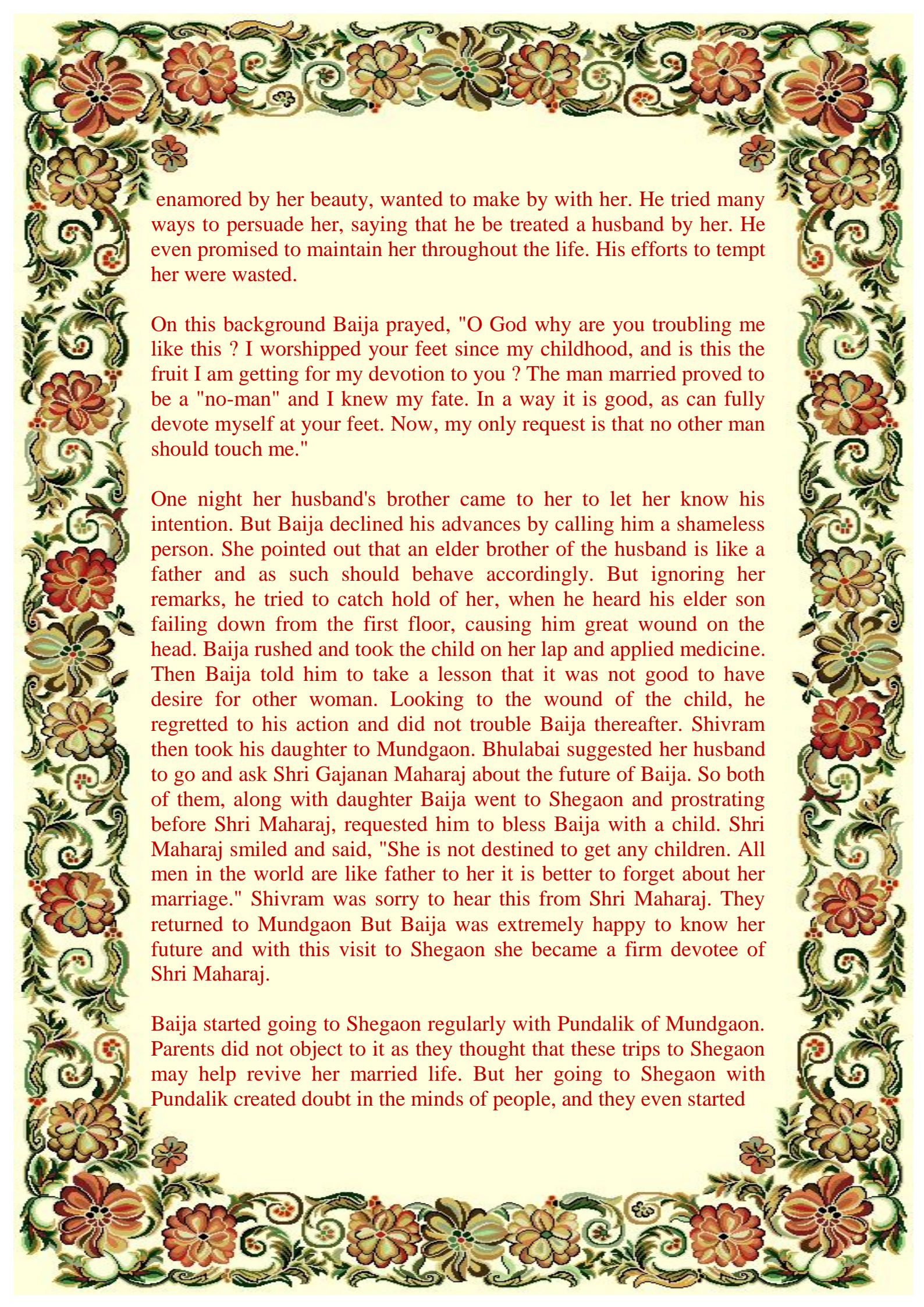


* CHAPTER EIGHTEEN *



Shri Ganeshay Namaha ! Jai to Chidvilasa. O Govinda, Shrinivisa, O Embodiment of Bliss, brother of the fallen, look to me. O Keshava-Keshimardana, Madhava-Madhusudana, O killer of Putana, Panduranga, consort of Rukmini, You know what I want. Is it necessary to speak it out ? Puranas say that you fulfill all the desires of your devotees. So, I beseech you to fulfill the wishes this Dasganu, who is entirely yours only.

