which no Puranic religion manages to give a correct translation, can be understood as Saa Ayi, meaning that She is the Mother. Sai enters Shirdi along with a marriage party, after helping Chand Patil find a lost horse, and then is given the name Sai by Mahalsapati the priest of Khandoba temple.

It is only natural that a Nath Yogi venerates the Mother constantly, as they have been accustomed to as Kundalini Shakti. Furthermore the first Sai was spotted in Shirdi was under a neem tree, meditating and engrossed in Sa

madhi, and neem is known to be sacred to Amma. Thus, all terms used by Sai such as Allah, Narayan, etc etc refer to Amma alone, and earlier in this book, we have already seen how the various Puranic deities of different religions are but the forms of Amma alone.

With this foundation, we now proceed to examine the incidents and teachings of Sai mentioned the Satcharitra chapter by chapter, each of which will be given briefly in a sentence. Corresponding to each such statement, we shall understand with reference the Vedic or Upanishadic teaching that Sai has reinforced thus.

- Sai symbolises the destruction of the three Gunas, Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic, by the grinding of wheat. Destruction of all three is necessary to achieve enlightenment and liberation.
- Atharva Veda 10.8.43 states the Gunas as a covering layer of impurity thus: "There is a nine-gated lotus, covered under three bands of GunAs (tribhir gunebhi), in which lives the Spirit with the Atman within, that the Veda-knowers know.
- Sai emphasises the need of a Guru, in taking us to the spiritual destination high up, avoiding wolves, tigers, ditches etc on the way.
- The syllable Gu indicates darkness, the syllable Ru means its dispeller. Because of the quality of dispelling darkness, the Guru is thus termed. Advayataraka Upanishad, 16.
- Sai gives a promise of bliss, joy, liberation ands enlightenment to those that write, read, dive deep into His Leelas, surrenders to Him as Guru, ands even simply repeats the Guru Nama Sai. The explanation of the Guru Nam a in containing the esoteric Mantra called Shodashi has been given in my book Sarva Vidya. In fact this very Na ma Smarana is emphasised as the ideal Sadhana, especially in the present Kali Yuga, as contrasted with Shamad ama, sacrifice, and worship for the earlier 3 Yugas. Sai told people to leave off all cleverness and always remember "Sai" "Sai". "If you did that" He said, "all your shackles would be removed and you would be free".... The function of the mind is to think, it cannot remain for a minute without thinking. If you give it a Sense-object, it will think about it. If you give it to a Guru, it will think about Guru.
- Sandilya says in Sandilya Upanishad, "The Vaikhari Japa (loud pronunciation) gives the reward as stated in the Vedas; while the Upamsu Japa (whispering or humming which cannot be heard by any one) gives a reward a thousand times more than the Vaikhari; the Manasic Japa gives a reward a crore of times more than the Vaikhari. ".
- Sai does not condemn, but requested villagers to temporarily endure the act of a certain Rohilla, who cries out loud constantly the name of Allah, causing public nuisance, and Sai justifies stating that this keeps him away from bad thoughts.
- The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad begins with the word Aum. In some verses it refers to it as udgita or loud chanting and declares the proper way to chant it is in conjunction with speech and with deep upper breath (or inhalation in which the chest is pulled up). This does not however condone the act of creating noise pollution by blaring in loud speakers. Sai only condones loud crying out to the Lord by voice, without sound amplification equipment.
- Sai emphasises how He is the inner ruler of all, seated in their hearts.
- "Antah Pravishta Shaastaa Jananaam Sarvaathma | Sarvaa Praja Yatraikam Bhavanti", or "Where all are united, He who has entered within, that are born, and is the self of all, is beyond comprehension, He is Shaasta the ruler of all things". Similarly, in another verse, "Antah Pravishta Shaastaa Janan aam Ekasanbahudaa Vichaara | Shatha Shukraani Yatraikam Bhavanti". This is what Taittiriya Aranyaka

of the Krishna branch of Yajur Veda says in verses 3-11-1 and 3-11-2.

- Sai Baba conquered this Samsar (worldly existence), which is very difficult and hard to cross. Peace or mental calm was His ornament, and He was the repository of wisdom. He was the home of Vaishnava devotees, most liberal (like Karna) amongst liberals, the quint-essence of all essences. He had no love for perishable things, and was always engrossed in self-realization, which was His sole concern. He felt no pleasure in the things of this world or of the world beyond. His Antarang (heart) was as clear as a mirror, and His speech always rained nectar.

The rich or poor people were the same to Him. He did not know or care for honour or dishonour. He was the Lord of all beings. He spoke freely and mixed with all people, saw the actings and dances of Nautchgirls and heard Gajjal songs. Still, He swerved not an inch from Samadhi (mental equilibrium). The name of Allah was always on His lips. While the world awoke, He slept; and while the world slept, He was vigilant. His abdomen (Inside) was as calm as the deep sea. His Ashram could not be determined, nor His actions could be definitely determined, and though He sat (lived) in one place, He knew all the transactions of the world. His Darbar was imposing. He told daily hundreds of stories, still He swerved not an inch from His vow of silence. He always leaned against the wall in the Masjid or walked morning, noon and evening towards Lendi (Nala) and Chavadi; still He at all times abided in the Self. Though a Siddha, He acted like a Sadhaka. He was meek, humble and egoless, and pleased all. Hemadpant thinks that on account of the store or accumulation of merits in his past births, he had the good fortune of meeting and being blessed by such a Sad-guru as Sai Baba. Even in full youth He hoarded nothing (expect perhaps chillim). He had no family, no friend, no home, nor any support. Since He was eighteen, His control of mind was perfect and extra-ordinary. He lived then fearless in a secluded place and always abided in His Self. Seeing the pure attachment of His devotees He always acted in their interests and hence He was in a way dependent on them. What experiences He gave to His devotees while he was living in flesh, are even today, after His Mahasamadhi, obtained now by those who attach themselves to Him. What the devotees have to do is this - They have to trim their heart-lamp of faith and devotion, and burn in it wicks of love, and when this is done, the flame of knowledge (self-realization) will be lit up and shine brighter. Mere knowledge without love is dry; nobody wants such knowledge. Without love there is no contentment; so we should have unbroken and unbounded love.

- Varaha Upanishad verses 4.21–4.30 describe the characteristics of a Jivanmukta; He who is engrossed in the ways of the world, yet his mind is steady, like ether, is said to be Jivanmukta. He whose mental radiance neither rises nor sets, whose inner state is neither affected by happiness nor by misery inflicted on him, is said to be Jivanmukta. He who is wakeful while remaining asleep, he whose mental alertness is devoid of impressions, is known as Jivanmukta. He who responds to influences such as hatred, fear, love, yet his heart remains pure like Akasha (aether, space), is said to be Jivanmukta. He whose attitude is not attached to anything, his intellect never clouded whether active or passive, is a Jivanmukta. He who does not shrink out of fear from the world, nor the world shrinks from him, who is free from anger, fear and joy, is a Jivanmukta. He whose mind is not agitated, though participating in the world, who rests in state of calmness and absolute consciousness, no matter what, is known as Jivanmukta.

- Sai appears as Lord Vitthal to Kakasaheb, while Ganga and Yamuna flow out of His feet as Prayag, for Das Guru.

- In the Taittiriya Upanishad (1.11.2), students are urged to treat their teacher a god himself (acharya devobhava).

- Akkalkot Samarth Swami, considered an incarnation of Dattatreya, confirmed through a vision to a devotee that Sai is His incarnation, while Sai too confirmed the same. This confirms Sai as one of a series of incarnations of Dattatreya starting with Narasimha Saraswathi. The incarnation of Sai is significant for reviving the Nath trad

ition for the forthcoming Yuga, as much as Dattatreya Himself did in the previous era. Later, Sai speaks of donning the saffron garment to manifest to an Agnihotri as His own Guru. In a later incident, highlighting the oneness of all Gurus, Sai also equally emphasised adhering staunchly to one's own Guru and tradition: Come what may, leave not, but stick to your Bolster (support, i.e. Guru) and ever remain steady, always at-one-ment (in union) with him. Even after passing away, Sai reinforced this idea through visions: give respect to the words of other saints, but at the same time asks us to have full faith in our Mother, i.e., the Guru, and abide by His instructions: for he knows our welfare better than any other person. Carve out on your heart, the following words of Baba - are innumerable saints in this world, but 'Our father' (Guru) is the Father (Real Guru). Others might say many good things, but we should never forget our Guru's words. In short, love your Guru wholeheartedly, surrender to Him completely and prostrate yourselves before Him reverentially and then you will see that there is no sea of the mundane existence before you to cross, there is no darkness before the sun.

- All Gurus operate as One unit, one breath, because in reality, all Guru is one's own Atma alone. Guru Gita states: The Guru is not different from the conscious Self. Without doubt, this is the truth; therefore wise men should make an effort to seek knowledge of Atman from Him.

- Sai only gave answers when he was questioned. Baba's paraphernalia at this time consisted of a Chilim, tobacco, a "Tumrel" (tin pot), long flowing Kafni, a piece of cloth round His head, and a Satka (short stick), which He always kept with Him. The piece of white cloth on the head was twisted like matted hair, and flowed down from the left ear on the back. This was not washed for weeks. He wore no shoes, no sandals. A piece of sack-cloth was His seat for most of the day. He wore a coupin (waistcloth-band) and for warding off cold he always sat in front of a Dhuni (sacred fire) facing south with His left hand resting on the wooden railing. In that Dhuni, He offered as oblation; egoism, desires and all thoughts and always uttered Allah Malik (God is the sole owner). The Masjid in which He sat was only of two room dimensions, where all devotees came and saw Him. Before Baba came to live in this Masjid, He lived for a long time in a place Takia, where with small bells on His legs, Baba danced beautifully sang with tender love.

