

Chapter 3: The Guru *Leela*, Part A

At Palani

Young Nityananda once visited the ancient city of Palani in the then state of Madras in South India. There is a famous Murugan temple over a hill. The priest of the temple was just returning after locking the doors of the temple following the afternoon *puja*. Young Nityananda accosted the priest and demanded that the temple door be reopened for him. The priest was astonished by the audacity of this young lanky youth. He was a head priest and nobody should dare to make such a request, at least not a young lad. The priest refused to oblige and was a bit nasty to Nityananda. Nityananda appeared not to be bothered by the priest's reply and just walked towards the temple. As the priest reached the foot of the hill he heard the temple bells ringing. The sound came distinctly from his temple, which he had just locked. The priest got worried and wondered how the bells could ring from the closed temple. In the temple there was lot of gold and other precious articles. He retraced his steps back to the temple. The door was locked, yet the bells were ringing! He hurriedly opened the doors and entered the inner temple. There was nobody there and the bell had stopped ringing. When he looked at the deity to confirm whether the gold on the statue was safe, he was shocked to find the young lanky lad in its place.

Wherever Nityananda went in Palni, money used to pour. He stood at the foot of the hill and the pilgrims visiting the temple placed money at his feet. Nityananda gathered the money and gave it to a local priest who wished to establish a kitchen (*Bhojan Shala*) to feed the pilgrims. Baba asked him to make the necessary arrangement to do so.

The food unlimited

In those days poverty was spread all over India. It was further compounded by various epidemics, droughts, floods, failure of crops etc. Food was scarce. In the villages, the scenes were pathetic. People were dying of starvation. Small children were orphaned and sick due to malnutrition. The best social service one could do was offer food to the needy. Nityananda was often found holding *bhandhara* (free distribution of food) in various villages. He used to hold the distribution of free food late at night. When asked why he didn't hold *bhandhara* during the day, he used to say "In the day even those whose stomachs are full make good of a free lunch. At night only those who are starving will keep awake. Food thus reaches genuinely hungry people". Nityananda used to feed hundreds of people in this way. Rice was cooked and stored in large heaps covered with sheets made from dried grass. From large vessels, curry was served hot and

tasty. At times only rice-water (*kanzi*) with chutney or pickles were served. Knowing free food was available, the entire village used to gather. Often Baba was seen serving with a large ladle and irrespective of the quantity of food available he used to serve each plenty. It would seem that there wasn't enough, but even after all had eaten, some food would always remain. He then used to order that the extra food be put into the river for fish and other animals to eat. The food thus reached all.

Rescuing the murderer

In each village Baba visited, several people came out to serve him. Some would give him money. Money used to be kept at his feet as he never took it in his hands. He used to instruct the local chief or any devotee to collect the money and make arrangements to distribute food through *bhandhara*. Some of the close relatives of those who donated money and offered free service to Baba felt that they're loved ones were being manipulated by Baba. These relatives did their best to prevent them from giving donations or service to Baba. Among those that donated were rich shopkeepers, rich men's sons and brothers, government officers who received handsome salaries and young boys of the village. All of them felt a strong urge to serve Baba in whatever way possible.

There was a rich man's son who used to donate money and also give his time in serving Baba to distribute food. His father was annoyed and all his efforts to discourage his son from joining Baba proved futile. As a rich man, he did the next best thing: he hired a professional killer to thrash Baba. Once, as Baba was visiting a devotee and giving *darshan* to those who has assembled, he suddenly got up from the gathering. The devotees who had gathered wondered why Baba left and followed him into the garden. There they saw that Baba was held by one man and his associate with raised arm was about to pull a long knife on Baba. The devotees soon overpowered both the goons, but the man with the knife was crying in pain. They found that his arm was seized in the raised position and he was experiencing extreme pain. His arm appeared as if frozen in the air and all efforts to pull his arm down failed. Nityananda felt sorry for the man and just touched his arm. Immediately the arm became free and the pain vanished. In the mean time, the police came and the devotees handed the assassins over to them. The police took both the men in custody and locked them up. Nityananda insisted that the men be released as they were poor and did it for the money. The authorities did not oblige. Nityananda stood his ground and went without food and water in front of the jail. The rich man who had hired the goons heard about the incident and approached the authority for the release of the men. Since he was influential his request was granted and both the goons were freed. The rich man became an adherent devotee of Baba and began to make his own regular contribution for *bhandhara* in a big way.

Lighting fire

Baba appeared like a young boy and not like any typical saint with a long beard and an animal skin to sit upon. He was thin, lanky and though often in a trance, he never appeared to be in any particular form of meditation. He was therefore often mistaken for a vagabond and insulted or hurt. There were several devotees visited him and served him with love and reverence and there were others took it upon themselves to hurt and test him. In one village where Baba was sitting under a tree, the local boys made fun of him. Baba was in a trance and did not notice them. This further antagonized them. They soaked several rags in kerosene and tied them around Baba's hands and lit fire to it. Baba continued to be in his trance, unaware of the fire burning his hands. As the fire grew, suddenly the youth who had lit the fire experienced a burning sensation on his hands. He began screaming and people wondered why. He realized his folly and surrendered to Baba. Baba who was still absorbed in his Self was unaffected by the happenings around him. As soon as the youth surrendered at Baba's feet, the burning sensation disappeared and he became comfortable again. Those gathered around realized that Baba was indeed a yogi and asked for his forgiveness.