There was a devotee named Baijabai at Mundgaon near Akot. She was born in a family of Haldi Mali. Her father was Shivram and Bhulabai the mother. She was married in her childhood only. Everything happens as per one's destiny Baija, having attained puberty, her father took her to the son-in-law's place, but it was of no use as he was found to be a neuter. The fact hurt the parents Baija, but looking to her young age, Bhulabai suggested that he be remarry to somebody else. Shivram did not agree and said that the masculine nature times gets active with the passage of time. So they decided to wait and keep Baija with her husband, expecting that proper medication might revive his masculine character. Both of them then returned to Mundgaon. Baija with her age of 15-16, and though wheatish in colour, had a youthful body. Her tall figure with beautiful eyes and sharp nose, had the power to attract any sexy person. Her husband's elder brother,




enamored by her beauty, wanted to make by with her. He tried many ways to persuade her, saying that he be treated a husband by her. He even promised to maintain her throughout the life. His efforts to tempt her were wasted.

On this background Baija prayed, "O God why are you troubling me like this ? I worshipped your feet since my childhood, and is this the fruit I am getting for my devotion to you ? The man married proved to be a "no-man" and I knew my fate. In a way it is good, as can fully devote myself at your feet. Now, my only request is that no other man should touch me."

One night her husband's brother came to her to let her know his intention. But Baija declined his advances by calling him a shameless person. She pointed out that an elder brother of the husband is like a father and as such should behave accordingly. But ignoring her remarks, he tried to catch hold of her, when he heard his elder son falling down from the first floor, causing him great wound on the head. Baija rushed and took the child on her lap and applied medicine. Then Baija told him to take a lesson that it was not good to have desire for other woman. Looking to the wound of the child, he regretted to his action and did not trouble Baija thereafter. Shivram then took his daughter to Mundgaon. Bhulabai suggested her husband to go and ask Shri Gajanan Maharaj about the future of Baija. So both of them, along with daughter Baija went to Shegaon and prostrating before Shri Maharaj, requested him to bless Baija with a child. Shri Maharaj smiled and said, "She is not destined to get any children. All men in the world are like father to her it is better to forget about her marriage." Shivram was sorry to hear this from Shri Maharaj. They returned to Mundgaon But Baija was extremely happy to know her future and with this visit to Shegaon she became a firm devotee of Shri Maharaj.


Baija started going to Shegaon regularly with Pundalik of Mundgaon. Parents did not object to it as they thought that these trips to Shegaon may help revive her married life. But her going to Shegaon with Pundalik created doubt in the minds of people, and they even started



spreading rumors that, in the guise of Shegaon trips, Pundalika and Baija were satisfying their lust for each other. They further objected to it saying that Pundalika was a Maratha and Baija belonged to Mali community, and thus a great hue and cry was raised to break their association. But both of them were pure at heart. Bhulai rebuked Baija for her frequently going to Pundalika, saying that young men and women came together only with physical attraction. She even advised Shivram to arrange her remarriage to a suitable boy of their community. Then she thought of taking Baija to Shri Gajanan Maharaj to find out the reason of her association with Pundalika. She believed that saints know everything and Shri Gajanan Maharaj was like a sandalwood which never can emit bad smell.

Bhulabai, Shivram, Baija and Pundalika all went together to Shegaon and prostrated before Shri Maharaj. Looking to Pundalika, Shri Maharaj said, "Pundalika, Baija was your sister in the previous life, and so don't deny her affection, even if it becomes a matter of public criticism. Both of you together worship Almighty God. Bhulai, you also should not obstruct or blame your daughter for what she is doing. She is sister of Pundalika. Moreover, Baija is not destined to get any husband. She will remain a maid throughout her life, like Janabai of Pandharpur. Janabai got Namdeo as Guru and Baija has surrendered to me. So nobody should trouble my Janabai." Hearing these words, Shivram got overwhelmed with emotion and could not speak anything. Then they returned to Mundgaon with Baija and thereafter never obstructed her for going to Shegaon with Pundalika.


Now, I will tell you a story about how Shri Maharaj always protects his devotees. There was one Dr. Bhau Kavar in charge of the Govt. Hospital at Khamgaon, He got a nasty boil, and eminent doctors were brought from Buldhana, Akola and Amravati for its treatment. All attempts with medicines and even a surgeon failed to give any relief to Bhau. He was restlessly lying on bed due to unbearable pain. His elder brother was very much worried over the ailment of Bhau. Then there was no alternative but to remember the holy feet of Shri Gajanan Maharaj. Thinking so, Bhau folded his hands and prayed Shri Maharaj to come to his rescue and cure him of the ailment.