- Pot, drinking cup and flask – the three supports, a pair of shoes, a patched robe giving protection – in heat and cold, a loin cloth, bathing drawers and straining cloth, triple staff and coverlet. Thus Sannyasa Upanishad, 1.4 describes the possessions of a Sanyasi.

- Sai punishes the untruthful oil vendors who denied oil by lighting lamps with water. So too, one Javhar Ali posing untruthfully as a Guru of Sai out of egoism, was rectified by exposing the shallowness of the pseudo Guru through testing by one Devidas.

- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3.9.24), which states, "The one who takes initiation (diksha) into spiritual life has to take the vow of speaking truth. Hence, by truth only initiation is supported."

- Sai reiterates the statements of Bhagavad Gita as "There will never be any dearth or scarcity, regarding food and clothes, in any devotees homes. It is my special characteristic, that I always look to, and provide, for the welfare of those devotees, who worship Me whole-heartedly with their minds ever fixed on Me. Lord Krishna has also said the same in the Gita. Therefore, strive not much for food and clothes. If you want anything, beg of the Lord, leave worldly honours, try to get Lord's grace and blessings, and be honored in His Court. Do not be deluded by worldly honor. The form of the Deity should be firmly fixed in the mind. Let all the senses and mind be ever devoted to the worship of the Lord, let there be no attraction for any other thing; fix the mind in remembering Me always, so that it will not wander elsewhere, towards body, wealth and home. Then it will be calm, peaceful and care-free. This is the sign of the mind, being well engaged in good company. If the mind is vagrant, it cannot be called well-merged."

- Sai oversees the celebrations of the Hindu Ram Navami and the Muslim Ursus sandal festival, on the same day, simultaneously, in the Dwarkamai mosque.

- Sai rescues a child falling unruly the fire remotely by putting His own hand into the Dhuni, and also cures the plague of a child by absorbing it within Himself. Undertaking personal responsibility for spiritual upliftment is a hallmark of the Vedic Guru Shishya system.

- Sai used to partake of the obtained alms with dogs and other animals everyday. Sai warned about the effects of eating alone, quoting Sudama as an example.

- I speak the truth, it is indeed his death. He who nourishes neither the god nor a friend, he who eats alone, gathers sin. (Rig Veda X. 117).

- On various occasions Sai advised various devotees not to travel at haste, but wait for some time before starting, so as to avoid accidents, and not paying heed to these instructions have caused accidents. So too He has saved many devotees from imminent calamities by warning them beforehand.

- It is through Atman that one perceives all objects in sleep or in the waking state. Having realized the vast, all-pervading Atman, the calm soul does not grieve. He who knows the individual soul, the experiencer of the fruits of action, as Atman, always near, and the Lord of the past and the future, will not conceal himself from others. This, verily, is That. (2.1) -- Katha Upanishad.

- Sai emphasised and was meticulous in obtaining food only through alms. Shastras say that those persons, who, getting rid of, or becoming free from the three main Desires, viz. (1) for progeny, (2) for wealth, (3) for fame, except Sannyas, are the fit persons to live by begging alms. In order to prepare food-stuffs and meals, the householders have to go through five actions or processes, viz. (1) Kandani-Pounding, (2) Peshani-Grinding, (3) Udaumbhi - Washing pots, (4) Marjani - Sweeping and cleaning, (5) Chulli-Lighting hearths. These processes involve destruction of a lot of small insects and creatures, and thus the householders incur a lot of sin. In order to atone for this sin, our Shastras prescribe five kinds of sacrifices, viz. (1) Brahma-Yajna, (2) vedadhyayan - offerings to Brahman or the study of the Vedas. (3) Pitra-Yajna-offerings to the ancestors, (4) Deva-Yajna - offerings to the Gods, (5) Bhoota-Yajna-offerings to the beings, (6) Manushya-Atithi-Yajna-offerings to men or uninvited guests. If these sacrifices, enjoined by the Shastras are duly performed, the purification of their minds is effected and this helps them to get knowledge and self-realization.

- These are the vows a Sannyasi must keep – Abstention from injuring living beings, truthfulness, abstention from appropriating the property of others, abstention from sex, liberality (kindness, gentleness) are the major vows. There are five minor vows: abstention from anger, obedience towards the guru, avoidance of rashness, cleanliness, and purity in eating. He should beg (for food) without annoying others, any food he gets he must compassionately share a portion with other living beings, sprinkling the remainder with water he should eat it as if it were a medicine. — Baudhayana, Dharmasūtra, II.10.18.1-10.

- Sai reminds devotees to fulfil unfinished vows, and partakes of food in the form of animals such as dogs. Sai reiterates the oneness of Ram and Rahim. In various occasions, Sai disproves conceptions of people approaching Him with the idea that He is a Brahmin or that He is a Muslim.

- He is the knower, the creator of time, the quality of everything, the Sarva-vidyah (सर्वविद्यः, all knowledge), states Shvetashvatara Upanishad. This God, asserts the text, is one, and is in each human being and in all living creatures.

- There are various Gurus imparting to us various kinds of wordly knowledge, but he, who fixes us in our Nature

(Self) and carries us beyond the ocean of worldly existence, is the Sadguru. Sai Baba was such a Sadguru. His greatness is undescribable. If anybody went to take His darshana, he, without being asked, would give every detail of his past, present and future life. He saw Divinity in all beings. Friends and foes were alike to Him. Disinterested and equal-balanced, He obliged the evil-doers. He was the same in prosperity and adversity. No doubt, ever touched Him. Though He possessed the human body, He was not in the least attached to His body or house. Though He looked embodied, He was really disembodied, i.e., free in this every life. Lord or Bhagwan is said to have six qualities, viz. (1) Fame, (2) Wealth, (3) Non-attachment, (4) Knowledge, (5) Grandeur, and (6) Generosity. Baba had all these in Him.

- In the invocations and prayers found in the Taittiriya Upanishad, a teacher seeks the following from God or gods. They can be considered the desirable qualities one may look for in a guru, a teacher or an adept: Fame (yash), Radiance of Brahman (brahmavarchas), Intelligence (medha), Immortality (amritasya), Vigorous body (vicasanam), Sweetness in the tongue (madhumattama), Good hearing capacity, Knowledge of the Vedas (sruti), Prosperity and material abundance, Students of chaste conduct, Pure mind, Wealth of knowledge, Right wisdom (sumedha).

- Baba, the support of all, required no prop or support (Asan) from anybody. He always used a piece of sack-clot for His seat, which was covered with a small beautiful bed by His bhaktas and had a bolster placed by them as a rest to His back. Baba respected the feelings of His devotees and allowed them to worship Him as they liked. Some waved Chamara or fans before him, some played on musical instruments, some washed His hands and feet, some others applied scent and chandan, some gave betelnut with leaves and other things, and some others offered naivaidya. Sometimes, He scolded the devotees, at times, He looked softer than wax, a statue of peace and forgiveness. Though He seemed to shake with anger and His red eyes rolled round and round, still, He was internally a stream of affection and motherly love. Immediately, He called out His devotees and said, that He ever angry with His devotees; that if mothers kicked their children and if the sea turned back the rivers, He would neglect the devotees' welfare; that He, the slave of His devotees, always stood by them, and responded to them, whenever they called upon Him, and that He always longed for their love. In the same context is the legend of a devotee Megha, who venerated Sai as Shiva, doing Ganga Abhishekha to Him, while being further instructed by Sai to worship the trident. Furthermore is the incident of the pilgrimage of Saptashringi by Shama which Sai insisted He do, to fulfill a prayer previously made.

- Bhagavad Gita 3:26 states Let not the wise disrupt the minds of the ignorant who are attached to fruitive action. They should not be encouraged to refrain from work, but to engage in work in the spirit of devotion.

- Taking this concept to a higher level, Sai, while completely non attached Himself, allowed Him being venerated by devotees as they pleased, and the height of such veneration had to be the daily traditions of Arathi during dawn, noon, dusk and night, and the Chavadi procession preceding the sleep for the night. This procession was carried out meticulously by devotees in all regal and splendor.

- "Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the greatest (Infinite, nirguna). Where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is the little (finite, saguna). The greatest is immortal; the little is mortal." (Chandogya Upanishad 7-24-1).

- There are descriptions of Sai curing various illnesses using Vibhuti or ash from the Dhuni, called Udi. The teaching here is that ash represents the final state all shall reach, bodily as the cremation, and in terms of Karma Vasanas as their eventual burning. The mind, with all its thoughts and worldliness is the primary source of disease, called Bhava Roga in Vedas, and if that is cured, everything else is cured automatically. Baba taught by His Udi that all the visible phenomena in the universe are as transient as the ash. Our bodies composed of wood or matter of the five elements, will fall down, after all their enjoyments are over, and be reduced to ashes. In order to remi

nd the devotees of the fact that their bodies will be reduced to ashes, Baba distributed Udi to them. Baba also taught by the Udi that the Brahman is the only Reality and the universe is ephemeral and that no one in this world, be he a son, father or wife, is really ours. We come here (in this world) alone and we have to go out alone. It was found and is even now found out, that the Udi cured many physical and mental maladies, but Baba wanted to din into the devotee's ears the principles of discrimination between the Unreal and the Real, non-attachment for the Unreal, by His Udi and Dakshina. Sai used Udi as medicine for anyone who approached Him with physical ailments, including facilitating progeny.