Baba, a visiting doctor

When my family met Baba, he was in our village of Padbidri in South Karnataka. He was often found standing erect on a tree. People used to gather below the tree and shout, "Oh Deva! I am suffering from such and such a disease. Please cure me. Please help me Deva". Baba remained as if unaffected by the entire crowd and their pleas. But he used to often pluck a leaf and throw it at the person requesting a holistic cure. The person who received the leaf as an answer to his prayers took it home and ate it like a medicine. He would soon be cured of his ailment. As more and more people received the benefit of Baba's cure the crowd became larger and larger. Baba used to then move from one place to another.

Anant Shenoy, grandfather of my father Raghunath was in advanced age when he met Baba in Padbidri. He was bed-ridden due to an acute pain in his stomach. His grandsons approached Baba. Baba was sitting on open ground. He plucked a few blades of grass from the ground, asked them to prepare a decoction of the grass and give a spoon-full to Anant Shenoy. When it was administered as instructed by Baba, Anant soon became free of stomach ache. Anant, who was my great grandfather, was thus the first to experience the grace of Baba in my family.

The holistic healing of Baba became known all over Karnataka. Once a Konkani speaking man from Karnataka, wanted Baba to save his mother. His mother was seriously ill with a lump in her leg. Several medicines had been tried but to no avail. This man went in search of Baba and when he finally found him he expressed his concern for his mother. Baba Nityananda responded, "This one

knows and is there" but did not offer any grass or leaves as medicine. The man was disappointed and became very desperate. He somehow managed to take his mother to the spot where Baba was found sitting near the village square. But Baba was nowhere to be found. Disappointed, he returned home with his mother. When he arrived, he found Baba descending the stairs of his house. Nityananda rubbed the affected area for a few minutes and the lump disappeared.

Sitaram Shenoy's daughter Gita, had a large very painful boil on her leg. One day she visited Ganeshpuri along with her mother Shusheela. Baba was in Vaikuntha and he saw Gita's leg with the painful boil. He told Susheela to go to the bed of the river Tansa where a particular tree was located. There Gita had to go around the tree three times and then take a leaf from the tree and tie it over the boil. She should then loudly request to the tree, "Please cure me." Shusheela took Gita to the tree on the bed of the river and did as Baba said. The very next day the boil was cured.

Gita was suffering from severe jaundice. The doctor had recommended allopathic medicine with several restrictions to her diet. During a visit to Ganeshpuri, her mother informed Baba of the child's condition. Baba asked her to give Gita medicine for worms. When the doctor was told of this, he said that as Gita didn't have worms, giving her such medicine would prove to be fatal. With faith in Baba Susheela gave Gita the medicine Baba suggested and the next day the child purged a large worm with her stools. Immediately she was free from jaundice.

My father, Raghunath, was very often fainting and did not know how to get over it. The problem was becoming chronic. Baba asked him to rub copious quantities of aged fat (*ghee*) made from cow's milk on his head. The fat had to be vigorously rubbed on the temple and the froth that is formed should be discarded. This, when done, freed him from this problem of fainting. In fact this solution was later recommended by my father to several others who had similar problems. Although it was awfully smelly, the more aged the *ghee* was, the greater was the medicine's efficacy.

Often we used an ointment called Santalax which had a sandalwood base. This ointment was recommended by Baba and was a multipurpose medicine. One can use it for insect bite, boils with pus, wound, etc. It was available in a small round tin box of 50 gram with a yellow label until 1970. Similarly there was a red colored liquid called Ague Mixture. It was very bitter and Baba had recommended it for malaria. It was one medicine which we children did not like to take because of its very bitter taste that used to linger on the tongue for several hours.

One of the attendants of Baba called Monappa had a good knowledge of ayurveda. He was blessed by Baba and hence his medicines, which were natural herbs were very effective. For sore throat he used to give us the dried stem of a plant which was hollow in the centre. Smoking this stem used to cause a severe

burning sensation in the throat, but within a few minutes the throat infection disappeared. He used to prepare *triphala churna*, a general tonic and several other remedies.

It was not the queer and odd technique or the medicine that cured. What cured was the power Baba's words carried.

As Sai Baba

A Parsi lady visited the shrine of Shirdi Sai Baba, where one of the ashram officials told her that if she wanted to see Shirdi Baba, she should go to Ganeshpuri and meet the great yogi saint Nityananda. When she went to Ganeshpuri she experienced the divine grace of Baba.

Malou Lanvin was a devotee from France. She had received *shaktipat* from Baba Muktananda. Spiritually she was highly evolved and spent much of her time in meditation. In 1982, when Parampujya Swami Janananda visited Ganeshpuri, she received his grace. She visited Kanhangad and stayed for several days and offered *seva* to Swamiji. She was a trained nurse and hence could offer very valuable service. She spent much of her time in *seva* and meditation. Her daughter Marium was equally devoted. When Janananda attained *Mahasamadhi* on 27th December 1982, Malou was by his side. After Swamiji's *Samadhi*, she went into seclusion devoting all her time to meditation. She stayed at Baba Ramdas' Anand Ashram in Kanhangad, Shivananada Ashram in Rishikesh, Mussorie, Ganeshpuri and much of her time was used for reading spiritual books and in prayer.

One day she visited Shirdi. Although there was the usual rush, as she was having *darshan* of the Samadhi, the priest in Shirdi picked a red rose from Baba's statue's hand and gave it to Malou as *prasad*. From Shirdi she came to Ganeshpuri and went to Baba Nityananda Samadhi shrine to have Samadhi *darshan*. Here too, the priest gave her a red rose from the hand of Baba's statue. She realized that it was one and the same *tattva* (essence). She bowed low to Baba.

