



## Sai Satcharitra Chapter 1

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- **Salutations**
- **The Story of Grinding Wheat and Its Philosophical Significance**

According to an ancient and revered custom, Hemadpant begins the work, the Sai Satcharitra, with various salutations:

First, he bows and prays to the God Ganesha to remove all obstacles and make the work a success and says that Shri Sai is the God Ganesha;

To the Goddess Saraswati, to inspire him to write the work and says that Shri Sai is one with this Goddess and that He is Himself singing His own life;

To the Gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—the Creating, Preserving and Destroying Deities respectively– and says that Sainath is one with them; And Sai, as the great Teacher, will carry us across the River of Worldly Existence.

To his tutelary Deity, Narayan Adinath, who manifested himself in Konkan– the land reclaimed by the Lord Rama from the sea– and to the *Adi Purusha* (original male ancestor) of the family.

Then to Bharadwaja Muni, into whose clan he was born and also to various saints— Yagyavalakya, Bhrigu, Parashara, Narad, Vedavyasa, Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatkumar, Shuka, Shounak, Vishwamitra, Vasistha, Valmiki, Vamadeva, Jaimini, Vaishampayan, Nava Yogindra and also to modern Saints such as Nivritti, Jnanadev, Sopan, Muktabai, Janardan, Ekanath, Namdev, Tukaram, Kanha, and Narahari.

To his grandfather Sadashiv, father Raghunath, his mother who passed away in his infancy, to his paternal aunt who raised him and to his loving elder brother.

Then, to the readers and prays to them to give their whole and undivided attention to his work.

And lastly, to his Guru Shri Sainath– an Incarnation of Shri Dattatreya– Who is his sole refuge and Who will make him realize that Brahman is the Reality and the world an illusion.

After describing briefly the various modes of devotion according to Parashara, Vyasa and Shandilya, the author goes on to relate the following story:

“It was one morning, sometime after 1910, when I went to the *Masjid* in Shirdi to receive Sai Baba’s *darshan*, I was wonderstruck to see the following phenomenon:

After washing His mouth and face, Sai Baba began to make preparations to grind wheat. He spread a sack on the floor and thereon set a hand-mill. He took some quantity of wheat in a winnowing fan, and then drawing up the sleeves of His *Kafni* (robe) and taking hold of the peg of the hand-mill, started grinding the wheat by putting a few handfuls of wheat in the upper opening of the mill and rotating it. I thought to myself, “What business had Baba with the grinding of wheat, when He possessed nothing, stored nothing and lived on alms?” Some people who had come there thought likewise, but none had the courage to ask Baba what He was doing. Immediately, this news of Baba’s grinding wheat spread into the village and men and women flocked there to see Baba’s act. Four bold women from the crowd, forced their way up, gently pushed Baba aside and forcibly took the handle into their hands. And then, singing Baba’s *Leelas*, started grinding. At first, Baba was enraged, but on seeing the women’s love and devotion, He was very pleased and began to smile. While they were grinding, they began to think that since Baba had no house, property or children and since He lived on alms, He did not require any wheat-flour to make bread. “What would He do with this large quantity of flour? Perhaps as Baba was very kind, He would distribute the flour among us.” Thinking in this way, while singing, they finished the grinding and after putting the hand-mill aside, they divided the flour into four portions and were about to take the flour away. Baba, Who had been calm and quiet up till then, got wild and started yelling at them saying, ‘Ladies, have you gone mad? Whose father’s property are you looting? Have I borrowed any wheat from you, so that you can safely take the flour? Now please do this; Take the flour and throw it on the village border limits.’ On hearing this, the women felt abashed, and whispering amongst themselves, went to the outskirts of the village and spread the flour as directed by Baba.”

“I asked the people of Shirdi, ‘What was this that Baba did?’ They replied that as the Cholera epidemic was spreading in the village, this was Baba’s remedy. It was not wheat that was ground, but Cholera itself was ground to pieces and pushed out of the village. From this time onward, the Cholera epidemic subsided and the people of Shirdi were happy. I was very pleased to know all this, but my curiosity was also aroused; I began to ask myself, ‘What earthly connection was there between wheat flour and Cholera? What was the causal relationship between the two? And how was one to reconcile them?’ The incident seemed to be inexplicable. I felt I should write something about this and sing to my heart’s content Baba’s sweet *Leelas*(miracles). Thinking about this *Leela* filled my heart with joy and I was thus inspired to write about Baba’s Life– The Satcharitra.”

And as we know, with Baba’s grace and blessings, this work was successfully accomplished.

### The Philosophical Significance of Grinding

Apart from the meaning which the people of Shirdi gave this incident of grinding wheat, there is, we believe, a philosophical significance too. Sai Baba lived in Shirdi for about sixty years and during this long period, He did the business of grinding almost every day– not the wheat alone, but the sins, the mental and physical afflictions and the misery of His innumerable devotees. The two stones of His mill consisted of *Karma* and *Bhakti* (devotion); the former being the lower and the latter the upper. The handle with which Baba worked the mill was *Jnana*; It was the firm conviction that Knowledge or Self-realization is not possible, unless there is the prior act of the grinding of all our impulses, desires, sins and of the four *gunas*– *Sattva*, *Raja*, *Tama* and the *Ahamkara* (ego), which is so subtle and therefore so difficult to get rid of.

This reminds me of a similar story about Kabir, who upon seeing a woman grinding corn, said to his Guru Nipathiranjana, “I am weeping because I feel the agony of being crushed in this wheel of worldly existence, like the corn in that hand-mill.” Nipathiranjana replied, “Do not be afraid. Hold fast to the handle of knowledge of this mill, as I do; And do not wander far from the same, but instead turn inward to the Center and you are sure to be saved.”

***Bow to Shri Sai — Peace be to all***