- The Brihadajala Upanishad describes many rituals of the Pashupata sect. Bhasma, sacred ash, is equated to atman (Soul) and anratman (Inner Soul). The rituals of Bhasma-snana (ash-bath) and application of Tripundra, instead of the ash-bath are significant Shiva veneration.

- Sai tames down the raging Dhuni fire by striking the Shatka.

- Panchamahabutas refer to the five great elements ether, air, fire, water and earth, which according to the Mundaka Upanishad are sourced in the eternal, omnipresent, subtle inexhaustible Prakriti.

- Sai insisted on the concept and practice of Guru Dakshina, highlighting how it fosters non attachment towards monetary wealth. Sai also emphasised the shunning of unnecessary paraphernalia as rich garments etc of Das Gangu, in God's performances of Hari Kathas.

- Taitriya Upanishads states The Guru bids his disciple farewell and delivers his last upadesha: Speak the truth; Practice virtue. Let there be no neglect of your daily reading. Give unto the teacher what is pleasing to him."

- In response to a seeker asking for rapid enlightenment or Brahma Jnana, Sai necessitates the surrender of five things viz. (1) Five Pranas (vital forces), (2) Five senses (five of action and five of perception), (3) mind, (4) intellect and (5) ego. This path of Brahma Jnana of self-realization is 'as hard as to tread on the edge of a razor'.

- Sai reiterates the Vedic wisdom as follows: All persons do not see or realize the Brahman in their life-time. Certain qualifications are absolutely necessary. (1) Mumuksha or intense desire to get free. He, who thinks that he is bound and that he should get free from bondage and works earnestly and resolutely to that end; and who does not care for any other thinks, is qualified for the spiritual life. (2) Virakti or a feeling of disgust with the things of this world and the next. Unless a man feels disgusted with the things, emoluments and honors, which his action would bring in this world and the next, he has no right to enter into the spiritual realm. (3) Antarmukhata (introversion). Our senses have been created by God with a tendency to move outward and so, man always looks outside himself and not inside. He who wants self-realization and immortal life, must turn his gaze inwards, and look to his inner Self. (4) Catharsis from (Purging away of) sins. Unless a man has turned away from wickedness, and stopped from doing wrong, and has entirely composed himself and unless his mind is at rest, he cannot gain self-realization, even by means of knowledge. (5) Right Conduct. Unless, a man leads a life of truth, penance and insight, a life of celibacy, he cannot get God-realization. (6) Preferring Shreyas, (the Good) to Preyas (the Pleasant). There are two sorts of things viz., the Good and the Pleasant; the former deals with spiritual affairs, and the latter with mundane matters. Both these approach man for acceptance. He has to think and choose one of them. The wise man prefers the Good to the Pleasant; but the unwise, through greed and attachment, chooses the Pleasant. (7) Control of the mind and the senses. The body is the chariot and the Self is its master; intellect is the charioteer and the mind is the reins; the senses are the horses and senseobjects their paths. He who has no understanding and whose mind is unrestrained, his senses unmanageable like the vicious horses of a charioteer, does not reach his destination (get realization), but goes through the round of births and deaths; but he, who has understanding and whose mind is restrained, has his senses being under control, like the good horse of a charioteer, reaches that place, i.e., the state of self-realization, whence he is not born again. The man, who has understanding as his charioteer (guide) and is able to rein his mind, reaches the end of the journey, which is the supreme abode of t

he all-pervading, Vishnu (Lord). (8) Purification of the mind. Unless a man discharges satisfactorily and disinterestedly the duties of his station in life, his mind will not be purified and, unless his mind is that Viveka (discrepancy between the Unreal and the Real), and Vairagya (Non-attachment to the unreal) crop up and lead on to self-realization. Unless egoism is dropped, avarice got rid of, and the mind made desireless (pure), self-realization is not possible. The idea that "I am the body" is a great delusion, and attachment to this idea is the cause of bondage. Leave off this idea and attachment therefore, if you want to get to the goal of self-realization (9) The necessity of a Guru. The knowledge of the Self is so subtle and mystic, that no one could, by his own individual effort ever hope to attain it. So the help of another person-Teacher, who has himself got self-realization is absolutely necessary. What others cannot give with great labour and pains, can be easily gained with the help of such a Teacher; for he has walked on the path himself and can easily take the disciple, step by step on the ladder of spiritual progress. (10) and lastly the Lord's Grace is the most essential thing. When the Lord is pleased with anybody, He gives him Viveka and Vairagya; and takes him safe beyond the ocean of mundane existence, The Self cannot be gained by the study of Vedas, nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He, whom the Self chooses, gains it. To him the Self reveals Its nature, says the Katha Upanishad. In many incidents, Sai proved how as a Guru, He drew to His direction, pulling the strings of the "sparrows" that were His devotees, wherever they might be.

- Sai explains His two primary monumental teachings - Shraddha and Saburi, or Faith and Patience. I tell you My own story, which if you listen carefully, will do you good. I had a Guru. He was a great Saint and most merciful. I served him long, very long; still he would not blow any Mantra into My ears. I had a keen desire, never to leave him but to stay with and serve him; and at all costs receive some instructions from him. But he had his own way. He first got my head shaved and asked Me two pice as Dakshina. I gave the same at once. If you say that as My Guru was perfect, why should he ask for money and how should he be called desireless? I replied plainly that he never cared for coins. What had he to do with them? His two pice were (1) Firm Faith and (2) Patience or perseverance. I gave these two pice or things to him, and he was pleased. "I resorted to My Guru for 12 years. He brought Me up. There was no dearth of food and clothing. He was full of love nay, he was love incarnate. How can I describe it? He loved Me most. Rare is a Guru like him. When I looked at him, he seemed as if he was in deep meditation, and then we both were filled with Bliss. Night and day, I gazed at him with no thought of hunger and thirst. Without him, I felt restless. I had no other object to meditate, nor any other thing than My Guru to attend. He was My sole refuge. My mind was always fixed on him. This is one pice Dakshina. Saburi (Patience or perseverance) is the other pice. I waited patiently and very long on My Guru and served him. This Saburi will ferry you across the sea of this mundane existence. Saburi is manliness in man, it removes all sins and afflictions, gets rid of calamities in various ways, and casts aside all fear, and ultimately gives you success. Saburi is the mine of virtues, consort of good thought. Nishtha (Faith) and Saburi (Patience) are like twin sisters, loving each other very intimately." "My Guru never expected any other thing from Me. He never neglected Me, but protected Me at all times. I lived with him, and was sometimes away from him; still I never felt the want or absence of his love. He always protected Me by his glance, just as the tortoise feeds her young ones, whether they are near her or away from her on the other side of the river bank, by her loving looks. Oh mother, My Guru never taught Me any Mantra, then how shall I blow any Mantra in your ears? Just remember that Guru's tortoise-like loving glance gives us happiness. Do not try to get Mantra or Upadesh from anybody. Make Me the sole object of your thoughts and actions; and you will, no doubt, attain Paramartha (the spiritual goal of life). Look at Me whole-heartedly, and I in turn look at you similarly. Sitting in this Masjid, I speak the truth, nothing but the truth. No Sadhanas, nor proficiency in the six Shastras, are necessary. Have faith and confidence in your Guru. Believe fully, that Guru is the sole Actor or Doer.

- In Chandogya Upanishad (VII-19-1) there is a mantra which means: "This is the kind of shraddha that we should have in that fundamental invisible subject, that should always occupy our mind; only then can we think right

t" -- *When there is shraddhA then and there is right thinking*. Brahma-vidyA (Knowledge pertaining to the subject of brahman) should be taught only to those who have shraddhA – says Mundaka Upanishad. Who are those so qualified? The Upanishad gives a list of such qualifications. (III -2-10). Those who discharge their obligations (karmas) in the right manner; *shrotriyas* (those who have excellent scholarship of the vedas); those who have an intense anguish to be in brahman; and those who have shraddhA. In Prashnopanishad also (I – 10) it says those who seek the Atman become eligible to do so by their tapas (austerities), celibacy (brahmacharya), shraddhA, and learning.

- Sai reprimanded ands denounced the practice of slander and harsh words. Shri Hari (God) will be certainly pleased, if you give water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked, and your verandah to strangers for sitting and resting. If anybody wants any money from you, and you are not inclined to give, do not give, but do not bark at him, like a dog. Let anybody speak hundreds of things against you, do not resent by giving any bitter reply. If you always tolerate such things, you will certainly be happy. Let the world go topsy-turvy, you remain where you are. Standing or staying in your own place, look on calmly at the show of all things passing before you. Demolish the wall of difference that separates you from Me; and then the road for our meeting will be clear and open. The sense of differentiation, as I and thou, is the barrier that keeps away the disciple from his Master, and unless that is destroyed the state of union or atonement is not possible, Sai also emphasised and insisted on correct remuneration to any work that is done. Sai highlighted the concept of kindness by rescuing a goat about to be butchered

- Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.2 states: There should be no errors in your duties to the gods and the Manes. Treat your mother as God. Treat your father as God. Treat your teacher as God. Treat your guest as God. Whatever deeds are faultless, those alone are to be performed and not others. Whatever good conduct is present in us, only those should be adopted by you and not others. After instructing people about the duty that one has towards gods and manes, the Upanishad speaks about how a person should conduct his life and should respect other people. Further, it tells that the mother, the father, the teacher, and even the guests are to be treated as God. The Upanishad considers rude, coarse and violent behaviors as adharma i.e. unrighteous actions that lead to sorrow. Therefore, for one's own good, one must try to be polite and respectful in their interactions with others.