This does not necessarily mean that Baba Nityananda and Shirdi Baba were one and the same soul. Baba often said "Ocean water is large and no matter the shape and size of the vessel you use to carry it, the vessel contains the same water as the ocean. The ocean is free and anybody and everybody can take as much as he wants. What and how much you take depends on the size of your vessel (the depth of your faith and love)". Appa Apte, a devotee of Shaligram Swami experienced that Sant Janeshwar and Sadchidananda Baba (who helped Janeshwar to write Janeshwari) are Bhagavan Nityananda and Shaligram Swami respectively, in their present sojourn on this earth. When Godhavaribai, a disciple of Upasini Baba visited Ganeshpuri, she saw her guru in Baba. More recently, a

lady in Oakland saw Baba's face on Jesus on the cross. Baba appeared smiling and full of divine joy. Some saw him as Lord Vittal and some as Shiva.

The Eternal One at Ananteshwar Temple

Udupi is a small town in South Karnataka famous for Lord Krishna's and Ananteshwar Temples. These temples are ancient and famous, visited by thousands of devotees from time immemorial. Somewhere in 1917-18, Bhagavan Nityananda reached Udupi and was found wandering around these temples. He was often found sitting on the steps of the Ananteshwar temple.

Several miracles happened here with Baba and hence there was a huge crowd wherever Baba was found. He used to move very fast from one place to another and people followed him wherever he went. The local chaste Hindus who were caste conscious did not approve of Baba Nityananda achieving fame in the temple area. They instigated children to throw stones on him. Whenever a stone would hit him, it would sparkle but when it fell to the ground it would be again an ordinary stone. Sometimes the stones thrown at Baba were found at the feet of Krishna statue inside the temple. Priests at the temple soon realized that Baba was not an ordinary person but a *Siddha*. During the annual car festival (*rath yatra*) when Baba threw beaten rice on the Lord Krishna's chariot, it turned into coins.

There were two educated Konkani speaking youths who were curious to know more about this dark lanky youth who never stuck to one place. Every time these two tried to catch up with Baba, he seemed to vanish as if he wanted to avoid the crowd. However, one day they caught up with him and seizing him by the hands addressed him in Kanarese. Since Baba did not respond they spoke to him in Hindi. Baba still maintained silence. They then asked him in English wondering which language he would understand. When both were at their wits end, and were about to give up, Baba replied to them not only in all these three languages, but also in their mother tongue. Once it became known that Baba could speak Konkani, several villagers from G. S. B. community became his adherent devotees. They invited him to their house and soon short of *satsang* were held. Baba insisted on distributing food as *bhandara*. Its likely that he met Tulas Amma at Managalore during this period.

Do not doubt

There was a Konkani speaking lady who came to visit Baba in Udupi. Baba offered her coconut. It is auspicious for a young married lady to receive coconut from a holy person as it is considered a sign of blissful married life and a blessing that saves the woman from early widowhood. This lady being from a high caste family, wondered whether it was appropriate to receive any *prasad* from a casteless Baba. As she was in this dilemma, Baba held the coconut to her for several minutes and when she still did not move forward to collect it, he threw it

away saying, "*Mitthi, sub mitthi.*" (*Dust, all dust*). A couple of months later this woman lost her husband. Were she to trust that all are equal irrespective of caste or race, the deliberate attempt by Baba to ward off widowhood would have been effective.

Love for train

Several years after his foster father, Iswar Ayar's death, Baba once again appeared in Quailandy. Some farm workers found a dark lanky youth sitting near the railway tracks. One of the men from this group fell down due to epileptic fits. His colleagues gathered around the fallen man and tried to revive him. Suddenly, a lanky youth came forward and put something in the fallen man's mouth. Immediately the man got up, hale and hearty. His colleagues were impressed and one of them recognized Baba as Raman, the boy who used to live in Quailandy.

News of the return of Nityananda soon spread all over the village and villagers gathered around Baba, who preferred to stay close to either railway stations or railway tracks. There was a regular crowd around Baba everyday. This was not liked by railway staff as it was interfering with their work. Mr. Narayanan Nair was chief of the railway staff and was a very strict man. People used to call him Tiger Narayanan. When he was told of the crowd gathering around Baba, he became very furious. He went to Baba and abused him with foul language and ordered him to clear the tracks. Baba did not take any notice of Tiger Nair and appeared to be in a trance. Baba continued to stay around the tracks and crowds continued to visit him to get their problems solved. One day Madras Mail was passing along the same track that Baba was sitting on. Tiger Nair noticed it and was sadistically waiting for Baba to be crushed under its wheels. The train kept coming towards Baba at full speed but Baba was in deep meditation. There was no way the train could be stopped. As the train reached Baba it suddenly stopped just a few feet away from Baba without the engine driver applying the brakes. He was shocked and climbed down to see Baba sitting calmly and smiling at him. Tiger Nair approached him and demanded to know why he had stopped. The driver had no answer. Although the engine was in perfect working condition, the train refused to budge even an inch. It was then that Tiger Nair realized that Baba was indeed a divine personality and prostrated at his feet. Tiger Nair who had a very strong personality, became a staunch devotee of Baba and built a small ashram for Baba at Kotmangalam.