It was about midnight with pitch darkness and foxes were howling nearby, when a bullock cart, with a hood above, and a fine pair of bullocks, came to doctor's door. Doctor, from his bed, could see the cart coming and stopping at his door. A Brahmin got down from the cart and knocked at the door of doctor's house. His brother opened the door and asked the person the purpose of his visit. The Brahmin said that his name was 'Gaja' and had come from Shegaon with 'Tirtha' and 'Angara' for Bhau Kavar. He further advised to apply the Angara to the pain full boil of Bhau and to put Tirtha in his mouth. Thus giving these two things to Bhau's brother, the Brahmin went away, saying that he had no time to stay.

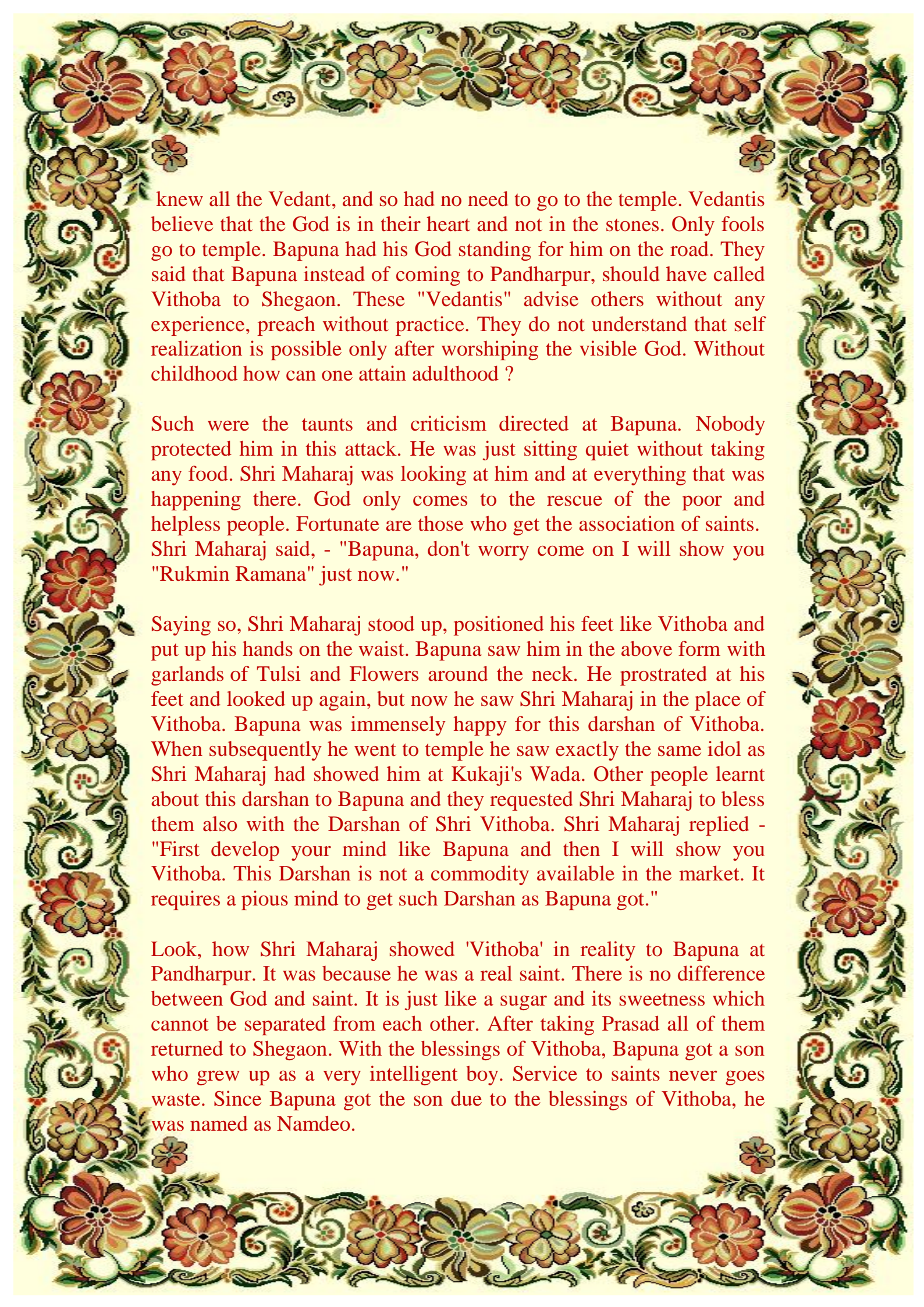
Hearing all this, Bhau immediately sent a man to call back that person, but could not get any trace of him, nor of the bullock cart. Then Bhau applied that Angara to the boil and it immediately burst emitting out pus. In an hour all the pus passed away and Bhau got sound sleep. Subsequently he was completely cured and went to Shegaon to pay respects to Shri Maharaj. Looking at Bhau, Shri Maharaj smilingly said, "That night you did not give even grass to my bullocks." Bhau understood that the nocturnal visitor with Tirtha an Angara was Shri Maharaj himself. Bhau then, as a token of thanks giving, fed people at Shegaon.