- Sai reinforces the teachings of Ishavasya Upanishad through a maid servant, clad in torn clothes, but content nevertheless, even if new clothes were provided to her.

- Enveloped by the Lord must be This All — each thing that moves on earth. With that renounced, enjoy thyself. Covet no wealth of any man. Should one wish to live a hundred years on this earth, he should live doing Karma. While thus, as man, you live, there is no way other than this by which Karma will not cling to you. Those who partake the nature of the Asuras [evil], are enveloped in blind darkness, and that is where they reside who ignore their Atman [Self]. For liberation, know your Atman, which is motionless yet faster than mind, it is distant, it is near, it is within all, it is without all this. It is all pervading. And he who beholds all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, he never turns away from it [the Self]. When to a man who understands, the Self has become all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be, to him who beholds that unity. — Isha Upanishad, Hymn 1-7.

- Sai teaches on nine forms or types of Bhakti, viz., (1) Shravana (Hearing); (2) Kirtana (Praying); (3) Smarana (Remembering); (4) Padasevazna (resorting to the feet); (5) Archana (Worship); (6) Namaskara (Bowing); (7) Dasya (Service); (8) Sakhyatva (Friendship); (9) Atmanivedana (surrender of the self). These are the nine types of Bhakti. If any of these is faithfully followed, Lord Hari will be pleased, and manifest Himself in the home of the devotee. All the sadhanas, viz. Japa (vocal worship), Tapa (penance), Yoga practice and studying the scriptures and expounding them are quite useless unless they are accompanied by Bhakti.

- In the Srimad-Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana are told the nine forms of Bhakti.

- Sai says the one capable of digesting onion should eat onion alone.
- While onion is generally condemned as a Tamasic food in many Puranic Hindu scriptures, Charaka Samhita highlights its medicinal value and necessity as follows: The onion/palandu (*Allium cepa* Linn) promotes kapha and is effective in treating vata but not of pitta. It is a good adjuvant for food and is a strength-enhancer, heavy, aphrodisiac and appetizing. [175].
- There are so many crowding to Sai Baba. Do they all get benefit from Him? To this, He replied orally - "Look at the mango tree in blossom. If all the flowers brought fruit, what a splendid crop it would be. But do they? Most fall off (either as flowers or as unripe fruits) by wind etc. Very few remain".
- Advayataraka Upanishad states By the help of a great teacher one tries to find the Thuriya state hidden in either the sahasrara (thousand petal lotus) or the cave of the heart or end of the 12 Nadis. Ability to see it is only through the help of a great teacher.
- Hemadpant has given us a novel form of worship. Let us, he says, use hot water in the form of tears of joy to wash the Sad-guru's feet, let us besmear His body with sandal-paste of pure love, let us cover His body with the cloth of true faith, let us offer eight lotuses in the form of our eight Sattwik emotions and fruit in the form of our concentrated mind; let us apply to His head bukka (black-powder) in the form of devotion and tie the waistband of Bhakti and place our head on his toes. After decorating the Sad-guru with all jewelry in this way, let us offer our all to Him and wave charanam2 of devotion to ward off heat. After such blissful worship, let us pray thus:- "Invert our mind, turn it inward, give us discrimination between the Unreal and the Real and non-attachment for all worldly things and thus enable us to get Selfrealisation. We surrender ourselves, body and soul (body-consciousness and ego). Make our eyes Yours, so that we should never feel pleasure and pain. Control our body and mind as You will and wish. Let our mind get rest in Your Feet".
- Pranagnihotra Upanishad states: In the bodily sacrifice, unadorned by the cord round the sacrificial post, the sacrificer is the self; (his) wife is the intellect. The great officiating priests are the Vedas. The ego is the Adhvaryu. The mind-stuff is the invoking priest. Prana is the assistant of the chief priest; Apana is the assistant of the Adhvaryu. Vyana is the first chanter. Udana is the loud Sama singer. Samana is the assistant of Hotir. The body is the altar. The nose is the interior of the altar. The crest is the wooden container. The foot is the chariot. The right hand is the ladle. The left hand is the container of the ghee. The ears are the two ghee offerings. The eyes are the two parts of the ghee. The neck is the libation. The Tanmatras are the assistant of the Brahma Priest. The great elements are the attendants. Gunas are the supplementary offerings. The tongue is the final sacrifices. Teeth and lips are the middle libation. The palate is the hymn-recitation. Memory is the Samyavak formula. Compassion, forbearance, non-violence are the four Ajya oblations (to Soma, etc.,). Om is the sacrificial post. Desire is the cord. Mind is the chariot. Lust is the sacrificial animal. The hair is the Darbha grass. The sense organs are the sacrificial vessels. The organs of action are the oblations. Non-violence is the Ishtis. Renunciation is the sacrificial fece. The post-sacrificial bath (follows) from death. In this body are stationed all the divinities.
- Sai condemns an act of suicide by a person, saying it is better to put up with suffering in this birth itself and finish it, rather than being born again and going through this charade all over again.
- Chandogya Upanishad, supposed to be one of the earliest of the Upanishads, does not contain any direct reference to suicide but indirectly prohibits it as according to it a person is a Soma-sacrifice. Ishavasya Upanishad also concurs stating: One who takes one's own life goes towards asuras and pretas and he heads towards a loka of total darkness.
- Baba descended from His seat, came to one Ramadas'i's place of reading, took out the copy of Vishnu-Sahasra

-Nam, and coming to His seat said to Shama- "Oh Shama, this book is very valuable and efficacious, so I present it to you, you read it. Once I suffered intensely and My heart began to palpitate and My life was in danger. At that critical time, I hugged this book to My heart and then, Shama, what a relief it gave me! I thought that Allah Himself came down and saved Me. So I give this to you, read it slowly, little by little, read daily one name at least and it will do you good." In the same incident, Sai quelled the learned Arrogance of Ramadasi by explaining humans were more valuable than books, and not to pick a fight because of giving away his book.

- The charity or gift is the armour in the world, All beings live on the gift of the other, Through gifts strangers become friends, Through gifts, they ward off difficulties, On gifts and giving, everything rests, That is why charity is the highest. —Mahanarayana Upanishad 63.6.

- In many situations and examples, Sai has given Darshan, instructions and blessings through visions and dreams, bringing forth the truth that both dream and wake states are equally (un)real, and equally effective in spiritual progress. So too, by the same logic, In this connection it may be remarked that seeing Baba's picture earnestly is equivalent to seeing Him in person.

- The similarity of wake and dream, with only difference as duration is highlighted in the Kathopanishad's statement: —He who is awake in us shaping objects of desire while we are asleep . . . that is Brahman! (Kath. 2. 5. 8).The scriptures also declare "This is the same as the place of waking, for what he sees while awake the same he sees while asleep" (Bri. Up. IV.3.14). Hence the world of dreams is real.

- Satcharita describes the passing away of many devotees, both human and animal in the presence of Sai, emphasising the need of detachment from everything else, even close family, in one's last days. He instructed a Sanyasi devotee Vijayanand thus: "If you so loved your mother, why did you take Sannayasa? Fondness or attachment ill becomes an ochre garb. Go and sit quiet at your lodging, wait with patience for a few days. In the Wada there are many robbers, bolt your doors, be very vigilant, the thieves will carry everything. Wealth and prosperity are transient and the body is subject to decay and death. Knowing this, do your duty, leaving all attachment to the things of this world and next. He who does this and surrenders himself to the Feet of Hari (Lord) will get free from all troubles and attain bliss. The Lord runs and helps him who remembers and meditates on Him with love and affection. Your store of past merits is considerable, so you have come here. Now attend to what I say and realise the end of your life. Being desireless, begin from tomorrow the study of Bhagwat. Do three 'saptahas' i.e. three reading during three weeks, conscientiously. The Lord will be pleased with you and destroy your sorrows, your illusions will vanish and you will get peace."

- Shri Krishna has said in Gita (VIII-5-6) that "he who remembers Me in his last moments, comes verily to Me, and he that meditates otherwise at that time goes to what he looks for." We cannot be certain that we can entertain a particular good thought at our last moment, for, more often than not, we are more likely to be frightened and terrified by many causes. Hence constant practice is necessary for enabling us to fix our mind on any desired good thought at any or the last moment. All Saints, therefore, recommended us to always remember God and chant His name always, so that we may not be puzzled when the time for departure comes.