Baba Nityananda was very fond of traveling by trains. In the early days Baba was often found around railway stations and several railway officers, guards and drivers knew him. Baba often took free rides on several lines on Southern railway in the engine car. This personal rapport with various railway personnel came over due to several episodes that happened during Baba's travel in trains. Once, a ticket inspector found that Baba had no valid ticket. He forcibly removed Baba from the train. But it was found that the train just did not get started. The guard,

the driver and the engineers from the station looked at the various possible faults that can occur, but everything was found to be in order. When they just could not solve it and were about to report to the major railway junction for help, the train driver noticed Baba. He went to Baba and enquired why he was sitting there. The ticket checker told the driver that he had thrown Baba out of the train as he was without a ticket. The driver immediately understood the cause of the engine failure. He begged Baba to board the train. Baba removed from his loin cloth several tickets and offered them to the ticket inspector. All tickets were found to be valid tickets. When Baba boarded the engine car at the invitation of the driver the train started at the first attempt. Baba's acquaintance and fame with railway personnel grew to such an extent that whenever their train passed Kanhangad ashram they used to hoot their train whistles as an acknowledgement and salute to Baba Nityananda.

Construction of the caves at Kanhangad

In early 1920, Baba settled for some time at Kanhangad. He used to initially stay in a small cave, which was embedded within the wall of the fort. This fort was built by Ikkari Raja. This fort is very close to the present Kanhangad Ashram. Baba used to stay also in the cave of the present ashram. The present caves were built by Baba in those days. To build this cave it was necessary to build a road and clear the jungles around the hill. When the local authorities came to know about the massive activity taking place at such a remote place from the Kanhangad village, they came to investigate. When Baba was asked why this activity was being carried out, Baba told them that there would soon be a guest house built for visiting government officials. It was the British Raj and the officials were convinced that such possibilities can happen. In fact, years later, the area within the fort walls was allotted for a police station and guest house. Later, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, visited this place and gave his public speech on the grounds in this area. After the clearing was done and the road leading to the hill was ready, Baba began constructing the caves. There was no architect or structural engineer appointed for the job. Baba was all rolled into one. He was the architect, structural engineer and also the site supervisor of the massive work.

Using a local workforce, Baba carved forty caves in all, out of solid rock-hill. Baba gave six entrances to the maze of the caves. Since three entrances were facing east and three facing west, there was enough light in the caves throughout the day. It was therefore often called East-West Caves. Each worker was paid for their work. From where the money came nobody could know. Often Baba directed the foreman of the village to a particular spot beyond some tree where he would find the right amount of the wage bill. At times each worker would make a line in the evening and walk by Baba. Baba used to open and close his fist on the palm of each worker, leaving the exact amount on their palm.

Looking at the volume of the job, several local people felt jealous and complained to the local authority that Baba had found some treasure in the area and was liberally distributing it without intimating and handing it over to the government. An officer visited the site and finding Baba supervising the activity, demanded to know from where he raised the finance. There was a large lake infested with crocodiles beyond the cave hill. Baba jumped into the water and popped up with his hands full of money. Baba told the officer to join him, as there was a large amount stacked under water. The officer was so shocked that he walked away never to bother Baba again.

When the work of digging was in full swing, the District Collector of District South Canara, Mangalore, Mr. Gawn, visited the site. He had received a report from the local administration body that the illegal construction and destruction of the forest was being carried out by one Nityananda. As chance would have it, he had visited Kanahangad on some other matter when this report was again placed before him. He and his full retinue mounted horses and confronted Baba, who was working along with other laborers. Baba showed him the site and the activity being undertaken by him. He then called him inside the cave under construction. When Major Gawn came out of the cave he was a changed man. He ordered all his men to vacate the site and gave orders that no one should interfere with the activities of Baba and all should give complete cooperation. As Major Gawn was leaving, to his surprise he found that the road leading to the caves had been named in his honour. When Major Gawn reached his office he found a promotion letter on his desk. He was transferred to Madras District on a prestigious post.

On top of this hill where Baba had constructed the caves, is the shrine erected by Janananda Swamiji in memory of Bhagavan. This temple has a life-size statue, which was built in 1962 and is probably the first temple dedicated to Bhagavan. There are two deities on this hill, which were worshiped and revered with fear by local villagers. One of them is known as Gulga and it demands the first milk (colostrum) of a cow which has just delivered a calf. If this offering was not made the cow and calf would die. The second deity was known as Akeri Keri Keri Bateri Baba. I remember seeing it before the temple was built. It had three slabs, as if it were a tomb. This deity demanded local *arrack (liquor)* in return for any favor. Villagers believed that it was dangerous to cross the hill without paying their respect to these deities. When Bhagavan was at this place, he overpowered both of these deities, restricted their powers and ordered them to work for the welfare of people. He promised that in return devotees would offer them rice *knazi*. This practice continues even today. Devotees offer rice or sweet *payasam* in return for their wish fulfillment. Some offer oil to light a large lamp placed in front of the temple. When the shrine was built the three slabs were covered with marble and marble *padukas* were placed on the centre slab. If you bow in front of the slabs, the sight of Bhagavan's statue appears to be aligned with the *padukas*.

Blind getting sight

A man living in Mumbai heard about Baba and visited Ganeshpuri. When he entered Kailas ashram, he found a long queue of devotees waiting for Baba's *darshan*. He, too, stood in line and as it was his first visit, he was curious to observe what was happening. He saw that when each person's turn came to present himself to Baba, they would say something to Baba or offer some gift that they had brought along and then prostrate before Baba. Baba was found sitting on his chair with his eyes half-closed and was usually quiet. Occasionally Baba would nod and acknowledge a devotee or speak a few words, which only the two could hear. When this man's turn came to present himself to Baba, he was surprised to see that Baba moved forward in the chair and said to him, "Bring your brother here." He did not understand the reason for Baba requesting his brother, who had been blind from birth. He took his brother to Ganeshpuri the following week and presented himself along with his brother to Baba. Baba instructed that the brother should stay behind and the man could return to Mumbai. After a few days, when the man came to take his brother back, he found that he could now see clearly.