Once Shri Maharaj left for Pandharpur to meet God Vithal on the bank of Chandrabhaga. There were many devotees with him. Government had arranged special trains for going to Pandharpur as lot of people were going there for the auspicious occasion of Ashadhi Ekadasi. Jagu Aaba, Patil, Bapuna and many others with Shri Maharaj first went to Nagzari. There is an underground cave on a hillock at Nagzari and as there are many natural water springs near that hillock the place is known as Nagzari. The great saint Shri Gomaji had attained communion (Samadhi) with God in that cave at Nagzari. Shri Gomaji Maharaj was the first Guru of Mahadji Patil who got blessings at his hands for the welfare and prosperity of Patil dynasty. That is why Patils of Shegaon, while going to Pandharpur, first visit Nagzari to pay respects to Shri Gomaji and then go ahead. With this tradition they entrained at Nagzari for pandharpur. Alongwith Hari Patil were,



Shri Maharaj, Bapuna and about 50 other people. It was 9th day of Ashadh Shudha and thousands of Varkaris (regular visitors) started reaching Pandharpur. The sky was cloudy and it was lightly raining. Pandharpur appeared a Vaikunth (heaven) on the earth and was like a sea of humanity. All the space meant for going round the temple (Pradakshina) was full of devotees chanting, "Jay Jay Ramkrishna Hari." The whole atmosphere was charged with joy. Palanquins of saints Nath, Nivrutti, Dnyaneswar, Savata, Gora Kumbhar, Shri Tukoba Dehukar, Sopan Muktabai, Janardan, reached Pandharpur. The devotees threw up 'Bukka' in the air to offer respects to them and the whole sky appeared full of 'Bukka' spreading its fragrance around. People threw Tulsi and flowers also on the Palanquins. In such atmosphere Shri Maharaj reached Pandharpur and stayed in the house of Kukaji Patil which is on the way of 'Pradakshina.' There was a big crowd around the temple and scores of police personnel were present to keep the crowd in order. On the day of Ekadashi all the Shegaon people, except Bapuna went to the temple with Hari Patil. Bapuna had gone to take bath and so he was left back. On return from bath he learnt that all had already gone to the temple. He too then hurried to follow them, but due to big crowd around the temple that poor Bapuna could not get entry from anywhere. Helplessly Bapuna, in his mind prayed, "O Vitthala, Rushikेशha, why are you so much dissipated with me ? Why don't you allow me your Darshan ? You had gone to "Aran" to give Darshan to Savata Mali, like that, O Panduranga, come from the temple to meet me. Aran was 16 miles away, but now I am here just near the temple. People call you the helper of the helpless, then why are you ignoring me?"

Thus he prayed and prayed and at last disappointed returned to Kukaji's house towards evening. Whole day he had not taken any food and the additional disappointment had made him pale and sunken. Such was his intense desire to meet Vitthal, that his mind was continuously moving round the temple. All the people started laughing at Bapuna saying that he was the most unfortunate person. They said that he came to Pandharpur and must have gone round visiting stalls instead of going to the temple. Some said that he was a hypocrite and unfortunate. Others taunted him saying that Bapuna




knew all the Vedant, and so had no need to go to the temple. Vedantis believe that the God is in their heart and not in the stones. Only fools go to temple. Bapuna had his God standing for him on the road. They said that Bapuna instead of coming to Pandharpur, should have called Vithoba to Shegaon. These "Vedantis" advise others without any experience, preach without practice. They do not understand that self realization is possible only after worshiping the visible God. Without childhood how can one attain adulthood ?