- Sai narrated a parable of deep significance as follows to emphasise the divinity of food and condemn fasting: Once four of us were studying religious scriptures and other books and, being thus enlightened, we began to discuss the nature of the Brahman. One of us said that we should raise the self by the Self and not depend on others. To this the second replied that he who controls his mind is blessed; we should be free from thoughts and ideas and there is nothing in the world without us. The third said that the world (phenomenon) is always changing, the formless is eternal; so we should discriminate between the Unreal and the Real. And the fourth (Baba Himself) urged that bookish knowledge is worthless. Discussing in this wise, we four learned men began to ramble through the woods in the quest of God. The three wanted to make the quest with their free and unaided intellect. On th

e way a Vanjari (a man who trades in certain things, such as grain etc. by carrying them on bullock) met us and asked us, "It is hot now, where and how far are you going?". "To search the woods", we replied. He enquired, "On what quest are you bound?" We gave him an ambiguous and evasive reply. Seeing us rambling aimlessly, he was moved and said, "Without knowing the woods fully, you should not wander at random. If you want to walk through forests and jungles, you should take a guide with you. Why do you exert yourselves unnecessarily at this sultry noon-time? You may not give out to me your secret quest; still you can sit down, eat bread, drink water, take rest and then go. Be always patient at heart." Though he spoke so tenderly, we discarded his request and marched on. We thought that we were self-contained men and needed nobody's help. The woods were vast and trackless, the trees therein grew so close and tall, that the sun's rays could not penetrate through them; so we lost our way and wandered here and there for a long time. Ultimately through sheer good luck, we came back to the place from where we started. The Vanjari met us again and said, "Relying on your own cleverness you missed your way; a guide is always necessary to show us the right way in small or great matters; and no quest can be successfully carried out on an empty stomach. Unless God wills it, no one meets us on the way. Do not discard offers of food; served dish should not be thrust away. Offers of bread and food should be regarded as auspicious signs of success." Saying this he again offered us food and asked us to be calm and patient. Again we did not like this good hospitality and discarded his offer and went away. Without doing any quest and without taking any food, the three began to move out. So obstinate were they. I was hungry and thirsty and I was moved with the Vanjari's extraordinary love; we thought ourselves very learned; but were quite strangers to pity and kindness. The Vanjari was a quite illiterate and unqualified fellow and belonged to a low caste. Still he had love in his heart and asked us to eat the bread. In this way, he who loves other disinterestedly, is really enlightened; and I thought acceptance of his hospitality was the best beginning of getting knowledge. So very respectfully I accepted the loaf of bread offered, ate it and drank water. Then to! The Guru at once came and stood before us, "What was the dispute about?" He asked and I told him everything that had happened. Then he said, "Would you like to come with me? I will show you what you want; but he alone, who believes in what I say, will be successful." The others did not agree to what he said and left him; but I bowed to him reverently and accepted his dictum. Then he took me to a well, tied my feet with a rope and hung me - head downwards and feet up - from a tree near the well. I was suspended three feet above the water, which I could not reach with My hands, nor which could go into my mouth. Suspending me in this manner he went away, no one knew where. After 10 or 12 ghatakas (4 or 5 hours) he returned and taking me out quickly asked me how I fared. "In Bliss supreme, I was. How can a fool like me describe the joy I experienced?" I replied. On hearing my answer the Guru was much pleased with me, drew me near him and stroking my body with his hand kept me with him. He took care of me as tenderly as a motherbird does of her young ones. He put me into his school; how beautiful it was! There I forgot my parents, all my attachment was snapped and I was liberated easily. I thought that I should embrace his neck and remain staring at him always. If his image were not fixed in my pupils, I would like better to be blind. Such was the school! No one, who entered it once, could return empty-handed. My Guru became my all-in-all, my home and property, mother and father, everything. All my senses left their places and concentrated themselves in my eyes, and my sight was centred on him. Thus was my Guru, the sole object of my meditation and I was conscious of none else. While meditating on him my mind and intellect were stunned and I had thus to keep quiet and bow to him in silence. Among the four, one was a Karmatha (Ritualistic) who only knew how to observe, and abstain from, certain rites; the second was a Jnani, who was puffed up with pride of knowledge and the third was a Bhakta who surrendered himself completely to God, believing that he was the sole Doer. When they were discussing and arguing, the question of God turned up, and they, depending on their unaided knowledge, went in search of Him. Sai, who was Discrimination and Dispassion incarnate, was one of the four. Being Himself Brahman Incarnate, some may ask, "Why did He mix with them and act foolishly?" He did this for attaining the good of the public, and setting them an example to follow. Though an incarnation Himself, He respected a low Vanjari, by accepting his food with the firm belief that "Food is Brahman"* and showed how those who rejected Vanjari's hospitable offer suffer

ed and how it was impossible to get Jnana without a Guru. The Shruti (Taittiriya Upanishad) exhorts us to honour and worship mother, father and preceptor, and to study (learn and teach) the sacred scriptures. These are the means of purifying our minds and unless this purification is effected, self-realization is not possible. Neither the senses, nor the mind and intellect reach the Self. Modes of proof, such as Perception and Inference will not help us in the matter. It is the grace of the Guru that counts. The objects of our life such as Dharma, Artha and Kama are attainable with our effort, but the fourth object, Moksha (liberation) can only be had with the help of the Guru. * We think that this description of the topsy-turvy position in the well for 4 or 5 hours should not be taken too literally; for no one can be at ease and feel bliss if he be suspended with a rope-head down and feet up- in a well for hours together. On the contrary it might amount to torture. This seems to be a figurative description of the trance or Samadhi state. There are two sorts of consciousness; (1) Sensual and (2) Spiritual. When our senses and mind, which are created by God with an outgoing tendency meet their objects, we get the sensual consciousness in which we feel pleasure or pain, pure or mixed, but not bliss supreme of happiness. When the senses and the mind are withdrawn from their objects and are given opposite or topsy-turvy direction, i.e., when they are inverted and fixed on the Self, we get the other, i.e., spiritual consciousness in which we feel unalloyed joy or bliss which is ineffable. The words "In bliss supreme I was, and how can I describe the joy I felt?" So that the Guru put him in a trance and kept him above or aloof from the waters of the restless senses and mind.

- It should not be thought that food is something quite different from the experiencer, or that matter is absolutely foreign to Spirit. Food is identical with the experiencer. Matter is only a phase of the Spirit. Food is only a manifestation of the Atman. One should adore food as the Atman (Maitra. Up. VI. 12). It is eaten and it eats all things (Taitt. Up. II. 2). I am food; I am the eater of food; I, who am food eat the eater of food (Taitt Up. III. 10). That the mind is influenced by the food that is eaten is mentioned in another place in the Chhandogya Upanishad: In purity of food there is purity of mind; in purity of mind there is established memory; in established memory there results the release from all the knots of the heart, (VII. 26). After a fast for fifteen days, Svetaketu lost his memory and could not recite the Vedas. But, when, afterwards, he ate food, he regained his memory and recited the Vedas. If one does not eat for ten days, even though he might live, he becomes a non-seer, a non-hearer, a non-thinker, a non-doer, a non-understander. But on eating food, he becomes a seer, a hearer, a thinker, a doer, an understander. Adore food! (Chh. Up. VII. 9). This is Sai's reinforcement of a Vedic concept that is twisted, terribly misunderstood and exaggerated in Puranic Hinduism. For, even the Bhagavad Gita makes this clear: There is no possibility of one's becoming a yogi, O Arjuna, if one eats too much, or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough.

- The Taittiriya Upanishad says that is Brahma; from food all the creatures are born and having been born, by food they live, and having departed, into food again they enter. When an Atithi (uninvited guest) comes to our door at noon, it is our bounden duty to welcome him by giving him food. Just as varan (Pulse-soup) excels all other dishes, Anna-dana is the best of all merits. Baba required very little food for Himself and what little He wanted, was obtained by begging from a few houses. But when He took it into His mind to distribute food to all, He made all preparations from beginning to end, Himself. He depended on nobody and troubled none in this matter. Those who were accustomed to (take) animal food were given food from the Handi as prasad and those who were not so accustomed, were not allowed to touch it. He never created in them any wish or desire to indulge in this food. Baba at times proposed tests. For instance, on an Ekadashi day He gave some rupees to Dada Kelkar and asked him to go in person to Koralha to get mutton from there. So Dada Kelkar dressed himself and started for the place. Then Baba called him back and said, don't go yourself, but send somebody. On another occasion Baba asked Dada just to see how the saltish 'Pulava' (mutton dish) was done. The latter said casually and formally that it was alright. Then Baba said to him - you have seen it with your eyes, nor tasted it with your tongue, then how could you say that it was good? Just take out the lid and see. Saying this Baba caught his arm and thrust it into the pot and then immediately added, take out your arm and taking a ladle, put some quantity in t

he dish without caring for your orthodoxy and without blustering. Baba, in a true motherly way pinched Dada Kelkar in this fashion. Really no saint or guru will ever force his orthodox disciple to eat forbidden food and de file himself thereby.

- This, the topic of meat eating, is probably one of the most grossly misunderstood and twisted topics in Puranic Hinduism, so much that in the present day it has gone so far as to create tussle between different faiths, public unrest and even cases of lynching and violence. The issue can be settled only if one takes a very deep, careful look at the topic from various scriptural sources. First, it is in the nature of Vedas and Sanatana Dharma, not to impose or forbid anything as a rule, but only suggests what is good for mankind. It is in this light that Brahma Sutra emphasise that one must avoid killing of animals, and may resort to eating any kind of food indiscriminately, only when in mortal danger. The Charaka Samhita gives medicinal and nutritional values of eating various kinds of meat, especially in tune with seasons. The Parashurama Kalpa Sutras and other authoritative texts on Sri Vidyā describe the Vamachara Tantra involving Pancha Makaras, which include meat, but explicitly state that Shudras alone are entitled to it. This, one must take in conjunction with the Brahma Sutra, where one's Varnashrama is not determined by birth or profession but only by mindset. At the same time, as per the Sanyasa Upanishad, Sanyasis, especially of Avadhuta types are allowed to eat indiscriminately whatever they want. This is because, essentially, as Gita says, meat promoted Tamasic Gunas, but Avadhutas have far crossed that stage, to the very destruction of all illusion. This was what Sai followed too. He did not encourage or discourage the eating of meat, but had both vegetarian and non vegetarian fare cooked as part of the Handi, leaving people to choose as per their own mindset and the Varnashrama they identify themselves with. Furthermore Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in 6.4.18 gives the recipe of rice cooked with beef and veal for progeny of a well learned and respected son. While Puranic Hinduism, especially of the present day might find this jarring, it must be noted that the Upanishad specifies icy the male bull, that too of an advanced age, for this purpose. This does not amount to Go Hatya ie cow slaughter, neither does the Upanishad violate the Vedic Dictum of Go Avadhya ie forbidding cow slaughter, on the basis that cow is akin to a Mother, consuming lowly tasteless grass, and giving forth milk fit for human consumption just like a human mother, while also giving benefits out of its dung and urine as well. Since one male bull can father many calves, while each cow makes a distinct contribution by providing milk, the restriction of killing applies to the female cow and not to a male bull, and in fact, this allows for reasonable population control of cattle as well. Thus, one can see how Sai through the Handi system while have been controversially interpreted by half baked Puranic fanatics, nevertheless Sai sought to dispel all the Puranic misconceptions in this context. Related is the Brahma Sutra refuting any symbolic interpretation to Vedic Yajnas, with Vyasa clearly asserting that Vedic sacrifices positively involved killing of animals. This arises from the truth that all crayons being dream in nature, lack real value of life. Ultimately, this was the same aspect in which Adi Shankara was Himself defeated in Thiruvarur, being educated hence about the 16th stage.