There is another incident where a blind person got his eyesight. As usual, Baba was standing on a tree top and devotees gathered below the tree to collect the leaves thrown down by Baba. The healing power of the leaves was widely known and the crowd increased day-by-day. These leaves were gathered and treasured for their medicinal properties. A partially blind person stood in the crowd hearing the miraculous power of Baba. But the crowd was so huge that he could not get close to the tree on which Baba stood. Soon the crowd disappeared and only he was left. As Baba came down the tree he approached Baba and told him why he was there. He was slowly going blind and because of his poor eye sight he was no longer in a position to hold his job. Since he was the only member of his family earning an income, it was becoming very difficult to manage his family. Baba took a handful of leaves and rubbed them over his eyes without uttering a word. The man left after taking Baba's blessings. Nothing happened to his eyesight and he continued to have limited eyesight that night. The next morning when he woke up, he found that his eyesight had been restored.

Mukti for soul

One day a family came to Ganeshpuri with a small child in their arms. The child was very seriously ill and the parents appeared worried. On enquiry it was learnt that the child was suffering from pneumonia and had not opened his eyes for the last three days. They were directed to have *darshan* of Baba. When they were in front of Baba, the mother held the child towards Baba and began to weep. The father explained the case and prayed to Baba that he should save the child. Baba, who was silent for a while, suddenly passed his hands over the child, from his head to his feet. The child opened his eyes as the palm passed over his face and by the time Baba's palms reached his feet, the child closed his eyes once

again. Baba then told them to perform the last rites as the child was dead. Both parents were dejected and in deep sorrow. The following day the parents presented before Baba. The mother wailed, "Oh Baba! We had come to you with great hopes. We were told you are *Avatarpurusha*, but how could my child die in your very presence?" Baba rebuked them saying, "What do you understand of the law of Karma? You are blinded by ignorance. This child has chosen your womb and family for its last three births and was begging for liberation. In this fourth birth his desire for total liberation has been fulfilled 'here'. This is the impact of this holy land of Ganeshpuri, the land of the *Siddhas*. No more birth for him." Both husband and wife fell at Baba's feet much consoled. Yes, the mother had given birth to three children before and all had died as infants. It was Baba who gave him liberation in the *punyabhoomi* Ganeshpuri.

A similar incident where Baba gave salvation to a woman happened at Ganeshpuri. When Baba was in Kailas ashram, every morning a woman used to come and prostrate at Baba's feet and pray loudly for her salvation. This used to happen for several days at a fixed time, with Baba keeping his silence. One night Baba ordered one of the attendants in the ashram to buy a bag of beaten rice and unrefined sugar (*pova and gudh*). As soon as they were procured, Baba asked the attendants to mix the two ingredients thoroughly to make *guudgpova* and when it was ready, Baba asked them to make a figure of a woman at the same spot where the lady used to prostrate at Baba's feet. Baba then asked the attendant to wake and gather all the village children and distribute the *guudhpova*. Baba strictly instructed that the entire quantity had to be consumed before sunrise. The next day the lady came as usual and prostrated at Baba's feet with a prayer for her salvation. This time, however, she did not rise. She died on the exact spot where Baba had handmade her figure with *guudhpova* the previous night. Thus Baba made *annadan*, an important obligation to be done for the easy liberation of souls.

The offering of food is considered the best *seva* that a man can do for others. If you offer someone money, the receiver can still feel that he could have got some more, if land is offered then the receiver can still feel that a piece larger than what he got would have been better. Any other free gift can keep the receiver feeling dissatisfied. If, however, a hungry man is fed to his heart's content, he immediately raises his hands and says, "Enough, I have had enough." *Annadan* alone is one gift that results in complete satisfaction, *purna trupti* to the receiver. Hence in Hindu philosophy *annadan* is considered to be the most holy *dan* (alms) and when done ensures liberation.

Smallpox cured

A couple who were devotees of Baba had their first child very late in their lives. They were thus much attached to it. One day the young child, who was a few months old, got afflicted by small pox, a disease much prevalent in India in those days. They immediately rushed to Ganeshpuri with their child, placing it at Baba's

feet. There was a group of devotees sitting in front of Baba at that time in Vaikunt ashram. This disease is contagious and the manner in which they rushed in was not appreciated by Baba. Baba admonished them and went into his room. For about a week or so Baba did not come out of his room. When he finally came out, he took a bath and devotees observed that his body was covered with eruptions typical to those of small pox. The child, of course, survived small pox.

The scrap dealer

There was a devotee of Baba who was a successful businessman. Since his business was based on auction purchase for his products, he once made a huge loss due to a fall in market prices. He had to sell all his property to clear his dues. He came to Ganeshpuri to Baba Nityananda with his woes. When he prostrated at Baba's feet, Baba said "Sell *raddi* (waste material, normally scraps and old newspaper). Sell *raddi*." He failed to understand what Baba meant as he was in no way connected even remotely with any scrap deals. He returned confused and dejected feeling that Baba did not give him any specific solution. However, Baba's command, of selling scrap kept ringing in his mind. As usual, he visited the market place where he attended regular auctioning for his products. He learnt that huge quantities scraps were offered at a throw away price. At that moment he remembered Baba's words, "Sell *raddi*." The merchant made a bid for the scrap and got it at a very low price. He worked on it and was able to sell at a very high profit. He not only regained his lost status but amassed much more than his previous net-worth. With his status changing, he came to meet Baba and shared what had happened. He became a regular devotee and people called him Raddiwalla.