Such were the taunts and criticism directed at Bapuna. Nobody protected him in this attack. He was just sitting quiet without taking any food. Shri Maharaj was looking at him and at everything that was happening there. God only comes to the rescue of the poor and helpless people. Fortunate are those who get the association of saints. Shri Maharaj said, - "Bapuna, don't worry come on I will show you "Rukmin Ramana" just now."

Saying so, Shri Maharaj stood up, positioned his feet like Vithoba and put up his hands on the waist. Bapuna saw him in the above form with garlands of Tulsi and Flowers around the neck. He prostrated at his feet and looked up again, but now he saw Shri Maharaj in the place of Vithoba. Bapuna was immensely happy for this darshan of Vithoba. When subsequently he went to temple he saw exactly the same idol as Shri Maharaj had showed him at Kukaji's Wada. Other people learnt about this darshan to Bapuna and they requested Shri Maharaj to bless them also with the Darshan of Shri Vithoba. Shri Maharaj replied - "First develop your mind like Bapuna and then I will show you Vithoba. This Darshan is not a commodity available in the market. It requires a pious mind to get such Darshan as Bapuna got."

Look, how Shri Maharaj showed 'Vithoba' in reality to Bapuna at Pandharpur. It was because he was a real saint. There is no difference between God and saint. It is just like a sugar and its sweetness which cannot be separated from each other. After taking Prasad all of them returned to Shegaon. With the blessings of Vithoba, Bapuna got a son who grew up as a very intelligent boy. Service to saints never goes waste. Since Bapuna got the son due to the blessings of Vithoba, he was named as Namdeo.



A devotee of Kavathe Bahadur, being from Vidarbha, lodged at Kukaji's Wada. On "Dwadashi" day Pandharpur was gripped with Cholera Scores of people and helping him to sit, said, "Come on, get up and let us go to our Vidarbha." The Devotee said, "How can I go to Vidarbha now ? I am nearing the death have no relations by my side."

Shri Maharaj said, "Don't get scared like this. The danger to your life is avert. Saying so, Shri Maharaj put his hand on the head of that devotee. By that act his motions and vomiting stopped immediately and he felt strength enough stand up. How can death take away a man who is in the hands of a Sai. Within an hour he was fully recovered and returned home along with other people. Having rescued, from the grip of death, he was very happy prostrated before Shri Maharaj again and again. He said, "Swamiji, you brought me back from the jaws of death". Looking to this miracle, the devotees cheered "Jay" to Shri Maharaj. Thus all the people who had gone to Pandharpur with Shri Maharaj returned Shegaon safe.

A very strict orthodox Brahmin once came to Shegaon for the darshan of Shi Maharaj. Having heard about the greatness of Shri Maharaj, he had come from very distant place. Being a strict orthodox he did not tolerate anybody to even touch him. And so after looking to Shri Maharaj he regretted for having come at that distance to meet him. He thought that Shri Maharaj was a mad person behaving contrary to all the established religious practice, and therefore, did not like people worshipping such a mad person. In the Math he saw a dead dog just on his way to the well, where he had to go to fetch water. He therefore could not go and so murmured, "Nobody is caring to remove this dead dog and they call this "Ganjya smoker a Maharaj. I am a fool to have come here for his darshan." Shri Maharaj heard it and so, went to the Brahmin and said, "Don't have any doubts. The dog is not dead. Freely, go ahead with your Puja". The Brahmin angrily replied, "I am not mad like you. The dog is dead and its body is lying there since hour, but nobody cared to remove it." Shri Maharaj said. "We are ignorant and spoilt. We have no knowledge like you, but don't worry. Take the pitcher and follow me to the well for water."

Saying so, Shri Maharaj came to the dog and touched it with his feet. Sudden the dog stood up. The miracle made the Brahmin dumb founded. He realized the greatness of Shri Maharaj and regretted for having criticized him. Protesting at his feet, the Brahmin begged to be pardoned for the misbehavior. The same day he served food to all people there, and with doubts removed, fully surrendered before Shri Maharaj. Then, after taking Prasad, he went back with firm conviction that Shri Gajanan Maharaj was God himself.

May this Gajanan Vijay epic, written by Dasganu, guide the devotees to remain on right Path. This is the only desire of Dasganu.

"Shubham Bhavatu"
"Shri Hari Hararpanamastu"

Here is the End of Chapter Eighteen.



Compiled by : Shravan Pande, Shegaon, India.

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