Sai disproves misconceptions about His illiteracy in Sanskrit, by giving the following exposition on Bhagavad Gita 4.34: It is not enough merely to prostrate before the Jnanis. We must make Sarvasha Sharangati (complete surrender) to the Sad-guru. (2) Mere questioning is not enough. The question must not be made with any improper motive or attitude or to trap the Guru and catch at mistakes in the answer, or out of idle curiosity. It must be serious and with a view to achieve moksha or spiritual progress. (3) Seva is not rendering service, retaining still the feeling that one is free to offer or refuse service. One must feel that he is not the master of the body, that the body is Guru's and exists merely to render service to him. How is Jnana Upadesha, i.e., imparting of realization to be effected? Destroying ignorance is Jnana. (cf. Verse-Ovi-1396 of Jnaneshwari commenting on Gita 18-66 says - of ignorance is like this, Oh Arjuna, If dream and sleep disappear, you are yourself. It is like that. Also Ovi 83 on Gita V-16 says - there anything different or independent in Jnana besides the destruction of ignorance?* Expelling darkness means light. Destroying duality (dwaita) means non-duality (adwaita). Whenever we speak of destroying Dwaita, we speak of Adwaita. Whenever we talk of destroying darkness, we talk of light.

If we have to realise the Adwaita state, the feeling of Dwaita in ourselves has to be removed. That is the realization of the Adwaita state. Who can speak of Adwaita while remaining in Dwaita? If one did, unless one gets into that state, how can one know it and realise it? Again, the Shishya (disciple) like the Sad-guru is really embodiment of Jnana. The difference between the two lies in the attitude, high realization, marvellous super-human Sattva (beingness) and unrivalled capacity and Aishwarya Yoga (divine powers). The Sad-guru is Nirguna, Sat-Chit-Ananda. He has indeed taken human form to elevate mankind and raise the world. But his real Nirguna nature is not destroyed thereby, even a bit. His beingness (or reality), divine power and wisdom remain undiminished. The disciple also is in fact of the same swarupa. But, it is overlaid by the effect of the samaskaras of innumerable births in the shape of ignorance, which hides from his view that he is Shuddha Chaitanya (see B.G. Ch.

V-15)**. As stated therein, he gets the impressions - Jiva, a creature, humble and poor. The Guru has to root out these offshoots of ignorance and has to give upadesha or instruction. To the disciple, held spell-bound for endless generations by the ideas of his being a creature, humble and poor, the Guru imparts in hundreds of births the teaching - are God, you are mighty and opulent. Then, he realizes a bit that he is God really. The perpetual delusion under which the disciple is labouring, that he is the body, that he is a creature (jiva) or ego, that God (Paramatma) and the world are different from him, is an error inherited from innumerable past births. From actions based on it, he has derived his joy, sorrows and mixtures of both. To remove this delusion, this error, this root ignorance, he must start the inquiry. How did the ignorance arise? Where is it? And to show him this is called the Guru's upadesha. Unless the errors are exposed to his view, the disciple cannot learn what is God, jiva, world, body; how they are inter-related and whether they are different from each other, or are one and the same.

To teach him these and destroy his ignorance is this instruction in Jnana or Ajnana. Why should Jnana be imparted to the jiva, (who is) a Jnanamurti? Upadesha is merely to show him his error and destroy his ignorance. Sai often involved in specific instructions and blessings to specific devotees, sometimes counter intuitive on first glance, but on deeper inspection, well aligned with their previous Karmas, promises etc. Through these specific instruction and treatment of devotees, Sai emphasised how Guru, bring the Self, was supreme, and that one must completely surrender and follow His instructions, if they were to benefit spiritually.

- The Upanishads have profoundly underlined the role of the guru. Mundak Upanishad says to realize the supreme godhead holding samidha grass in his hands one should surrender himself before the guru who knows the secrets of Vedas. Kathopanishad too speaks of the guru as the preceptor who alone can guide the disciple on the spiritual path. Term Upanishad derives from upa- ('nearby'), ni- ('at the proper place, down') and sad ('to sit') and it means 'sitting at the feet of a teacher to receive the sacred teachings'.

- Sai Baba expounded many a time Who this ME (or I) is. He said need not go far or anywhere in search of Me. Barring your name and form, there exists in you, as well as in all beings, a sense of Being or Consciousness of Existence. That is Myself. Knowing this, you see Me inside yourself, as well as in all beings. If you practise this, you will realize all-pervasiveness, and thus attain oneness with Me.

- Aitareya Aranyaka (II.iii.2.5) of the Rig Veda tells us that in man alone is the Atman ('Self') most manifest, for man is best endowed with intelligence and discrimination, and who knowing the higher and the lower worlds aspires to achieve immortality through mental things. Taittiriya Upanishad tells us that all should know Brahman as existing in the intellect in which, Shankara explains, are hidden – a) 'knowledge', b) 'the knowable' and c) 'the knower', as also enjoyment and liberation. The relationship between the Individual self and the Universal Self reveals the actual source of thought and action; it reveals Brahman; vichāra (reflection and contemplation) results in disinterest in that which is not the source of anything in this world.

- In true Yogic fashion, Sai has performed many deeds that have been recounted by the non initiates as miracles. Examples include His 72 hours continuous Samadhi as a means to get rid of an asthma attack. Conversing with animals, recounting the previous births with absolute clarity, sleeping on a wooden plank suspended with tatters

d cloth proving His remarkable stability of posture, subsisting on very little food, sleeping well after midnight to wake up very early in the morning, all these are the Siddhis acquired to Samyama that Sai showed through example.

- On the topic of getting smitten with lust, Sai teaches: why are you getting agitated in vain? Let the senses do their allotted work, or duty, we should not meddle with their work. God has created this beautiful world and it is our duty to appreciate its beauty. The mind will get steady and calm slowly and gradually. When the front door was open, why go by the back one? When the heart is pure, there is no difficulty, whatsoever. Why should one be afraid of any one if there be no evil thought in us? The eyes may do their work, why should you feel shy and tottering? Our mind is fickle by nature, it should not be allowed to get wild. The senses may get restless, the body, however, should be held in check and not allowed to be impatient. Senses run after objects, but we should not follow them and crave for their objects. By slow and gradual practice restlessness can be conquered. We should not be swayed by the senses, but they cannot be completely controlled. We should curb them rightly and properly according to the need of the occasion. Beauty is the subject of sight; we should fearlessly look at the beauty of objects. There is no room for shyness or fear. Only we should never entertain evil thoughts. Making the mind desireless, observe God's works of beauty. In this way the senses will be easily and naturally controlled and even in enjoying objects you will be reminded of God. If the outer senses are not held in check and if the mind be allowed to run after objects and be attached to them, our cycle of births and deaths will not come to an end. Objects of sense are things harmful. With Viveka (discrimination) as our charioteer, we will control the mind and will not allow the senses to go astray. With such a charioteer we reach the Vishnupada, the final abode, our real Home from which there is no return.

- The Mahavakya Upanishad is a short text that discusses nature of Atman (self, soul) and Brahman (metaphysical reality), their oneness, and the nature of knowledge and ignorance. The text asserts that Yoga and introspection is the way to spiritual knowledge, with the help of a guru. The Upanishad is notable for characterizing Vedic rituals and chasing sensual pleasures as a mark of darkness within, that this darkness can be shed with the radiance of knowledge, the discovery of self as light.

- Through the incident involving Tembye Swami entrusting a coconut to a devotee asking to take it to Sai, with the result being the consumption of the coconut on the way. To the devotee feeling guilty for not executing Tembye Swami's orders, Sai explains: Now you need not worry yourself any more about the matter. It was on account of my wish that the coconut was entrusted to you, and ultimately broken on the way; why should you take the responsibility of the actions on you? Do not entertain the sense of doership in doing good, as well as for bad deeds; be entirely prideless and egoless in all things and thus your spiritual progress will be rapid."

- In the Kena Upanishad, is asked, By whom commanded and directed does the mind go towards its objects? Commanded by whom does the life-force, the first (cause), move? At whose will do men utter speech? What power directs the eye and the ear? Thus the disciple approached the Master and inquired concerning the cause of life and human activity. Having a sincere longing for Truth he desired to know who really sees and hears, who activates the apparent physical man. He perceived all about him the phenomenal world, the existence of which he could prove by his senses; but he sought to know the invisible causal world, of which he was now only vaguely conscious. Is mind all-pervading and all-powerful, or is it impelled by some other force, he asked. Who sends forth the vital energy, without which nothing can exist? In the same Upanishad, Amma as Uma answers: "It is Brahman. It is through the victory of Brahman that ye are victorious." Then from her words, he (Indra) knew that it (that mysterious form) was Brahman. Uma replied to Indra, "It is to Brahman that you owe your victory. It is through His power that you live and act. He is the agent and you are all only instruments in His hands. Therefore your idea that 'This victory is ours, this glory is ours,' is based on ignorance." At once Indra saw their mistake. The Devas, being puffed up with vanity, had thought they themselves had achieved the victory, whereas it was Brahma

man; for not even a blade of grass can move without His command. Through this, there is the absolute refuting of any talk of free will whatsoever.