There was a devotee called Gyanchand Muki. Chance brought him to Ganeshpuri. He was standing in a queue along with his wife and small children for Baba's *darshan*. The queue was long and it took several hours, but there was no sign of Baba opening the door. It was getting hot and the children became restless. They started demanding something to eat. But Gyanchand refused saying that only after Baba's *darshan* they could all have something to eat. The hunger and heat was unbearable and his children could no longer stand the heat. Just then a man opened the door and asked "Is there any Sindhi devotee in the queue?" Gyanchand immediately surged forward with his family. The man said that Baba has instructed him to take them inside. When they entered Kailash, Baba was sitting on the chair. Gyanchand fell at Baba's feet and started weeping profusely. The entire family then prostrated at Baba's feet. Baba consoled Gyanchand and told him that everything would soon be fine. This was Gyanchand's first visit to Ganeshpuri and his first *darshan*. All of them experienced strange waves of energy flowing from Baba and entering into them. Thereafter he visited Ganeshpuri regularly. During one of his visits, Baba advised him to do business in articles which were white in color. Gyanchand entered into the yarn business and soon became prosperous. Every Gurupunima he used to visit Ganeshpuri and celebrated whole heartedly. I have myself seen

him taking active part even after several years after Baba's *Mahasamdhi*. He used to bring several articles like cloth, sweets, and various types of fruits, etc and personally supervise the offering on the eve of Gurupurnima.

The astrologer

A devotee visited Baba and expressed "Baba my astrologer has predicted the death of my wife. I am worried as I have two small children to take care of." Baba looked up at him and asked "What makes him to sure that she would die?" Baba himself began to describe the wife's horoscope to the surprise of the husband. Baba also explained the basis of the astrologer's prediction. Baba then gave him very complicated instructions to ward off the impact of the planets. The husband followed the instructions given by Baba with total faith. The particular date predicted for her death passed, but she survived. The astrologer too was surprised with the results and asked the man how it had happened so. The husband told him about his Guru Nityananda and the instructions that Baba had given him to ward off the evil effect of the planets. The astrologer referred to his books on *Jyothish sasatra* and to his surprise he found the same solution as what Baba had given to nullify the negative impact of the constellations.

Stealing with consent

It is the custom in India that when you visit a saint or elderly person, you must carry a gift for them. The devotees visiting Baba Nityananda used to bring flowers, coconuts and fruits. Some used to offer money. The gifts were never taken by Baba in his hands. They were either placed at his feet or given to the attendants serving him. At times the collected gifts of flowers and coconuts used to form a big heap in front of Baba. A few business men used to give large tins of biscuits and chocolates. Baba himself never took any of it. The gifts were largely distributed among small children and coconuts and flowers were given as *prasad* to other devotees. At times large amounts of money used to collect at his feet. Some devotees used to prostrate at Baba's feet and while getting up used to conveniently gather some money between their palms and take it away without asking. All knowing Baba never uttered a single word of rebuke and kept his silence with a naughty smile on his face. The attendants used to get real bugged seeing people lifting money. One day the attendant brought this to Baba's attention and Baba asked "How do you know he has 'lifted' the money? Before taking it he asked for the permission from 'here'."

Behind the Samadhi shrine of Baba Nityananda is a small temple dedicated to Lord Krishna. The statue here is almost life-size Krishna reclining on a white cow. Krishna is holding a flute to his lips and is standing on his toes. Between the two front legs of the cow, Baba had placed a small *shaligram* and a small clockwise conch (a very rare variety, considered to hold very powerful *shakti*). A collection box was placed here where visiting devotees used to put in their donations. One evening Baba told one of the attendants to empty the box, count the money and

leave only one-fourth of the total amount in the box. The next morning the devotees found that the box was broken and the money that remained had been stolen. They went immediately to report the burglary to Baba who was laughing as if he was already aware of it. He said, "Yesterday a poor man visited 'here' and prayed silently that he be allowed to break into the collection box, as he urgently needed money." Baba, out of compassion, made arrangement for him to get only that amount which would meet his immediate needs.

Winning by love

Baba was once invited to Mrs. Krishnabai's house in Mangalore. Looking forward to Baba's visit on the appointed day, Krishnabai got up very early and cleaned the house. She made several garlands and decorated the place as if it was a festival. She also prepared several sweet dishes and various items for lunch as she knew Baba preferred to distribute food to devotees who also came to have his *darshan*. After much waiting Baba finally arrived but immediately left the house saying that he would not stay. Many devotees had gathered and it was very disappointing to all, including Krishnabai and her husband. Since Baba was like a small boy at that time, Krishnabai's husband and his friend tried their best to prevent Baba from leaving their house. Baba, though he appeared very thin, could easily push past both of them and with great speed walked out of the house. They saw Baba walking away without looking back. The entire crowd felt very disappointed. Krishnabai, who worked very hard for over a week to see this day was in tears. In her heart she prayed to Baba not to disappoint the devotees who had gathered and pleaded to him to return. Just as they were losing hope and the crowd began to leave, suddenly Baba appeared. He stood in front of Krishnabai and said, "She stopped 'this One'". What Baba meant was that the intense love and pleading of Krishnabai made him return. It is not physical force but pure love which binds God. Lord Vittal used to dance along with his devotees during *kirtan*. Namdev used to feed Lord Vittal and Janabai was often helped in her chores by the Lord. Such is the power of Love!