- Finally, in the Satcharitra we find the practice of Sai, of smoking Chillum filled with marijuana or Bhang, as is a typical custom of a NathYogi and also an Aghoris ands other sects, extending all the way to Shiva Himself. This has been raised as a controversial point in Puranic Hinduism due to incomplete knowledge, especially by Vai shnava fanatics who go so far as to decry not just the practice, but Lord Shiva Himself, with the claim that this is not a Vedic deity. As a befitting slap right across their face, is provided the verse from Atharva Veda Samhita 1 1.6.15: "To the five kingdoms of the plants which Soma rules as Lord we speak. Darbha, hemp, barley, mighty power: may these deliver us from woe." ‘भज्ञ’ (bhang) or hemp refers to the cannabis plant. Atharva Veda not only mentions Cannabis to be one of the five sacred plants but signifies cannabis leaves as the guardian angel. In certain Vedic rituals, cannabis stems were thrown into the yagna (ritual fire) to overcome enemies and evil forces. According to Vedas; Cannabis is referred as a source of happiness, joy giver and liberator. Other references alluding to the ancient historical use of Cannabis in the ancient Indian culture can be found in Rig-Veda, Sushruta Samhita and the Mahabharata. Charaka Samhita too details recipes of smoking for various health benefits, while also cautioning against too little or too excess of smoking.

With this, the key incidents and teachings of the Satcharitra have been explored in light of the Shruthi ie Vedic and Upanishadic truths that they reinforce. In summary, Sai's teachings strictly adhere to the Sri Vidya Vedanta, conveying all the important points that have been explored in detail in the BrahmaSutra Bhasya as part of Sarva Vidya, with the aim of taking all His devotees through the stages, to the final 16th stage. As an aspect of Amma itself as Bala, Sai's playful and humorous side has not gone unnoticed either, since in the Satcharitra specifically in Chapter 36, we find a mention of these, with closer devotee Shama always being a favourite catch of Sai. In true Sri Vidya Vedanta spirit, the Satcharita asserts that Sai never favored harsh, self inflicting asceticism, but enjoyable and pleasurable living on earth, while also conscious and making efforts of one's ultimate goal being liberation, surrendering to the Guru to achieve this.

We now turn to the topic of Sai's birth and childhood. The Sanyasa Upanishad strictly prohibits a Sanyasa from talking about His Purvashrama or life before renunciation, and Sai undoubtedly strictly adhered to it. Thus, Sai directly has not revealed any details of His childhood, and even His birth date as 1838AD, was arrived at by Hemadpant only through inference. However, it would be plainly stupid to assume that Sai did not have any childhood, since even incarnations such as Rama and Krishna had. Some accounts believe that Sai Himself was born in the Rama Navami day, while Satcharitra confirms Hours passing away on the Vijayadashami or Dussehra day of 1918.

How then, could we know about the childhood of Sai? To this we resort to Das Ganu, one of the most trustworthy devotees of Sai who has composed the Sai Guru Charitra of 7 chapters. This book, just like the Satcharitra, has the express blessings and validation from Sai Himself. Das Ganu upon completion read out the 1st 3 chapters to Sai, and Sai gave His approval to the whole book. The book recounts Sai's birth in Pathri and childhood in Selu, which have also found mention in other places such as Sai Leelamrita, and affirmed in Satcharita itself as a foot note.

As per this account, Sai was born in a small village called Pathri, and then studied for 8 years under the tutelage or Ashram of Venkusa. This Venkusa was none other than an incarnation of Amma itself as Venkatesha, who had proved His mettle and austerity, taking out His own eyes at the slightest Temptations, with sight restored later. Other students, growing jealous of the loving relationship between Sai and Venkusa hatched a plan to kill Sai w

While asleep at night along with Venkusa, and did this by throwing a brick at Sai. Aware and protecting His disciple, Venkusa received the fatal blow on His forehead, while Sai, waking up to the commotion, nursed His Guru with a cloth. Realising that Venkusa was nearing His end, He fed Sai 3 liters of milk from a hitherto unmilked cow, symbolising Jnana, Bhakti and Karma Yogas. Sai got the blood stained cloth, which became part of His Kafni and the footprints of Guru Venkusa embossed on three brick, which He used as a pillow throughout His life. In the last ends of Sai's life, the Satcharita mentions the slipping and breaking of the brick while cleaning the mosque, and Sai passing away 3 days later.

The final instructions of Venkusa was that Sai was to go westward along the bank of the Godavari, and that Sai would be His representative henceforth. This was how Sai arrived in Shirdi. Das Ganu mentions that Venkusa ie Venkatesha was the formal Guru of Sai. Further Venkusa instructed that His body be cremated, but He would manifest as a Vigraha of Lord Venkatesha under a fig tree in Selu, and that, this was to be installed in a temple as His Samadhi.

However, by virtue of His mission to restore Dharmic Hindu and Abrahamic Muslim faiths to their Vedic roots, Sai was considered an incarnation of Kabir, whom Sai took as His Guru as well. The neem tree under which Sai meditated in Shirdi was adjacent to the Guru Sthan, which Das Ganu mentions, is one of the many Samadhis of Kabir, which are all the places where are interred the flowers that the saint's body transformed to after death. By some accounts, Sai also belonged to the Nath Yogi by initiation from Lahiri Mahasaya - His way of living and practices already have been explained pertaining to Sai as the Nath Yogi.

In the Guru Charitra, through following teachings of Sai are understood.

- Sai consoles Bayjabai on the death of Her husband thus: "Oh mother, do not cry. All those who are born have to die, someday or the other. To be born, to live and to die are all decided by the almighty. He is in everything and every where. It is not in our hands to change his plans. Who is it that is born? Who is it that dies? Get hold of your self and examine this with dispassion and true knowledge. You will also realize the truth. If the cloth we wear is torn, we throw it aside. We lose whatever liking we had for it too. The all-merciful God has covered the ever living soul with this cloth of a body. That soul is the ever living, infinite, indivisible, attribute less, formless God. Do not show love for the worn out cloth of the body of Appa and try to protect it by applying Udi to it. Do not come in Appa's way and cause him harm. Let him reach his destination as per his destiny. As I have been talking to you here, he has already left behind the worn out cloth of his body. Do not interfere any more. Appa will achieve salvation. You will not be able to see it with your worldly eye. Let what ever happens happen."

- In the "Gita," Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the wise person knows that even though every human is destined to die, the soul is immortal: "For death is certain to one who is born...thou shalt not grieve for what is unavoidable." In two separate quotes, Krishna reminds him that although the human body is destined to die, the soul is immortal. The Spirit is neither born nor does it die at any time. It does not come into being or cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval. The Spirit is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. (2.20). Just as a person puts on new garments after discarding the old ones, similarly, the living entity or the individual soul acquires new bodies after casting away the old bodies. (2.22). All beings are unmanifest, or invisible to our physical eyes, before birth and after death. They manifest between the birth and the death only. What is there to grieve about? (2.28).

- Sai teaches on Prarabdha Karma thus: One gets the qualities and the habits of the body one is born in.

This is the law of the nature. It is in accordance with this law of the nature that the living beings experience their prarabdha karma. Look here Nana! Some lions roam freely in the jungle - the lords of all they survey. Some lions are caged and taken from village to village on show. The rich man's dog sleeps on mattresses of silk. Some dogs keep roaming throughout the day for a few pieces of bread. Some cattle are fed to satiety with hay. The owner gives them sufficient water and oilcakes to feed and takes good care of them. Some cattle keep roaming throughout the day, hungry for food. They do not even get a few stalks of grass to eat and have to nose about the rubbish. The main reason for these differences is the prarabdha karma. None can escape it without experiencing it to the full. It is the reason for the prosperity of the rich and the poverty of the poor. None can escape its writ without undergoing the full course. What law applies to animals applies to humans too. One is rich, the other poor; one is prosperous, the other in the clutches of wretched poverty. One is an orphan who has to beg for alms. One moves like a prince on horse back. One enjoys all the luxuries of life in kingly mansions. One has nothing to call his own and sleeps naked on the bare ground, the sky itself his roof. Some have progeny. Some have progeny, but they all die. Some women are barren and bear no children. Some women go to much trouble for just for the sake of bearing children. "Happiness and sorrow are delusions. They are the fog which covers up and hides the reality. What we feel are the pleasures of this world are not truly its pleasures. Examine this aspect closely. Many people commit mistakes in understanding these aspects. It is by the prarabdha karma that one gets delicious food to eat while another gets dry bread to eat. The one who gets the stale dry bread may be plunged into sorrow. Another may get merely the dry crust of the stale bread. The man who got the delicious food to eat will think that he has every thing and lacks nothing. One may eat delicious food or one may eat rice with pickle. It is merely to assuage hunger and to fill the stomach. Some may wear costly shawls with jewelled embroidery. Some may cover their skin with rags. It may be a costly shawl or a rag; the purpose is to cover the skin only. Beyond this basic use there no further use for these things". "It is ignorance to give importance to happiness or sorrow. If the mind is an ocean, the waves of sorrow and happiness are always rising and falling in that ocean. What you feel as sorrow and happiness are not real. They are mere delusion caused by your infatuation with the body. You may have a doubt here. Waves are present if only water is present. Light is present if only a lamp is present. So there must be a causative factor for the birth of these notions such as happiness and sorrow. What is it? It is the six enemies such as lust, anger, covetousness, delusion, pride and envy which is the basis for the experience of happiness and sorrow in this world. The form of the waves is delusion. It makes the truth seem a lie; and a lie seems as the truth. When a poor man sees gold in the hand of a rich man, he feels envious. Then the wave of envy starts in his mind. He gets the feeling, "That gold should be in my hand." The moment he gets this feeling, another wave of greed starts in his mind. Nana, how many more examples can I give you of this? First, we have to conquer our six enemies. Once they are conquered, they cannot do anything to start these waves our mind. To tell the truth we cannot fully conquer these six enemies but we can make them our slaves. We should place our knowledge as the superior officer over these six enemies. Over knowledge, we should place discrimination as the supervising officer. If we successfully achieve this, there will be no further pain of happiness and sorrow for us." Mukti (Emancipation, salvation) is true happiness. To take birth and die is true sorrow. Any other happiness or sorrow but for these, is a result of mere delusion. Now I will tell you how to live in this world. Listen to me with diligent care. We should happily experience what ever has been our lot as the result of the prarabdha karma. We should not be envious of others who are in a better state (due to their prarabdha karma) and hanker after their riches etc. Oh Nana, as the tree heavily laden with fruit is bent as if in humility so should one, who is heavily laden with wealth, be humble. But humility does not work with the wicked. Because there is the danger that the wicked will misuse the humility of the rich. One should behave r