Darshan after mahasamadhi

As mentioned elsewhere in this book, we had life size photograph of Baba in our house. Just a few days before Baba's *Mahasamadhi*, the face of Baba in the photo appeared pulled down, as if he was not keeping well. My mother noticed it immediately and remarked, "Baba is not keeping well." This photo was a representative of Baba in our home.

Elsewhere in Delhi, Captain Hatangdi experienced similar connectivity with Baba. Mrs. Hatangdi used to light a small silver lamp in front of Baba's photo that she kept on her altar. This lamp was very small and did not hold enough *ghee* to keep burning for long. After an hour or so the flame used to extinguish. On 7th August 1961, she got an inner inspiration to keep the flame burning. After an interval, she kept on pouring ghee to keep it burning. Not only that, on that day

she collected all the flowers from their garden and beautifully decorated the altar. She had never done this before. As soon as Captain Hatangdi returned from work, he enquired why this unusual action was done. His wife said that she just felt she should do it. Captain did not approve of it but somehow he too joined in pouring *ghee* at regular intervals to keep the silver lamp burning. The next morning they received a telephone call informing them that Baba had taken *Mahasamadhi* at 10.43 am. Although Captain's family was far off in Delhi, Baba kept their connection well!

In a similar incident, a doctor got intimation from Baba about his *Mahasamadhi*. I believe his name was Dr. Pandlaskar or Dr. Plasekar. He and his family were devotees of Baba and often visited Ganeshpuri. On 8th August 1961, his son woke up earlier than usual and behaved very strangely. With a very unusual accent and facial expressions he spoke to his parents as if he was not their son but an elderly person. He said, "Go to Ganeshpuri immediately. Baba is leaving today. The Rishi Mandal has called him and has said that he was needed to protect the world from the evil effect of eight planet conjunction." Actually in February 1962 eight planets were to line up in Capricorn. Such conjunction can bring disaster to earth. The young boy had no way of knowing this and also that Baba was to take *Mahasamadhi*.

Engineer Hegde was at his office sitting in his cabin engrossed in his work. Suddenly he saw Baba manifesting in front of him and saying "Come immediately." Mr Hegde, immediately left his office, picked up his wife and children and left for Ganeshpuri. It was as if Bhagavan wished him to be present when he took *mahasamadhi*.

Baba and animals

One of the devotees visiting Ganeshpuri regularly had the following incident to tell. In early 1950, when Baba was still in Vaikuntha ashram he visited Ganeshpuri. He had not planned to stay behind, but Baba ordered him to stay overnight. This man was a devotee of Goddess Durga and was worried that he would miss his evening *puja* which he conducted at his home. Although it was late in the evening several devotees were still sitting listening to Baba. Baba sat in front of them and there was an open field behind him. The cool winter breeze was blowing and it was a beautiful evening as the sun was about to set. As the darkness crept in he noticed that there were two bright small objects just behind Baba. He instantly realized that there was a large tiger behind Baba. The fear of the tiger and the possible harm that it could do to Baba, shocked the devotees who were there. The tiger gradually raised its body and carefully placed his front paws on Baba's shoulder from behind. Without moving or showing any reaction, Baba lifted his hands and tweaked the ears of the tiger as if he's been expecting the tiger to come. Baba spoke as one would cajole a family cat. Satisfied with the caressing and the attention that it got from Baba, the cat turned around and ran towards the Mandakini forest and disappeared in the darkness. Baba laughed at

the shocked devotees who witnessed a most unusual sight and said “Oh, it was just a vehicle of Mother Durga. Since this place belongs to her, the tiger had come to visit *‘this one’*”. Baba is often described as Mahakali Avatar and hence it was not surprising that the tiger visited him. The devotee who narrated this incident realized that his chosen Goddess resided in Baba and hence worship to Baba meant worshipping Durga. In all his *pujas* he kept Baba’s photo and worshipped him as the mother goddess.

It is said that Bhagavan understood birds and animals. Once a devotee brought his caged parrot for Baba’s *darshan*. It was May 1944, which is a very hot month before the monsoons arrive in June. The bird was placed in the ashram and it began to sing loudly. Bhagavan interpreted the song, “He is saying it will begin raining in three days.” It does not rain till 10th of June normally. The bird’s weather prediction, however, proved to be correct. In three days it rained heavily. In another incident, the visiting devotees were afraid of a king cobra that lived near the ashram. Baba assured them that it would do no harm, as the snake was absorbed in deep chanting and meditation. Baba, however, did not encourage the caging of birds and animals. In fact, he often insisted that birds must be set free.

Ganeshpuri, mother of all pilgrimages

Baba Nityananda often described the significance of Ganeshpuri. He used to say that God is everywhere. Just like water is everywhere but when it is at a particular place, like on a hilltop, it has great energy. So also at particular spots, the *shakti* can be unusually high. This is called *sthal mahimha* (power of the place). It is this power that creates miracles. A spot where many *Siddhas* have meditated and have stayed for long acquires their *spanda shakti*. Such places have such a high degree of spiritual and divine *shakti* that miracles just happen. In Ganeshpuri several *Siddhas* have stayed in the past and several religious *yags and yagnas* have been performed by gods and yogis. Every grain of sand of this place is filled with divine energy. Yet, several devotees used to often come to ask for permission to go on long pilgrimages. Sometimes Baba gave them permission to proceed, but he denied a few.