uthlessly with the wicked. The rich should be humble and be respectful towards the sadhu's and good people. The rich are like the cool shade trees in the burning mid-noon sun. The rich, intoxicated by their prosperity, should not cause any harm to any one. They should give alms and give to charity in accordance with their station in life. They should not take loans and make unnecessary expenditures. Even though this world is delusion, prarabdha is true. Money is essential to journey through this life. As the gall bladder is essential to life so is wealth essential in this world. One should not totally involve himself in making money. One should not be miserly but give to charity generously. Too much generosity is also dangerous. If our hard earned money is spent and exhausted no one will come to our rescue. It is a portent of disaster if a man is generous and a spend thrift too. One should see the qualities and qualification of the person before giving in charity. One should give handsomely to the physically handicapped, those in ill health, to the orphans and where it is useful to the public. One may spend money to take care of the scholars and for the childbirth expenses of women who have none to look after their welfare. Annadanam (the feeding of people) is of three kinds-Visesha karanam (for special reason), Nitya karanam (daily) and Karya karanam (occasional causes). When circumstances go one's way and one gets a windfall profit, he may do such Visesha Annadanam. One may feed even a thousand people.

One should not stop to see the high, low, good, or bad when one is doing annadanam. All are qualified to receive annadanam. One should do annadanam in the choultries too. However, one should never take money on loan to do annadanam. I will now tell you who are qualified to receive nitya annadanam. The wayfarer, the person engaged in penance, the sanyasi and the hungry are all qualified to receive nitya annadanam. One should do nitya annadanam even to those who do not accept cooked rice or those who study; eating at different houses every day of the week. The karya annadan is done on occasions such as marriage, the thread ceremony and other such ceremonial occasions. On such occasion, one should liberally feed friends, well wishers, relatives, and those of ones gotra. I have now explained to you the various annadanams and who are qualified to revive it. The regulations regarding vastra dan (the gift of apparel) are the same. Do not forget these regulations. One should try to ameliorate the sorrow of others. One should not misuse one's power or the wealth one has. One should not accept graft when one is in the seat of justice and do wrong. One should complete any given task in an excellent manner. One should not dress ostentatiously but only as much as demanded by modesty. One should not wear excess make up or go for excessive decoration of one's person. Do not insult any one. Recognise the wicked, keep them in mind and be wary of them. The wife, children, the servants have all come to us by prarabdha. Be courteous and loving towards them. Never assume for a moment that they are your people. That will lead to further entanglement, further prarabdha karma and more births and deaths. We should try to experience and finish the prarabdha in this life only. We should try not to have anything left over to take with us when we die. Whatever we get is a result of prarabdha. The friends, relatives, wife and children all are limited only to this particular life. Each person and his relationship to you are limited only to this life. Who knows who will be entangled with you in your forthcoming birth? It is our vasanas (proclivities) which keep us entangled forever without letting go of us." "It is the vasanas which are the seed bed of the next birth. That is why, if one does not increase his infatuation with the own karma; one would gain immeasurably in the hereafter. One stays for a day or two in one choultry and then moves on towards his destination without forming any association or infatuation with it. In the same manner, one should look upon this world as a choultry and not form any attachments. Thus, one should continue to do one's duty and recognize and revere the almighty that is the form of satchidananda (existence, knowledge and bliss). He is the one who causes one's son and another's son to be born. But the responsibility of looking after one's son is one's own. It is necessary to earn money and keep it for the sake of looking after one's own. But one should never have the feeling, 'I am saving money, I am keeping it for them, I am looking after them'. One should do one's duty and

present the result as well as the feeling of being the doer to the almighty and be untouched by it all. One should use ones knowledge to seek to know the good and bad about every thing. One should be able to accept the good and leave the bad. Try to do good works and complete them ably with determination. One should live in such a manner that one's fame lives on in this world even after one's death.

One should perform one's duty without harboring the feeling 'I am the doer. This is purushartha. How much more can I tell you of this? The ego felt by the feeling 'I am the doer' should be offered to God. When one gets just reward for one's labours one should be humble. As long as one is alive, one should take care of the body. But it is a waste of time to think of or worry about death. This body is on loan to you from the panchabhutas (sky, wind, fire, water and earth). As life leaves it the body returns to panchabhutas. The air joins air. The energy joins the energy. The panchabhutas go where they came from. The body is a part of the earth. It is futile to cry for it when it dies. In the same manner, it is futile to feel happy at birth. One should be content thinking that it is but the law of nature. The earth shelters the seed. The clouds rain water. The plants are born by sun's light. Does the earth, clouds, or sun dance with joy at the sight of the plants sprouting? Let the plant become a great tree or let it die as a sapling, the earth or clouds or the sun neither express happiness nor sadness. In the same way, the wise are beyond these feeling of happiness or sadness. We should also be like that. Where then, is the scope for happiness or sorrow? Oh, scion of the Chandorkar family! It is mukti or liberation to have equally neutral feelings about happiness or sorrow." The energy contained in pure consciousness is maya. Maya encloses pure consciousness. As how one cannot separate sugar and its sweetness, as one cannot separate the sun and its light; in the same way are the maya and the Brahman. The sun and the sunlight are two different words. But it is only by a conjoining of the both that the form of the sun visible to us. We distinguish and identify the sun by its form, the heat and the light it radiates. In the same way is maya and Brahman. But there is an end to maya and there is no end to pure consciousness. Pure consciousness has no beginning too. It just is. It is by maya or prakriti or nature that this whole world has formed. The detailed explanation of purusha (Brahman) and prakriti (maya) may be seen in the book 'Amritanubhava' written by Jnanadev in the Mohiniraj temple at Niwasa village. Let me tell you its secrets in brief." "Those who enter the cave of Self realisation do not revert to ignorance. They take the form of that cave and dance in the joy of infinite bliss. The reason for all this is eternal Brahman. Maya is his creation. Oh Narayana, the power of this maya is as the limitless ocean of unplumbed depths. The feeling, 'I am such and such' is formed by maya. This is an untruth. Once maya casts its net of deception on us, we cannot know and recognise either the truth or untruth. Maya has two principal qualities. Know you what they are! What is visible and true is hidden by maya. What is not visible and is untrue is shown by maya. Atman is the truth. I tell this to all. To recognise, realise the atman and to be immersed in it is the sole objective of all spiritual endeavour.

- After mentioning the analogies of the one fire and the one wind assuming different forms, the Katha says:"As the sun, the eye of all the world, is not sullied by the external defects of the eyes, so the one inner self of all things is not sullied by the misery of the world, being external to it." The self is the source of both the inorganic and the organic components of the world. The teachings of Yājñyavalkya, for instance, imply such a notion. The sage declares that there is duality as it were (iva). Here the expression "as it were" implies that the world of duality is not real, that it is illusory, māyā. When we come to the Śvetāśvatara, we find the term māyā used in the sense of illusion, and the Lord of all beings is described as māyāvin.

- Sai teaches: The person who is diligent in the practice of the four-fold sadhana will realize the Brahman easily. Sadhana is the efforts one makes towards one's salvation and towards achieving the ever pure knowledge of self. Sadhana is of four kinds. The first is the wise discrimination of the permanent and the impermanent nature of things. The second is dispassion. The third is the six practices of Sham-

a- mental restraint. 1. Dama- the control of the body and the senses. 2. Titiksha- forbearance, bearing all with equality. 3. Uparati- withdrawal or abstaining from the sense objects. 4. Shraddha- faith in one's guru and Vedanta. 5. Samadhana - concentration of the mind on scriptural or other elevating truths. The fourth is mumukshu, the quality of the active quest for knowledge."

- In the Mahanarayana Upanishad, with great sympathy, it prescribes 'dama' regimen for a Brahmachari and a 'srama' regimen for the renunciate muni who has renounced everything. "The Brahmacharis hold that 'dama' is supreme, and revel in the implementation of that; whereas the dwellers in the forests (the munis) hold that 'srama' is supreme and revel in the implementation of that" (Narayanopanishad: 78 – 3,4).