Once a devotee came to him and expressed his desire to go to Bhadri and Kedar on a pilgrimage. Baba said, “What are you going there for? What will you find there which is not here. Everything is here. Everything, everything is here alone. Ganga, Bhagirathi, Narmadha are all here. Shiva, Krishna, Gods and Goddesses are all here. Why then go anywhere else?” This devotee insisted and went to the Himalayas. On the steps of Bhadrinath Temple, a beggar approached him and started asking for alms, singing a song. Since it is customary to give alms when on pilgrimage, he gave the beggar a coin. After his visit to various temples, the devotee returned to Ganeshpuri for Baba’s *darshan*. As soon as he presented to Baba, Baba began to sing the same song that the beggar sang on the steps of Badrinath Temple and tossed the exact coin that the devotee had given to the

beggar. The man was shocked when Baba further gave the details of his pilgrimage. The man realized that when the very God of gods existed at Ganeshpuri in the form of Bhagavan Nityananda, it was foolish to go to any other place in search of God.

Visit to devotee as Sai Baba

There was a lady who was a staunch devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. Sai Baba had long passed away, but she used to still long for his *darshan*. It was a routine for her to give alms to any ascetic who came to her doorstep in the afternoon. One day an old *fakhir* stood at her door. He appeared just as she had seen Sai Baba in various photographs. He wore a long *kafani*, tied a cloth over his head, and had a white beard. She took him in and gave him a good lunch. The *fakhir* blessed her and promised to soon meet her and left. Chance took her to Ganeshpuri a few days after this incident. She had never been there nor had she seen Baba before. When her turn came to present before Baba, Baba said "I went to your home a few days ago. You gave me a good lunch." The lady looked up and said "Swami, why did you come as Sai Baba?" Baba replied "Would you have recognized me were '*this one*' to come in this form?"

Shaktipat in absentia

This was from a devotee who experienced a complete transformation within him. Madhukar Khade often visited Ganeshpuri along with his father Baburao Khade. Baburao was a strict disciplinarian and adherent devotee of Baba. The respect and discipline that he followed in the presence of Baba was equally accepted by his brother devotees and his own family members. As Baburao was also a spiritually advanced soul he instructed his brother devotees on the path of *sadhana*. Since his children were small he did not think it was appropriate to teach them. Madhukar Khade, however, used to listen to his father giving instructions to others and slowly and secretly adopted them. In one of his visits with his father, he sat in a corner and began practicing what he had learnt indirectly from his father. There were several devotees in the hall and a conversation was going on between Baba and the assembled devotees. The young Madhukar was practicing innocently but suddenly a doubt flashed in his mind about whether what he was doing was right. There was no way he could ask his father, who would have admonished him for adopting what was not instructed to him. Helplessly he looked at Baba, who smiled at him and nodding his head gave a loud '*humkar*'. Madhukar was surprised that Baba could read his mind and help him in his spiritual quest. Years later Madhukar Khade would help several aspirants in their *sadhana*.

In another instance, a devotee went to Ganeshpuri with an intention to get instructions on his meditation. When he was in the presence of Baba he did his *pranayama* looking at Baba. Baba immediately nodded indicating that what he was doing was right. In his return trip, he randomly churned the pages of the

Chidaksha Gita and stopped at a page where Baba says, “A yogi is no yogi if he does not have control over his breath.” He received several such instructions as he continued to read the book which guided him in his pursuit. He was steadfast in his meditation and earnestly did it regularly with full trust in Baba. Each day he used to begin by surrendering to Baba and praying for his guidance in his *sadhana*. Ever since he had seen Baba in the superconscious state of infinite bliss and peace he wanted to experience the same. One day during his meditation he got direction from Baba that Baba would give him an opportunity to experience that state. As he was meditating, automatically a mantra arose within him and he began to experience bliss and lost all body consciousness. This is a wonderful example of how the Guru provides guidance in performing *sadhana*, even though he may not be physically present.

Nityananda in nirguna form

Once a devotee was planning to visit Ganeshpuri several years after his last visit. He had a vision of Baba saying “Ask my devotee about my present form.” He immediately contacted a devotee who was a regular visitor to Ganeshpuri. This friend informed her that Nityananda had taken *Mahasamadhi* a few weeks before. Bhagavan who was a *mahavatar* chose to silently withdraw from the world stage, of his own free will, choosing the time and day of his passing. It was on 8th August (8) 1961 (8) in morning 10.43 (8) that Bhagavan had chosen to withdraw his *leela* in gross form. It all counted to the mystic number eight, which signifies infinity. Thus the infinite merged in the infinite. Even after his passing Bhagavan still very much cared for his devotees. Instead of getting a sudden shock of knowing of the passing away of Baba after reaching Ganeshpuri, Baba prepared this devotee to see him in *nirguna* form.

Thus forewarned and mentally prepared, this devotee reached Ganeshpuri and made his way to Kailash Ashram, the place where he was so used to seeing Baba. The chair on which he usually found Baba was empty. He suddenly experienced the deep vacuum and pain of separation. His heart cried “Why? Why did you have to leave me alone?” Suddenly he felt Bhagavan’s subtle presence and assurance that he would now be eternally present in subtle form seated in his heart. His bliss and *shakti* was all pervading. He was now *sharvantiyami* Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. Yes, Nityananda is *anant*, his *leela* is *anant*, his form is *anant*, he is indeed the *Eternal One*.

Shree Nityanandarpanamastu